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COURSE CODE: WSOA3003A

ESSAY TOPIC: Micro Project 2: Communication and Feedback design of a Turn Based Combat Game

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

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Signed: Tenisha Moodley

Date: 1 April 2021

Intent

This prototype will be used to make a successful and efficient feedback design for the turn based combat system prototype that was created in a previous prototype (Moodley, 2021).

A successful feedback design provides moment-to-moment recognition of the system to the player at any given time of the system. It makes the game system transparent to players, the things they need to know about, at any given time, such as inventory or the character movement. This allows the player to always understand what they need to do, or what the outcome of an action will be. Essentially, at any given point in the system, the player will see and understand all the information they need to know that will affect them in the system at that current time through data such as presenting the health of a player through a life bar and at the same time turning the player avatar red and emphasising that the players avatar is being hurt. This type of feedback design is known as layering feedback which is identified as good feedback as this form of communication design ensures that the player has multiple ways of understanding a single action in a system. Therefore, researching an exploring this type of layered feedback design is the main objective of this prototype.

Although, the player is required to understand every moment in the system, the player is also first required to learn how the feedback system works before they can start engaging and understanding the system properly. The system develops the players knowledge of the system feedback, as the system progresses, and utilises it effectively for when the player is found in the most complex or climaxed parts of the system and is then required to engage fully with the systems feedback.

Why is the feedback important? Understanding the reasoning behind layered feedback will help the system designer develop the system more encouragingly towards player interest rather than designer interest. Feedback helps theme system's mechanics flourish, as it enhances the mechanics actions and therefore provides more to the players understanding of the mechanics. Feedback can make the game system more intriguing even if the system mechanics are bad or uninteresting to the player. Therefore, feedback can be used as a means of advertising the game's system, and emphasise the system's core mechanic, theme and dynamics without directly affecting the game's aesthetics, although it can also help portray game aesthetics. The goal of feedback is the definition of feedback. At every moment, the player should be able to identify what is happening, what is going to happen, or what just happened system to represent good and understandable feedback.

According to the knowledge researched above, this prototype, it is intended to provide essential or functional feedback design rather than pretty or lavish feedback design, and therefore we are only going to provide feedback according to the importance of the action rather than whether it makes the game's aesthetics look nice.

Process

Using animations, particle effects and colour as layered ways of feedback to communicate to the player about the feedback design of the system.

As previously mentioned, good feedback is a layered model of communication design to make the game as complex as possible without making the game complicated, in order to allow the player to understand the system thoroughly. Feedback layers granted to an action or mechanic in the system, imply the importance of that action in the system. Such as that if the enemy attacks the player, the firing of the attack is emphasised, the attack hitting the player is emphasised and the damage the player takes is emphasised. This leaves numerous layers of feedback to one action in the system, however in this prototype, this one action is the most important mechanic in the game as the player is required to survive as the overall goal of the system and therefore being attacked leads to the players defeat.

The emphasis or the feedback on an action can be accomplished using, sound, colour, vibrations, screen shake, dialogue, animations, images and numerous other forms of communication design to represent feedback and configure the design of communication in the system.

The communicative designs we will be focusing on in this prototype will be imagery, colour, animation regarding the colour and image designs and particle effects, a customisable system provided by the Unity platform being used to design the prototype, to create layered feedback to the system's mechanics. These manners of feedback design will be used because they are easily explorative within the Unity platform while still providing meaningful and effective feedback. Other feedback designs such as sound design is not necessary to represent feedback, and it is not as easily accessible within the Unity system so it was neither implemented nor disregarded entirely within the creation of this prototype.

The damage taken, attacking, healing, Doppelgänger attack, smoke attack, dodging and game over mechanics will have specialised feedback implemented on them because of their importance within the system. The player will need feedback on these mechanics in order to communicate and engage with the system because these mechanics help the system progress and allows the player to develop along with the system and achieve their goals winning against the enemy Non-Playable Character (NPC). Although, all of the mechanics mentioned will have layered feedback designs, the dodging mechanic will be emphasises less like a mechanic and more like a side effect of a lack of mechanical action taking place in the system. Therefore the dodging mechanic will be emphasised with the lack of layered feedback because even though it's important for the player to know that their attack has missed or that they have dodged the enemy's attack, the lack of feedback will emphasise the 'nothing' that has happened more than layered feedback would.

