ONEIROI

Playtesting Report

Organization

We organized two playtesting sessions: One in Zurich and other in Lausanne on Friday May 10, 2012. As our playtesting sessions were quite long (sometimes going on for almost an hour) we only recruited 10 playtesters, all of them random students we did not know before.

Questionnaire

In addition to taking notes while watching the players, we asked them to fill out a small one page questionnaire afterwards. We included the following questions:

On a scale from 1 (impossible) to 5 (intuitive), how easy was it to understand:
a) The objective of the game? **3.4**
b) The controls? **3.5**
c) The story? **3.6**
Note: Many players did not look at the loading screen where we explain the story because it was not clear that this was part of playtesting.
Summary: All of those areas could be improved, maybe the story not as much as explanations and controls.

On a scale from 1 (plays no role) to 5 (very important), how important do you think these elements are when playing Oneiroi?
a) Luck **2.6**
b) Skill **4.1**
 b.1) Analytical thinking and strategy **3.7**
 b.2) Physical dexterity (hitting the buttons in the right way) **4.2**
Summary: Skill is much more important than luck, a bit more physical dexterity than strategy, which is in line with our expectation.

Do you think the game is balanced? Yes/No **6/10 Yes**
   If no, who has an advantage? Mopheus/Phobetor **2 Morpheus, 2 Phobetor**
Summary: We had the impression that Phobetor is a bit easier to play than Morpheus, but that the game is not completely unbalanced. Interestingly, the two teams that reported an imbalance reported different player figures to be at advantage. We could maybe benefit from some more balancing, but judging from our small dataset, we are not completely off.

What was your main strategy?

- As Morpheus: walk onto the guys As Phobetor: throwing dreams
- i ahd all dreams so i just had to follow phobetor
- To be faster than the other player.
- capturing humans from one corner/region and processing towards other parts of the game field
- I guess if you are Phobetor and go away from Morpheus, you can get many dreams (walk slowsly) get new people and return some of the created dreams to protect your people.
- Run faster than the enemy -> capture faster
- -

Summary: Being quick is a major component. Some of these answers read like "I have not found a winning strategy", which might be a good thing (the game doesn't have any loopholes) or a bad thing (the player doesn't know what to do at all).

What did you like best about Oneiroi?
- handling dreams in different ways/possibilities
- mix of strategy & arcade
- The scenery and in general the graphics are really nice!
- Fun game mechanics, competitive nature of game
- It challenged me right from the beginning.
- The look of it is very very nice and the menu and story fits the look of the game.
- Atmosphere is nice
- fantasy game
- The graphics and also the animation effects and the music.

Summary: Mostly the overall aesthetics and atmosphere, but also some gameplay aspects.

If you could change one thing about the game, what would that be?
- Control should be more fluid Aiming does not go back yet, aiming is not intuitive.
- Texture sometimes are not easy to understand (can i walk through here or not)
- I have no idea how the dreams are produced
- that both have same amount of dreams or that they have distinct skills
- to give some explanation about the game rules while playing.
- the maps (rocks): better visibility where one can move, maybe different grounds
- It would be nice to see at which places you can walk (pass by).
- More visual feedback of what's happening eg. speedboost active vs inactive
- better visualizations of the number of dreams
- More explanations about the different mechanisms (for example: generating dreams).

Summary: More explanations, better controls, more visual feedback.

Do you have any further comments or ideas to improve Oneiroi?
- more characters? additional elements? like thunderstorm etc.
- Perhaps smaller stages(?)
- Wall idea see * (the participant indicated a drawing he explained to us: He would like to be able to position the wall at an offset from the player, i.e. some amount in front or

behind Morpheus)
- Better instructions, differences explained...
- The phobetor model could have a smoother look with less edges.
- We need to see the obstacles in the preview in order to make a strategy
- The obstacles close to the edge make it too hard to get around them
- The aiming mechanism

Summary: Some cool but advanced ideas, other comments go in the same direction as in the previous question.

Observations

It was difficult for players to understand the game logic as they do not want to read all the story and tutorial hints, and then were lost for the game purpose. However, the game improved after a couple of rounds when they get a hang of the idea. After taking in their feedback and explaining the game logic, their game play was improved significantly, they had a strategy and were having fun.

Of course, there was a difference in motivation of participants and we found that players who are more willing to learn about how the details of the game work and invest into the steep learning curve, are rewarded in the end and have more fun. For example, we had a very supportive and motivated group who would give us lots of constructive feedback, but also another group where players didn't want to try out other mechanics or just pushed buttons randomly because they didn't see the purpose of the game at all. The former group ended up playing re-matches for almost an hour. One of them kept losing because he had less experience with the Xbox controller, but was so motivated that he kept trying until he won a game (Quote: "This is extremely cool to play! I'm losing all the time and it's still awesome!"). The latter group spent quite a long time running around on our largest map and taking each other's humans by walking into them (not really exploring special powers or throwing - "I don't want to walk faster because I lose dreams") and as a result, their game ended up being quite boring.

