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ICS 161

**Usability Playtesting**

* **TITLE**: NIOR
  + **Tester:** Alvin Nguyen (Audio)
  + **Tester:** Nick Romo (Audio & Webcam)
  + **Tester:** Samer Metri (Audio)
  + **Tester:** Amy Ea (Audio & Webcam)
  + **Tester:** Ian Cristobal (Audio & Webcam)
  + **Video Link:** <https://youtu.be/xKbmX9FdCbI>
* **GAME INTRODUCTION**
  + **Goal**: The purpose of the test is to see how difficult but casual the game can be. The game was designed to be a relatively simple platformer that at the same time tests the player’s timing and precision when it comes to jumping and attacking.
  + **Description**: Players play as a tiny knight tasked with the goal of reaching a mysterious red flag. The knight has to venture through three zones, one of which are filled with skeletons and treacherous holes. The knight is capable of fending off skeletons one at a time, but might be overwhelmed when dealing with multiple skeletons at once. As a result, there are health kits scattered around the map for the knight to pick up and use. In order to progress through each zone, the knight must pick up the key to unlock a gate. Doing so would allow the knight to advance to the next location.

Jumping and attacking are the core mechanics of the simple 2D platformer. However, the knight is unable to move while attacking, so the player must pay extra attention as to where the knight decides to attack. When the knight and the enemies collide, they will be knocked backwards. As a result, sometimes players will find themselves knocked into a hole and falling to their death. In addition to the two core mechanics, players must pick up keys on the map in order to open the gates and proceed to the next map.

* + **Player Experience**:Given the simple and cute pixel art style, the goal of Nior is to develop a relationship between the player and the knight. That way, if the player finds themselves in a situation where they have to live, they will feel anxiety and/or frustration. In addition, the designer hopes to make the player feel at ease, as the game was designed to be simple and straight-forward with no surprises or gimmicks. As a result, players should feel satisfaction from playing a deceptively simple game such as Nior.
* **USER PROFILE SUMMARY**
  + **Demographics:** The users chosen for the playtest were college students and friends of the developer. All of which are roughly around 20 years of age. Of the 5 users, 4 of them are males and 1 of them are females. All of which have some form of gaming experience, but at varying degrees. *Samer* and *Ian* both have generally minimal gaming experience, while *Alvin*, *Nick*, and *Amy* have significant amount of gaming experience. *Amy* and *Alvin* generally have the most amount of experience in 2D platformers.
  + **Why Users Were Chosen:** The users were chosen because they were the game designer’s friends and I believed that friends are definitely way more comfortable with sharing both the pros and cons of a friend’s game and not sugar coat it. In addition, play testing with friends is definitely a more enjoyable experience for both the designer and the user since the user would feel more comfortable sharing with the developer what is on his or her mind.
* **PLAYTEST**
  + **Procedure:** The playtesting procedure I decided to go with is to generally spectate the user play the game without any direct interruption from me, the developer. After the user completes the game, then I will ask the user questions such as “What did you like about the game?” or “Was attacking enemies with the stab animation pleasant?” and so on. As a result, the videos for playtesting are often quiet and it much more beneficial to me as a developer to see their natural reactions.
  + **Hoping to Learn**: With playtesting, I hoped to learn how deceptively simple the game can be for the player while at the same time hoping that the game was designed easy enough for the player to quickly grasp and dive right in. Generally, I was interested in whether the game was too difficult or not. At times that does seem to be the case because players were unable to make certain jumps or find themselves cornered by skeletons and being unable to get out without dying. After playtesting, I did inquire players if they enjoyed the art and they did, saying that it was somewhat cute and enjoyable to look at. They also found the combat to be quite simple and enjoyable at times, but the fact that the knight stops moving when attacking is quite a nuisance. To test the jump mechanics of the game, I had platforms specifically spaced between each other to see to what extent players can detect when is the “right” moment to press the jump key and make it to the other side. Aside from that, the feedback from the game was generally well understood except from when there were bugs with the colliders between the player and the skeleton. At some instances players would quickly lose their health because the colliders were bugged and the player was taking hits from the enemy continuously.
  + **The 5 Q’s of Game Design:** The first question of game design would be to see if players would become frustrated at the simple mechanics of the game despite the bugs going on with the skeletons (Why?). The second question of game design would be who I pick to be the players, and the answer would be friends. In my perspective, friends are comfortable talking to the developer which is a good thing. And at the same time, in contradiction to Schell’s statement, having friends allows them to be more direct with what they think is wrong with your game or something that bothers them. The third question is where the playtest took place, and it would be at the developer’s home. The fourth question is what? And the answer to that is what interesting ways players decide to tackle the skeletons. The fifth question is how? The data gathered from the playtest are used to make minor adjustments to the game at a later point and can hopefully improve playability of the game.
* **HYPOTHESIS**
  + **Hypothesis 1:** Combat might be too boring for the player.
    - The hypothesis is **incorrect**; most players seem to enjoy the combat of the game. However, the only downside of the combat that some players pointed out is the inability to move while attacking. That may lead to difficulty in combat if anything.
  + **Hypothesis 2:** There is not enough health for the player.
    - The hypothesis is **incorrect**, with the amount of health kits in the map, players did not feel like they had to carefully conserve their health. In addition, because the combat was relatively simple and enemies came from one direction, players did not easily lose health.
  + **Hypothesis 3:** The game overall might be too challenging for the player.
    - The hypothesis is **correct** mostly due to the spacing of the platforms. Because of the specific precision of which the players have to jump from, players often found themselves falling to their death. Moreover, players are dying more from falling to their deaths rather than getting killed by the skeletons.
* **RESULTS**
  + **Art Style**: The art style successfully seemed to develop an attachment between the player and the object. As stated before, after the playtests, the players expressed how the objects in the game looked cute and how the appearance of the knight contributed to the motivation to reach to the end. Overall, I would say that this worked well as it produced some response from the player.
    - 3/5 Players thought the art style was enjoyable and cute
  + **Enemies:** The enemies were the buggiest part of the game, as the colliders were not thoroughly polished at the time of playtesting. Often times players would find themselves corners in edges of the map by skeletons, often resulting to an instant game over. Nonetheless, it provided a small sense of satisfaction for the player when they kill a skeleton. This did not really work well because it was frustrating players with the bugs. It can be addressed by fixing the collider boxes upon changing sprites and improving AI behavior so it does not end up cornering the knight.
    - 4/5 Players had “wtf” moments when hit by dead skeleton heads
  + **Jumping**: The jumping mechanic in the game had a big contribution to the emotional response of the player. Most of the times players were becoming frustrating at the spacing of the platforms and how they were constantly falling to their deaths. I would say that this worked well and didn’t work well at the same time because the spacing between the platforms was purposefully done to where the player has to jump at precisely the right moment or else the knight will not make it. However, it does seem to produce more of a negative emotional response from the player so I believe the appropriate method to address the problem would be to make the platforms bigger at certain points or fix the spacing between the platforms.
    - 4/5 Players seemed unpleasant after falling to their deaths constantly
  + **Game Overall**: I think what generally worked in the game was the jumping and style of the game. The majority of the users thought that the game was essentially simple despite the difficult parts. It also helped contributed to the experience of simplicity and at the same time an experience of deception. What definitely did not work was the enemies as it seemed to have frustrated players more than giving players a sense of satisfaction. However, for some users, once the player was able to get to the end, there was a feeling of accomplishment, which would definitely be a plus.
  + **What Worked:** Jumping, Attacking, Visual
  + **What Didn’t Work:** Enemies, Box Collision, Spacing of Platforms, Lack of Sound