Video Streaming Project

Design Concept: ‘Pidgin.tv’

AC41012 User Experience - Group 9

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Our Aim

The recent surge in popularity of online video streaming services has taken the world by storm. Brands such as Netflix and YouTube are household names, and millions of people around the world indulge in some form of digital content digestion daily. However, sometimes it can be quite a hassle if you want to watch a show that's exclusive to one streaming service when there are so many other things you already watch on another. Being forced to switch between multiple providers for content, rather than having them all centralised, makes for a cumbersome and frustrating user experience.

To solve this problem, we aim to develop our own service which functions as a link between existing content providers, allowing users to access all the streaming content they enjoy in a convenient way on one service. In addition, we wanted to find a way to make our service unique amongst others, and to this end we decided to create a service that would also be a tool in order to aid those who wish to watch and learn from content in a variety of languages. Existing content providers don't make it easy to find content in other languages, especially content that has been translated or captioned in a way to make it useful to non-native speakers.

Our Target Audience

The first step of requirements gathering for our User Experience project was to identify potential stakeholders. Our application relies on content provided from existing streaming services, so they will likely be concerned with how our application represents their products and treats their customers. In addition, the existing users of these providers may be potential stakeholders due to their prior investment (time of use or cash subscriptions) in these services, and their interest in our service will depend on if it improves on their existing experiences or not.

Our target demographic will be people who are (or aim to be) multi-lingual. This is a user set that we feel currently has limited options for content, so we felt that tailoring it to meet multilingual learning needs while still being generally accessible would be good.

In addition to helping users find content in different languages with caption/translation, we thought implementing user/community interactions (such as a friends system, allowing users to highlight phrases they don't understand from video transcripts, or ranking the difficulty of understanding videos) would improve the experience.

Personas and Scenarios

While developing our idea for the service, we created some personas to help gauge how different user types might interact with our service. Personas are a fictional representation of a particular portion of the audience for a service that is being designed. We gave them backstories and motivations to try to capture the essence of the character and make them as realistic as possible. This made it simpler to design the service to meet different users'

needs. We created three distinct personas with detailed profiles and goals they would use our service to accomplish. As an example here is one of our personas, ‘Mads Andresen’:

Mads is a 38 year old Danish journalist who likes making YouTube videos and tweeting. He mostly presents his videos in English as he feels he can reach a larger audience that way. However he’s unsure about his ability to speak English fluently, and as a result wants to improve on what he knows in an informal environment. The goal he is trying to accomplish through using our service is that he wants to be able to look for videos he can watch in English, with both English subtitles and Danish subtitles, so that he can understand how the dialogue is conveyed in both languages.

Through using personas such as Mads, we feel able to gauge how users might want to interact with the service in a way that suits them. This process gave rise to multiple changes to the initial designs for our service, adapting it to suit user needs we hadn’t considered prior.

Based on Mads’s persona we wrote a scenario that we mapped (see Appendix B) allowing us to plan out all the steps that this person would have to take in order to reach their objective. Originally we wrote out all the steps we felt that Mads would have to undertake in order to complete his goal, keeping these steps as general as possible so that the scenario could work regardless of the concept structure of the service. This process allows us to optimise ideas and features from our initial concept, creating an overall better product.

Afterwards, we went through each step and added any relevant questions in case they might change how we approached the goal and the user flow. We then added any comments we felt would be appropriate, such as assumptions (e.g. we had assumed he had used this service before, so he was already logged in, so he wouldn’t have to do so again). Lastly we added any potential improvements that we’d thought of, as trying to think through the logic of navigating the website illustrated to us how we could possibly improve the experience. An example of this was a change to how we could handle the searching function: We thought that the user could either type in a specific query that they were trying to look for, such as ‘Videos in English with Korean subtitles’, or have a drop down menu that presented the query in a manner that was more akin to a conversation, such as ‘ I would like to search for ____ in the language ____ with subtitles in ____’ (the ‘____’ sections corresponding to text entry fields, or drop down lists with options). Through doing this we hoped to fix any issues with service usage, whilst also trying to make it as user-friendly and simple as possible.

