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Course code: WSOA3003A

Student number: 2152594

Name: Jodi Chapson

Assignment: Reflection and Analysis on Assignment 2

Due: 1st of April at 14:00

For this assignment, we were required to build on our previous Unity Project from Assignment 1: a turn-based combat game with a focus on data design and the usage and manipulation of data to change and influence the game. The focus of this prototype was on communication design: what information is vital to the game and how this information is communicated to the player through various means be it visuals or sound, among other things. This is Into the Dark – prototype 2.

Prototype 1 was left at a basic turn-based combat game with no animations or visual/particle effects. In terms of UI: there were individual health bars for enemies and players, that floated above them during the whole game – regardless of whether in or out of combat (see Appendix 1). This was originally so that a player would always know how much health they and/or the enemies had, even if they were not fighting at present. During battle, special buttle HUDs would appear (see Appendix 1) that would display the health and damage stats of the player and enemy, respectively.

In prototype 2, further revision found that simply having the green health bars floating above the characters at all times, was not particularly helpful in communicating information on health. The health bars themselves could only represent how much health a character had in relation to their max health and could not communicate a concrete number such as 5 or 12. Looking at the health bar alone, one has no means of gauging how much health there originally was, and exactly how much health there was left, so it became somewhat irrelevant and a waste of screen space. That being said, the green health bar communicated information much faster than say, a roster of closely clustered numbers at the corners of the screen: representing health and damage. Another note: I felt that having two different pieces of UI (the health bar and the battle HUDs) that both were intended to serve similar functions (communicate health) made the player move must look in two different places for information that should be more easily and comfortably found in one. For example: The Battle HUD only showed current health, while the health bar showed health in relation to the max. Hence, in Prototype 2: the health bar was removed from above the characters, and instead merged with the battle HUD to form the new player and enemy HUDs that can be seen in Appendix 2. Now, the players only need to look in one place for information and their health or the health of enemies.

With regards to the battle HUD, several other changes were implemented asides from alterations to the display of the health stat. Firstly: a character sprite for the respective enemy/player was included in the HUD – not only to make the HUD more visually appealing and colourful, but to also help identify which information belonged to which character. However, upon reflection, I realize that perhaps this would be an issue of there were multiple of the same enemies in the same battle. How would one know which information belonged to who? It is an issue that I will have to tackle in the future.

The representation of the Damage stat was also changed in the HUD so that not only is the amount of damage a character deals, communicated, but also the type of damage, be it for example, normal damage or fire/water damage. This was implemented with the intention that in the future, when there are more elements and reactions from certain elemental attacks on certain types of enemies, a player will always be able to keep track of what is on the playing field and can always find a means to be prepared for their own turn, and for that of the enemy’s.

I also added a small bouncing arrow that indicate whose turn it is, so it is easier for players to keep track of the game state. The arrow will bounce back and forth between the player and the enemy during battle to show turns.

I did some minor animations for the player to better communicate the various states and actions of the player i.e. idling, walking, attacking and flinching. I did not manage to make animations for the enemies, so to help with communicating attacks (the most important part of battles) I added in damage figure particles, to not only communicate that damage was dealt to a certain character, but to also communicate the amount of damage and type of damage.

Also, I added some quality-of-life changes as well: such as shadows to make the characters look more grounded and existing in the world. I fixed an issue with health bar: where, when they were full, they did not appear entirely full, and when health was below 0, health bars still showed a small sliver of green in the health bar.

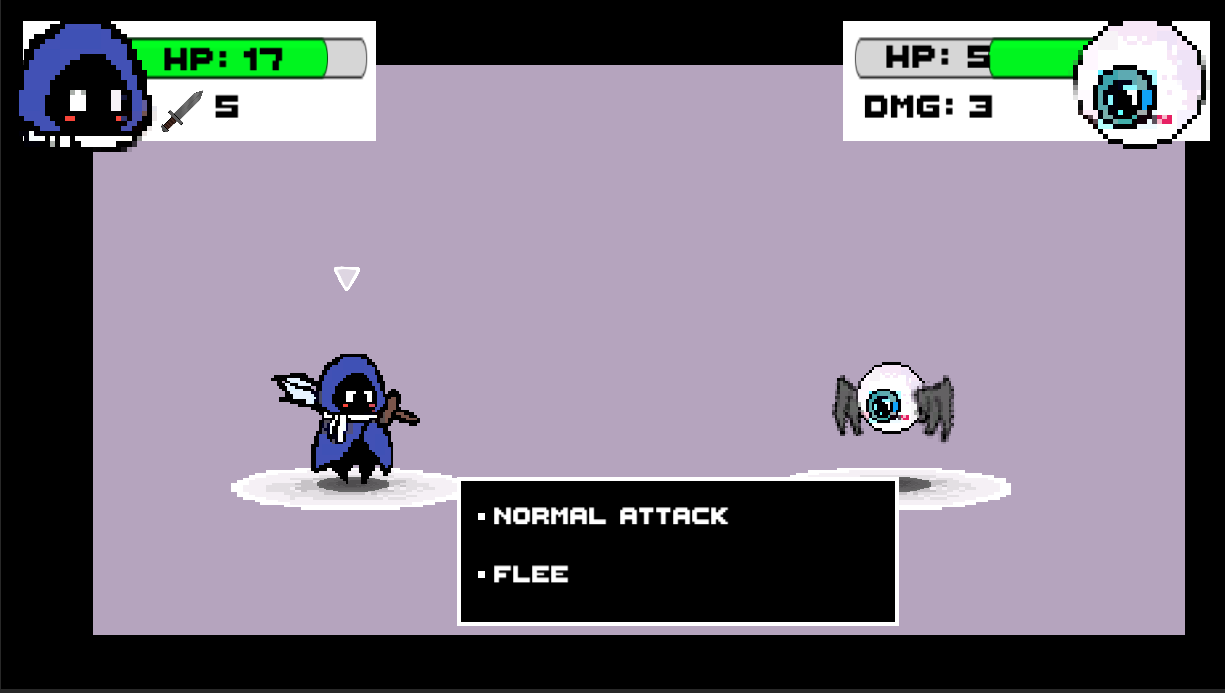
In reflection, I am quite happy with what I perceive as an improvement to the UI and HUD of Into the Dark from prototype 1 to this prototype 2. I felt that now vital information such as health, damage, and the actions of various characters. However, he current HUD mainly suits 1v1 fights. If I were to explnd the game to feature multiple characters in a fight, the current UI, though comparatively less clunkier and more compact that the UI of prototype 1, would take up way too much space as each character will have to have their own battle profile. If it comes to it, these may need to compacted even more so that the screen is not majority battle HUDs and profiles.

APPENDIX 1



Protype 1 UI: for in-combat (above) and out of combat (below)

APPENDIX 2





Protype 2 UI: for in-combat (above) and out of combat (below), featuring the new player/enemy HUDs and arrows indicating turn.