

User Feedback Report



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1. Description of the prototype

To make the report more understandable, we start with a brief description of the prototype, which, apart from the menu and instructions panel, was the example of a level in the fire chapter.

The level consists of three rooms that the players can navigate, each with an obstacle that they have to overcome (see image below).

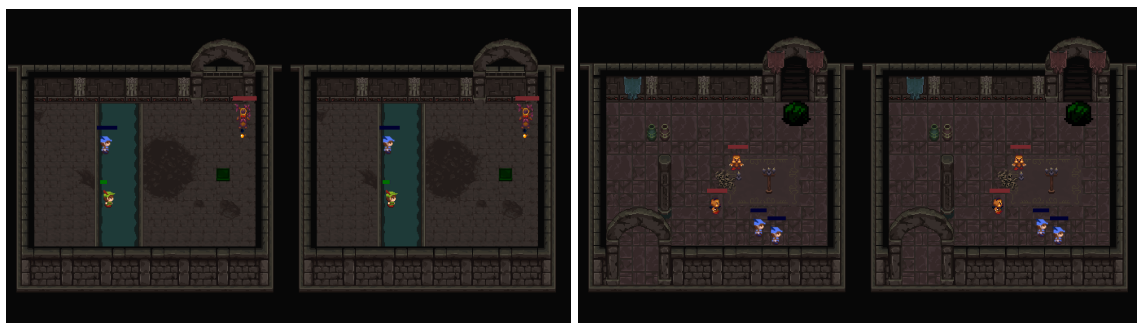


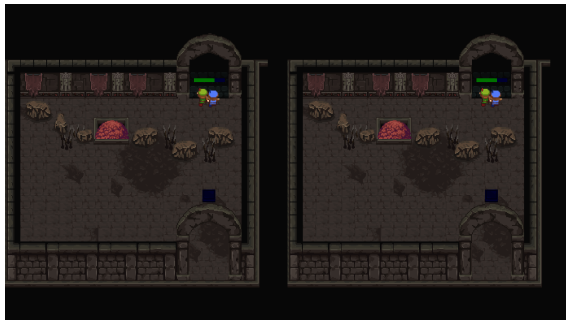
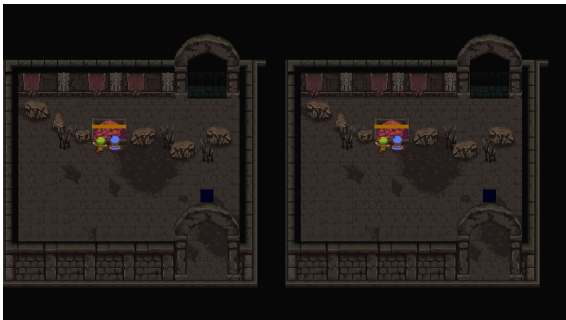
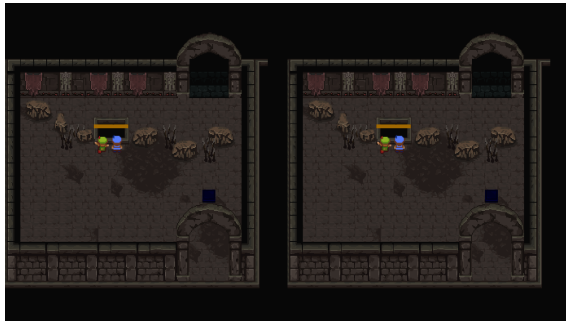
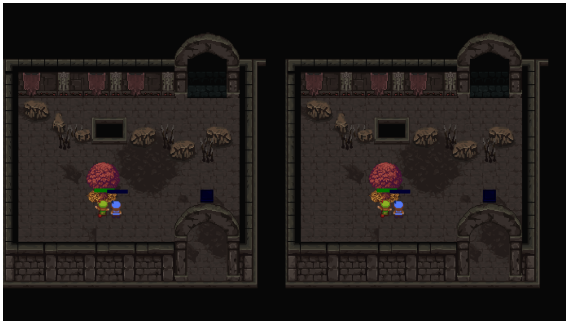
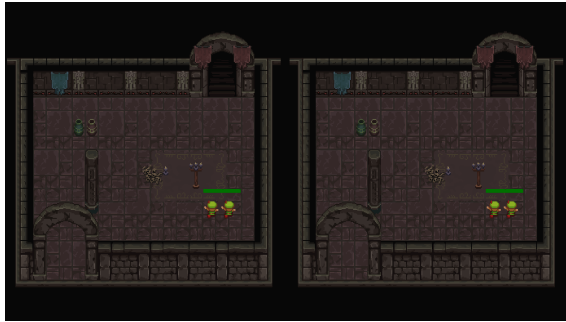
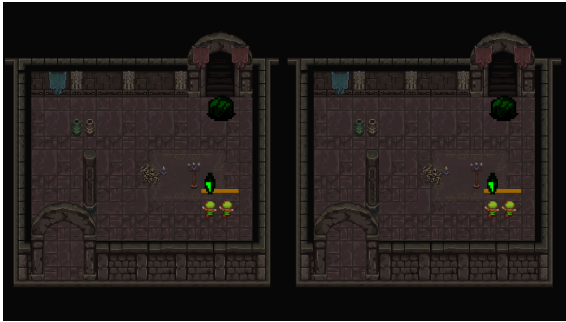
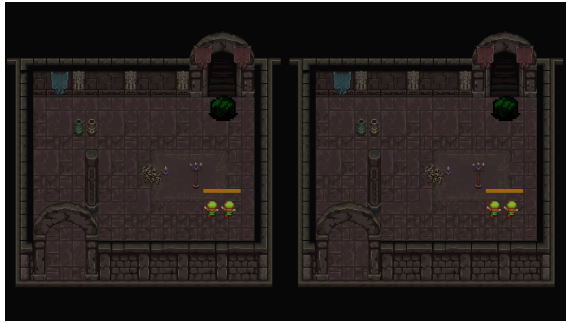
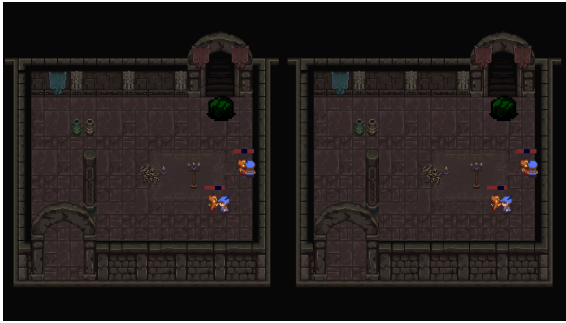
In the first room they have to change their color to cross the river without sustaining damage and have to kill the enemy to open the door.