Proposed User Journey

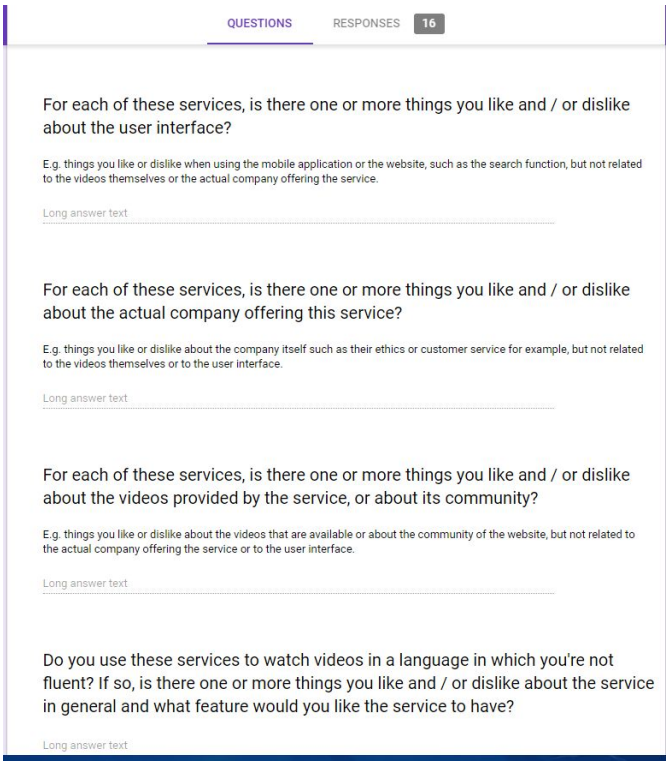
A feature list alone doesn’t give much direction when creating a user interface, so we created a user journey to outline the path the average user might take whilst interacting with our service. We decided to model this journey as if the user had never used this service before, so that we could capture how a new user might feel (See Appendix A).

This journey details the user’s path as they initially navigate to our website, register and set their preferences, search for a video, and then finally watch it. This comprises the core

experience with our website. This helps us with modelling user interaction with our service, allowing us to ‘zoom out’ and criticise the path as a whole, identifying strengths and weaknesses and allowing us to optimise it. By having these insights early in the development process, we can address issues before they can have a negative impact on the service.

Insights from User Studies

Before we began planning our service and its features we sent out a questionnaire to gather feedback from potential users. Some of the questions we asked were, ‘Which streaming services do you use?’. While this wasn’t directly relevant to the service design, we felt it was an important question to ask to frame further questions for our participants, prompting them to give better answers while remembering the services they use.



Following from this we asked about the participants opinion about the services they used, what they liked about them, as well as more specifically regarding whether they watch videos in languages they are not fluent in. This last question was important so that we could gauge if people would find the multiple language service we are offering useful. In order to prevent any possible ordering effects, these questions were randomly ordered for each participant.

Overall the feedback proved helpful while we were designing our service as comments gathered were worked into proposed features of our design.

One feature implemented based on questionnaire feedback was the ability to allow the user to filter videos by available captions. We hadn’t initially thought of this, but agreed that it would be useful for the user, especially with the language focus in the application. This feature will be extended to not only search for captions, but also the language of the captions, letting the user even more control over what they see. Outside of manually filtering for this, the user will also be able to define caption preference under User Settings, so that the user won’t have to filter every time they search for videos.

Some participants also suggested that they wanted to create playlists so they can keep a record of certain videos they particularly liked and would like to watch again. This feature could be added to video player with a playlist element, and this playlist could be accessed from the user’s profile or through customised searching.

One participant didn't like the idea of displaying recommendations and suggested that that they would like the option to disable them from being displayed. This could be implemented as a setting the user can opt out of under the User Settings menu.

Based on the questionnaire, we conducted some semi-structured interviews. We asked a question from the questionnaire, and possible follow-ups. This allowed us to get more data specifically relating to language learning. Three people mentioned learning from and with friends. We decided to emphasise the role of the community in our design. Interesting features mentioned by interviewees were sharing playlists, setting goals, and seeing what users' friends have watched.

After gaining this feedback, we engaged in a brainstorming session. Although brainstorming is usually done at the very start of the project to identify its aim and decide the direction it should take, we were already satisfied with the one we already found (creating a video streaming service for language learners). We did however use brainstorming for a slightly different purpose: identify the features we wanted the service to offer. After the brainstorming session, we kept the ones we liked and merged duplicates. We expanded on features mentioned in the user studies, and came up with new ones. By allowing users to define tags and difficulty for media, users can more easily find content relevant to their interests and language level. We decided to make it possible to watch videos with other users in synch, which would allow for a tutor to help with understanding in real time.

