Reflective Log 1- Design Scenarios

I learned that creating design scenarios is a good approach to help make the redesign effectively and the task inventory obtained from the previous part helps filter out the least important tasks and leave the most relevant tasks to be redesigned.

I learned this during the group meeting when we decided to choose the important tasks to be redesigned from the common issues in the task inventory. The design scenarios help us to focus on not only the redesign of a single part but also focus on the user goals from a higher level. It is an excellent way to share a point of view among the group, so we would be able to picture the redesign in our mind first. By following the scenarios, we walked through the process of completing a task in a workflow-based viewpoint and figured out the missing part earlier in the beginning of the redesigning state. Since the task inventory contains the most important tasks evaluated in the previous work, it would be great to use those tasks in the redesign in order to make significant improvement from both the designer's and the user's perspectives.By carefully reviewing the 24 tasks from the task inventory we found earlier, it saves us a lot of time from reconsidering potential tasks individually, so we made a total of 8 different design scenarios where each of the scenarios is consist of a few closed related tasks. The learning experience matters because it creates a reasonable connection between two different part of the project. The design scenarios help me focus on the user goals instead of a particular viewpoint; the task inventory helps me prepare the most important tasks ready for the redesign phase.

In the lights of this, I will continuously practice this approach in the future. In addition, I will keep the records of the task inventory and design scenario together in order to memorize the great learning experience.

Reflective Log 2- Conceptual Models and Design Principles

I learned that the conceptual model design principles are great tools to guide my design and all five principles from the conceptual models are very useful.

I learned this when I started my redesign. According to the user research, the original design of the OpenOffice software has too many tabs, toolbars, and icons. It prevents users from finding the right one and some of them are rarely used by our target users. As discussed in class, visibility does not mean to show everything upfront, since the relative visibility would be minimized and make the visibility even worse. Therefore, we changed the main interface by removing less important icons and putting functions in submenus. In order to increase the perceived affordance, we designed the cursor to be different when performing different tasks. For instance, if the user wants to draw a line, after he clicks the line button and clicks on the text field, the cursor changes to an arrow that points to the direction away from the previous click, implying the line can be drawn by holding and dragging the curse to another point. The mapping principle is also important. Especially, one control should affect one objects. In order to reduce the confusion, we changed the previous table icon to give a form instead of two potential responses. For the save icon, we create a larger notice box that displays after clicking and fades out after one second to ensure a strong feedback is provided to users. The learning experience is important because it helps me remember the principles by practicing redesign based on them. The concepts are easily forgotten if I do not use them at all. The more I evaluate the current design based on those principles, the more redesign options I can think about.

In the light of this, I would keep practicing the principles in the future and I would definitely remember that a good design would make things visible, provide perceived affordances, get mappings right, provide feedbacks and exploit the power of constraints.

Reflective Log 3- Visual Design Principles

I learned that visual design principles are very helpful during the redesign phase. I should apply all four principles in the mockups.

I learned this when I redesign the mockups. Since it was my first redesign work and I was not good at drawing, I could not do much instead of following the visual design principles. I used the alignment principle to check and create equally spaced tabs, bars, and toolboxes. Mybalsamiq works greatly in assisting me to align things properly with an acceptable error. I use the proximity principle to design the sharing file function. Since people who share files may also want to edit the collaborators, I make them closely located to reduce the search time for the icon. Mybalsamiq provides a good library of all different symbols and saves me some time. Since each of us focused on different scenarios, we did cross-checking each other to see if there were some common issues that could be replaced by similar patterns to ensure the repetition principle. Lastly, due to the short of time, even we cannot make a full-colored redesign, we used bold, underlined and large font to make a contrast in our redesign mockup. The learning experience matters because it helps me practice the principles in the real world. The concept itself would be easily forgotten if one does not use it in reality. It also helps me understand how effective the principles are. By replacing the old design with the new mockups, I see a significant improvement in the user interface.

In the light of this, I would definitely remember all four visual design principles, the "CRAP", and I would use it for my redesign projects in the future.

Reflective Log 4- Usability Test

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I learned that usability testing is important to evaluate the product redesign and think-aloud is a great technique to perform the testing.

I learned this during my usability testing with the participants. During the test, we practiced the think-aloud method by asking participants to speak out what they are thinking when they are performing the tasks. I think it is a great method to use because it makes the observation easier during the test. I could identify the issues whenever I found the inconsistency between what the participants said and what they did. For example, the test required the participants to add a header to the word document. She claimed that she could find the tool inside the layout menu. However, in our redesign, there is no such tab inside the mockup. This indicates the problem that different naming of the menu may confuse users and result in a longer searching time. Then, she said that she should read through the toolbar. Although the icon was on the toolbar, she could not identify it. This implied a serious issue that the icon did not represent its function properly. This learning matters because it does not only teach me what and how to do the test but also let me think about why the method is good to use. Although there are critiques about the method such as unnatural situation, I still believe it is a great method to apply in the testing.

In the lights of this, I will carefully review the pros and cons of each method before using them for usability testing. Since think-aloud is largely used in the technical interview, I will practice the method more in the future.