Reflection

Using the previous prototype to utilise the exploration of feedback design, saved a lot of time to focus on the goal of this prototype. However, the time limit of a 7 day week to finish the prototype might still have been underestimated as the prototype could have used more time to juice the system as even though the prototype makes use of a layered feedback design, the design itself could have been more refined to encourage game flow. Therefore, a more scheduled plan regarding the intent of the prototype should have been made, including hourly slot schedules to work on different types of feedback within the system or work on numerous different layers of feedback at a time. This change in prototyping would have given room for more research on the field of feedback. This prototype was created while following why certain mechanics needed certain layers of feedback, then each mechanic would be given layered feedback according to what looked the most communicative to the player.

Using over emphasised feedback can become daunting because if the screen shake is too short and simply adds a freak movement of the camera to the player then attention from the action that was being emphasised can be drawn more to the irritating camera movement and the player may miss the action, which is the opposite of what feedback is supposed to do.

Feedback allows developers to see mechanics the way the player would see the mechanics, since the player is not interested in the backend or data aspect of the system mechanics as they will be more interested in how the mechanic reacts in the system and therefore the feedback of the system. Using this view, the developer has the chance to see whether their mechanic design of the system is either interesting or effective for the system.

While implementing feedback to the Smoke and Doppelgänger attacks in the system, I noticed that changing two statistics at the same time in both attacks removes a sense of familiarity with the attacks, such as that they lose their individuality when they both lower and rise a statistic so without the layered dialogue feedback given to both attacks, the player wouldn't be able to off handedly differentiate the attacks from one another in regards to the statistic changes. Because this prototype focused on the feedback given to a turn based system, the system itself was not changed even when data values or mechanical design had room for improvement so these changes to the mechanical structure of the system was left unchanged and feedback was implemented on the system regardless of unfavourable mechanics.

This subject brings attention to the feedback that was implemented to the mechanics. The pie charts below show how certain layers of feedback worked or didn’t work for certain important mechanics. The charts imply which feedback designs were therefore chosen to represent respective mechanics because of their effectiveness during play testing this prototype.

Figure 1, 2, 3 and 4 shows how the manipulation of animation, either with colour or imagery, was the most effective way to represent when the respective mechanics take place. This is because these mechanics require visual representation of the avatars reacting logical to the player or NPCs requests such as that when the player attacks the enemy and the attack lands, the enemy's avatar displays its damage for the player to understand.

I would have liked to implement an animation following the image manipulation of the players avatar moving forwards to represent them attacking the opposing player, but this feedback was not regarded until too late in the process of creating the prototype and time became insufficient to add this feature of feedback.

All of the figures below show how communication through dialogue plays the greatest role of feedback design to communicate the game system's mechanics to the player. This system is dominantly value oriented as the system primarily manipulates numbers to progress. Therefore, the system is heavily dependant on dialogue to communicate this to the player as other forms of feedback, besides maybe sound design, would not be able to communicate this.

