

Prototypes and User Feedback

Introduction

In this report we present the prototypes we created to test and explore the key aspects of the game. These include:

- the cooperation between the players
- the character's basic movements
- the need to explore multiple rooms to complete the level
- the interaction between the characters and the traps and obstacles
- the interaction between the characters and the entities of the game
- the camera view
- the combination of powers

We will briefly explain how we built the prototypes and present the user feedback and conclusions we draw.

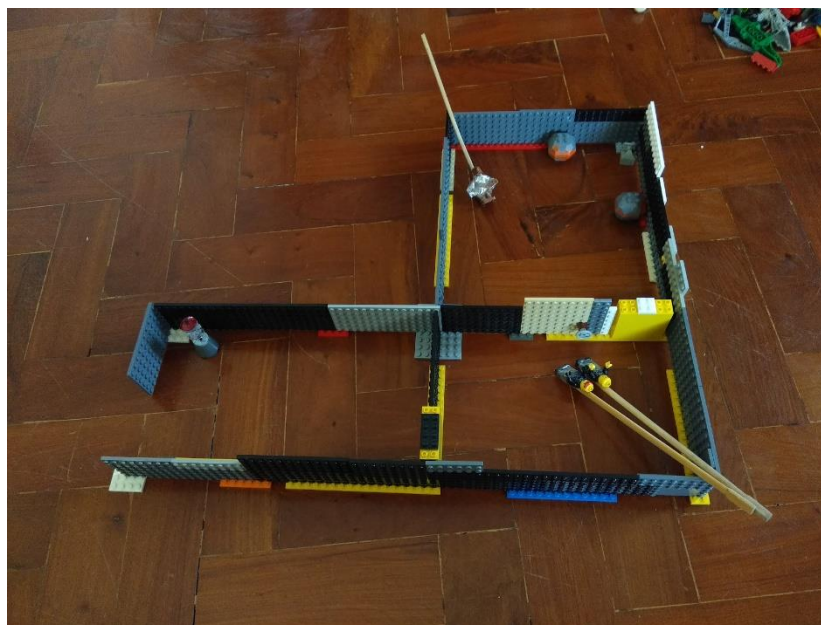
The videos of the prototypes can be found here:

- Player Cooperation, Basic movement and exploration: <https://youtu.be/75EGpfDHnUo>
- Captivity Traps Prototype: <https://youtu.be/u4Ho04t99dQ>
- Character's abilities Prototype: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2mp2EuDbFs>
- Story Interaction: https://youtu.be/Gbh5_2-LFX0

Player Cooperation, Basic movement and exploration

This prototype was made using pieces of Lego, wooden sticks and duct tape (see image below). We built a 3d example of what a first level would look like, where the characters, still with no special abilities, have to cooperate to distract a monster and open a valve that will unlock the door to the exit.

The person testing the prototype (family of a group member) reported to have enjoyed the feature of cooperation, the freedom of movement in 2d and the fact that opening the exit door required a non-direct route.



Traps and Obstacles Interaction

The traps and obstacles were drawn using a pen on paper. Each trap is presented in a room using a bird's eye view perspective. In order to gather user feedback and explain how to overcome each trap and each interaction, a simple video was made. This video is backed by a form provided to some users in our focus group, in order to get some more formal data.

Overall, there are different types of obstacles and traps. Each room has a way to advance to another room. Usually, this is made through a door that needs to be open. If the door is closed, it might have a lever connected to it, which needs to be activated. Another way of activating some doors would be by placing an eternal flame on a sacred torch. These levers and torches may not be present in the same room as the door it opens. A special way to go from one room to another is by using the power of an Electric Elemental and go through a cable that connects two rooms or using ventilations that are only useful by fusing the Water and Fire Elementals.

Other straight-forward obstacles and traps were added, like mazes in rooms or holes with spikes. Pits of lava only allows for the Fire Elemental to cross. The same idea of only allowing a certain Elemental to cross an obstacle was added by designing an electromagnetic field, to which only the Ground Elemental would be immune.