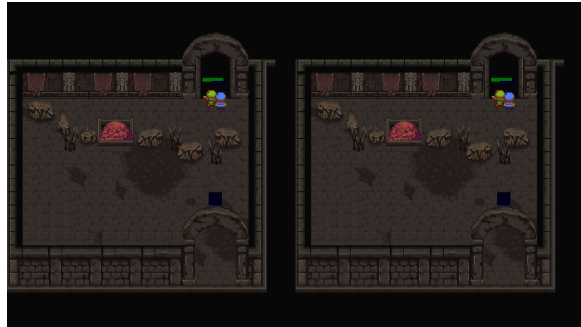
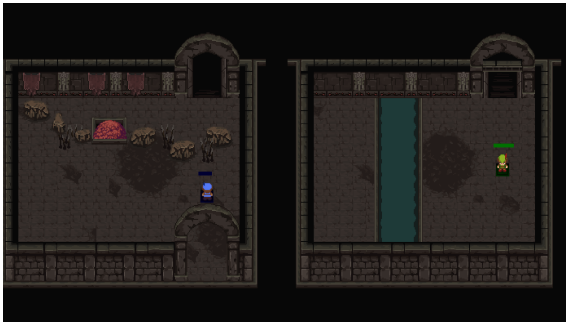
In the second room they have to destroy the big green rock by shooting an increased green projectile at it. They don't have to kill the enemies in this room, but they inflict damage upon contact so it's hard to create a combination while they are still chasing the players.

In the third room, the players have to combine the water and earth powers to create a tree that will fill the whole and let them pass. One of the players has to then stand on the blue pressure plate (while using the blue elemental) and the other player has to go to the first room, using the green elemental, and stand on that one. Once they are simultaneously on the pressure plates, the last door opens and they can exit the level.

