CROSS-SPELLBOUND

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ABSTRACT

Spelling is the sacred pillar of all words. Misspelled words are calamitous. Cross-Spellbound is a gold mine to enhance ESL students' skill in identifying and practicing the correct spelling for common misspelled English words. In a form of crossword puzzles, the students will be able to enjoy the extraordinarily amusing experience in trying to get the correct spelling for all words based on the clues provided. Adding to the fun, the students will be challenged by three difficulty levels namely warrior (easy), elite(intermediate), and master(hard). They should also complete each level within the stipulated time. Acing each level will definitely boost their confidence in using the English words, especially in academic writing purposes. Other than that, as students all around the globe are also challenged by the unwelcomed arrival of Covid-19 pandemic, this educational game should be beneficial in reducing their stress while gaining precious English spelling knowledge. Besides, since Open and Distance Learning (ODL) requires a more independent and student-centered learning process, Cross-Spellbound is one of the best wagons to jump on. Cross-Spellbound further serves its novelty by providing complete instructions to guide the potential players. While online games are taking the limelight in most educational areas, printed materials should not be left out as the experience from the sense of touch activities as scratching the words on paper could be one of the best spells to charm an individual.

Keywords: spelling, ESL students, common misspelled English words, Open and Distance Learning (ODL), educational games

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the challenges for second language learners is to spell the new words correctly. Likewise, for English, the second language learners (ESL students/learners), they are prone to be influenced by the rules of their mother tongue, hence the misspelled words. They are also bound to spell the words based on their registered sounds. Once the word is mispronounced, the incorrect spelling will be generated. As quoted by Mohd Samuddin and Krish (2018), in Botley, Hakim and Dillah (2007), ESL learners tend to choose the wrong grapheme to represent the sound of the words as a result of mispronunciation.

Malaysian students who learn English in school fall under the same category of second language learners, therefore, they are also bound to commit spelling errors. With the emergence of various social network services, these ESL learners have more platforms to practise the second language; spoken or written. According to Yunus et al., (2019), social network service motivates students to engage in their English language learning as well as encourage them to improve their writing.

Even though this could be a good sign for their second language learning process, it could be defeated if they do not pay attention to the correct spelling of words. A research by Nazman, Ting and Chuah (2021), highlights that social media users believe that the use of non-standard spelling is normal in social media context as it saves time and eases their typing effort. Unfortunately, this situation could be a contagious virus to the ESL learners who might believe that the published spelling on social media is the correct form to be used.

In brief, Cross-Spellbound wishes to familiarise ESL learners with the commonly misspelled English words by providing both the wrong and correct spelling in one amusing educational game; this has proven a great boost in mastering English vocabulary by using crossword puzzles as the main activity.

2. MATERIAL AND METHOD

A. Cross-Spellbound: Materials

Cross-Spellbound was created using the most user-friendly application, Microsoft Word and Portable Document Format (PDF). These applications were chosen since this project aims to provide fun and easy English educational game experience for the players. Besides, the application formats used let the players decide whether to play the game using the soft copy or the hard copy.

B. Cross-Spellbound: Content

Cross-Spellbound comprises three modes with three difficulty levels namely warrior, elite, master. There will be three sets of crossword puzzles for each level. The players are expected to complete each set and level within the stipulated time.

C. Cross-Spellbound: Method

Cross-Spellbound can be played either by an individual, in pair, or in group.

Mode: Individual
Step 1: Set the mode (individual)
Step 2: Choose the difficulty level (starts with warrior – elite - master)
Step 3: Set the stopwatch:
> *Warrior = 10 minutes for each set.*
> *Elite = 15 minutes for each set.*
> *Master = 20 minutes for each set.*
Step 4: Play the game till the end.
Step 5: Get the answer key to check and score yourself.

Mode: Pair
Step 1: Set the mode (pair)
Step 2: Choose the difficulty level (starts with warrior – elite - master)
Step 3: Set the stopwatch:
> *Warrior = 10 minutes for each set.*
> *Elite = 15 minutes for each set.*
> *Master = 20 minutes for each set.*
Step 4: Play the game till the end.
Step 5: Get the answer key to check and score yourself.

*If one of the players could not complete any set within the stipulated time, he/she will be eliminated from the game and the remaining player will be declared as the winner.
**If no player is eliminated, the player with the most correct answers will be declared as the winner.

Mode: Group
Step 1: Set the mode (Group)
Step 2: Choose the difficulty level (starts with warrior – elite - master)
Step 3: Set the stopwatch:
> *Warrior = 10 minutes for each set.*
> *Elite = 15 minutes for each set.*
> *Master = 20 minutes for each set.*

Step 4: Play the game till the end.
Step 5: Get the answer key to check and score yourself.

