Unity University

Faculty of Engineering and Technology

Department of Computer Science and MIS

Virtual Assistant

Final Project Documentation

Submitted to the Department of Computer Science and MIS in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science in Computer Science.

By

1. **AMANUEL ALEMAYEHU**
2. **MIKIYAS HAILE**
3. **DAGMAWI MITIKU**
4. **ANTENEH GIRMA**
5. **SAMI RAMADAN**

Advisor:

W/ro MENBERE TESFAYE

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Chapter One - Introduction

1.1 Background Information

The digital landscape has undergone a profound transformation with the integration of Virtual Assistants, representing a significant leap in user interaction and support systems. This evolution is primarily attributed to advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and natural language processing (NLP). Virtual Assistants, such as Siri, Google Assistant, and Alexa, have become ubiquitous in daily life, providing users with personalized assistance, information retrieval, and task automation. This paradigm shift in human-computer interaction has not only enhanced user convenience but has also laid the foundation for more specialized and context-aware Virtual Assistants tailored to specific domains and industries.

The proliferation of Virtual Assistants has been driven by the need for more intelligent and adaptive interfaces that can comprehend user intent and deliver seamless interactions. This technology's integration into various applications, from smartphones to smart home devices, underscores its versatility and potential impact on diverse sectors. As society becomes increasingly reliant on digital interactions.

In the realm of accessibility and inclusivity, the development of a virtual assistant tailored for individuals with impairments is a natural extension of this technological evolution. By integrating features that cater specifically to the needs of this user demographic, such as enhanced speech recognition, tactile interfaces, and compatibility with assistive devices, the project aims to break down digital barriers and empower individuals facing various challenges. This represents a crucial step towards ensuring that the benefits of advanced technology are accessible to all, irrespective of physical or cognitive abilities.

The project recognizes the importance of collaboration with experts in accessibility and disability studies to ensure that the virtual assistant is not just a technological solution but a tool that genuinely enhances the lives of its users. This collaborative approach will help in fine-tuning the virtual assistant to address nuanced requirements and provide a truly inclusive and user-centric experience. By embracing the principles of universal design, the project aspires to contribute to a future where technology fosters equal opportunities and independence for everyone, regardless of their abilities.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Despite the global prevalence of Virtual Assistants and their widespread adoption across various languages, it is noteworthy that there is currently a gap in the availability of Amharic-driven virtual assistants. Amharic, the official language of Ethiopia and a language spoken by millions worldwide, lacks dedicated virtual assistant support. This gap highlights an opportunity for innovation and inclusivity within the digital landscape, as the development of a virtual assistant catering to Amharic speakers can significantly enhance accessibility and user experience for this linguistic community.

The absence of Amharic-driven virtual assistants underscores the importance of linguistic diversity in technological advancements. Language plays a crucial role in facilitating communication, and providing virtual assistant support in Amharic would empower a large population with a tool that understands and responds to their needs in their native language. The project, therefore, not only addresses the needs of individuals with impairments but also contributes to filling a linguistic void, promoting inclusivity on a broader scale.

In navigating the uncharted territory of developing a virtual assistant for Amharic speakers with impairments, the project emphasizes cultural sensitivity and linguistic nuances. Collaborating with linguists and experts in Amharic language and Ethiopian culture becomes pivotal to ensure the virtual assistant is not only technologically advanced but also culturally resonant. By recognizing and addressing these linguistic and cultural dimensions, the project aims to set a precedent for the integration of diverse languages in virtual assistant technologies, fostering a future where no linguistic or accessibility barriers limit individuals from harnessing the full potential of digital assistance.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 General Objective

In pursuit of this overarching goal, the project recognizes the importance of engaging in continuous dialogue with the target user community to ensure that their unique perspectives and requirements are central to the virtual assistant's development. This participatory approach extends beyond the initial stages of conceptualization and design, involving ongoing user testing and feedback loops to iteratively refine the virtual assistant's functionalities. By placing the user

at the core of the development process, the project aims to create a solution that not only meets but anticipates the evolving needs of individuals with impairments and Amharic speakers.