We add here some screenshots taken during a gameplay in order to show how to go through the level:







Captivity

Play
Quit
Controls

2.Controls and Presentation

Presentation

Regarding the presentation, we worked on three aspects: the information made available to the user, the movement of the camera and the design of the environment.

Design and camera movement

We started by designing the level in an outside garden, where a player could move around with the camera following him. However, this solution didn't work well when we introduced the second player, so we redesigned the level to be set inside a castle, with two cameras (with a split screen), each pointing to the room where the correspondent player is currently in.

The split screen also allowed us to have obstacles that require each character to be in a different room simultaneously.

Information

We thought of three aspects that require an extra visual feedback: the health of the characters/enemies, which elemental the character is currently using and the fact that a character is charging the power to combine.

The health of the characters and enemies is made available through a health bar, on top of each of them. This was a unanimous decision from the workshop we held, in which we asked what health system the participants preferred.

To know which elemental the player is using, we change the color of the character to a color matching the standard color of the element: blue for water, green for earth, red for fire, white for air and electric blue for electricity (although we only implemented the first two). We also decided to have the color of the health bar matching the color of its character.

And finally, to let the players know that their characters are charging for a combination, we set their respective health bar to a golden color, whenever they press the combination key.

Controls

We faced two problems when defining the controls: how to make them comfortable for two players using the same keyboard, whilst using keys that are easily rememberable, and the relationship between the character's movement and the direction at which it shoots.

For the controls different combinations were tried among the members of the group. We tried to split the keyboard in half and attribute the standard movement keys to each player: WASD and Arrows. Swapping between the elementals was done through 2 keys for each player.

Each key allowed to choose either the “green” or the “blue” elemental which would still be a valid implementation for the final product. In that case, the 2 keys would allow to iterate over the elementals that the player has access to.

As for the final product, we intend to allow the players to edit and adjust their own controls as they prefer.

As for the aiming, we saw two possible options: either shoot towards the direction where the player is facing, or let the users manually aim. Now, while the second option allows for more freedom and avoids having to run away to then face back an enemy to shoot him, it would require extra controls or keys to use, which, given that the two players have to use the same keyboard simultaneously, would make the game uncomfortable to play.

3. User Feedback

To make the user feedback more legible, we will first describe the “game sessions”, the situation where our testers played the game, and then write the feedback they gave.

The game sessions were held by:

- Session 1: Eduardo Skapinakis
- Session 2: The whole group
- Session 3: Rui Melo
- Session 4: Miguel Lahera
- Session 5: Rodrigo Carvalho

Game Session 1 (live - in presence - first version of the prototype)

This test was made with a previous version of the prototype. The main differences to the new version were:

- The second room had three enemies instead of two
- The green rock was destroyed by hitting it 5 times with a regular green projectile
- The pressure plates, from the first and third room, were brown
- The collider around the hole was smaller
- There was nothing to note that the players were charging the combination power

I met with two friends that had been to our workshop and asked them to try the prototype on my computer.

They enjoyed the movement of the characters and spent some time just playing around in the instructions menu.

When the game started, they took some time to figure out that to cross the river they had to turn into the blue elemental.

They noticed the button on the floor, but moved on to the next level, since it didn't do anything.

A few seconds after reaching the second room they died from the moles touch, since they weren't able to run and shoot them simultaneously, but realised almost instantaneously that they had to shoot green projectiles at the rock to destroy it.

They spent some time trying to figure out how to go over the hole, trying to shoot it and going around it and then tried to create a tree next to it. However, the first tree didn't cover the hole due to its small collider and only on the second attempt were they able to cross to the other side.

Finally, the need to stand on both pressure plates was obvious to them and they exited the level.

Feedback

Both players enjoyed the game, especially the movement and the design of the level, and felt emotionally connected to the players, which was visible when they were running away from the moles in the second room.

They said that the second room was too hard, so we reduced the number of enemies from three to two.

They found some bugs regarding the movement between each room, which was due to a collider being too small, and some places where the players could exit the level, which was due to a disabled collision.

They thought that the solution with the tree filling the hole was a bit unexpected, a problem which we did not fix in the prototype. In the game, the users will be made accustomed to using combinations for overcoming obstacles as they receive those powers, so when they reach the hole the solution will come to them more naturally.