We then did another brainstorming session to identify the different pages we wanted the website to have, and we organised the previously identified features under each of the found pages.

This was not the only testing we did. We engaged in testing with some of the low-fidelity prototypes we created. We asked what the participant thought about each prototype, if there was anything they liked in particular, if there was anything they disliked in particular, and finally if there was anything they would change about our designs. We felt that these questions were as encompassing as possible, without quizzing the participant with numerous questions. We also hoped these were as open-ended as possible, so that the participant had the freedom to say what they wanted without being influenced. The feedback we gained was helpful, and helped us redesign the proposed dashboard page's interface. The participant liked the carousel we had as the main focus for this webpage, as they allow for viewing lots of videos taking up minimal screen space. The participant also pointed out that that the participants section of the navbar wasn't too clear, as they believed that it wasn't a button, and only created an on-hover sub-bar. This was clarified to the participant after receiving the feedback, but we agreed that it wasn't too clear, so we knew that it had to be changed. The participant also commented that it might be a good idea to provide icon next to the thumbnails indicating the languages the video was available in.

From gathering all this feedback we made changes to our initial designs to accommodate the issues that were presented to us (See Appendix E & F for an example of before-and-after designs).

The Proposed Solution & Wireframes

For a web service such as ours, branding is a key part of our appearance to users. If we look at other video streaming services, most of them have punchy, simple names that reflect the service provided (think Twitch, YouTube, Vimeo, Hulu). This fashion of name is easy to remember, and easy to share: it has staying power. We wanted to harness this essence and create our own branding that users can remember and make us unique. We settled upon “Pidgin.tv”. The name stems from the idea of a ‘pidgin language’: a grammatically simplified form of a language that is used for communication between people who don’t share a common language. We felt that this name fits the service we are wanting to develop, as we are trying to bridge the gap between languages using media as a focal point, the ‘pidgin’ language as you will, supplemented by captions and community interaction.

Aside from branding, another major part of the user experience is the appearance of the application. This is one of the most important aspects of the service, as typically users would much rather use a website that is pleasant to look at and easy to understand and use, over one that has more features and is complicated. This meant that aesthetic design was a large consideration when designing the service.

Initially we created some paper prototypes for some rough ideas of how service features could be laid out. Most of these were simple sketches but they conveyed important information on where the best place to place certain features might be, gleaming from existing services. Over all of these prototypes, all of them had a navigation bar at the top. Navbars are a common feature amongst modern web applications which provide quick navigation which most users are familiar with. We felt it was important that we too have a navbar at the top, as most users would be accustomed to navigating using one and following this convention would reduce the user learning needed to identify and navigate to key application features.

In addition to a navbar, we added a ribbon underneath to allow for expanded options in place of bulky dropdown menus. If the user hovers over one of the buttons on the navbar, this ribbon will update to show more relevant links for the user to interact with. These links will stay present until the user hovers over another button, switching the links on it to those relevant to the newly hovered category. We are also considering allowing the user to hide the ribbon entirely using a close button or by clicking the parent button again.

Another feature we want to implement is our ‘Smart Search’. This comprises a persistent search bar located on the floating navbar which takes user input and contextually searches for different types of content: users can enter a film title (and its alternative titles in different languages/markets), a director, an actor, or even a fellow user, and the search bar will identify films, people, or even fellow users that can be expanded on in a search page. The user can also use tags similar to Google to allow for precise searching for experienced users. An alternative to tag or keyword searching that was proposed was the ‘Contextual Search’: a conversation-based search that allows for specific searching without any technical user knowledge. This would follow a format similar to “I want to watch films in [LANGUAGE] with captions in [LANGUAGE], with keywords [KEYWORDS]” or something similar. This has

not been implemented into the wireframes provided due to space restrictions, but will be modelled for the prototype stage.

