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COURSE CODE: WSOA3003A

ESSAY TOPIC: MDA Analysis of the Communication and Feedback design of the game Threes

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- I have correctly acknowledged all direct quotes and paraphrased ideas. In addition I have provided a complete, alphabetized reference list, as required by the MLA method of referencing (described in the Student Handbook).

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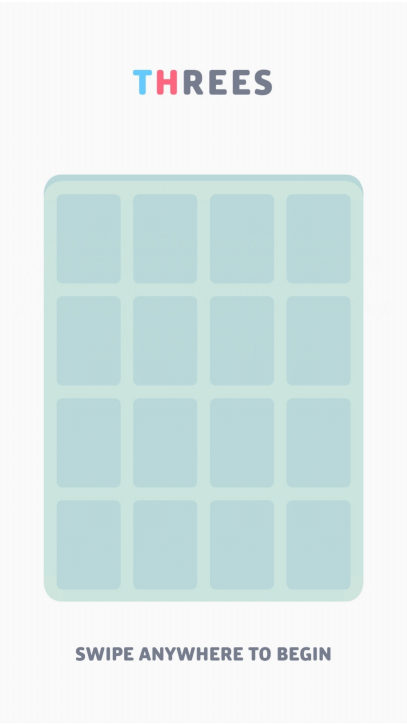
Date: 4 April 2021



Screenshot of the start up scene in *Threes* (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

The Mechanics, Dynamics and Aesthetics (MDA) framework (Hunicke, LeBlanc, Zubek, 2004) is the model of analysis that will be used to analyse the communicative and feedback design of the game *Threes* (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014). The MDA model is used by developers to distinguish the effectiveness of individual aspects of game systems that need that need to be fluent within the system in order to make the system work as effectively with the player as possible.

Player and system communication is an important factor of game design because if a system does not provide communicative feedback with the player in any way possible then the game system will not be a game, as the game system will not be able to communicate to the player that it is a game. Feedback in a game is every bit of data that is displayed to the player, from the imagery to the sound design of the system and is used to emphasise the MDA framework used to develop the game. An effective and most commonly successful form of feedback design provides moment-to-moment recognition of the system to the player. It makes the game system transparent to players, which allows the player to always understand what they need to do in the game, what will happen in the game and what has happened in the game at any given moment.

Threes is a digital, puzzle game which incorporates the addition of numbers and the logic of space to invent an intricate maze of numbers as a game system with a goal. The feedback design, according to the MDA framework, in *Threes* was designed using images, sound and dialogue to represent to the player the games core mechanic, which is to get the highest score possible using the game's mechanics, dynamics and aesthetics.

The game mechanics are the rules and actions that the game system allows the player to interact with. In *Threes*, this is represented by the action of swiping along the screen to progress through the game (see **Figures 1 and 2**). From the beginning to the core system of the game, the swiping mechanic is the predominantly used means of progression as the game system communicates this persistently through every frame of the game as shown in the aforementioned figures. This feedback to the players is cognisant of the dynamics of the MDA framework.

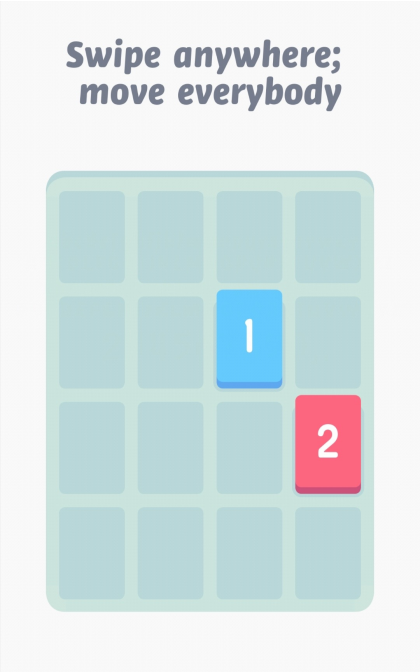


Figure 1 shows a screenshot of *Threes* communicating with the player through dialogue and colour organised imagery, about how the player navigates around the games system as well as hinting to the games core mechanic and goal (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