Finally, three more obstacles that need the combination of powers of different Elementals were designed:

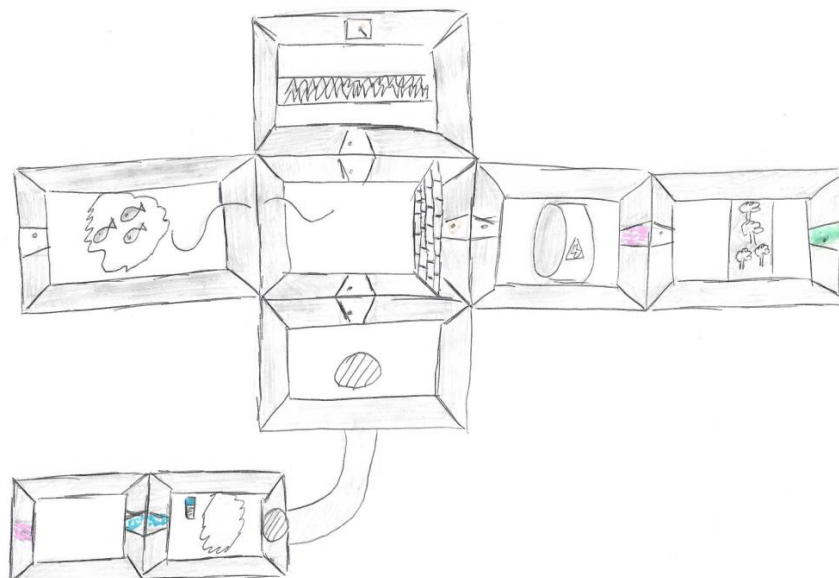
- There is a lake/pool of piranhas, which is only crossable by combining the power of the Electrical Elemental and Water Elemental;

- A destructible wall which needs to be destroyed by causing an explosion. That same explosion can be possible by combining the Electrical and Fire Elemental;

- An Ancestral Abyss that has a bunch of trees and vegetation at the very bottom. A huge tree can be formed by combining the Light and Ground Elemental. This tree can provide passage to other sections of the room, overcoming the abyss.

The form and the video were seen by 4 elements corresponding to our focus group. In that form, the users were asked to rate from 1 to 5, with 1 being "Awful" and 5 "Excellent" the overall design, the difficulty behind it, like its complexity and how inclined to play a game with this style and these kind of traps were they. To the first question, the average answer was 2.75, to the second 3, the third 3.5 and to the fourth, all answered with a 4.

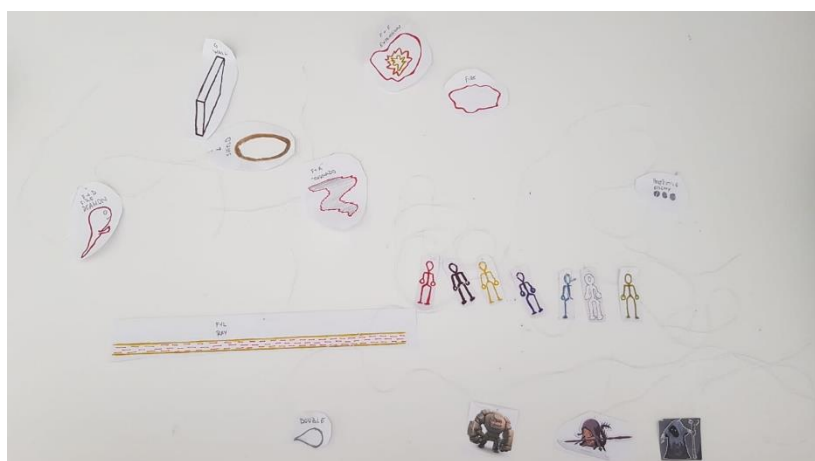
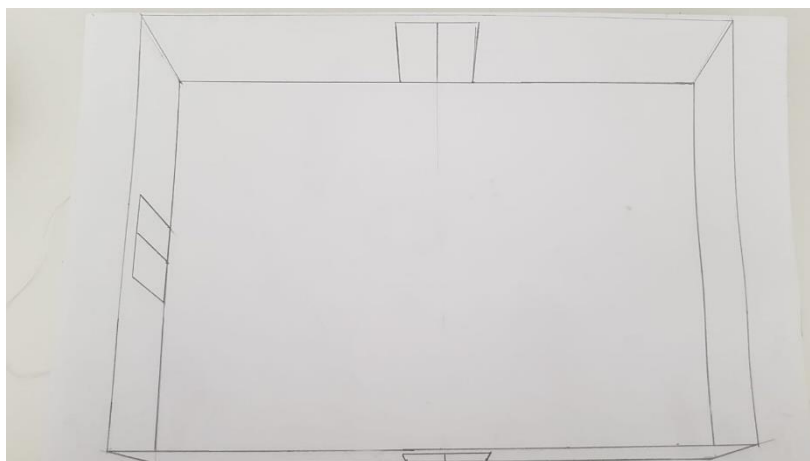
Overall, the users who provided feedback were not impressed by the global design, but enjoyed the main idea behind. They answered that it makes a complex game and would be thrilled to try it out.



