**Usability Playtesting Summary Report**

**a. Title**: The Floor is Lava

* Tester: Tiffany Tran

**b. Introduction:**

* **Goal**: The goal of the test was to get a rating of how difficult or easy the game is and criticisms (especially of the jump mechanic).
* **Description**: As the game title suggests, the player is to avoid the floor since lava will vaporize the player. The player is to jump onto colorful platforms to avoid the floor. However, there will be a sign that tells the player to jump on a certain colored platform as the other ones will eventually sink into lava. The purpose of the game is for the player to quickly react to the changing sign and jump onto the corresponding platform before he/she falls into the abyss.
* Overarching results: Given the massive art deficit the playtest results weren’t as valuable as they could have been.  The main feedback given was that the mechanic that persists between both worlds is less of a puzzle and more of a confusing annoyance.  My advice to the creators would be to change the core mechanic associated with each world so that the players have a different challenge, that rely upon each other, balanced with timing to create a sense of urgency that will engage the player to want to switch.

**c. Procedure**

* **Script:** Hello, my name is Tiffany and I am here to oversee the playtest of this game.

I will need to record you as you play the game. When I say record, I mean your screen and your reactions as you play. If you are uncomfortable with the camera, you can opt out of the video and have just your voice over the gameplay. When you play the game, I’d like you to think out loud so I can hear the choices that you’re making and what confuses you as you play. You can even cuss so just be as candid and think aloud.

Your test will greatly help the development of the game so the designers can figure out whether to fix, add, and/or remove some features. Thank you.

* **After Gameplay Questions:**
  + What did you like or not like about the game?
    - * Don:
        + No idea if casual/hardcore
        + OW, Splatoon2, Smash
        + “Copied from Mario party... probably”
        + The game killed me (dislike)
        + Rigged

The blue/skyblue should not be there (can’t tell the difference)

* + - * + Add Toad
        + No graphics
        + Make the blcoks shorter
        + Remove jump tech
      * Sam: EZ after learning the first 2 rounds
      * An: like how u can control chara w/ buttons
        + Don’t like spamming space jump
        + Don’t like how can’t exit game w/o alt-tab
        + Don’t like how restart button’s there the whole time
        + Weird how pause menu appeared at ESC
        + Black edges?
        + Controls feel jank / jumping is weird, didn’t understand how u can jump a million times above the lava
        + Maybe start w/ few blocks then expand to mil
        + You’re in space with a random lava pit w/ blocks
        + Why don’t just hold jump instead of smash
        + Restart ruins immersion
        + When does this end?
        + Im wave dashing, too good for this game
    - How should that be improved?
  + How would you describe this game to another person?
    - Sam: Nostalgia of lava game/simon says
    - An: “It’s okay. Survival”
      * Feels like flabby bird that does only one thing , like a mobile game
        + Like high score but no high score
    - Don: Mini game from Mario party that’s never finished
      * Free app game from app store that’s filled with ads
* **User Profile Summary:**
* Samantha Alfonso, 22, CSUF
  + I found her at the CSUF school library drinking boba, reading IGN game reviews. She likes playing Final Fantasy V and considers herself as a casual gamer. The playtest itself lasted for about 3 minutes but the debrief and questionnaire took 10 minutes. She tends to play on her PC and PS4.
* An Bui, 19, UCB
  + He was at the Tet Festival and actually agreed to playtest. He was visiting only for the weekend, hence the Discord call. He played longer than expected and gave more
* 2 males and 1 female, 2 were casual game players and the 3rd was a hardcore game player and designer, the test consisted of a PC platform.  There were 3 scheduled and all 3 showed up and tested for around 15-30 minutes each.  The first 5-10 minutes I introduced my role, the game, the tester’s purpose, their roles and responsibilities, and the interaction that would happen.  I then allowed the players to playtest the game for about 20 minutes and finished with a debrief, a questionnaire, and asked if they had any lingering thoughts, feelings, or suggestions.  The first 2 acted as a base level test to discover if the core mechanics were decipherable (given the limitations on art) and then to identify if that was fun as is.  Depending on whether or not the designers want to change the mechanics I will either use their test results to advise them to change the mechanics and give details as to how or advise them to make the art a lot more dynamic and “juicy” to reward the player with the mechanics as they exist now.  The 3rd was able to give more insight into what they feel is broken, what they would specifically like to see, and whether or not they felt encouraged to keep playing.  Throughout the first 2 test cases 1 of the designers was able to be there and helped me by note taking and equipment operation.  My usability partner was there for a short time at the beginning to help synch. up on questionnaire feedback, testing parameters, and equipment functionality.

