

Foundational Development for Words Research Game (Sprint 2)

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"Words" is a word-finding game that uses incremental and reversible pseudo-random number generation to create an indefinite board of letters for the player to explore. Although still at an early stage of development, the game demonstrates novel PCG techniques and has potential applications in language pedagogy. As part of the project, we are also attempting to explore procedural rhetorics which offer alternatives to the standard rhetorics of capitalist accumulation and colonialist domination prevalent in most popular games. This summer we added features to the Words game through two two-week development sprints.

During the second two-week sprint, we worked on creating a hint feature and on adding an avatar to the game. The hint feature creates a text dialog where the user can type in a sequence of letters to look for in the current screen. If that sequence of letters is present, the first letter of each copy of that letter sequence is highlighted. The mechanisms involved in this feature include a text input element within the dialog that allows the user to specify a word to look for, and a way to search for word matches based on text entered by the user. We hope that this feature will later be modified to limit the number of hints the user can utilize.

The avatar feature gives the player a sense of connection to the game by allowing them to choose an avatar they would like to have represent them in the game. After the player chooses an avatar (out of the two options we have so far) the chosen avatar is placed onto the board of the game. As the player connects glyphs on the board, the avatar follows the cursor, and when the player matches a word, the avatar plays a jump animation. The mechanisms involved in this feature included designing the avatar options, adding animations, and building a menu to allow the user to choose their avatar, as well as the system for displaying the avatar in the game and for triggering avatar animations. We hope that in the future the avatar feature will be modified such that players will be able to provide their own avatar drawing and animation or otherwise customize their avatar.

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