Assignment 2: Communication Design Analysis

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Abstract

This report documents the design processing in updating the previous prototype by providing methods of communication through design. This report will discuss the intentions of the designer, how the designer went about implementing these intentions and whether they were successful.

Intention

With the focus of the previous project being elemental combinations and buffs, the designer wanted to focus on these two aspects when it came to communicating them. The designer focused planned to focus on several elements of communication design: UI, UX, art, animation, sound and most importantly feedback. Regarding the UI, the designer already laid a base idea out in the previous prototype, minor changes would be made to this. With the UX element the designer decided to put the game through some playtests to see how users intact with the system and obtain feedback from them. When it came to the art, the designer decided to create characters that could appeal to young adults, something that is not to serious and also cute. With the animations the designer wanted to create idle states for both characters as well as motions that indicate that an attack has taken place. For the sound, the designer wanted to create sound effects that would pair well with each action type and elemental buff. The sections to come will discuss how the designer went about trying to implement these methods of feedback. Overall, the designer believes that blending these elements together would result in successfully bring life to the game and providing the play with sufficient and appropriate feedback.

Process

Due to the lack of artistic skills the designer decided to draw up a few prototypes drawings for each sprite to be used, theses ranged from character sprites to particle effects sprites. Once each sprite had been drawn up it was then viewed by peers allowing the designer to determine which drawings appealed to them more (these prototypes can be viewed in Appendix).

Once the art had been settled, the designer then asked a few people to play the game to observe how they reacted to the layout and the overall user experience. Some players seemed to be very confused and overwhelm in the beginning. The cause of this seemed to be all the different buttons provided to them, and not being sure what exactly the buffs are. To overcome this the designer decided to alter the UI of the game slightly, such as the dialogue text, changing it from: "Choose an Action" to: "Choose a Buff an Action.". When tested on a new set of players, it was observed that some learned how the game works under a shorter period of time.

Regarding the intention of the designer to produce more feedback, the table below will layout the plans of the designer:

Feedback Type/Area	Explanation/Execution
Attack	1.In the previous prototype part of this feedback had already been established through the text bars found on both sides of the screen. 2.Adding in projectiles that act as a visual effect of the attack occurring. To make the movement of the projectiles look more smooth, Linear Interpolation was used. 3.To add on this, the designer wanted to put a trail to this projectile, but instead of adding a trail component, a particle effect was used. This proved to create a more appealing visual and enabling the noise component allowed it to be even more so.
Damage	1.Screen shake, this was done by move the camera slightly to random values between -1 and 1 on both the x and y axis. Once the code worked, in order to get smooth results a few iterations were made to the duration and strength of the shake.

	2. Particle effect vs Colour change, when trying to visually show damage the designer decided on two options as seen. Changing the colour of the sprite did not seem to be appealing to play testers unlike the particle effects.
Buffed Attacks	Main focus of previous prototype, hence receiving feedback is important. Once again particle effects were used to do so. Designing different sprites to use in different particle effects for each different buff. Depending on the buff, the effect would also behave differently.

When working with the different particle effects, to enhance the effect, the designer decided to random most values between two different and performing iteration to obtain the best results possible at the time.

Reflection

As a designer, providing good feedback systems have always been challenging of me. Even though I could not successfully implement each idea I had, I found the assignment to be interesting and fun. I learned to work with new things that could be used in future projects. Play testing the prototype served a vital purpose throughout this assignment, as communication revolves mostly around the player.

When it came to balancing and successfully integrating the feedback (that which was implemented), I found it difficult to pull off. As you can see when an attack is initiated, there is a slight lag when it comes to the following feedback systems: screen shake, attack projectile and the buff particle effect. This all due to time between the different states of the game. With more polishing and iterations this can perform better.

The layout of the buttons still seems to slightly overwhelm the players, this could be because of the multiple colours of the buttons, or the fact that everything is almost completely tightly packed. Although, the particle effect system works wells in most areas, it still is not enough to give off sufficient feedback. Adding sound to these effects would serve well, unfortunately, I was unequipped with the means of developing proper sound effects and there for chose to keep it out of this prototype.

As an engineering student, I am not comfortable with developing my own assets, although this assignment allowed me use this as an opportunity to work on my asset development, and I have successfully created assets that appeal to the user. Although this is not enough, as I found that "art" alone does not create sufficient feedback and should almost always be coupled with animation. Although not all the intended feedback elements were implemented, I believe that the little integration there is between that which exist currently, successfully conveys feedback to the user.

Recommendations

As stated previously, developing a balancing between the feedback systems is key. With regards to the sound and animation, implementing them would significantly boost the feedback given to players, although the designer suggests that you created different sounds and animations for different things. For instance, developing three different sounds that the enemy will make when attacked, and then randomly choosing which to play between the three, this will help prevent things from sounding monotonous. Also adding something other then text to indicate a players' turn could also help create identifiable moment to moment gameplay.