Character's abilities

This prototype has been done using a pen, paper, some images printed and white sewing thread. For this prototype, we wanted to show, not only the different combinations, fusions and abilities that the characters have, but also we wanted to show the birds eye view perspective. So first of all, we created the room following a vanishing point perspective trying to simulate the perspective of a camera, once we reached more or less the right point of view, we started decided to think about the enemies and the characters, at the end, we just wanted to make sure that the characters are going to show as people (but with different colors depending on the spirit they are using in that moment) and we also wanted to make clear that there is going to be different types of basic enemies: tanks, slayers and mages among other bosses that we are going to define in the future. Then we just thought that for the aim of this prototype, we do not need to show all the powers, as this is something you need to discover all over the game, so we just make the prototyping about the different combinations the fire has within the other elements. So we thought about it, we made some drawings and at the end we built up the scenario putting threads to everything in order to move the characters and show the different animations. Here you can see how everything was prepared.

This prototype has been seen by the two members of the focus group and some other people in order to know more about how the game is going and changes we could do. First of all, we asked them what they expected from the game so far, and they all agreed, summing all the responses up, that the game seems funny, interesting, dynamic and entertaining. Then, they were asked if they would play the game when released, all of them said yes but one, which specified that he would play only if the game is free. We kept asking if the game could be successful in the market, and they answered that the game was original and the way you can combine different powers in order to go through the levels seems amazing. For the next question, we asked them to rate it up on a scale from 1 to 5, and we got a score of 4,5, which means the game seems cool and has a future. And last but not least, they were told to add any comments in order to add new things for next updates. Here we were told different things, some interesting ones have been: put sound to the game, put hidden chests to reach something, put some animations/history and have special attacks, like a stronger one. So we will take into consideration all those little nuances in order to satisfy our potential clients.



Story Interaction

This prototype was built using pen and paper. As they had to be in a physical format, we decided that it would be easier to do this one with pen and paper. We started out by drawing the characters with pencil on a sheet of paper to get the basic designs, as well as the dialogue boxes that were used. The design for the characters and for the dialogue boxes were inspired by similar styles of many existing games. In order to show that the characters are speaking to each other, we drew only half the character's bodies in order to place them on top of the dialogue boxes. This could also be used to show a different perspective of the characters, as they will probably have a different look to them in-game, given that the game has a bird's eye view perspective. This method is used in a lot of different games that have characters speaking to each other.

This prototype was seen and tested by a member of the focus group. After inspection of it, the tester explained they liked the direction and intention of the prototype. But also further explained that the story might need some work. Which we agree with and will develop and change the story more in the future. The tester also said that we should take into consideration how we want the feeling of the story to be. Meaning that, if the story follows a more casual/relatable feel to it, we should have to stick to that way of showing it throughout the whole game, in order to not break the immersion. Overall they liked the structure and the mechanic of presenting the story through dialogue but only if it's captivating and not boring. This person's personal preference was to be presented a story through narrative, with cutscenes, impactful gameplay, etc. which we also thought about having so that's a good starting point for further development. They also stated that the character's art style was pleasing and fun, but since that wasn't the focus of this prototype, we will be changing the characters heavily in the future. In conclusion, the tester was happy with the result of the interaction with the story, found it fun and captivating and wishes to see how it progresses in the future.

The goal of this prototype was to show the player how the story would be presented to them and the interaction needed to do so. This was a successful way of doing so as it showed exactly how the story is revealed to the player, how they interact with it, and it gave us some ideas on what might be possible doing next to further develop it.