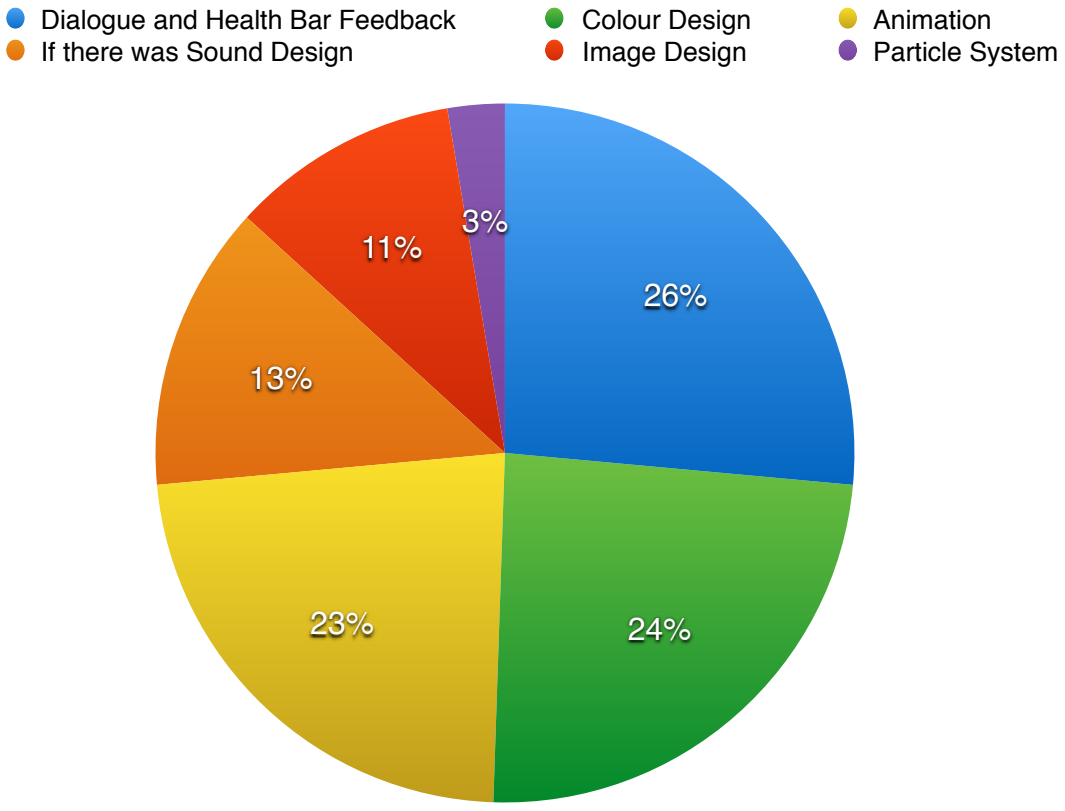


Figure 1 A pie chart showing the play testing results of which design features were the most effective, in communicating to the player, for the Attack damage mechanic

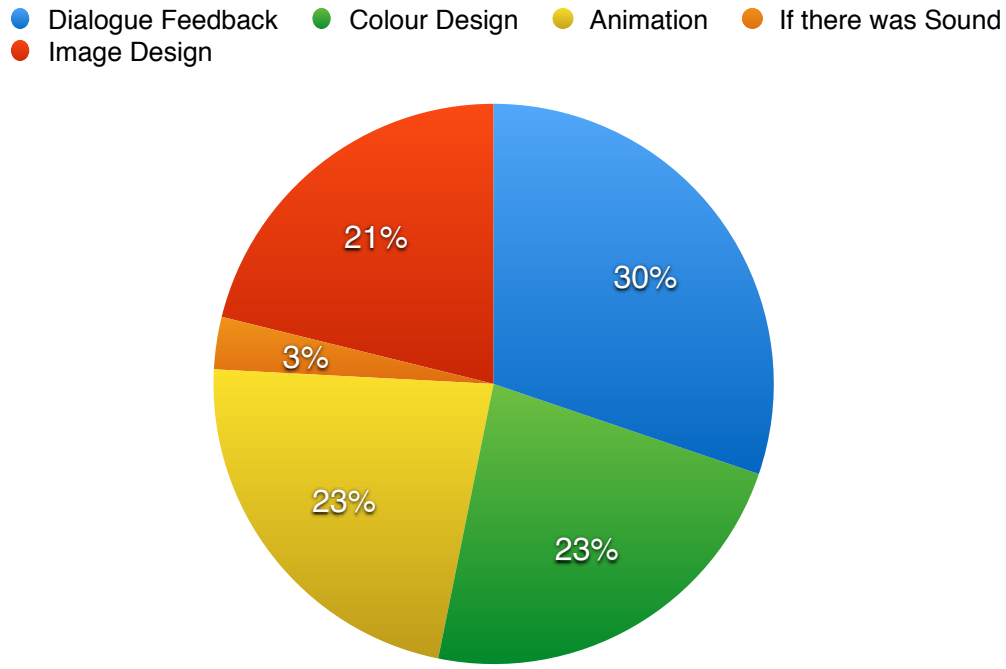
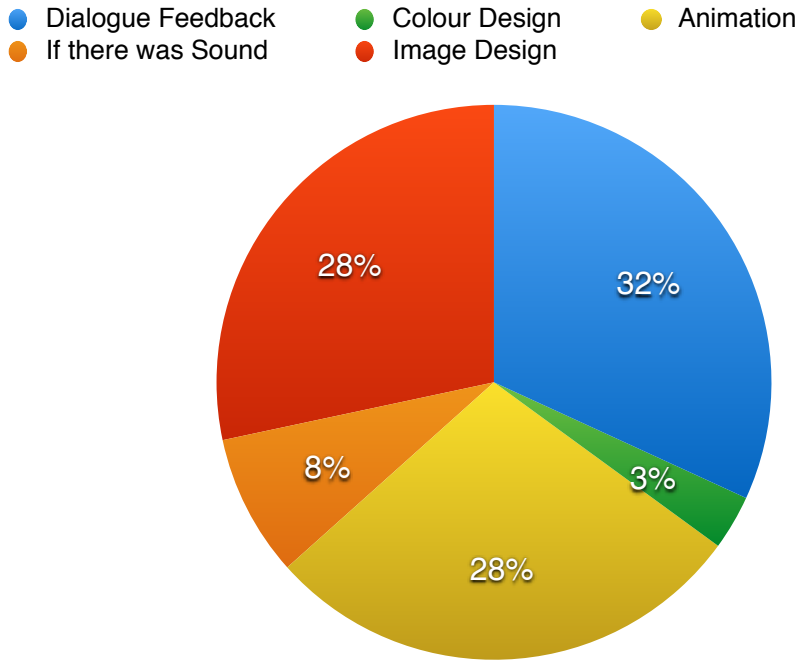


