User Experience Design for Inexperienced Gamers: GAP (Week 6) (2010)

İrem Gökçe AYDIN – 1550268
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The aim of this paper is to propose a set of guidelines to enlighten the first step design of games for the use of especially casual gamers who are not hardcore gamers. Because later changes in the game design and tutorials are costly, initial accessibility of games for gamers is important. To establish this approach, the authors proposed a checklist of principles, named GAP, and applied it on Heuristic Evaluation and Usability Testing methods. As the authors indicate, user experience is a key point in the perception of gamers and lately overlaps with the usability principles to make games fun and immersive. Game Approachability aims to help gamers to **initiate** and **continue to play** with the help of UX too. To do this, the principles of this concept was derived from academic researches related to "learning concept" like Social Learning Theory, Self Efficacy and Cognitive Learning Theory. Because in a game, the player "learns" and explores the environment, approachability principles take motivation, helping behaviours and engagement features in the games seriously. As indicated in the paper, the validation of the GAP conducted by the comparison of Emprical Usability Evaluation and Heuristic Evaluation for 4 games from different genres. According to results, some accessibility issues were found by Heuristic Evaluation and some by Usability and some by both. However, it was clear that the percentage of accessibility issues found by Heuristic was higher then usability testing. As in the paper stated, one of the the reason for that is that some principles like self-efficacy or amount and type of demonstration cannot easiliy be discovered by user comments. However, the level of detail in the principles is higher in the usability tests. In conclusion, I believe GAP can be used as a checklist support and as a heuristic evaluation in the refinement of the game designs according to usability test results. And as I realized from the paper, it is an advantage that some of the failures in some principles like HEP and PLAY can be fixed and improved with some other principles of GAP like Demonstration and SandBox again. So we have the problem and solution at the same time with one set of principles.