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Course code: WSOA3003A

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Assignment: Reflection and Analysis on Assignment 1

Due: 03/26 at 14:00

For this assignment, we were required to build a turn-based combat game prototype that focused largely on the concept of data and how data/numbers and figures would directly affect the combat and gameplay – how our project would be shaped by the data we assigned to it, and furthermore, how the data would dictate the experience of players in the future. We were given approximately a week for this microproject and hence, I present to you, Into the Dark – prototype 1.

As per our brief, I intended to make a simple, turn-based combat game that would feature not only 1v1 combat, but later grow into team vs team combat, such as in games like Fire Emblem: Three Houses, Lost Sphear, AFK Arena and, in a sense, Child of Light. I envisioned a small game where players could control a little squadron of characters – each one more different than the last, and each bringing new strategies, attacks and combat mechanics to the game. I wanted to include many means of customization for the players – such as a wide variety of weapons and armour to equipped and use, potentially an inventory for holding special items, or a shop for buying upgrades.

I played around with the idea of different types of characters such as the protagonist swordsman and perhaps, a future healer/ranger or tank. While these ideas did not have place in such an early prototype, all that have been mentioned above would bring different things to the table and add more layers of strategy and complexity to the combat through the affecting of different stats be it damage bonuses, health bonuses, the option of healing or defence. One other idea I had considered was playing around with elements, which is included in this first prototype in which certain elemental attacks/skills will have special affects when they come into contact with enemies of certain elemental attunements – such as how a water attack (Water Blade) would get a 2x damage bonus against a Fire elemental enemy (though I was unable to communicate this special perk clearly in a tutorial or text for the prototype.) This was largely inspired by Genshin Impact, a game that makes use of varying damage bonuses, elemental reactions, and effects in combat. While I could only achieve a few of my big dreams for this project, I was able to test the waters in how much work this could come down to, in terms of balancing and coding for multiple characters and taking into account a myriad of damage bonuses, chance and elemental effects.

For my process, I spent a lot of the early portion of my time, researching the games I had mentioned above, and several others such as Persona 5 and the Pokemon game series – games that fell into the category of turn-based combat games, and from which I could draw inspiration. I sought the guidance of various online game developers (namely Brackeys and Blackthornprod) and studied how they chose to construct battle systems and state machines – things I had yet to try take on myself. After research, I worked at building my game up – first from its art assets. Though the focus of this assignment was not the aesthetics or visuals of the prototype, it helped to have some form of art assets to place into my scene and help me visualize what I could possibly make. At this time, I thought particularly about how numbers would play into the system. Would there be a levelling system and how would that perhaps affect the stats of players and enemies? How much damage or how much health should player/monsters have? Should health be lower, despite the player not having any access to healing yet at this point in the game? I had even considered passive out-of-combat healing, but scrapped the idea as I felt that would take some of the risk away between fights, if a player could heal back up to full health after every fight. Though, perhaps this could come back in the future in another form, such as only partial healing? So that a player could have some form of healing and stay somewhat healthy throughout a lengthier dungeon. I spent a good portion of my time on level building as the “dungeon” was a large portion of the gameplay and exploration of the dungeon could result in the discovery of treasures, NPCs and collectibles, that would help the player in combat or benefit their journey in one way or another. I tackled the combat system and state machine rather late – though was able to produce a system for the game that functioned as intended, and rarely if ever had any issues or bugs.

Reflecting back on this micro-project, I feel that I had perhaps let myself get too caught up in the potential of this project, that I did not put as much of my time or attention on the focus of the task: data-design. This first prototype features a working combat system in which damage can be dealt, health can be obtained, and new powerful abilities can be learned. I had wanted to install something of a shop, in which could buy stat bonuses and upgrades for their weapons and/or characters. However, due to time constraints, not all the above could be achieved. Nevertheless, it was a project in which I learned, studied, and gained much insight into the concept of data design and how it is so imperative to the games that we build. I only hope to improve my project from here on out.