Figure 2 A pie chart showing which design features were the most effective, in



communicating to the player, for the Smoke attack mechanic

Figure 3 A pie chart showing which design features were the most effective for the Doppelgänger attack mechanic

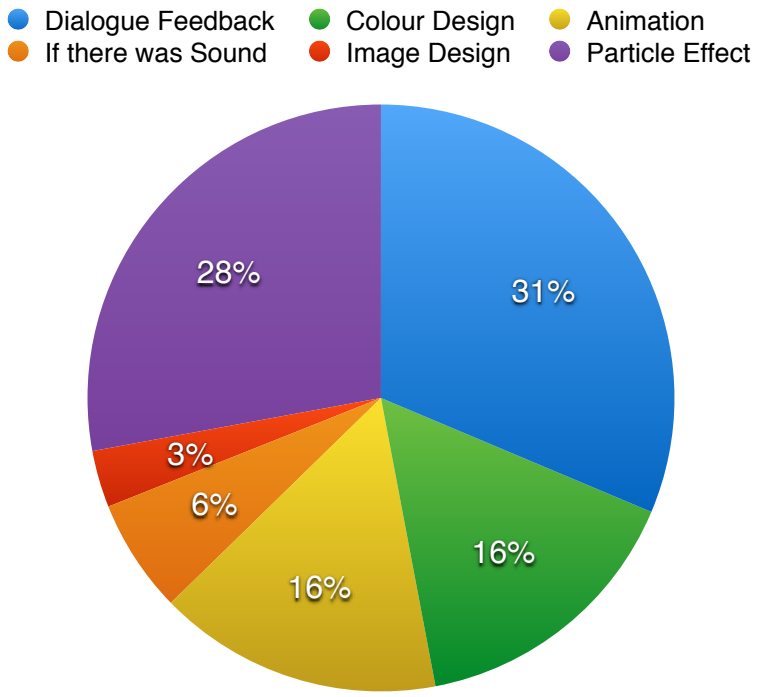


Figure 4 A pie chart showing which design features were the most effective, in communicating to the player, for the Heal mechanic

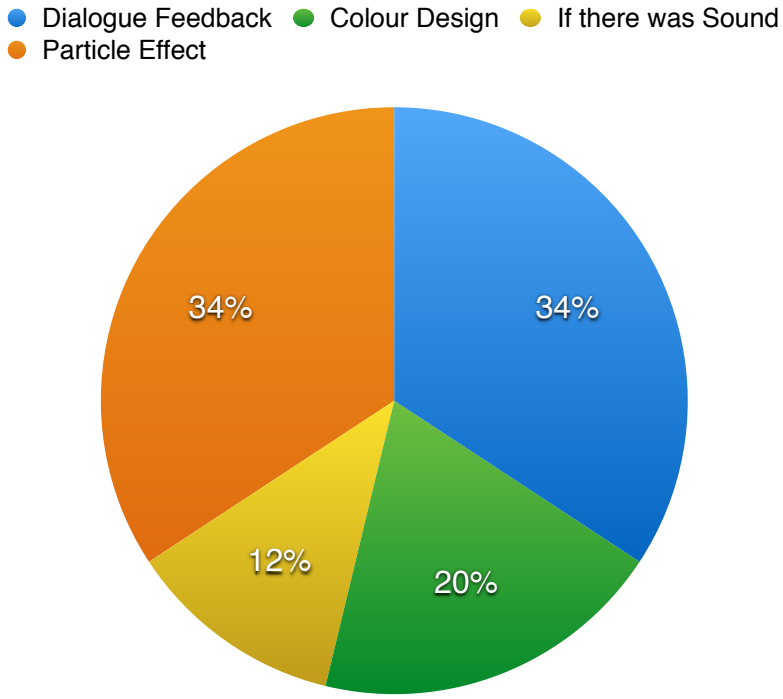


Figure 5 A pie chart showing which design features were the most effective, in communicating to the player, for the increasing and decreasing of player or Enemy Statistics

References

Moodley. T. Student Number: 2105982. (2021). *Micro Project 1: Data Design of a Turn Based Combat Game*. Witwatersrand University. Course Code: WSOA3003A, Year 3.