In our designs, we wanted to make the service as mobile-friendly as possible. A large portion of internet users are primarily mobile-based, and allowing for a smooth user experience on all devices is paramount to user satisfaction. As a result, we opted to not use radial menus, and used standard drop-down menus instead. This is due to design issues with radial menus: where on the screen should they appear? How quickly will users adapt to them? How much space do they need? Will they obstruct other content? Does navigation efficiency trump user familiarity? In the end, we decided the potential problems made radial menus a less effective choice to accomplish our navigation goals. To further our mobile-minded approach, we aim to produce a mobile form factor version of the service alongside an app for improved mobile application usage.

With regards to the colours of our wireframes, we have mostly kept the colour palette grayscale. This is not reflective of final colour palettes or design choices: this is simply for the purposes of layout and function. We plan on making branding and visual information choices with direction from accessibility guidelines (such as WCAG 2.0) and this will be further explored in the prototype phase.

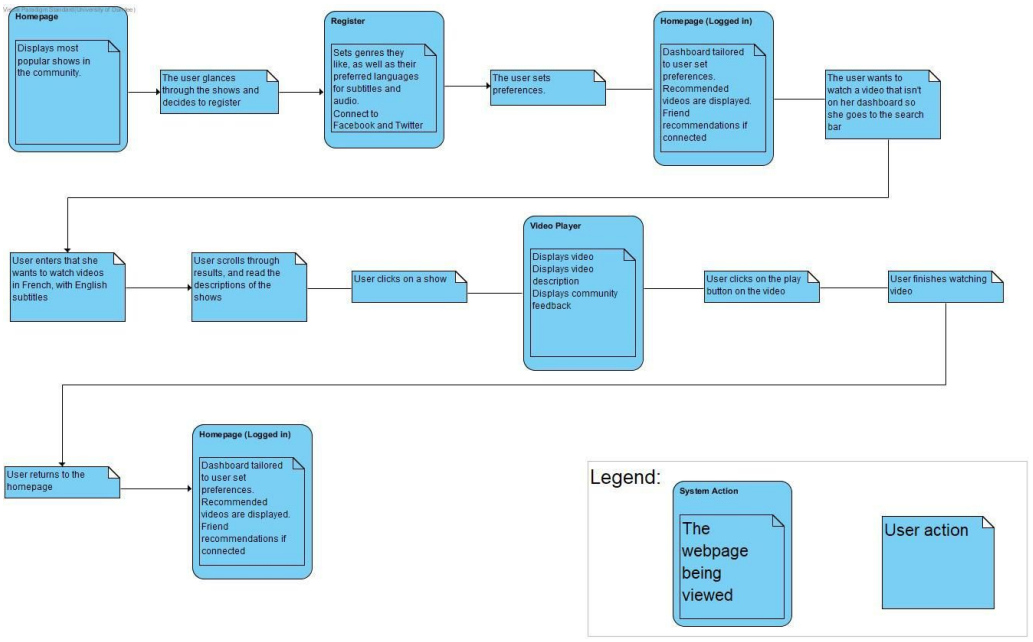
Our user ‘Phrasebook’ is a feature that allows the user to note sentences/phrases in films (through flagging dialogue as it is read, making a note of the corresponding captions or transcripts if available) that they have difficulty understanding. This feature will allow the user to identify gaps in their knowledge and review unfamiliar words and phrases, which can be further translated with help from a friend or possibly a community translator should enough people flag a phrase, idiom, and the like.

A second screen application was an interesting idea for this service (See Appendix H). We wanted it to be closely linked with the experience, and even improve upon the experience. Our vision for this application was for it to act not only as a mobile wrapper for the website, but as an enhanced version for mobile users. Part of these enhancements include a second-screen remote feature so that the user can navigate through the site, and interact with the videos from their mobile device, similar to how a Chromecast works. In addition to handling navigation and playback features from this second screen, we intend on adding Phrasebook functionality to the app so that users can flag dialogue from their phone as they watch, meaning that the flagging mechanism can be separated from the screen they are watching on as to not detract from the core viewing experience.

