Practicum 2.5 Playtest evaluation

Team 10 – Mojo Jojo Studios

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# Data analysis

For each used method, analyze the resulting data. Also analyze the serendipitous findings. What have you learned from the data?

## Method 1: Observation

When looking at the observation data, we made many interesting discoveries. Originally, the observation and the interview had a sample size of 10 playtesters. However, three of those sessions were not done according to the protocols, resulting in totally different and biased data. These are included in the appendix but were not included in the analysis, because those invalid observations and interviews might corrupt the research findings.

Out of the 7 observations, the following interesting observations concerning the research question were discovered:

* Player didn’t understand or notice the stamina system. This appeared: 5
* Player expresses dissatisfaction with stamina system. This appeared: 1
* Player sometimes leaves enemies undefeated. This appeared: 3
* Player did not notice the corruption system. This appeared: 1
* Player did not understand the corruption system. This appeared: 2
* Player strongly relied on the health regeneration system. This appeared: 1
* Player learned the archetype of the character and adapted accordingly. This appeared: 5
* Player expressed satisfaction when defeating enemies. This appeared: 2
* Player did not understand the objective of the game. This appeared: 1
* Player does not use all of the characters abilities. This appeared: 3
* Player uses level design to beat the enemies in a cheap way. This appeared: 2
* Player used fireball excessively. This appeared: 4

From these results, some very obvious conclusions can be made. The stamina system was hard to understand easily and was seen as a burden in the game. Players also adapted their playstyle to counter the enemies however they often did not use all of the characters abilities. Players also sometimes tended to avoid enemies instead of always defeating them and abused the fireball to defeat enemies. Only two playtesters expressed satisfaction directly during the observation but it is hard to draw a conclusion from this, as not every player expresses their feelings easily. While to corruption is mentioned a couple of times, it is hard to measure this through observations. The interviews might shed more light on this.

Some observations were not interesting enough or supporting high-level observations. For a full list of all of the observations, check the appendix.

## Method 2: Interview

As was the case with the observation, only 6 of the 10 interviews were academically viable to use as four interviews where not executed according to the protocol. All interviews are included in the appendix. The following interesting observations, with their supporting interview answers, were discovered:

Q1: “Had je door dat de wereld veranderde tijdens het spelen van het spel?”

* Did not notice the effects of the corruption: 2
* Did not notice the visual representation of the corruption: 3
* Was not aware that corruption was caused by both killing enemies and capturing checkpoints: 4

Q2: “Voelde de player character responsive aan voor jou?”

* Player character felt responsive according to the player: 5
* Controls were negatively mentioned: 1
* Stamina bar was negatively mentioned as limiting or annoying: 3

Q3: “Werden, voor jouw gevoel, jouw menselijke vaardigheden uitgedaagd tijdens het spelen van het spel? Bijvoorbeeld bij het verslaan van vijanden” (Als de interviewee vraagt wat daaronder valt, noem bijvoorbeeld reageren, observeren, anticiperen etc.)

* Player did not experience challenge on all of the challenge aspects we wanted to achieve: 1
* Game felt different than designed: 1
* Player experienced challenge on all of the aspects the game was supposed to challenge: 4

Q4: “Heb jij, tijdens het spelen, kennis gekregen over enemies en hun aanvallen? (...) Kon jij dan ook die kennis toepassen?”

* Player acquired knowledge about most of the enemies during gameplay and was able to adapt accordingly: 5
* Did not find it necessary to adapt: 1
* Player was not able to adapt accordingly: 1

Q5: “Was het spel voldoenend om te spelen? (antwoord) Wat maakte het voldoenend volgens jou?“

* The player had a positive experience: 5
* The player specifically experienced satisfaction when achieving small goals: 3.5 (One playtester only experienced it when at low health)
* Other aspects aside from combat were not satisfying: 1

Q6: “Had je het gevoel dat het een eerlijk spel was om te spelen?”

* The player felt the game was fair: 4
* The player felt the animations were easy to see: 1
* Enemies were easy to dodge: 1
* Enemies were stronger than the player and thus the game was unfair: 1

Q7 Heb je zelf nog opmerkingen over onze game die niet zijn behandeld ?

From the interview we can conclude that the players could barely noticed the corruption mechanic and if they did they felt it was not significant during gameplay. The controls were seen as responsive but most player mentioned stamina being a limiting factor. Most players felt their abilities were challenged by the game in the way we intended, and the players could gain knowledge about enemies and adapt this knowledge. A majority of people experienced levels of satisfaction with small tasks and almost all had a positive experience.

## Method 3: Questionnaire

We had 12 people who did our questionnaire.

Interesting statistics:  
7 out of 12 said they noticed that the world changed during play but when asked when the world would change there was nobody who correctly mentioned all of the triggers. Killing an enemy and interacting with checkpoints were commonly noticed however. The people who said they did got asked if they felt they were influencing the world during play and rate it on a scale from 1 to 7 on which 1 is bad and 7 is excellent, this gave an average of 4.1 as a result.

