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Playability: What a Video Game Needs to Be Successful

ScienceDaily (Mar. 10, 2011) — Researchers at the University of Granada have created a video game that will serve as a model to assess all aspects related to video games; it has also established a conceptual framework that will allow experts to assess players' experiences. The researchers based their study on their own experiences in previous projects where they developed educational resources and video games aimed at educational environments.

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What are the characteristics that a video game must have to be entertaining? Why do players prefer some video games to others? What is the difference between a game and an educational multiplayer video game? All these questions were answered by a research carried out by José Luís González Sánchez and conducted by professor Francisco Luís Gutiérrez Vela, at the Department of Languages and Computering of the University of Granada.

As González Sánchez explains, *playability* is an abstract concept difficult to define "as it features both the inherent functional and the non-functional aspects of the experience undergone by a player, when playing a video game." Thus, *playability* is "the set of properties describing a player's experience when playing -be it alone or with other players- with a specific game that is intended to be both entertaining and credible."

Educational Resources

The authors based their research on their own experience in previous projects where they developed educational resources and video games aimed at an educational environment. "This helped us in knowing what children expect from video games, and in understanding what they consider to be entertaining" -main author points out.

Thus, if surveys and trends are true "video games will be used both by children and by the elder in the future. For this reason, we should understand the standards that video games should meet to ensure that this comes true."

In the light of the results obtained in this research, their authors conclude that "video games have their own evaluation and formalization rules. We think that this study represents a step forward in standarizing and defining what people exepct from electronic entertainment interactive systems."

The study conducted at the University of Granada started from the bottom: what is a video game? What is it composed of? How do its components interact? In short "we achieved to create a theory model that will serve to study any aspect related to video games."

The video game industry is the strongest in entertainment: in 2009 it had a turnover of 1,200 million euros, and in 2008 it earned 1,500 million euros, which means that its revenue totalled 500 million euros more than music or cinema industries (see full report in http://www.adese.es/).

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