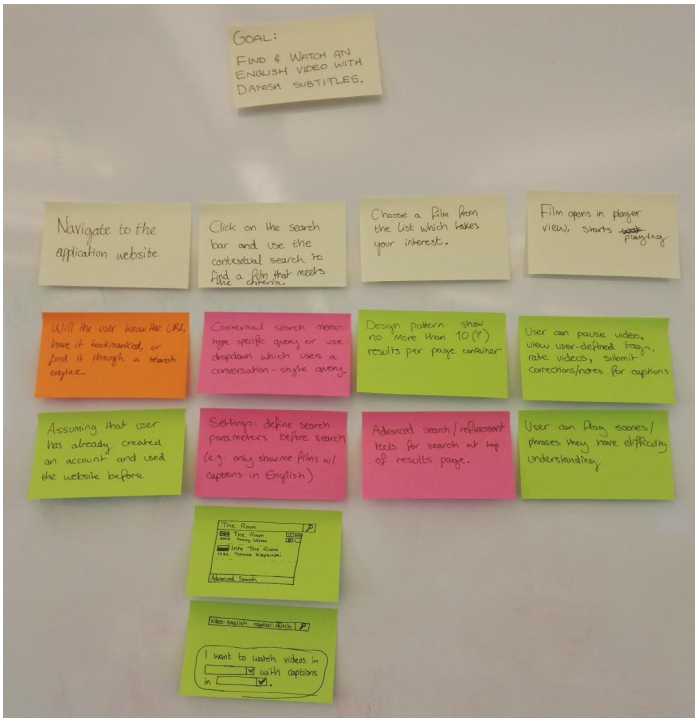
The wireframes themselves have been included in the Appendices below, showing three of the pages most likely to be frequented by users, as well as a proposed design for the app’s second screen remote feature.

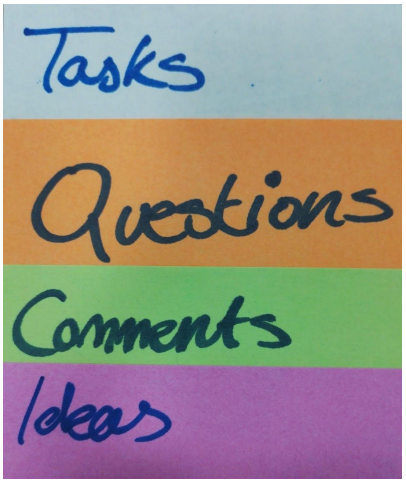
Appendices

Appendix A - User Journey

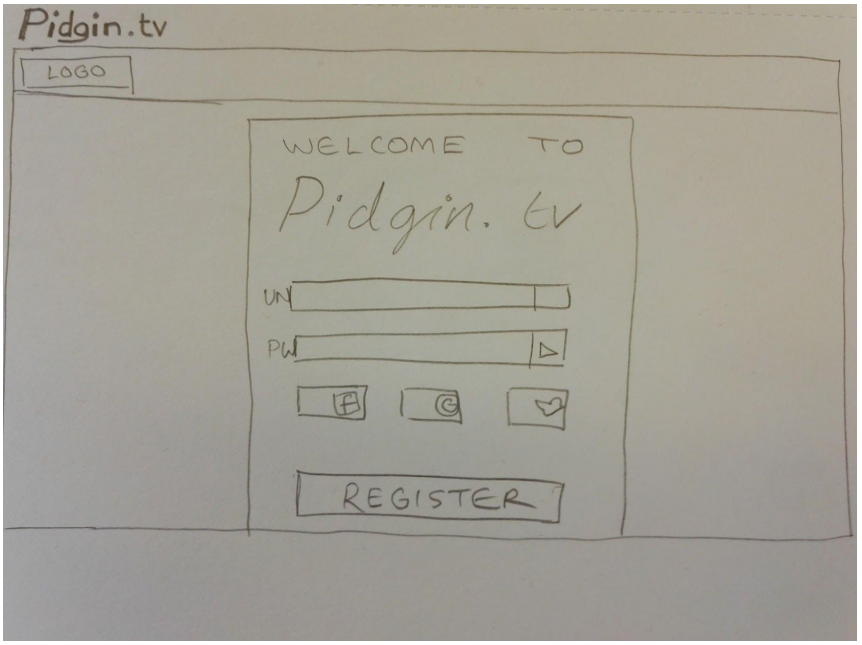


Appendix B - Scenario Mapping (Mads)