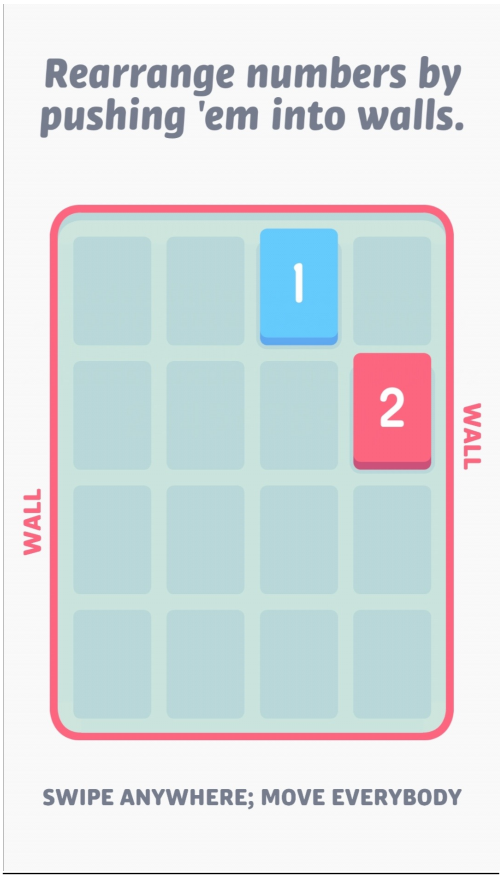


Figure 2 shows a screenshot of *Threes* communicating with the player through dialogue and colour organised imagery, about how to use *Threes*' mechanics (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

The dynamics are the reactions the system has to the player interacting with the mechanics of the system. Although feedback and dynamics are not essentially the same in concept as they have certain areas of specification, such as that the dynamics are the systematical revolution of a certain action of the game, while the feedback is the designed response used to emphasise the dynamics of the game, they can still be considered part of a greater category of systematical response to player interaction. Concerning *Threes*, the games dynamics are extremely important and therefore require a great level of feedback design because if the feedback provided to the player is not explicitly indiscreet, then the player has a higher possibility of not understanding the dynamics of the game, which in turn will lead the player to misunderstand the mechanics of the game and will ultimately distinguish the game is ineffective in its objective.

Threes, therefore, uses animations, sound design, imagery and dialogue as feedback to emphasise the game dynamics. When a player swipes values across the screen and the value is respectively capable of fusion with another value according to the system's mechanics (see **Figures 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7**), then the system responds with a layered feedback design. Layering feedback is identified as effective feedback as this form of communication design ensures that the player has numerous ways of understanding a single action in a system, such as that if the fusion of values is successful, then the values add with one another and the resulting value replaces the two fused values in the space that the player swiped into, communicates verbally with the players about the successful fusion and lastly provides animated figurines of the personalisation of each definable value in the system, as seen in **figures 5, 6 and 7.**

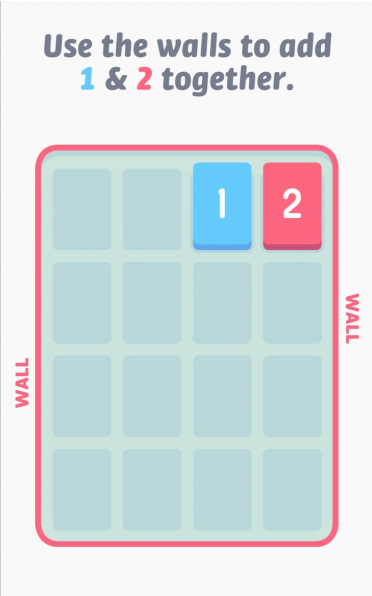


Figure 3 shows a screenshot of *Threes* communicating with the player through dialogue and colour organised imagery, about how to use *Threes*' functional but simple spacial navigation mechanics (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

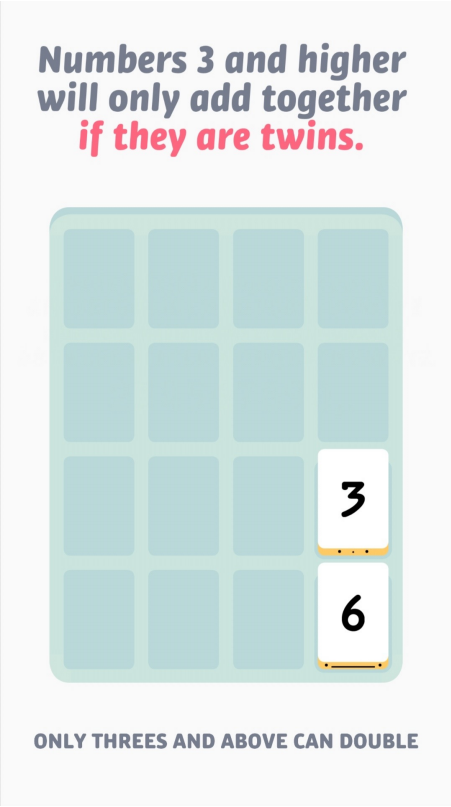


Figure 4 shows a screenshot of *Threes* communicating with the player through dialogue about how the games core mechanic works (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