Furthermore, the project acknowledges the significance of collaboration with experts in accessibility, linguistics, and cultural studies to navigate the intricate intersections of technology, language, and diversity. By forging partnerships with professionals who specialize in understanding the nuances of Amharic and the cultural contexts of potential users, the project seeks to ensure that the virtual assistant is not merely a technological artifact but a tool that resonates with and serves the broader community effectively. Through this multidisciplinary approach, the project aspires to contribute not only to the advancement of virtual assistant technology but also to the broader discourse on inclusive design and the role of technology in fostering cultural understanding and representation.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. **Comprehensive User Analysis:** Conduct a thorough analysis to identify and understand the unique requirements and expectations of users within the targeted domain. This involves not only understanding the tasks users wish to perform but also the context in which these tasks occur. By gaining insights into the specific needs of individuals with impairments and Amharic speakers, the virtual assistant can be tailored to provide more effective and personalized support.

2. **Robust Natural Language Processing:** Develop a sophisticated natural language processing system to facilitate seamless and contextually relevant interactions between users and the Virtual Assistant. This includes the ability to comprehend user queries, respond appropriately, and adapt to diverse linguistic nuances, including the intricacies of the Amharic language. The goal is to ensure that users can interact with the virtual assistant in a manner that feels natural and intuitive.

3. **Efficient Task Execution:** Implement features that empower the Virtual Assistant to perform designated tasks with precision and efficiency. This involves integrating task-specific functionalities and optimizing the assistant's capabilities to enhance user productivity. For users with impairments, this may include features such as voice commands, tactile interfaces, and gesture recognition to ensure a seamless and efficient user experience.

4. **Adaptive Machine Learning:** Incorporate machine learning algorithms to enable adaptive learning and continuous improvement of the Virtual Assistant's performance over time. This

ensures that the assistant becomes more adept at understanding user preferences and evolving alongside changing user needs. The adaptive machine learning component is crucial for the virtual assistant to stay relevant and effective in providing assistance tailored to the evolving requirements of users with impairments and Amharic speakers.

These specific objectives collectively contribute to the overarching goal of creating a Virtual Assistant that goes beyond generic capabilities, providing a tailored and intelligent solution for users within the specified domain. Through the integration of advanced technologies and a focus on inclusivity, the project seeks to make a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals facing unique challenges in the digital realm.

1.4 Scope of the Project

Building upon the contextual considerations discussed earlier, the project's scope is strategically aligned with the overarching goal of inclusivity and innovation. Beyond addressing the challenges faced by individuals with impairments, the project aims to extend its impact by considering linguistic diversity, specifically focusing on languages such as Amharic. This expanded scope necessitates a careful examination of linguistic intricacies, cultural sensitivities, and the unique needs of Amharic speakers, enriching the development process with a more comprehensive understanding of the target user community.

In navigating this extended scope, the project recognizes the importance of a user-centric design approach. The development process will involve continuous collaboration with both individuals with impairments and Amharic speakers, ensuring that the virtual assistant not only meets their functional requirements but also aligns with their cultural preferences and linguistic nuances. The intuitive user interface will be crafted to facilitate seamless interactions, accommodating users with diverse abilities and language backgrounds. By integrating advanced technologies and linguistic considerations, the project aims to create a virtual assistant that transcends the conventional boundaries of technology, fostering a more inclusive and equitable digital landscape for individuals with impairments and speakers of languages like Amharic.

Furthermore, this comprehensive approach involves a meticulous examination of the targeted domain's intricacies, encompassing industry-specific terminologies, workflows, and user expectations. The aim is to create a Virtual Assistant that seamlessly integrates into the user's

environment, providing a highly personalized and efficient experience. This focused scope ensures that the project remains both manageable and impactful, delivering a Virtual Assistant solution that not only meets the specialized needs of users in the identified domain but also contributes to the broader discourse on technological inclusivity and cultural representation.

1.5 Tools and Methodologies

There is a distinct methodology we used in creating an exceptional tool to manage our project. Then, once that tool is in place, we use a specific methodology to manage the working of the project. Tools and methodologies are the devices and techniques we use as a team to perform various tasks in system development platforms to our project.

