

Working Title:

An Investigation of Level Design in Theory and Application: High-quality Level design for Third-Person Action Adventure Games.

Keywords:

Third-Person Action Adventure Games, Level Design, Implementation Methodology, Combat, Narrative, Guidance/Hints

Research Question:

How might designers approach combat, narratives, and guidance in a third-person adventure gaming environment to enhance the immersive and interactive gameplay experience with the game players through level design?

Filed of Inquiry:

This research project is to explore how level design works in the game elements of combat, narrative, and guidance, and how they are used in a scene within a level. Through extensive case studies, principle analysis, and prototype production, this project will demonstrate the elements involved in level design, using third-person adventure game as an example to provide clear and concise design guidelines and examples for peers who want to try designing their own levels.

Contextual Review for level :

Level refers to the space where the game starts, progresses, and continues. These game spaces are defined by boundaries that restrict player movement and interaction. Thus, all aspects of the game, including the gameplay itself, are fixed within the levels. Each level presents variations in its spatial characteristics and attributes.

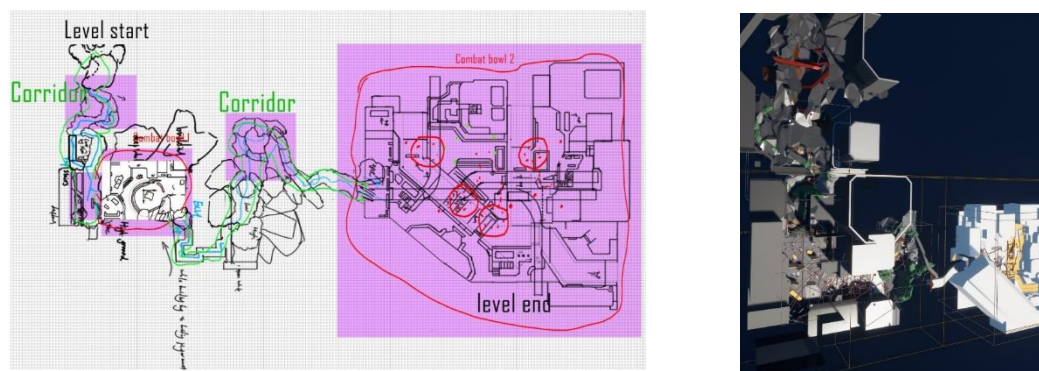


Figure 1: undergraduate capstone project level design sketch and top view

Aims:

1. Consider what level design is, the relationship between level design and traditional architectural design. Also, how is level design applied in third-person perspective games? What is the connection between gameplay and levels in third-person games?

I intend to explore the potential of level design and its significant impact on the overall game experience. As an interactive element between players and the game, I am interested in understanding how level design influences player immersion during gameplay, and how to create immersive experiences by designing game spaces in different circumstances.

To create immersive experiences, I will analyze the levels and materials of successful third-person games and transform in-game examples into design theories, which can then be converted into practical methods. By employing case study methods to collect extensive data, I will shape the levels and gameplay elements necessary for third-person action-adventure games. Through this approach, I aim to gain insight into how level design from a third-person perspective impacts player immersion during gameplay.

2. Based on the extension of the first Aim

Understand how level design affects combat, narrative techniques, and guidance in third-person action-adventure games. This will ultimately affect the immersive gameplay experience.

The known level design undoubtedly influences the player's experience. Through my research, I aim to define the impact of level design on combat, narrative, and guidance in games. I will explore the consequences of different level designs and analyze how players react to their environment. By doing so, I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between level design and the overall game experience.

Combat: Investigate how level design impacts combat in terms of creating an engaging, enjoyable, and immersive experience for players. I will explore the necessary elements of combat in level design and how they can be adapted to match the movement abilities of different characters.

Narrative: How the characters in the game go through playing, and what they do in the scene to affect players' self-identification and emotional experience. The background of the game, story, how to tell a silent story through objects, scenery, characters in the scene to achieve the purpose of constructing game background.

Guidance: How level design guides players subconsciously towards the correct path. The methods and elements used to guide players, and how they are applied in the level design process. In addition to guiding players towards the correct path, how to increase player curiosity and arouse their desire for exploration.

The three directions at this stage are too vague and broad. As the research progresses and becomes more refined, it may be necessary to remove or modify the elements of combat, narrative, and guidance. However, for now I plan to proceed with these three directions to test the higher and closer connection between game designs and levels, making it a more appropriate main research direction.

3. Integration, creating own-level design theory and practical methodology.

Based on the current state of level design, which is considered a dying art due to factors such as the fragmentation of design materials and the domination of game production studios, I aim to contribute to this field through my research. Specifically, I plan to update the theoretical knowledge of level design in third-person adventure games and make it more accessible to a wider audience, while also providing practical guidance on how to apply this knowledge effectively. The end goal of this research is to create a tool book for fellow level designers, which will enable them to design high-quality levels for third-person action-adventure games. The feasibility and effectiveness of this tool book will be validated through its application in actual game development.