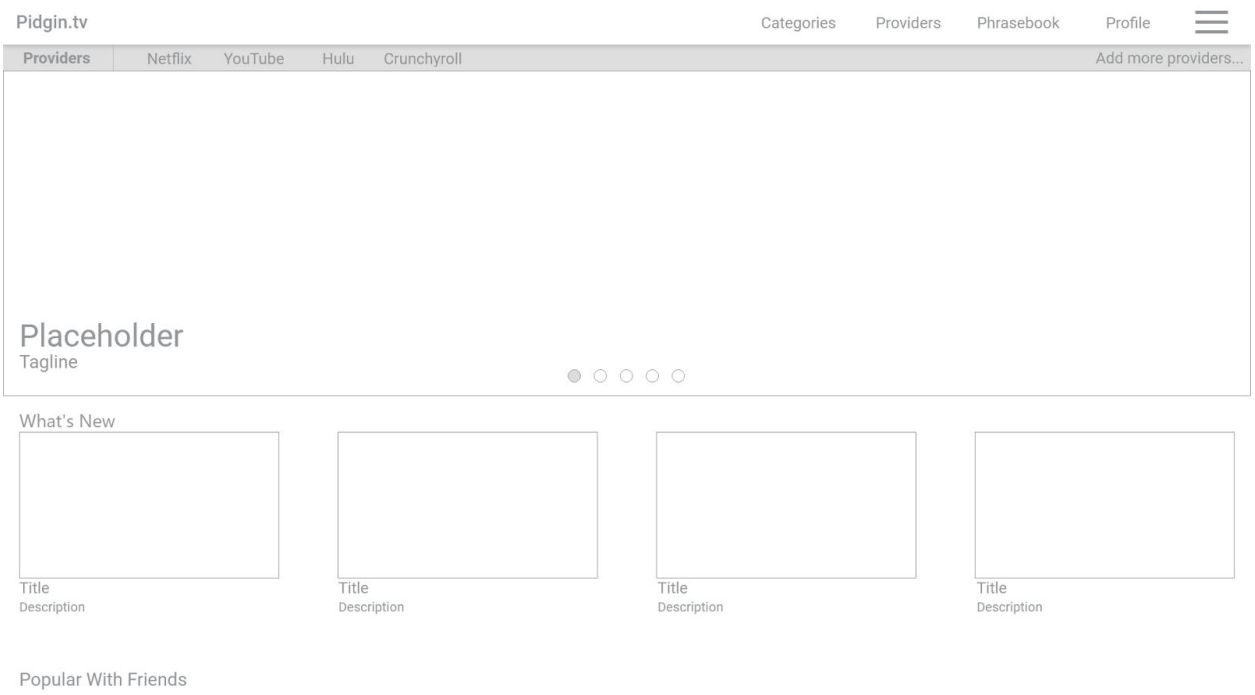


Appendix C - Paper Prototype (Login)