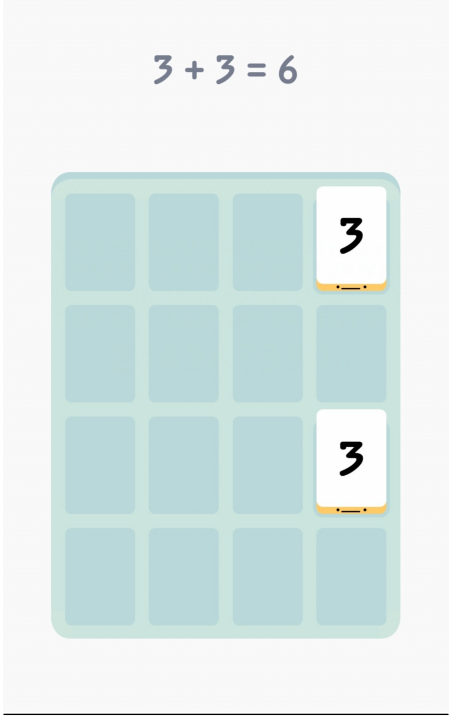


Figure 5 shows a screenshot of *Threes* game play where two values are equal to three (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

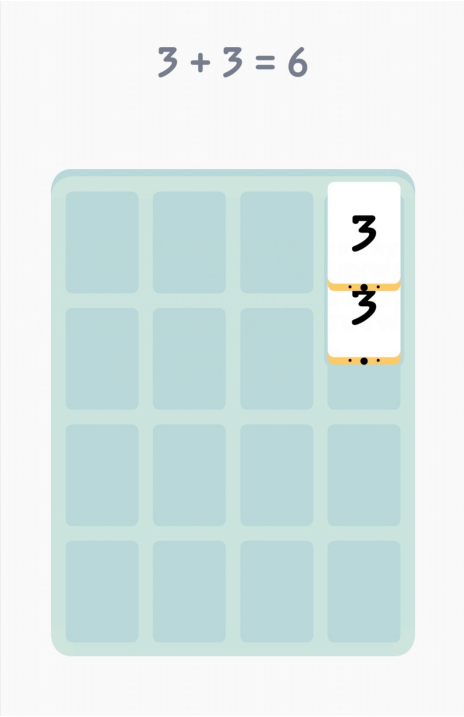


Figure 6 shows a screenshot of *Threes* game play where the two values, which are according to the system greater than or equal to three, are being allowed to fuse with one another. Notice the value figureheads at the bottom of the screen are animated to change as the player fuses them as a layer of feedback (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

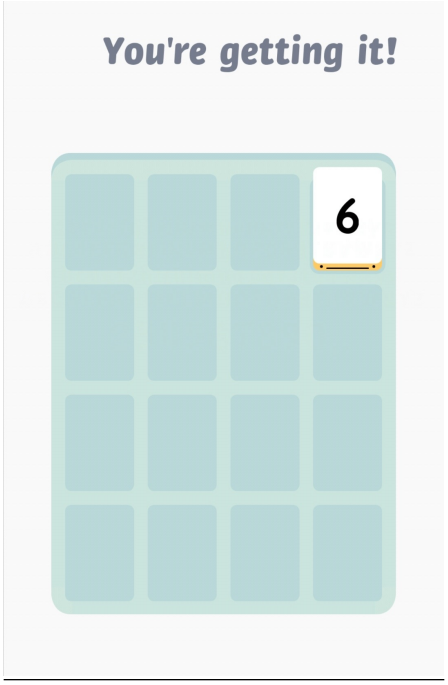


Figure 7 shows a screenshot of *Threes* game play where the two values have fused and become the addition of both values in the space where the player swiped. The figure head of the value has changed, and the dialogue in the game has illustrated to the player that they have successfully interacted with the game's main mechanic (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