In general, players identified the slowing effect of carrying too many dreams and were able to adapt to it. They also identified the difference in dream generation but were clueless without explanation to why is it different.

There was a lot of overall confusion with the throwing mechanism. In one case, players initially tried throwing dreams on each other and were puzzled as that had no impact and they lost a dream. This made them reluctant to use the throw mechanism any more. In another case, the players didn't recognize they had to hold the button down in order to increase the throwing force. However, once they figured out the effect on humans the use improved and the interaction between players increased by a large amount.

Walls were not used very often, but in some cases where they were used, they had an impressive effect on the gameplay. It seems to be possible now that we changed the building mechanics to block off the opponent quite quickly.

Additional Feedback

Many playtesters pointed out that the gameplay mechanics are not sufficiently explained at the

beginning. The music, graphics and the visual appearance of the game were liked by the playtesters and the graphical design of the UI as well as the story were said to be fitting well together. Regarding controls, the playtesters wished to be able to cancel the throwing of dreams and the construction of walls once started. Furthermore, they want to be able to reduce the throwing distance when aiming. Regarding the construction of walls, one playtester pointed out that it should not only be possible to build walls centered at the player, but also within some distance from the players position. Some playtesters also had problems finding and tracking the crosshair when using the throwing mechanics.

Conclusions

These are the main problems we identified and the solutions we propose:

- We have added three screens that only appear before the first play and explain the game. The problem we encountered is: Nobody wants to read all that introductory help, and even if they would, the cognitive load is too high. You can't really imagine in the menu what the game is like and memorize all controls. Also, we would need to explain even more concepts there, e.g. the one-time drain for Phobetor and the dream generation for Morpheus.
  - Drop the three screens. It would be really cool to have a tutorial mode where players get help on what to do with popup bubbles, but I guess that's too hard to implement in the remaining time. Instead, we could implement a feature that shows button presses over the player's heads and record a video of us playing. That video could also play if there is no menu input for a while (lots of other games do that).
- The controls for throwing are not suitable. That is already solved now by the crosshair going back and forth, but that feels kind of unnatural, so we could also have a look at these solutions:
  - Use the RT trigger to specify the throw force
  - Once in throw mode by holding X, stop moving the player and move the crosshair with the thumbstick. It's hard to move and throw at the same time anyways because the player first has to rotate in the direction he wants to go and rotating is slower in throw mode.
- Players accidentally may hit our debug mode button. We should remove that before the final release.
- Humans waking up when there are too many good dreams around is counterintuitive. A human with more dreams seems more safe intuitively, and that just flipping over can be frustrating. Also, it makes Morpheus even harder to play than he is anyways.
  - We should maybe just remove that condition but that may unbalance the game as in a number of playtesting rounds, we found that they become the source of dreams for Phobetor who would have otherwise lost the game.
- The difference between X (throw a single dream) and B (release all dreams) is unclear, we haven't found a clear solution here yet...
  - drop B altogether
    - pro: Easier to explain game

- ■ con: If you have rallied too many dreams, you have a problem... you would need to throw them and lose them
  - ○ Let B stay in but don't explain it
    - ■ pro: Players focus on throwing instead
    - ■ con: More hidden complexity
  - ○ Rename A & B to more intuitive terms - A: "Pickup dreams"; B: "Drop all dreams"
  - ○ Release dreams one by one instead of all suddenly
    - ■ not sure if that helps at all for the problem?
- ● Kolossos is weird. In-map obstacles as cliffs are hard to see. The map is not suitable for beginners. Possible solutions:
  - ○ Drop Kolossos and add another simple, small map
  - ○ Make sure it says that it is an advanced map in the menu and fix the cliffs to be more visible
- ● The duration of special powers is unclear
  - ○ Make walls fade out with time (simply reduce the alpha of the rays)
  - ○ Add a particle effect for Phobetor's speed boost (maybe dust coming from his feet or some fairy-style particles). Also, add a sound effect (vacuum cleaner, hair dryer or some grumbling from the dust)
- ● Quick asleep-awake-asleep sequences for the same humans happen from time to time and seem uncontrolled. Also, they are an advantage for Phobetor (who gets new dreams this way).
  - ○ This could be solved by adding, after a human was captured, a time span of e.g. 2 seconds in which the same human can not be re-captured by the other side
- ● It should be possible to cancel the construction of walls and the throwing of dreams
  - ○ This can be solved by adding a button for cancelling the current action (building of a wall, throwing a dream). The problem is that we would have to re-fund the player the dreams he already spent while building the wall, but that is a solvable problem...
- ● The crosshair was not visible enough and hard to see when throwing.
  - ○ We should maybe make it bigger to emphasize the impact radius of a thrown dream.

We hope to be able to implement the most important fixes until the end of next week in order to have a good final release candidate.