Game Session 2 (game lab - second version of the prototype)

During the lab we presented the second version of our prototype, in which we had reduced the number of enemies from the second room from three to two.

We got feedback from our colleagues and professor, who, besides mentioning that the game concept was interesting, pointed out some problems with the prototype.

The main aspects were:

- The movement between the rooms, which wasn't consistent with the architecture of the level (a door going up would make you appear in a level in the same corner as the door you went through)
- The fact that creating a tree next to the hole sometimes wouldn't fill it
- The fact that there isn't a feedback for the combination powers being charged
- The restriction of only being able to shoot where you are faced.

We only fixed the first three issues, since, as mentioned before, we consider that adding a key for each direction for shooting would make playing the game uncomfortable, due to its cooperative nature and the fact that the players have to use the same keyboard.

There were also some design flaws that were mentioned, like the blurry characters, the shade of the buttons in the menu and the height of the walls in comparison with the player's height.

From these we only fixed the last two, since we only wanted to give a general impression of the character design and movement.

Feedback

During this laboratory, we got feedback from both the teacher and the other groups. There we could get a lot of information that we changed for the final prototype.

First thing they realised was the fact that the blue character was blurrier than the green one. Then, they also mentioned that the movement was nice, but the thing of facing the enemy while running, they thought it was not the best idea, they preferred the self-direct projectile towards the closest enemy. The teacher also mentioned that the way we were leaving a room and entering the new one was not comfortable because we were leaving and entering the rooms always from the top part. That made the thing that you entered the new room and as long as you kept pressing the key to go up, you would permanently change the room. They also said that it was difficult to guess what to do in the game, for example with the tree if we did not introduce it. And finally, they also said that we should make that button in the

floor a bit lighter, or at least make that button have one of the characters colors in order for you to focus on it.

Game Session 3 (online - final version of the prototype)

A discord call was made between us and a member of our focus group. Since the game is a co-op, he called his sister to play with him. The river/lake obstacle in the first room was easy to interpret and overcome as for straight up killing and dodging enemies and their projectiles. On the second level they were presented with a green rock that blocked their passage. After trying to shoot at it, the member's sister recalled the combination interactions and suggested combining a huge green projectile. In the final room, initially, the players went only for the pressure plates to unlock the door. After a little bit of struggle, they finally came up with the idea of combining different elements which grew a tree. In the end, they directed that combination to the hole, allowing them to cross and complete, successfully, the room. They only pointed out the blurry sprites on the blue character and the lack of clues overcoming the traps.

Game Session 4 (live - In presence - final version of the prototype)

I met two people, one of them was from the focus group, and the other one was someone that was helping him playing for the co-operative part.

At the beginning they played in the instruction menu trying the different controls and guessing what each combination did.

After being confident with the controls, they just went to the play mode. In the first room, they tried to shoot at the enemy without crossing the river, but it wasn't possible, so they just tried to cross with the water element. Then, they shooted with the basic projectile to the enemy avoiding his shots and killed him, they also played with the button, but as it wasn't doing anything at all, they just continued through the level.

They went to the second room and they got a bit nervous about the enemies following them. They discovered that the enemies were following the closest character, so they split one enemy to each of them and they achieved to kill them both. Then they tried a couple of things for the green rock. They tried to shoot with the basic projectile several times at the same time, but as it wasn't working, they tried a combining green projectile to finally destroy that rock. They also tried for fifteen second to destroy basic objects, but they realised that it was not necessary.

For the last room, they tried again to do a combining green projectile to destroy one of the rocks over there in order to cross to the final door, but it did not work. So they just thought about using the combining power between the ground and the water, but they did it not in the right direction. They finally understood that they could put the combining power to fit the hole. After crossing that hole, they struggled a bit on how to open the door, but after a while (1 minute more or less), they remembered that button in the first room, so one of them went there and they pressed the button by turning into the right element.

They finally opened the room and achieved to go through the level.

Feedback

Both players enjoyed the game. They found it entertained and a good idea to develop. They are waiting for new updates.

About the feedback, they mainly said that the blue character was blurrier than the green one, and also that we could add some sound effects to the game when throwing a projectile or combining a power.