*If one of the players could not complete any set within the stipulated time, he/she will be eliminated from the game and the remaining player will be declared as the winner.
**Group with more remaining player(s) will be declared as the winner.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Cross-Spellbound was played by its first 30 players and their feedbacks are shared in the following figures;

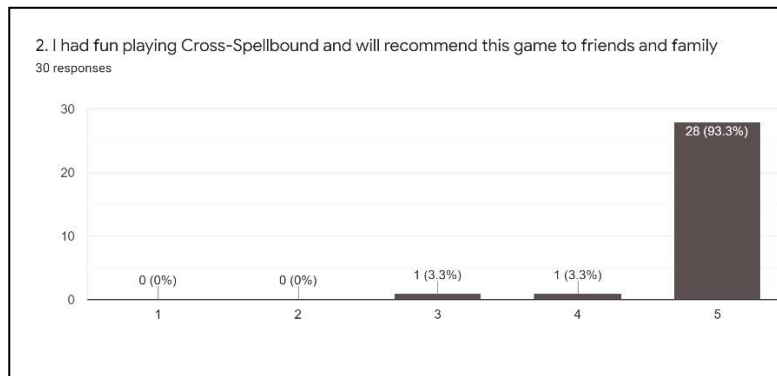### 3.1 Students' Feedbacks on Cross-Spellbound

Figure 1: Students' Feedback on their Excitement in Playing Cross-Spellbound

Based on Figure 1, 93.3% of the students strongly agreed that Cross-Spellbound offers them an amusing experience and they will definitely recommend the game to their friends and family.
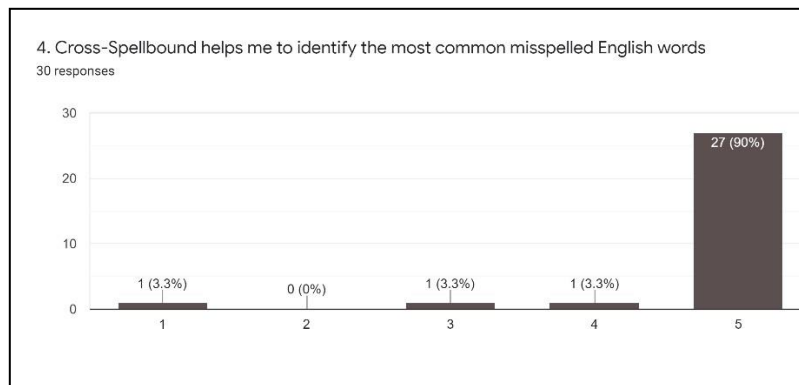

Figure 2: Students' Feedback on their Experience in Playing Cross-Spellbound

Figure 2 reveals that 90% of the respondents strongly agreed that Cross-Spellbound helps them in identifying the most common misspelled English words.
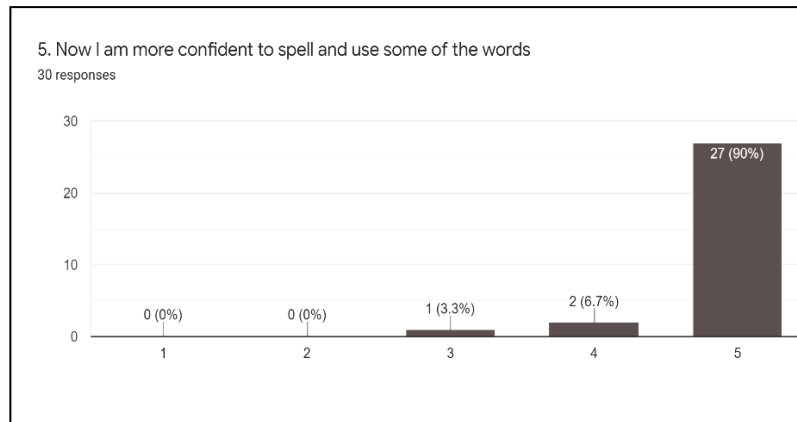

Figure 3: Students' Feedback on their Spelling Confidence after Playing Cross-Spellbound

Referring to Figure 3, the majority of the respondents (90%) strongly agreed that Cross-Spellbound has boosted their confidence in spelling and using some of the words included in the game.

In brief, positive feedback gathered by the project has proven its high potential for commercialisation as well as accompanying other existing educational games. While online games are taking the limelight in most educational areas, printed materials should not be left out as the experience from the sense of touch activities as scratching the words on paper could be one of the best spells to charm an individual. As suggested by Lee (2020), students who learn English as their foreign language believe that printed materials are more effective for learning English compared to digital materials.

4. CONCLUSION

Cross-Spellbound has successfully met its players in its own exciting and beneficial ways, and is hoped to meet more players in future. This educational game is worth playing as it can be played offline, using the soft copy or the hard copy. Other than that, players have full-control on how to play the game except for the restricted instructions accompanied as to increase the challenge. Cross-Spellbound wishes to help ESL learners in spelling as well as their English writing journey. As mentioned by Saeed Al Sobhi (2017), spelling needs to be given more attention even though some might regard it as trivial, as it could lead to greater problems in English writing.

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