CMSI 370-01
INTERACTION DESIGN
Fall 2014

Assignment 0925 Feedback

Because we have not yet fully explored the scopes of outcomes *1b* and *2b*, those proficiencies have a maximum value (for this assignment) of **|**. That proficiency, for those outcomes, carry the signal "keep doing what you're doing."

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You had a couple of nice insights, but these were displaced by a number of separate issues, which then added up to distractions in reading the final report: (a) missing out on presenting the test data in a way that communicates the trends highlighted in the text very effectively; (b) a noticeable number of typos that gives me the impression that you wrote this once and never returned to review it; (c) occasional misuse of terms (e.g., definition of learnability; circular reasoning that learnability caused the good timed results…when in fact learnability *is defined* as good timed results); (d) arbitrary "term-dropping" (e.g., golden rules, universal usability, consistency, etc.) without any real follow-through.

1a — The two takeaways (home page issue; confusion with the word "zoom") are certainly good findings and do reflect an understanding of mental models and how they can diverge between developer and user. However, these insights are disrupted by the issues listed above. (**|**)

1b (max **|**) — Here, it is almost worse to toss out a bunch of terms but not really use them, than to avoid mentioning those terms in the first place. (**/**)

2a — A study was certainly performed, but the way it is documented has quite a few points for improvement (see above). (**/**)

2b (max **|**) — Actual, quality design decisions are found in the "home page" and "zoom" findings. However, the frequently awkward writing, loose definitions, and lack of follow-up on terms that were mentioned but never really examined, all contrive to drag down this proficiency. (**/**)

4d — Definitely a few unsubstantiated claims were spotted, plus the sources of the various mentioned concepts were not listed. (**/**)

4e — A single commit…does not cut it. (**/**)

4f — **+**

Updated feedback for commits up to 11/2/2014:

Improvements are seen, but somewhat marginal. One subset of data are presented (the new chart), but that chart does not label its axes and its integration with the text could have been better. For example, the discussion actually precedes the data; in reality, you saw the data first, then sought to explain it with your heuristic analysis. The text would have been better served by reflecting this sequence: present the chart to show the objective data; note that differential; then seek to explain it. Typos remain hit or miss—some went away, but new ones came in. And not just trivial ones like spaces after punctuation; there were also a couple of phrases that sorely needed rewording plus misspelled or miscapitalized names. Finally, additional text was noted surrounding technical terms from the course, but with very few exceptions, little new information or detail was actually seen.

The lone full step forward was the use of most terms—the definitions were generally more solid, and in most cases you stated their sources. That is certainly a good thing, though it missed the full follow-through of also providing formal citations for those sources, which would have then motivated a references section at the end. In total, that change counts as an improvement in content but is still a "miss" in execution.

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1a — As stated previously, this was decently demonstrated and still is; however as noted in the above paragraphs, the glitches that drag it down are slightly better, but largely remain and the improvements are not enough to motivate a bump. (**|**)

1b (max **|**) — This is a touch better, but still not perfect (cases in point: "universal usability" and details on "errors"). It is definitely better, but only a higher **/** and not really over the edge to the next level. (**/**)

2a — The attribution of some information definitely improves the documentation of this study, but the lack of follow-through to a list of references makes it fall short of a home run. Typos still abound, and the integration of objective data is better but introduces new flaws (i.e., missing axes). I think the improvements take it beyond a **/**, but the remaining shortcomings keep it from a **+**. (**|**)

2b (max **|**) — In the "effective use of terms" department, the improvement sought would be to elevate the discussion of the home page or printing tasks to the same specificity (illustration and pinpointing of the source of the issue) and groundedness (trackdown of the cause to a precise portion of the Apple guidelines) of the zoom task. This improvement is not seen in the other two issues.

There was clearly an attempt to add some detail, but as noted in the inline comments the substance was not really there. For example, in the case of the home page, ultimately the issue was that Opera appears to use a different vocabulary (i.e., "home page" vs. "speed dial"). You were right (as you were in the original version) to identify this as a huge miscommunication in mental models, but *why*? The difference in terminology hints at it right there—it can be shown to violate either "speak the user's language" or a failure in "help and documentation" (both Nielsen heuristics). The terminology difference can also be attributed to violating the principle of consistency (touched on by Shneiderman, Nielsen, *and* Tognazzini, so you know it's big!)—virtually all other browsers talk about the concept of a "home page," so Opera's introduction of "speed dial" is inconsistent with how other browsers work. Of course we don't want to be slavishly consistent—because then nothing would ever change!—but when it comes to interaction design we want to introduce changes in a manner that signals that we *are* doing something different, then provide help in acclimating the user to this change (ultimately with the hope of convincing the user that this change is for the better).

As for the issue with printing, the root cause of the error was not quite clear. Your analysis mentions that Opera would only "print a page that isn't the home page" but said analysis never provides details on this limitation. Did Opera crash? Report an error? Did it inexplicably disable the *Print* command when on the home page? Having then provided this detail, you could reason about it more. If, for example, the issue was the latter (disabled *Print* command), then you could go further by arguing that Opera missed out on "know thy user" (Shneiderman)—i.e., users have come to expect any browser page to be printable, and so its developers should have realized that this would be contrary to most users' expectations.

Anyway, sorry that this one feedback item is long-winded, but I really wanted to explain why your zoom discussion worked, but the others didn't. Based on your revision it appears that the positive qualities of the zoom section were not fully appreciated, because they were not emulated in the other sections. I hope that the preceding two paragraphs illustrate how these qualities could have been applied to the other two tasks.

So in the end, as I hope you can see here, the changes don't quite address this outcome. (**/**)

4d — Added sources improve on this outcome, but missed formal citations keep it from maxing out. (**|**)

4e — Commit frequency is better, but messages are still too generic (of *course* the new commit has revisions and changes—but what in particular got changed in *this* commit?). (**|**)