Enhancing Souls-like Gameplay: A Study on Improving Game Difficulty, Replayability, and Player Engagement

Mr WONG Chak Shing,
BSc (Hons) in Multimedia Technology and Innovation, Department of Digital Innovation and Technology
*Supervisor: Mr CHEUNG Kit Jacky, Lecturer*

ABSTRACT

Forsaken Realm is an experimental 3D souls-like game for Windows PC. It addresses common issues in similar games, such as game difficulty, replayability, exploration, and player engagement. The project implements solutions like difficulty adjustment, rogue-like elements, and improved player progression mechanism. It explores the nature and impact of souls-like games, and aims to attract new players while contributing to the gaming industry's growth.

Menu

Combat
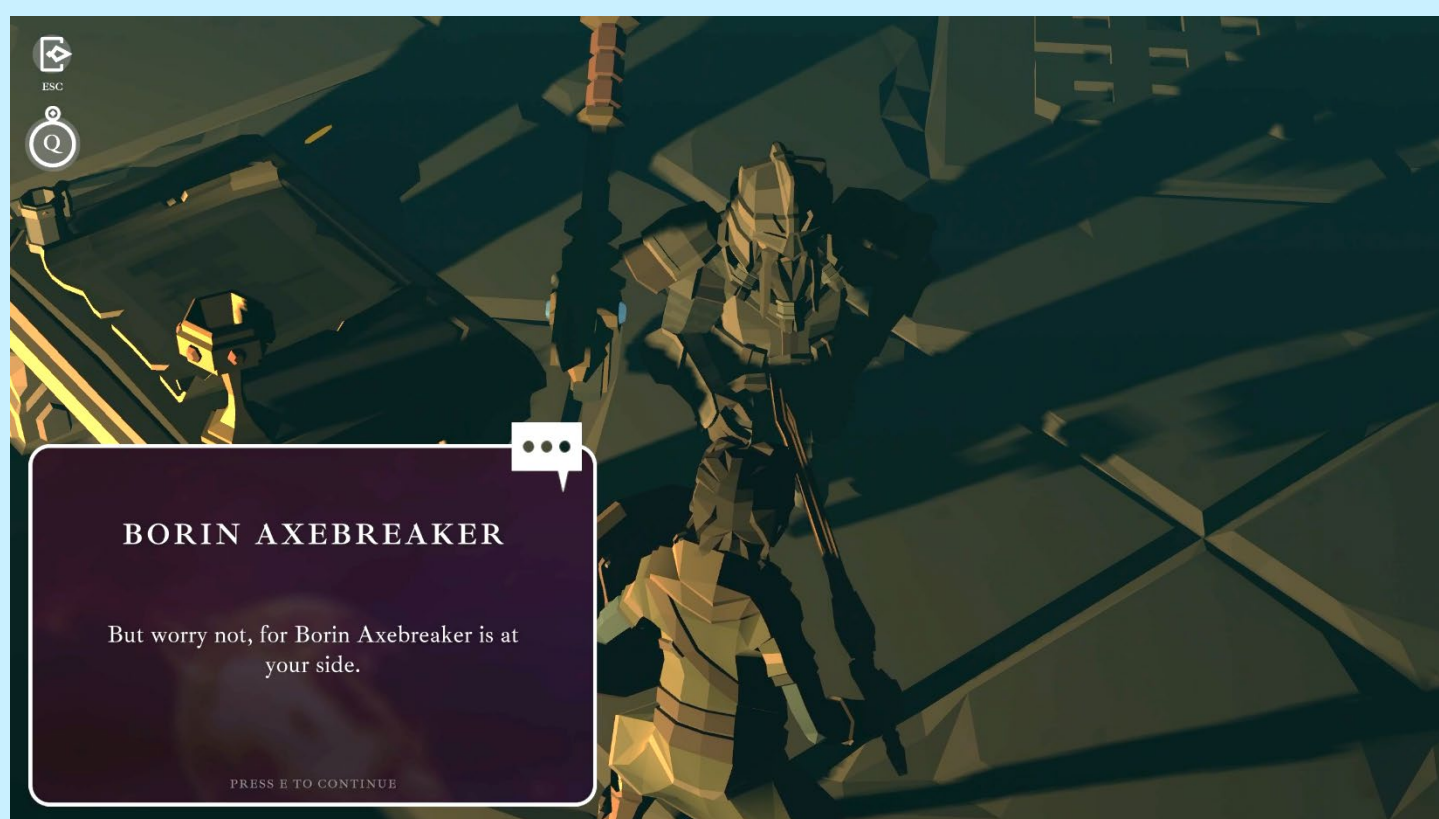
NPC Interaction

Ability Upgrade

BACKGROUND

The Souls-like genre requires significant effort and patience from players due to its difficulty and complexity. Players need to be psychologically prepared to endure the game. If a Souls-like game fails to impress them, they often drop it and seek something more engaging.

Bloodborne (2015)

Dark Souls 3 (2016)

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The project aims to make Souls-like games accessible to all players, attracting a larger audience and benefiting developers in the growing market.

- Increase Accessibility
- Retain Experienced Players
- Expand Player Base
- Benefit Developers

METHODOLOGY

Research, analysis, and playtesting are conducted on Souls-like games to identify issues and generate solutions. A prototype is designed and evaluated, with findings analyzed and compiled into a report with recommendations for future improvements.

- Conduct extensive background research on Souls-like games and hardcore games to gather information about their characteristics, player experiences, and market trends
- Analyze existing Souls-like games to identify common shortcomings and areas for improvement
- Formulate solutions to address the identified drawbacks, such as implementing a difficulty adjustment method and integrating rogue-like elements
- Develop a testing method to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed solutions: multiple playthroughs, record failed levels, and collect the respective data on game difficulty
- Design game mechanics, features, and user interfaces based on the identified objectives and research findings
- Iteratively test and refine the game design, incorporate feedback and insights from playtesting sessions
- Implement the final design and conduct additional testing to assess gameplay experience and player engagement

FINDINGS

Merging souls-like elements and implementing Hades' "God Mode" incentive system enhances gameplay, reduces penalties, motivates players, and increases progression. This improves playability, lowers the entry barrier, and attracts a wider audience.

- Enhanced Gameplay Experience
- Motivation and Perseverance
- Increased Accessibility and Appeal

CONCLUSION

The project successfully addresses drawbacks of Souls-like games, improving accessibility and enjoyment. It includes difficulty adjustment, rogue-like elements, and refined progression mechanism for increased replayability and satisfaction. It also contributes to the growth of the Souls-like game genre.