**d. Goals & Hypotheses**

*Overall Goals*:

* The players were all able to grasp the conceptuality of the challenge which is wonderful considering most of the game was temporary art.  The problem that came with that is that they felt there wasn’t enough content to warrant the length of play the game required of them for them to garner a victory.  Furthermore, their baseline interactions were not fun.  Overall I would consider the playtest a success because the most important component of a playtest is of course playability.  However, player accessibility only opens the door for a player, it by no means invites them inside.

*Specific Goals:*

CORE CONCEPT:

* Players must survive and avoid the lava by jumping on different platforms indicated by a huge text that appears on top of the screen.
  + Successful understanding but a failure of excitement, engagement, encouragement, replay ability, ease of conveyance, intuitive coordination, and strategic customization.

CORE GAME MECHANICS:

* Mobility

  + Successful understanding but double jump overrides the use of ever needing to single jump because of the fact that there is nothing inherently tied to the height of a single jump.
* Randomizer
  + No issues other than the speed of the physical world of the boss being incredibly fast, making the challenge overwhelming for new players.  Make the speed faster as long as their is still control in perspective to the enemy dashing.
* Attacking
  + Player understanding was successful but the actual interaction was boring, repetitive, and left the player feeling weak and powerless given that there wasn’t much/any feedback and that each successive attack only did peanut damage.
* Blocking
  + Quickly understandable and provided a moment of litera “awe.”  This is probably the most developed mechanic in terms of conveyance, enjoyability, and interaction.  However, given its limitations it is also the least used and most overlooked.

GAME CHALLENGE:

* Survival
  + Incredible difficult, the player is constantly fighting for their life and never feels powerful.  They are always on edge and are fearful to switch between worlds because of the damage they quickly receive.  This leaves one world lopsided which in turn provides a psychological negative association with the world where they are taking successive and hard-to-defend damage.
* Persistent knowledge
  + This was successful but not deft.  The numbers on the screen eventual convey to the player what the two worlds are and their states.  The amount of interaction that is immediately thrown in the face of the player though has them overlooking the VERY obvious text cues though, which implies that there needs to be ramp up time to introduce world switching before the player is ever left fighting with a boss.  Furthermore, there should be more thought put into how to convey the two states of the different worlds without having to use ugly numbers that block the top of the screen.
* Speed, reaction, and timing
  + The immediacy of the enemy attacks feel overpowered and even the color cue changes do not provide enough feedback for a player to safely assume the boss is about to attack.  Therefore there needs to be some kind of movement beforehand that ramps up to the full speed and movement of the enemy so that the player can anticipate the boss’ actions.

WHAT WOULD THE PLAYER FIND FUN:

* Defeating a complex boss with intricate knowledge of their weaknesses while protecting your own exposed weaknesses.
  + The only victory came from a player manipulating an existing bug, pushing the boss into the corner, and rendering that boss’ attack useless.  This is the biggest current issue in the game as the player never truly feels in control, knowledgeable of their world, and the right way to expose the weaknesses of the boss nor the proper way to defend against their own.

WIN-LOSE CONDITION:

* The player has to survive all the levels to win and not touch the lava..
  + Players are clear with end state of the game when they miss the platform.   
    Successful understanding with clear-conveyance of the final/end state of the game.  However, some attention should eventually be paid to an internal “restart” button & a main menu so that the player doesn’t have to relaunch the game with each playthrough.

*Hypotheses:*

* The game will be too easy because the speed of each level is not changing. As the player progresses, the speed should increase to make it more challenging.
  + At first it was challenging, then it was easy because of the ability to jump on the walls.
  + Don suggests increasing speed of blocks every level
* The game should have more feedback. (sounds)
  + Music/ jump sound/ sound when you die
  + Don: customizeable controls, pause button, no sounds.
* The win-state would be clearer with scoring or with a screen that shows the player they have beat the game. (The tests do not have a win-state)
  + **Don: wants high score**
  + This hypothesis was **correct.**

*What are your concerns about the game (the inherent potential weaknesses)?*

* Feedback is pretty weak.
  + There are no audio queues and usually the player looks (physically) but the boss doesn’t provide much.

*What do you hope to get from the user testing?*

* How the controls feel
* Suggestions if the game needs to amp up on the difficulty

**e. Results**

**A. What Worked Well**

**One Line Description of the Issue**

1. **Player’s all enjoyed the blocking mechanic once they discovered it was a mechanic given the art feedback:**All 3/3 players as they played the game smiled at the art feedback and the functionality given the way the boss attacked.  The feedback was understood and the players could continue due to understanding the world through this feedback.