We also asked the people to rate some other things on a scale of 1 to 7  
Thier gaming experience from previous games :5.6  
How responsive did i experience the controls for the player-character:5.3  
To what degree did the responsiveness of the player-character hinder my performance:3.2  
How intense the game was: 3.8  
How much i learned about the enemies:5.4  
I was able to apply what i learned to defeat the enemies:5.3  
The game was satisfying to play:5  
How fair was the game:4.5

We also asked the players how long they played the game for and if they finished the games the majority said they finished the game and they said they did it in less than 20 minutes. We expected people to take longer and we wonder if they missed content.

From the statistics we conclude that the corruption isn’t quite clear yet, people noticed that something changed but they couldn’t accurately tell how it changed or if they did it. We can also tell that the controls felt responsive and they did learn from the enemies. Finally, people rated the intenseness of the game as average while the game-experience should be action-packed.

## Serendipitous findings

A lot of minor findings were discovered with some being quite significant and others just being very minor. These discoveries are:

* Stamina system was experienced by almost all of the players as a very annoying and limiting factor.
* Fireball was very abusable
* Player did not like the second character as much because it has less ‘cool’ abilities.
* Players really really enjoyed cool looking abilities (way more than expected)
* Lack of falldamage (and hitstun but it’s lacking due to time constraints) was mentioned
* Some players tend to avoid enemies when they have the possibilty to do so while this is not the goal of the game.
* Health regen was also abused, players took their time between and even during battles to regenerate health.
* One player did not like the idea of being less ‘strong’ than your enemies.
* One player specificly mentioned that the non-respawning enemies did cause satisfaction because, even when she died she had still achieved something as they did not respawn.
* The level geometry was exploited by player because the ai couldn’t handle certain parts of the level very well.
* Teleport was not used often at all by the players as most of them felt like hover was far superior.
* People accidently destroyed checkpoints during a battle as the same key was used for attacking enemies and destroying checkpoints.

# Answering the research questions

## question 1:Is the player able to analyze and gain knowledge about the enemies in the game?

Based on the three types of analysis, they all suggest that the players are able to do this. The questionnaire answered the questions regarding the RQ with both an 5.4 and 5.3 (answers had to be between 1 and 7, with 7 being totally agree and confirming this question). In five of the observations the observer noticed that the player learned the enemies in the game and was able to apply them and in five interviews players mentioned that this was the case as well by the players themselves.

In general we can thus say that players are able to analyze and gain knowledge about enemies in Vilom Chronicles. However, this is an early build and a low sample size. Developing the game further might cause the experience to change while it was not intended, so regular playtests might be wise to know if this is still true for that build.

## question 2:Does the player feel like he has influence on the game world?

Based on the three types of analysis, they all suggest that this is not the case. In the questionnaire the questions regarding this research question were answered with 5 out of 12 not noticing anything changing during gameplay and the people that noticed it, only rated it with an 4.1. This was quite hard to observe but during the interviews half of the people did not notice the game change, a majority did not know how it was caused and a minority did not notice the effects that it caused.

The answer is quite obvious with more than half of the playtesters not noticing the game changing mechanics at all during gameplay. Players don’t feel like they have an influence on the game world in the current build. Atleast 90% should notice the game influence for this question to be true, as it is one of the two main twists of the game.

## question 3:Does the player experience the character controls as responsive during gameplay?

Based on the three types of analysis, the majority of the people said that the controls indeed are responsive. In the questionnaire the control responsiveness got a 5.3 and how much they were hindered got a 3.2. This implies that they thought the controls were above average and did not hinder the gameplay. In our observations the controls are not mentioned, that is a good thing because this means the testers it not show any frustration with the controls. During our interviews 5 people said the player-character felt responsive and the controls were only once mentioned negatively.

In conclusion we can confidently say that we achieved our goal of responsive character controls.

## question 4:Does the player feels like he/she needs to actively use his abilities(human abilities like reaction, observation etc.) to defeat the enemies in the game?

Based on the three types of analysis, most people experienced the game as challenging. The questionnaire answered the questions regarding the skills people had to use to complete the game: 58.3% of the players observe and 58.3% react to the situation. 33% of the playtesters tried to think strategically, 25% anticipate the attacks of the enemies and 8.3% of the players gained knowledge about the enemies. 16.7% of the playtesters did not have to use any of their abilities. The majority of the players we interviewed experienced challenge on all aspects of the game. In some of the playtest the observer noticed that the player would walk past an enemy and leave it undefeated or the player would use the level design to beat enemies in a cheap way.

In general the players try to react on what is going on and some people try to plan ahead. Only a few playtesters did not have to use their abilities. Because most of the players are challenged by the game, we could say that the game is quite challenging. Since not all players experienced the same amount of challenge, we can conclude that the game was not as challenging as intended.

## question 5:Does the player experience satisfaction when completing objectives in the game?

Based on the three types of analysis, the majority has some level of satisfaction when completing objectives. In the questionnaire people rated the satisfaction received with a 5 out of 7. During interviews the players noted to have a positive experience 5 times and to have a greater level of satisfaction 3,5 times, one person noted that only near death it was really satisfying. During observations in 2 cases the playtesters clearly expressed a feeling of satisfaction.