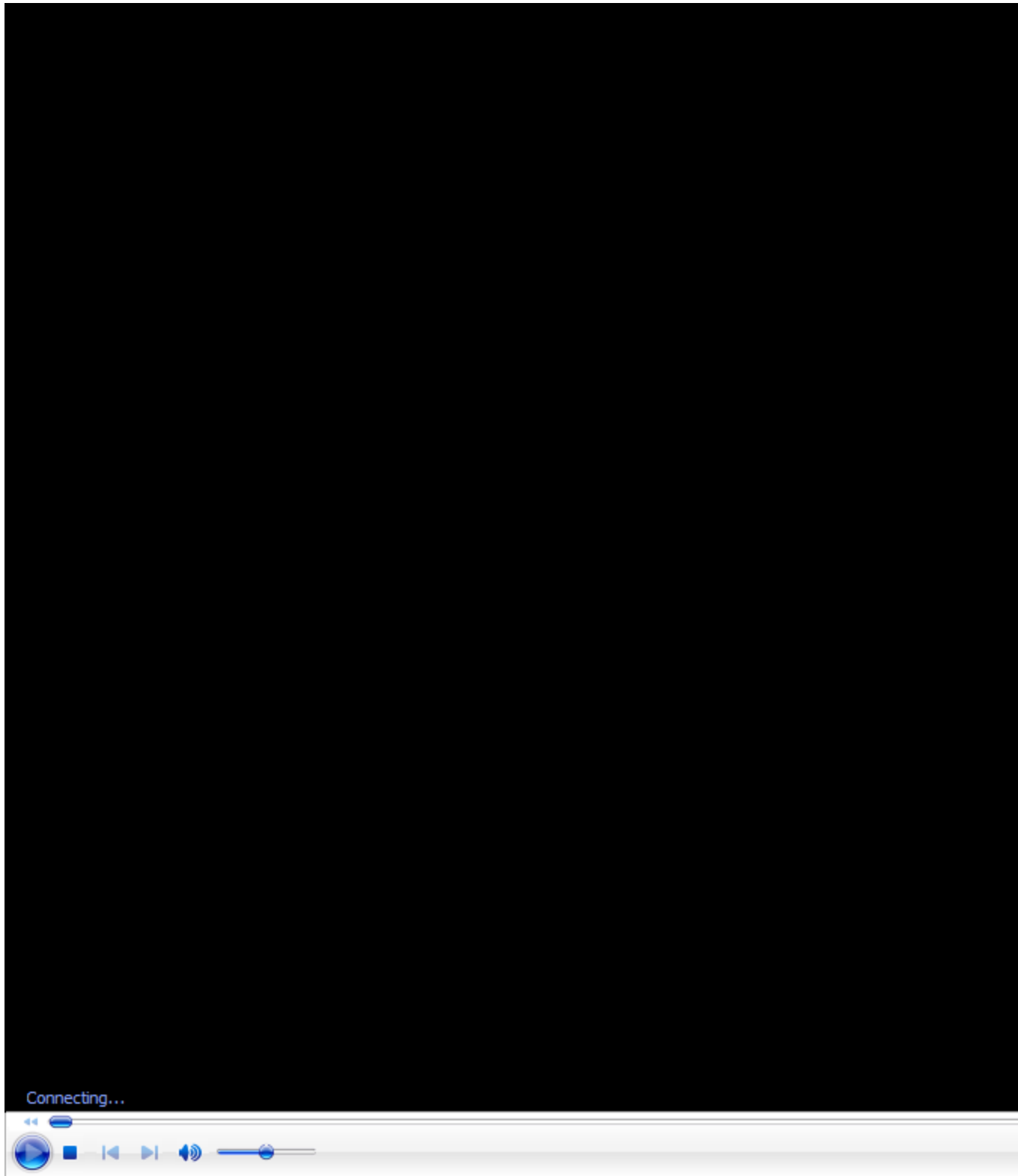


Figure 2. Explores and tests the possible structures for level, the narrative structure, and the potential psychological cues used for guidance in DP1.

At the beginning stage of the game, players are informed of the need to find a raincoat and are immersed in an atmosphere of rainfall through the use of sound effects. Despite hearing the sound of 'rain' in clear weather after leaving the garage, there is no actual rainfall outside. As the game progresses, players discover that what they thought was the sound of rain was, in fact the sound of sizzling bacon. This plot twist serves

to conclude the game. The level design of this demo refers to the Chinese ancient poetry narrative technique, qǐ chéng zhuǎn hé 起承转合 (introduce, development, twist, conclusion), and has conducted feasibility tests on applying this technique to game design.

The arrangement of decryption in the game also follows the 起承转合 narrative structure. The first puzzle serves as a simple introduction, aimed at familiarizing players with puzzle-solving techniques and corresponding ways of thinking. The second puzzle requires the combination of three different parts, making it more challenging than the first. Finally, the third area featuring the sound of frying bacon serves as a turning point and concludes the entire game play or the story.

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