WSOA3003A/Micro Project Analysis 2

Turn-Based Combat Game – part 2.

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In continuation of the previous paper written about this (unnamed) turn-based combat game, this paper will establish a concise understanding, intent, and demonstration of communication design during development. This will mostly be referring to the conciseness of User Interface design and how the game provided visual feedback to the player when they interact with a button or object in order to improve game feel. While the game remains a small prototype, many steps were taken to improve gameplay *and* game feel, as well as providing visual cues which aid in understanding the game better and thus, overall improving player experience.

As stated in the previous paper, the goal of this project was to create a role-playing, adventure turn-based game. The final prototype would ideally be a 2D platformer where the player would have to avoid enemies in order to avoid a turn-based battle sequence that would eventually follow, be able to pick up several collectibles and player aids (such as healing potions) and when colliding with an enemy, would enter a turn-based battle mode where the player would be able to use different abilities to defeat said enemy. The player would then continue on with their journey in the 2D platformer. The focus of this iteration was to fix any overall bugs and to improve the UI in order to provide much better visual feedback to the player – the aim of this iteration mostly to improve the broken mechanics of the battle mode rather than focusing on the exploration mode. Previously (and still in the exploration mode in the platformer world), the player had a different-looking health system compared to the enemy; the enemy having a health bar rather than a heart system (taking the form of buttons to integrate the theme) that the player had. This proved to be an inconsistent oversight as the enemy having too similar of a health system to the player would make the characters too similar and a little indistinguishable from each other (due to how similar their health systems would be). Thus, the heart system was scrapped entirely and replaced with different coloured health bars (green for the player, red for the enemy). These colours were chosen mostly to adhere to the colour palette for the player and enemy; the red being more complimentary to the enemy's colour palette (see Appendix A and B).

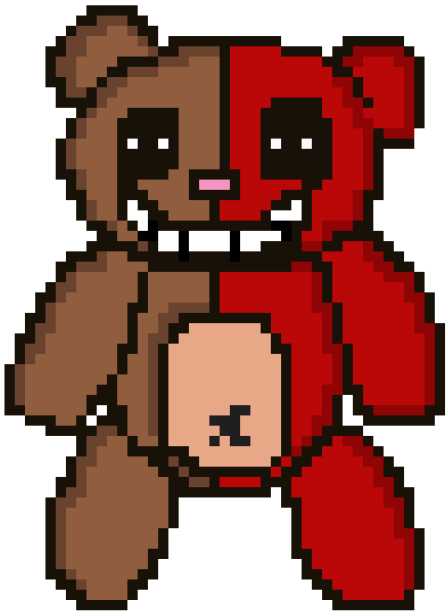
Another major goal for the development of this prototype is to improve game feel. When inflicting damage to an enemy in the previous prototype, the only way to tell was a decreasing (albeit buggy) health bar. While the visual feedback told the player that the enemy was hurt, the visual impact felt lacklustre and demure. Thus a screen-shake every time the player or the enemy inflict damage to each other was implemented. A change that may feel small but gives a sense of power when inflicting a blow. This feature, however, is not to be considered perfect. The original idea was to make the enemy sprites and the player sprite shake when damage is inflicted upon them, as it would add more specificity to as to who was hit at that moment. However, this will remain in a list of future improvement for the game at a later time, and the screen shake is satisfactory for the moment being.

Another detail added to convey crucial information to the player was the amount of health points given to them as they start their battle as well as how many health points their enemies might have. This, along with how much damage they are able to cause and how much damage an enemy can cause to them, is important due to how the players may manage their resources (such as health potions etc) during battle in the future. Thus, a damage pop-up text every time the player or the enemy inflict damage with the amount of damage was implemented. This feature, however, was incomplete. The player has a healing ability and should also be able to see how much health they are able to gain back to manage their resources during battle, and a visual feedback other than the health bar would allow for such convenience. This will also be added to the list of future improvement for the game.

Overall, most of the design goals set for this part of development were reached to an extent, many feeling incomplete or needing to be re-planned entirely. This phase of development was not as difficult as the previous one – obviously, time constraints being the biggest obstacle, and technical difficulties being the second biggest. This, however, has become a very interesting exercise for a much better understanding of communication design, how to achieve good and coherent communication design and how to overall improve game feel and player experience through UI and other smaller details.

Appendix List

Appendix A: the main character of the game, with a lighter colour palette



Appendix B: the default and (sole) enemy, the Teddy. It has a darker colour palette and button for eyes