COMP260 Assignment 1 Reflection on Level Design

Name: Cameron Warton

Student number: 44635931

Level 1

Gameplay – The first level is very simple but also introduces quite a lot of new player mechanics including: the gun, the Chomper variant of enemy, the 3 keys, spikes, the moving platform, the staff and a destructible pillar. There is acid present in this first level but it is entirely aesthetic. There are a total of 3 enemies in which one of them is optionally avoidable. The player will need to be able to control the gun mechanics in order to defeat the Chomper enemies. The player can see all the different elements straight away and there is a clear linear path to the exit to start off with.

Design – Even though this level is particularly linear, the player is primarily meant to encounter each obstacle for the first time in order until the exit. They won't have to deal with multiple threats or information overload when they are trying to figure out what each gameplay component ads to the game and the physics/effect that will result to the player in regard to the gameplay.

The player won't have much difficulty in the start when introduced to the first enemy and the second enemy is only placed in such a way where if the player fails an easy task, they are given a consequence of the second enemy. The hardest part of the first level is on the upper path where missing the platform to jump across will result in the player falling down the hole onto the bottom path trapped with the second optional enemy and spikes. It's here that they will lose a guaranteed heart from the spikes and an optional 2 hearts if they manage to fail dealing with the Chomper or fail to get out in time before the damage invulnerability delay finishes.

Reflection - What worked in the design of the level is the multi-layered path and the consequence of mis-timing a jump resulting in falling down to the previous bottom layer. This level introduces the mechanics one by one in a fairly safe manner. The player won't need to deal with anything external in the gameplay until they work out the consecutive mechanics. Too many enemies didn't work. There would have been no break to the constant threat.

Level 2

Gameplay – in brief what gameplay is involved in the level? Are any new mechanics introduced?

The second level of the game introduces the acid immediately at the start and requires the player to form a decent jump in order to avoid the hazard. The player is then given access to both of the weapons at different areas. The second obstacle is the pillar in order to signify the crossing into the second area of the level. Once the pillar has been broken, the player is introduced with the verticality of the level with a moving platform which moves vertical. There is a hidden key underneath the moving platform and health. On the top of the moving platform's destination, another pillar signifies another checkpoint and entering into the fight area. The player faces the Spitter variant of the enemy here in combination with a Chomper as well for a more complex

engagement. The second moving platform carries the player horizontally towards the hub door across a valley of spikes.

Design – There are 3 main areas to this level and it's still quite easy but nothing compared to the last level. The first area is just introducing the acid and getting the player ready with weapons to better combat the rest of the level. The middle level is the 'elevator' which is designed for the player not to expect in regards to the verticality. The key is hidden under the elevator which requires exploring. The fight is meant to make the player think in regards to the appropriate weapon to use.

The player has it easy in the first zone but it gradually gets harder until the last zone where the player is expected to lose a life or up to 3 if they aren't careful.

The hidden second key means that the player might need to traverse around the map backwards if they don't find it the first time. There is a checkpoint so that players always have the ability to travel back.

Reflection - The verticality was the one thing that I think really shined in this level. The pillars were great at giving the player some breathing room knowing that there is a checkpoint before entering the next part. I feel like they needed to have more enemies in the first two zones, but not near the acid. This way, the player will feel more challenged. The player discovers the vertical aspect to the game, they have the drama of finding the hidden key under what is expect to be an elevator going upwards. The challenge was at the end with the bosses and the spikes. The map was created in the rock alternative tile to increase the sensation.

Level 3

Gameplay – The last level was the big challenge that was meant to bring all the skills slowly learnt and put them together in a map sectioned with high intensity and with high choice of exploration direction. The player is immediately faced with a Spitter and must deal with it from the low-ground which is incredibly hard to avoid all damage. The average player will lose a heart instantly before moving onwards. There is a destructible block of wall that takes 4+ hits of the staff in order to break. The biggest part of this level is that there is a main acid lake which spans across the two different areas of the map. The player cannot traverse the acid lake without dying and respawning at a checkpoint so they must go another way. The path above is mixed with enemies and spikes together for a double threat. The player must avoid the spikes while also avoiding the ranged/melee damage of the enemies. The biggest gameplay mechanic in this level is the introduction of the push-able boxes. These boxes are dropped from height in order to float in the acid and creating a passable bridge. Only when both boxes have been thrown into the lake, should the player be able to pass onwards to the other side. On this side, the pathway is chaotically placed with the only goal of finding a safe passage to climb upwards.

Design – The level is meant to be a mix of fast paced and explorative movement separated by a big acid lake. On the first side, the player must try to solve the puzzle of traversing the acid lake whilst maintaining as many hearts as possible that they will need to climb the dangerous second area.

The most difficult part will be the first half of the map where the player has to fight 5 enemies in really rough terrain without any cover. The player is expected to lose a life or two minimum just navigating this area. The easiest part will be the second half where the player must climb to the top while avoiding the dangerous spikes or occasional enemies.

Falling from the platforms in the second part of the level will make the player drop down considerably and possibly onto enemy controlled platforms. The difficulty is quite high on this level and this is the first level where there is a real puzzle to be solved with the boxes and the lake.

Reflection - The acid lake which was not traversable was my favourite part of the level. The player was required to find another way across by going vertically up until they found a solution and came right back down. I preferred the first half of the level because there was a real puzzle whereas the second half was just exploring a way up without any real danger as long as the player takes their time and doesn't rush. If the player rushes the second half, they will certainly lose upwards of 2 lives which could cost them the game. The player discovers the puzzle which needed to be solved, the level had a clear idea of "need to cross the lake" which showed the drama aspect. The level was incredibly challenging compared to the previous levels which showed an escalation of challenge. The whole level was split between two main areas of which had a different tile scheme to show the sensation and exploration.

Overall Reflection

The first goal of discovery was very easy to implement especially in the first level as the mechanics were introduced one by one in order for the player to get familiar with what they are seeing before moving onwards to battle the next mechanic. The second level showed the same mechanics but in a different light. The player was shown a different perspective on how the mechanics can be used to beat a level for example the verticality or the multiple variants of enemies. The third level threw everything together to create a mix of linearity and non-linear movement in order to follow the goal. In terms of challenge, I feel that the first two levels are more of training levels whereas the third level is the first 'real' level where the player is challenged to a proper level in order to maximise fun.

I feel like I could have sped up the escalation of difficulty of the first two levels to provide a steady curve where challenge is always on the same level as game mechanic experience.

There were two main styles of tiles that were used and a bunch of interact-able entities which showed sensation to the player.