**Why This Happened:** The art is very clear and it is a good balance against the way the spirit world boss attacks.

**PLAY Heuristic Adhered to:** E3. Player actions are obvious and result in immediate, positive feedback for all players in the first ten minutes.

1. **The end screen is very obvious and clear:**  The players immediately understood what had happened and could respond to it accordingly.  All 3 testers immediately understood when the game ended and asked for instructions on either how to restart or whether the test was over.

**Why This Happened:** The immediate screen change that overlayed on top of everything else was very obvious to the player that their was a state change and that the game was over.

**PLAY Heuristic Adhered to:**UI Design - Jakob Nielson. Visibility of system status.

1. **Player’s quickly understood what their health was (or at least that they had health) and when they were taking damage**: All 3 players eventually realized that the two different worlds had separate health states and were eventually able to decipher which were tied to which.

**Why This Happened:** The text feedback at the top was immediate and obvious.

**PLAY Heuristic Adhered to:**  UI Design - Jakob Nielson. Help & documentation.

**B. What Really Needed Work**

**One Line Description of the Issue**

1. **Observation:**Players were frustrated and confused by the ensnarement.  All 3 players remarked “what the f\*\*\*” when there movement was taken away.

**Why This Happened:** There needs to be more feedback on whether being ensnared is a good or bad thing.

**Suggestions:**

·         Provide a red hue around the parameters of the screen if the player is supposed to take damage or some kind of persistent color change to show a change of state.

·         Provide some kind of feedback whenever an input is attempted to show that the system is registering them.

**PLAY Heuristic Violated:** E3. Player actions are obvious and result in immediate, positive feedback for all players in the first ten minutes.

1. **Observation:** All 3 players lost interest in playing after 3-4 playthroughs.

**Why this happened:** One of the playtesters was reported saying “the controls are rudimentary.   I’d like more depth and an objective... There's such a long time in between attacks I’m just button mashing and hoping to do things...It takes a long time and the repetition of the same action to get any result and because it takes so long to kill the boss it makes me feel like it's all the game has to offer...I’m not having much fun because there is no “discernable reward” so I’m just grasping at straws throughout the way.” Forcing a player to attack two different states of the boss is essentially the same thing as having two boss fights at the same time but with the exact same mechanic there is no differentiation.

**Suggestion:** Make the mechanic in the Spirit World different than the mechanic in the physical world (perhaps healing) so that the balance between the two world is one of constant feedback.  Either focus on making one of the world's very fun with this basic attack mechanic or focus on making the world changing the thing to balance.  The way to do this is to force the player to pay attention to timing as opposed to just forcing the player to switch after they’ve done a set amount of damage.

**PLAY Heuristic Violated:** A5. Varying activities and pacing during the game play minimized any fatigue or boredom.

1. **Observation:** The players didn’t ever use the single jump.

**Why this happened:** There isn’t any incentive to jump just once as there is never a particular height that matches with this jump therefore every player simply spams the double jump whenever interacting with this.  All 3 players exclusively used double jump and were noted commenting that they saw no reason in using a single jump.

**Suggestion:** Make the platforms that are supposed to be landable at a specific height that the player needs to reach in order to damage the boss.  Set one at the height of a single jump another at the double jump and expose the weak spot of the boss at one of these three locations and change them randomly over time.

**GAP Heuristic Violated:** The game has elements of good gameplay and entertainment.

**f. Survey Results (these are not quite good enough)**

* 0/3 users answered they thought the game was fun, 0/3 said not fun.
* 2/3 of the users reported they were unable to complete the game.
* 0/3 users opted to play more than 4 times.

**Sample Survey Results  (these are much better)**

* How many understood the jumping mechanic
* How many understood the purpose of the game
* 3/3 of the users did not understand the point of the game.
* 3/3 users were able to understand the world switching mechanic and the persistent states that they were supposed to keep track.
* 2/3 users were able to use the blocking mechanic effectively although they expected it to do something different they were still happy with what they were able to do.

**1. Learning Ease of Use**

Playtesters

Moderately Easy                  0

Not at all Easy                      3

*Comments*

* + simple, fun, confused at first (no list of controls)
  + want time limit for goal
  + an:
    - score keeper “endure pain and suffering” (not knowing when it ends)
    - colors (blue / skyblue)
* The unique elements of the gameplay run their course very quickly and the attack elements are so basic that the length of gameplay it takes to kill the boss is rather punishing.  Players were noted saying they felt weak and that they wish the boss had less health or that their attacks were stronger.

Build No. 1 :

* Basic gameplay parts with moving blocks
* player jump ability
* restart button

Build No. 2 :

* Add start button
* Lava background
* Color text disappears when starting next iteration for new block