1.5.1 Data Collection Methodologies

To develop a Virtual Assistant that truly understands and caters to user needs within the specified domain, a comprehensive data collection methodology will be employed. This includes:

- Questionnaire .
- Interview.
- Observations
- Group meetings.
- data analysis.

1.5.2 System Development Methodology

For our virtual assistant project, we have chosen the robust Object-Oriented System Development Methodology, recognized as one of the most effective approaches in software development. Here's why this methodology is ideal for our project:

1. **Holistic Problem Solving:** Object-oriented methodology represents a fundamentally different approach to problem-solving compared to other software development methodologies. It encourages a holistic view of the system, allowing us to conceptualize the virtual assistant's functionalities in a more integrated and comprehensive manner.
2. **Reduced Complexity and Failure:** By encapsulating data and procedures within objects, the methodology enables us to reduce the complexity of the software system. This reduction in complexity is crucial for the success of our virtual assistant project, as it enhances the system's manageability and reduces the likelihood of failure.

3. **Data as a Critical Element:** Object-oriented methodology treats data as a critical element in program development. This aligns with our project's focus on user data and preferences, ensuring that data is handled with precision and security throughout the system.
4. **Enhanced Security:** The methodology's emphasis on encapsulation contributes to building secure programs. This is particularly important for a virtual assistant project, where user privacy and data security are paramount. By restricting direct access to sensitive data, we can create a more secure virtual assistant.
5. **Scalability:** Our virtual assistant project may evolve from small-scale implementations to more extensive systems over time. The object-oriented approach facilitates this scalability, allowing for easy upgrades and expansions as the project progresses.
6. **Time and Productivity Gains:** The object-oriented methodology leads to increased development efficiency and productivity. Its modular nature allows for focused development efforts, making it easier to manage and maintain the codebase. This efficiency aligns with our project goals, ensuring that we can deliver a high-quality virtual assistant solution within the specified timeline.

In summary, the Object-Oriented System Development Methodology is a strategic choice for our virtual assistant project, offering a holistic problem-solving approach, reducing complexity, treating data as a critical element, enhancing security, supporting scalability, and providing time and productivity gains. These attributes make it an ideal framework for developing an intelligent, adaptive, and user-centric virtual assistant that meets the diverse needs of our target user community.

1.5.3 Development Tools

For our virtual assistant project, a strategic selection of development tools has been made to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our software system. These tools span across different aspects of the development lifecycle, ensuring a comprehensive and well-integrated approach.

For **Documentation**:

For creating and managing documents crucial to our project, we will leverage a variety of tools, including:

- Microsoft Office: A versatile suite for document creation and management.
- Google Docs: Enabling collaborative and cloud-based document editing.
- Adobe Acrobat DC: Facilitating PDF creation and editing.
- Foxit PDF Reader: A reliable tool for viewing and annotating PDF documents.

For **Frontend** Development:

In crafting an engaging and user-friendly interface for our virtual assistant, we have chosen an array of frontend development tools:

- Flutter (Dart programming language): Utilized for cross-platform app development, ensuring compatibility across multiple devices.
- VS Code (Visual Studio Code): Serving as our integrated development environment (IDE) for coding and debugging.
- Figma**:** Instrumental in designing aesthetically pleasing user interfaces for both applications and the website.
- Material UI Kit: Employed for implementing material design principles on mobile platforms, enhancing the visual appeal and user experience.

For **Backend** Development:

For the backend architecture and data management, a combination of tools will be employed:

- Firebase: Utilized both for frontend and backend development, serving as a versatile and scalable database to store and synchronize data.
- Clever Cloud Adons: Utilized for backend development, serving as a versatile and scalable database to store and synchronize data.
- Dart: Selected as a backend language, facilitating efficient data storage and synchronization.

Hardware Tools:

In addition to software tools, our development process will rely on various hardware components:

- Laptop Computer: Essential for coding, designing, and overall project management.

