**Text Readability and Design Elements – Unit 6**

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**Part 1: Help Text and a Chosen Interface**

Today I am going to continue my critique of the Steam user interface. For this assignment, I will be using the Steam Windows Desktop client, and not the web, Linux, or MacOS clients. There are many ways to use text to help interface design. It can be used to help explain concepts both amateur and advanced, it can help remind the user of what heuristics to generate, and much more.

Contextual help text is one such example of text to aid the user in heuristics generation. Contextual help text, as put by OpenLearn, is text that is displayed only in certain situations meant to help the user understand concepts related to what they’re interacting with at the moment of reading (The Open University, 2016). Steam uses contextual help text in a number of ways. For example, if a game is listed for sale, in early access, or as a downloadable content purchase for a piece of software required to play, steam will notify the user with a banner displayed next to the purchase button, as well as a small paragraph detailing what this means for those unfamiliar with the terminology.

Steam also utilizes another type of help text; procedural help text. Procedural help text details an instruction set the user must follow in order to achieve an outcome or goal (Twinkl, n.d.). This can be seen in areas such as help submissions. Should a game or Valve device stop working, the user is able to submit a report. Upon submission, Steam will notify the user of what steps to take in order to either troubleshoot, or prepare a package for a return and service. Procedural text is also displayed in cases such as game installations. Steam makes it exceedingly clear how exactly a user is to play their game at every step in the process.

**Part 2: Typography Concepts**

Define the following terms in a table or bulleted list, writing full sentences for the definitions in your own words. Provide an example of how each one might be used in an interface. Use in-text citations to identify the sources of your information (this means that each definition must be cited).

* Leading
  + Leading in typography is defined as the space between lines of text, usually measured digitally by pixels (px) (City Tech Open Lab Course, n.d.). This refers specifically to vertical space. Leading can be extremely helpful to improve readability and information density of the body of text a designer is creating. Too much blank space between lines of text may contribute to a lack of information, and excess of space needed. Too little blank space may make the user feel as though it is difficult to read through, or keep track of their space in the text.
* Kerning
  + Kerning dictates the amount of space between letters in a line (City Tech Open Lab Course, n.d.). Kerning refers to the space horizontally from one letter to the next. Increasing the kerning of typography may contribute to adjusting the spacing of a text to improve readability with specific fonts. For example, one may use a different kerning for Times New Roman than they would for Calibri. Too little kerning in a typeface may cause the type to be unreadable.
* Tracking
  + Similar to kerning, Tracking also describes horizontal space in text (University of Pittsburgh, 2022). Instead of describing the space between letters, however, tracking describes the space to be used for an entire word. An example of this may be increasing tracking to fill a banner on a website, or emphasizing a word in text.
* Widow
  + In a relatively dark way to describe typographic methods, widows refer to the lines at the beginning of a page that end a paragraph (Stockton University, n.d.). For example, one may have a paragraph describing common typographical objects, but the last paragraph ends on page five despite beginning on page four. If the entirety of the paragraph on page five is a single line, it would be referred to as a widow.
* Orphan
  + Much like widows, orphans are lone lines of text part of a bigger paragraph (Stockton University, n.d.). Orphans refer to the single line of text at the bottom of a page that continues on the next page. For example, if there was a paragraph as described above that began on the last line of page four but continued to page five, then the line of text on page four would be referred to as an orphan.
* Anti-aliasing
  + Anti-aliasing is an interesting phenomenon encountered with strictly digital type and image outputs. It refers to the suppression of jagged ‘staircasing’ on slanted lines in a digital output (Chan, 2004). This method could be increasingly important depending on the font you use. For instance, Times New Roman may have a lot of both straight lines and curves given the serifed nature of the typeface. In this font, anti-aliasing could be important to provide a clean and readable output.

**Part 3: Design Concepts**

Headings and subheadings are an important part of interface design. Not only do headings and subheadings provide a clear an easily accessible organizational structure to quickly navigate, but they also communicate to the user exactly what to expect from a group of text, allowing the user to make a decision of whether or not the information detailed therewithin is necessary to read.

Consistency is another important factor in interface design. A consistent design language may help set the user up to use the tools they’ve learned from other interfaces to be able to quickly and efficiently navigate your interface with ease, and minimize confusion all the while. This is why it is important for the default hyperlink colour to remain consistent when possible. In addition to clear communication as to if a section of text is able to transport the user to a new area, default hyperlink colours also provide the user with the information they need on whether or not they’ve already visited that location before; or at least remove the need for guessing.

There are many design concepts to consider when porting your interface onto a mobile environment. Beyond the constraints of a completely different technological architecture, the screen must be considered in relation to your content. For example, if a designer has blocks of text optimized for a landscape orientation for a user’s screen, then it would be unwise to copy that text directly onto a mobile application. This is because common methods of mobile interaction included portrait design, and the layout could be completely compromised in the transition to a mobile environment.

**Part 4: Accessibility**

Not everyone can see the text or graphics on a website. In your own words, discuss at least 2 ways in which websites should consider users with these disabilities.

Visual impairments can affect many people in different ways. Because of this phenomenon, it is important that designers remain agile to anticipate for not only small impairments their users may have, but also those that may present more substantially. In order to accommodate, designers may incorporate a number of aspects into their design theory.

One such aspect may be contrast. Having a unique colour combination may help a company stand out over their competition, but a unique and fun colour combination should never be prioritized over readability. If a designer is ever straining or struggling to read text in any section of their design, they must rethink their theory immediately, as their more visually impaired clients may suffer even greater than the designer, and be completely unable to read the intended text to navigate the interface effectively. Colour combinations with sharp contrast to highlight important elements can be used to great effect to help clients of all backgrounds gather the information they need at any time while using an interface.

Another aspect to use could be element sizing. Small elements may be helpful to keep overall size requirements down, but these should be used sparingly. Clients and users that do not have such sharp vision may struggle to see design elements that they need to navigate an interface. This will only cause frustration while using an interface. Because of this, sizing can be utilized to great effect to both highlight important elements, and help visually impaired users to see the content a designer needs them to, and continue to use the interface well.

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