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Short Analysis

Report on Level Design Prototype

The following report will look at the overall level design of the prototype and discuss the designer's intentions while working on it. The process will also be outlined as well as a brief reflection on whether the prototype met the designer's expectations.

At the start of the tutorial the player may find a green square just underneath them. This square was meant to function as a non-playable character (npc). The placement of this npc was done in order to briefly explain the rules of the prototype to the player. This includes basic movement, interaction with other objects and so on. The npc was placed very close to the player as it is the first object they may encounter in the game and as such makes it easy for them to understand the rules without accidentally bypassing it. In order to provide the player with this information and make sure it wasn't missed, the player is forced to move towards the npc as it is the only direction they may move as they are blocked off by walls. The prototype makes use of a dialogue system that starts once the player is within a certain range of the npc and text can be cycled through with a button. In creating this system, the designer wanted to make information accessible for all players and implemented a button to allow players to read the rules at the own pace. As movement was not halted during this, players may have rushed past the npc and missed the tutorial info. To counter this, the npc was implemented in a way where as long as the player was near it, they could cycle through the text.

The level itself is designed in a way where there are 3 circles the player must collect in order to reveal a hidden portal that takes them to a combat scenario. After interacting with the npc, the player will find the first circle directly underneath the npc out in the open. The second circle is buried underneath some boulders to the lower right whereas the third is placed behind a breakable wall. On the left is a sealed room that can be broken by the player at any time, however this room is empty if the player does not have all 3 circles. When the player collects all 3 circles, a portal shows up in this room which takes the player to a turn-based combat scenario.

Regarding the placement of the circles, as this level acts as a tutorial stage the designer wanted to place them in a way where the player learns the mechanics as they progressed through the stage. The first circle is out in the open with nothing between it and the player. This circle's purpose was to teach the player the interaction mechanic in which the player left clicks once close enough to the circle in order to pick it up. It is not intended to serve any challenge to the player as it only teaches them how to pick up circles. The second circle that is buried beneath the boulders is there to teach the player that boulders can be moved through collision physics. In order to collect the second circle which is placed out of clicking range, the player must realize that they have to move the rocks out of the way. The third circle is similar as it is out of clicking range, therefore the player must break the weak wall in order to collect it. The implementation of this was simple and saw the player learning simple mechanics as they aimed to collect circles.

The portal room was placed before all the circles were found for two reasons: to give players a sense of control as they have the choice to open the portal room early and find nothing, as well as to have the player question why a room with many obstacles would be empty. The goal was to use the information provided to the npc as a guide as the npc explains that once all 3 circles are found the portal room will be revealed. Should the player have understood the rules from the npc they would know that this will be where the portal appears once all the keys are collected.

To reflect, the prototype does a good job of providing the player information, however not all information is directly given. This is seen where the player may find the portal room early but not realize that's where the portal is meant to understand and as such the implementation of the portal room depends on the player's wit and sense to go back to that room after collecting the keys. The prototype itself is very simple and acts solely as a tutorial stage, as such provides no real challenge to the player as it is very simple and players are guided through the level by the hand through the use of the npc. This works well as a tutorial stage, however gameplay in future levels will have to be improved.