Communication Design

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1   Introduction

This report aims to discuss the intention regarding the feedback and player communication implemented in a turn based card game prototype followed up by the design process and concluded with a short reflection of outcome.
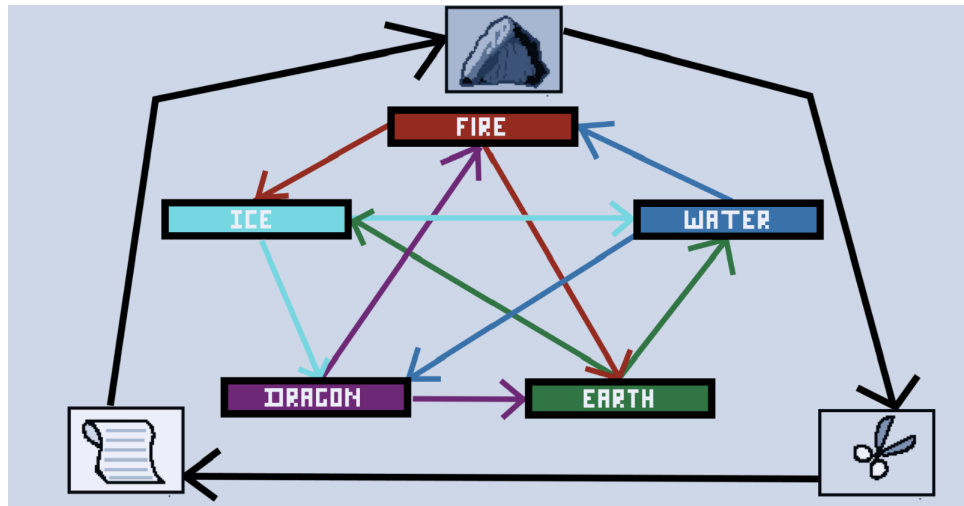

Figure 1: Type Select Tutorial Scene

2   Intention and Process

Since the primary game loop consists of the active player choosing from a single card from their hand, a set of four sprites are laid out at the bottom of the screen to indicate each of the cards available to be played. Each card is comprised of a background sprite and a image sprite on top to indicate the card's primary type. The background is used to represent the card's secondary type and is colour coded to reinforce this. The general consensus in designing the cards was to communicate the primary and secondary type of each card to the player entirely with visual cues. This is believed to be easier to remember and allows the player to quickly gauge the information on each card faster than if they were to read off all the data. The secondary type is also indicated

on a small bar as text underneath the card's primary image as to reinforce this information to the player. When the player runs the mouse over one of the four card sprites in their hand, the sprite is magnified as to provide feedback to the process of choosing a card. The computer controlled opposition player's cards are indicated at the top of the screen with sprites that are meant to represent the backside of each card. This is designed to allude to the real life convention of indicating that the opposition cards are hidden to the other player. The card that each player chooses for the given round is shown above each players hand toward the middle of the screen. If a critical hit is achieved, text saying critical hit appears in the middle of the screen. If a attacking card also counters the type of the defending card, the text 'super effective' appears centre screen. The text is intended to teach the player how the different damage bonuses work.

The game now also includes a subtle tutorial scene that also serves as as a type selector for the player. Before the game starts, the player selects one of the secondary card types that will appear under their health bar during gameplay. The buttons are represented by the same sprites that appear on the cards and are arranged and connected by arrows to show the player which types counter one another. The background of this tutorial scene also indicates to the player the primary type countering system which follows that of rock, paper, scissors using the picture that appear on the cards. This user interface tutorial scene can be seen in figure 1.

The data that drives the game is partially revealed to the user in the form of the HP bars that are show in the top left and bottom right of the screen. These bars indicted scale with the players current health stat as to show how much health each side has remaining. This is also where the player can see the opponent's type as well as their own which they chose on the previous screen. Each player has incentive to play card that match this type as it deals bonus damage. When a player is damaged, the HP structure flashes as to provide feedback when damage is being done and to which player.

3 Reflection

The user interface elements implemented are minimal but effectively and subtly tell the player important aspects of the game. The counter system of rock, paper scissors followed by the tie breaking secondary type system are subtly portrayed in the brief tutorial screen before the player enters the game. Little bits of feedback enhance and bring attention to significant but smaller aspects of the gameplay loop like selecting which card to play and the reducing of HP. Paying attention to some of these visual cues are intended to help the player slowly learn the mechanics of the game. The design opts for a 'learn as you go' type approach to a tutorial rather than explicitly telling the player how to play the game.