We also got secondary feedback such as having more rooms for the level or have more enemies.

Game Session 5 (online - final version of the prototype)

This prototype showcase was done through a discord call. I met up with a friend that is not actually part of the focus group, but is close to their description. And as, unfortunately, he was alone, he had to play one character at a time, so that may have hindered the enjoyment of the experience. To get a clearer view and impression of what he was doing/feeling while he played, I asked him to share his screen. We started by navigating over to the Controls section, where he learned the movement and shooting for each player, the swapping elements keys, and how the combination of powers worked. He seemed like he enjoyed the bigger projectile when the players are controlling the same element and also the power that grows a tree when one is controlling water and the other earth. He didn't have an objection towards the controls but over time he would forget and search for the keys when he needed a certain thing (combination or shooting). This could be due to it being the first time he played our digital prototype, and also because it is a level in the middle of the game and not a starting level, because we do not explain the controls in-game, other than in the Controls menu. So after getting familiar with the controls, he started the game. In the first level, he did not think that you needed to change to the water element to cross the water, so he just crossed it as the earth element and took a lot of damage. Maybe we could make our intention clearer there. The first interaction with the enemy standing still was rough. He was having a hard time hitting the shots and dodging its projectiles at the same time. On one side this is good because it makes the game challenging, on the other hand, it could be a mechanics issue and could cause frustration to different types of players. After defeating the enemy, he noticed there was a pressure pad (or button) in the ground but didn't know what to make of it yet. When moving to the other room, he made a mistake and went back, but before going back, he had already caught the enemy's sight, so when he went back to the second room, the enemies were way closer to the entrance, making it more difficult. So, again he had a hard time killing them but did it just fine. In this room there wasn't much to see so he just moved on to the next one. In the final room he noticed 2 things immediately: that there was a hole in the level and also a different colored pressure pad. Knowing this, he instantly knew what he had to do, so with the other character he put himself on top of the button in the first room and kept the earth element. With the character in the last room, he noticed he had to change element to match the color of the pressure pad, and so he did and opened the door. So yes, he actually opened the door before going over the hole. After this, he wasn't sure what to do to cross to the other side. He tried destroying the rocks and the spikes. At first he mistook the spikes for dead trees so he also tried to revive them with the combined power that grows the tree. Nothing worked, but by remembering about the tree power, he went on to do it point toward the hole, and so he filled it up and was able to cross. And so he finished the game. He went on to try several more times to get it faster, without damage, and to get the hang of it more, so i can safely say that he liked it.

Feedback

While playing the game he came up with interesting feedback. Overall he liked the game but there were a few things awkward to him. At first, he tried destroying the vases in the second room and couldn't, so that could be a nice idea, and fill them up with pick-upable health or maybe collectibles. While playing and exploring the rooms, he managed to find some bugs, like random collisions, his character model going in front of the wall, things of this nature. He also mentioned that the shooting was a bit limited as you could only shoot in the direction you are facing. He talked about a solution where the first input taken when walking, would make you shoot that way even if then you moved with the other keys (for example if you went right, pressing D, would make you shoot in that direction only for however long you'd be moving). I found that to be a little confusing and so that will be up for debate later. He also mentioned that the order in which the first enemy shoots could be random to make it harder, because as it is, you can find spots where the enemy will never hit you and you are able to hit it. He thinks that it would be nice for the powers to be explained as soon as you get them, so in the beginning of each chapter when you get a new power, it would be either explained or shown to you what it does. Overall, he really liked the game (he even played the prototype multiple times without asking) and enjoyed the experience. He really like the direction in which we are going with it and is looking forward to seeing and playing more of it!

4. Remarks

Worth noticing that the aim of this prototype was for players to try out different interactions in the game. This prototype does not provide an easier or direct line of thought in what to do in each situation. Nevertheless, we intend Captivity to have a puzzly and adventure approach, enabling the cooperation between both players, but some basic guidance at the beginning of the game would be given. By giving those initial advice, some frustration would be avoided and would enable the players to emerge in the game and understand its essential mechanics.

As mentioned before, some sprites were blurry in the prototype. Since our intention was to show the basic interactions, controls and movements, we didn't focus too much on the art aspect. Nevertheless, for the final game, we intend to use other art tools to fix the issue.