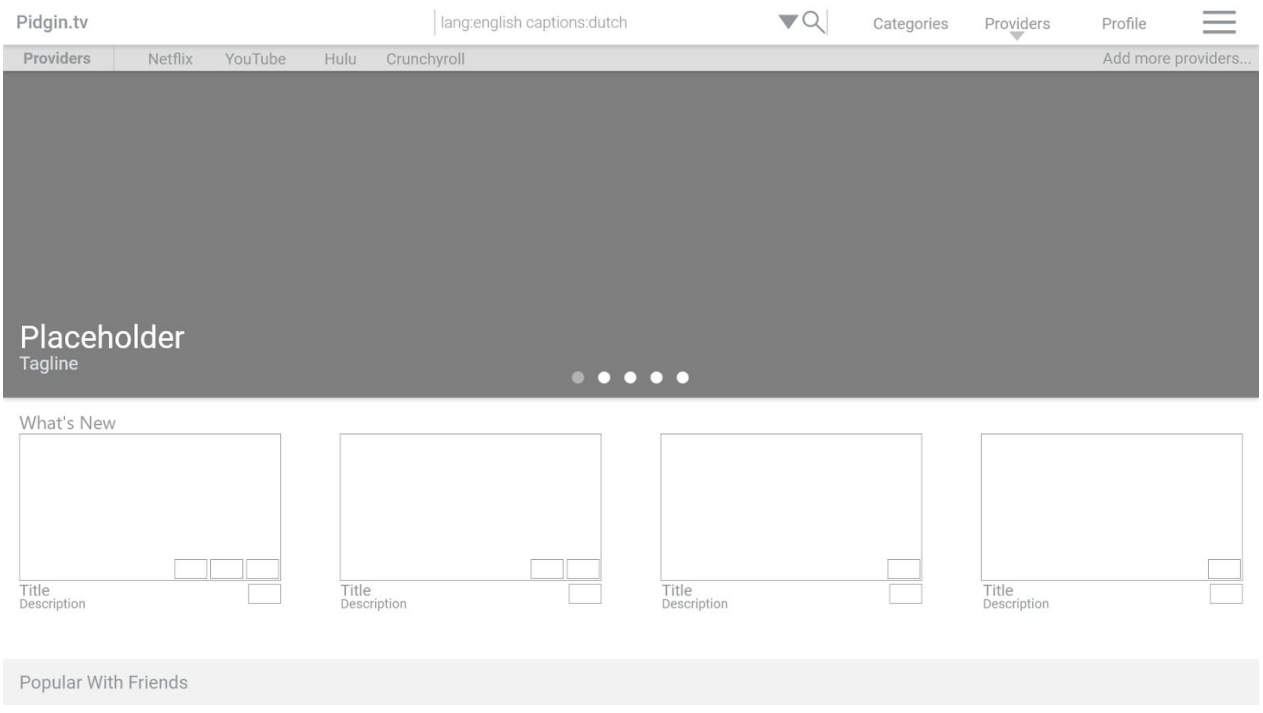


Appendix D - Digital Wireframe (Login)

Appendix E - Dashboard (Initial)

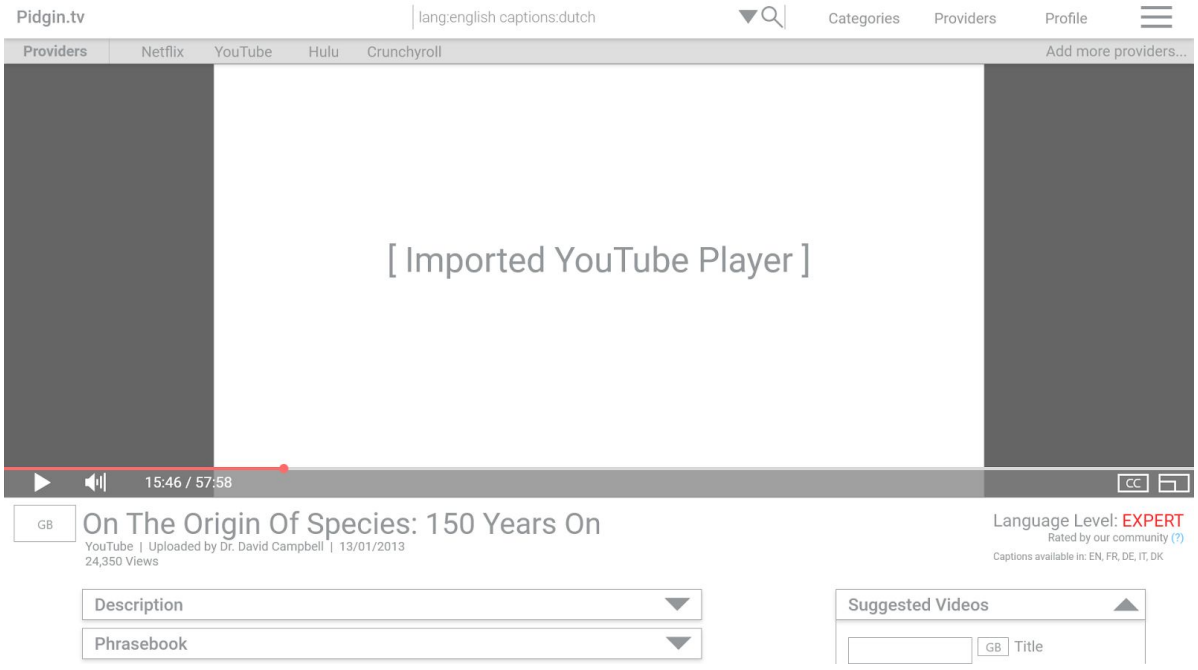


Appendix F - Dashboard (After feedback)



(Changes: added an icon for the spoken language, as well as icons for the available caption languages. Made content groups more visible using background colour. Added ribbon indicator under open parent.)

Appendix G - Video Player



Appendix H - Second Screen App