

be more efficient in the actual game activities, without demanding extra cognitive load to process them during gameplay.

Another idea to aid the bit selection and usage process is to provide a separate “cheat sheet” with all pieces and their count, next to the actual game boards. Players can cross out any pieces that have been used with a marker in order to keep track of what has been used and what is still available. This cheat sheet can be used during the initial sessions and then progressively removed, letting the users depend on their ability to recognize the physical pieces. This is a common process of scaffolding in instructional design, also called fading, because the additional information (scaffold) is removed (faded) over time [8].

These introductory puzzles can also assist in dealing with some observed instances of under-specification. We suggest that children should have a very clear understanding of the piece properties and the constraints that they introduce. Thus, we should help them form some kind of algorithmic representation including all the properties that bits should have in any given position, and show them how to apply it in similar situations. This can be achieved through guiding questions that will lead children to evaluate the different properties of any missing piece on the board. Questions like “How big should this piece be?”, “How should it attach to adjacent blocks?”, and “What polarity should the magnets have?” will help them construct mental functions of bit and path properties that need to be evaluated at every point.

Social interactions are important in the conversion of the game attributes (i.e., path shape on board, bit properties, remaining bits) to mental functions. Students should be encouraged to question each other’s assumptions while moving from the initial introductory puzzles to more complex game boards, to prevent an adversarial tone. Because the game could become quite difficult, depending on the path and pieces provided, we found it helpful to include a “more knowledgeable other” in the form of a guide, who could intervene before frustration overwhelmed the students. This guide, in conjunction with the students’ interpersonal interactions, keeps the activity in their “zone of proximal development” [16].

While further, rigorous evaluation is necessary, we agree with one of our reviewers that RabBit EscApe “seems novel and engaging, and likely to be of interest to many other researchers, and to spark interesting debates.”

5. CONCLUSION

A significant leap must be made to educate our youth as society continues to develop computational systems with which they must interact. Along these lines, we have developed RabBit EscApe to teach CT in a relatively explicit way, intentionally moving the focus of the game away from mathematical concepts, which are predominant in other CT game setups. Having run a study to observe children’s interactions with each other and our game, we believe there is a promising avenue for low-tech, tangible games for teaching CT to children aged 6-10 years in an engaging way. Our next step includes running a formal study to assess the game for its appropriateness in cultivating CT skills, and verify if the designed strategies support these skills in a successful manner.

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