This tells us that in general the game is satisfying to play, but this only shows clearly for slightly over half of the people, and even less for observations, thus we should aim to get this number higher and make the game satisfying for almost all player.

# Proposed improvements

Give several concrete improvements for the game, based on the playtest session results. They are ordered from most important to least important.

## Improving the combat

The combat system should be modified heavily. Our original intent was that each fight was a difficult fight however we noticed that most people experienced this as a hack and slash game instead. Things to add to relieve this issue:

* Combo attacks: The ability to make combinations where consecutive attacks have different effects.
* AI improvements: The AI’s combat state currently is not great. It should gain blocking modes and dodging abilities to. Possibly blocking everything when the player attacks when it isn’t a counter or isn’t in an attack/recovery state itself. Along with a more interactive design. Currently the AI is purly range and random dependant. Instead it should move to detecting the players common habits and countering them effectively.
* Block break: AI and Players alike should gain attacks that can break through blocks. These moves would also have allot of punish frames along with them to make them somewhat risky.
* Making attack more meaningful: By changing the frames and hitboxes of each attack, they can be applied in more specific situations and have more meaningful usage. This also means that attacks don’t feel spammable anymore because of the change of frames.

All of these along with more animations to clarify what actually happened.

These improvements would serve to slow down the fights in terms of speed. As such we may need to rebalance damage and health values across all objects.

This would make each fight more intense as a single enemy would become more difficult to defeat in general.

## More clarity in corruption

Whenever initiating the corruption it would not be too obvious, we realized this through that most people either didn't notice the gameworld changing or they didn't identify why it changed correctly. So to improve the clarity we would aim to add more animations to it. Starting with a clearer animation to the the initiation of the corruption, but also it’s affects on the world. When certain things are corrupt enough modify the lighting system the make this more clear, add in moving tentacles or other clear representations of corruption. The trees start moving on their own and swiping at its enemies. Along with that we would modify the checkpoints destroy and capture animations. To promote the effects of them more. This should improve clarity on the corruption mechanic.

## Improving the characters

Based on playtest we saw Vairl’s teleport was rather useless in the current version. The actual teleport should be sooner and further to improve how much of an impact it has.  
Tanis requires some additional moves. Tanis should receive a special attack and a dodge ability just like Vairl has (fireball and teleport respectively). This makes both characters equally as fun to play as they both have their unique mechanics.

We also noticed that the use of the fireball spell was a dominant strategy. To decrease this we could add in an additional resource to manage the use of these type of abilities. Ideas for regenerating this: kills, on checkpoint capture, on checkpoint destroy or on item use.

## Rewarding the combat

We noticed that some players would just slip past all the unnecessary fights. Adding in gold or experience systems as a reward for defeating enemies turn this more into a decision for the player. Risk health but gain more gold/experience. Another way might be to stimulate this, is that enemies can anti-air, making it hard to move past enemies without taking damage.

## Stamina modifications

Several players reported frustrations with the stamina system. Stamina should start regenerating sooner. Instead of the current 2 seconds probably somewhere around ½ second. This would make controlling the player character better and resolve the complaints regarding not being able to continue combat due to an arbitrary bar and timer. Another solution would be changing the system by having a block and special move bar and adapting attack animations accordingly and game rules accordingly. Normal attacks don’t use any amount of the bar but can’t be spammed because if it does not combo, the player will trade a hit with the enemy when trying to attack again. To complement this system, normal moves should be cancellable in special moves. For example, a normal move can be cancelled in a teleport when the player tried to attack but recognizes that an attack is incoming. Also, enemies can block attacks easily.

## Health systems

Some players abused the health regeneration giving the player the ability to face-tank most damage without consequences. Health systems should move to a more punishing system. Regeneration should be limited instead of infinite. To mitigate the infinite regeneration we made it incredibly slow but this still doesn’t give the desired challenge aspect we were looking for. Ideas for limiting this was that you would regenerate health on: kills, on checkpoint capture, on checkpoint destroy or on item use.

## Locked boss battles

Some players would run away from boss fights, which on rare occasions caused unintended scenario’s for in the AI and the boss’s moves. Whenever a boss battle starts the boss arena should become locked to prevent the player from running too far away and then regenerating all his/her health and stamina. This would increase the challenge aspect that we are trying to create, as well as increase the sense of satisfaction of defeating the enemy.

## GUI improvements

As some players were struggling with the stamina bar and on rarer occasions the health bar. Moving the health and stamina of the player to a different location on the screen and making the bars themselves larger would improve the clarity of what these bars represent as a small decrease on the bar will appear larger compared to the 100 pixel bars we used. As well as move the health from a boss down to the bottom of the screen and extending it out to make it more clear that a boss in the fight.

# Appendix A: Data

The data from the playtests should be added here, or included in the zip file of the submission.