Lastly, while using the MDA framework to analyse the effectiveness of *Threes*' feedback design system, the simplistic but functional aesthetics of the game, the ability of the game to implore the player to understand the games core mechanic and therefore their desire to engage with the game, further highlights the core mechanic of the game which the feedback and dynamics of the game explore and therefore succeed in enveloping the players in a game that flows without misconceptions of system plot holes. The minimalistic colour scheme allows the player to identify the most important parts of the game, since players place more attention to the display of the game rather than the background design of it, such as that the 1's and 2's in the game are highlighted red and blue in order to indicate that they have a different mechanic to that of the other values (see **Figure 8**).

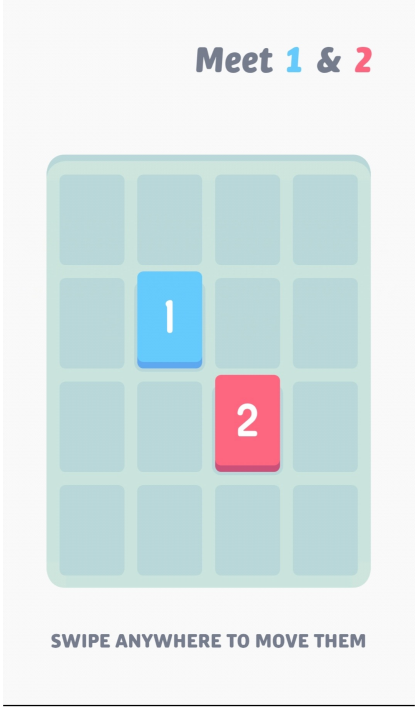


Figure 8 shows a screenshot of *Threes* communicating with the player through dialogue and colour organised how to differentiate specific mechanics to the other values' mechanics (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

Threes' layered feedback design, therefore, shows how much attention to detail the developers put into the core mechanic of the game, because although the game's core mechanic is simplistic, the game is intriguing to numerous types of players with just its feedback design alone. The players get introduced to characterisation of values, such as that the number 24 is named *Torbus*, and has personality (see **Figure 9**), intrigued into the mastery of the game, and enveloped in the games aesthetically design all through communicative sound, imagery, and colour design.

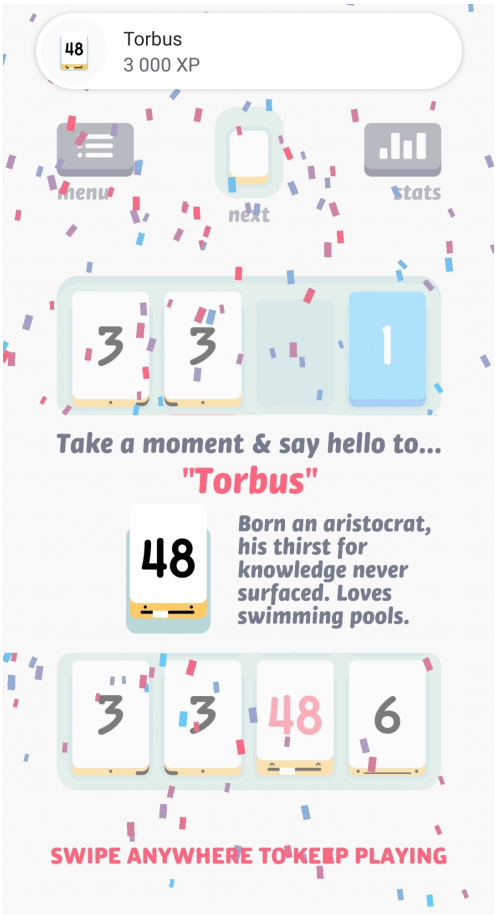


Figure 9 shows a screenshot of *Threes'* characterisation of values (Vollmer & Wohlwen, 2014)

References

Vollmer, A & Wohlwend, G. (6 February 2014). *Threes*. [Online]. iOS, Android, Xbox one, Windows Phone. Developer: Servo LLC. Composer: Big Giant Circles.

Hunicke, R & Leblanc, M & Zubek, R. (2004). *MDA: A Formal Approach to Game Design and Game Research*. 1-5. AAAI Workshop. Available from URL: https://www.aaai.org/Papers/Workshops/2004/WS-04-04/WS04-04-001.pdf