- Mobile Phone: Used for testing and assessing the virtual assistant's functionality on different devices.
- Flash Disks: Employed for secure data storage and transfer.
- Printers: Facilitating the creation of hard copies of essential documents.

Software Tools:

To support various aspects of the development process, we'll utilize a range of software tools:

- Android Studio: A powerful IDE for Android app development.
- Internet Browser: Essential for testing and ensuring remote database and server accessibility.
- Visual Studio Code: A versatile code editor that enhances coding efficiency.
- Draw.io: Employed for creating visual representations of system architecture and flow.

This diversified set of tools has been meticulously chosen to cater to the diverse needs of our virtual assistant project, fostering collaboration, creativity, and efficiency throughout the development lifecycle.

1.6 Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries of the specialized Virtual Assistant developed in this project include individuals and businesses operating within the domain.

The main parties that benefit from this application are:

I. **Visually Impaired Individuals:** They gain independence by accessing information and performing tasks using voice commands and text-to-speech features. The app enhances their ability to navigate smartphones, read texts, and identify objects, fostering a more inclusive and empowered lifestyle.

II. **Hearing Impaired Individuals:** Despite its primarily text-based interface, the app serves as a valuable tool for individuals with hearing impairments, facilitating communication through text-to-speech and speech-to-text functionalities. This ensures they can engage with the virtual assistant effectively.

III. **Motor Impaired Individuals:** The app's intuitive design and voice commands cater to individuals with motor impairments, offering an accessible means of interaction. This demographic benefits from simplified navigation and hands-free operation, enhancing their overall user experience.

IV. **Cognitive Impaired Individuals:** The app provides a user-friendly interface and supports individuals with cognitive impairments by offering easy-to-understand interactions and reminders for daily tasks. This aids in promoting independence and cognitive well-being..

V. **Elderly Population:** The elderly, especially those unfamiliar with complex technology, benefit from a simplified virtual assistant that aids in daily tasks, communication, and access to information. This promotes inclusivity and technology adoption among older individuals.

VI. **Caregivers and Family Members:** Caregivers can use the app to set reminders, access information, and communicate effectively with the impaired individuals they care for. It serves as a supportive tool for enhancing caregiving responsibilities.

VII. **Community Support Organizations:** Organizations working with impaired individuals can utilize the app as a tool to empower and support their communities, promoting inclusivity and accessibility in their programs and services.

VIII. **Government Agencies:** Governments benefit from the app by promoting inclusivity and accessibility initiatives. They can endorse and integrate the app into public services, contributing to a more inclusive digital environment for impaired individuals.

IX. **App Developers (Us):** As developers, we have the opportunity to generate revenue through various channels, such as partnerships, grants, or collaborations with government agencies and NGOs. Additionally, the app can feature advertisements and potentially offer premium services, ensuring sustained profitability and continued development.

1.7 Schedule

The successful execution of this project relies on a well-defined schedule that encompasses key milestones and deliverables.

Task	Start date	End date
Requirement Phase: Background Study and Identification of the Problem	Oct 28, 2023	Nov 10, 2023
Project Management	Nov 10, 2023	Nov 24, 2023
Analysis Phase	Nov 24, 2023	Jan 12, 2024
Design Phase	Jan 12, 2024	Feb 23, 2024
Development Phase	Feb 23, 2024	Jun 15, 2024
Testing and Implementation	Jun 15, 2024	Aug 10, 2024
Deployment and Maintenance Phase	Aug 10, 2024	Aug 28, 2024

Gantt Chart

Task	Duration (in weeks)	Start Date/ End Date					
		Oct 28, 2023- Nov 10, 2023	Nov 10, 2023- Nov 24, 2023	Nov 24, 2023- Jan 12, 2024	Jan 12, 2024- Feb 23, 2024	Feb 23, 2024- Jun 15, 2024	Jun 15, 2024- Aug 10, 2024
Requirement Phase: Background Study and Identification of the Problem	2						
Project Management	2						
Analysis Phase	7						
Design Phase	6						
Development Phase	9						
Testing and Implementation	5						