

1.2 Task – User Research

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Opening Script:

Hi, _____. My name is Christian, and I'm going to be walking you through this session today. We're conducting interviews to better understand how people approach learning a new subject and vocabulary. This should take about 15-20 minutes.

This is not a test. You can't do or say anything wrong here. If you have any questions as we go along, don't hesitate to ask them. If you need a break, let me know.

Let's get started. I'd like to ask you a few questions for a project we're working on about education and learning new vocabulary.

Interview Questions:

1. Why do you think learning new vocabulary is difficult?
2. When was the last time you had to learn a good deal of new vocabulary? Did you succeed? Why or why not?
3. What were your biggest challenges when starting a new class/job/project? Why?
4. Tell me about a time you've been frustrated with jargon and new vocabulary. Why was it frustrating? Is there something that could have made it easier for you?
5. What methods do you use to learn a large amount of new vocabulary? What are the advantages of your approach, other than efficiently learning the vocabulary?
6. What features do you think would be most useful to you in a flashcard program? How will these features help you accomplish your goals? What are your goals?

Interviews

Interview 1 - Sean Keeley - 26 year old Student

1. More complicated vocabulary you can't use, so you can't recall when you need, or when it's best to use it.
2. Last month. Not so much success. I didn't practice speaking with native Japanese people after learning the new vocabulary.
3. Biggest challenge in new job is fully understanding what is expected of me, and what to expect from others. When you're new to a job, it's often the case where you go through training phase, you feel you aren't moving very fast, and people are telling you things that you should have already known, and you don't want to ask too much for fear of looking foolish.
4. I was asked to review/proofread a physics based research paper that contained many acronyms and specific quantum phenomena. I had to review the paper alongside wikipedia articles. I had about 7 tabs open. It was frustrating because it was a field i am not in, but people in the field

expect outsiders to know, and definitions build on previous terms. If i had a person who was more related to the field who I could ask questions to directly, it would be easier. Terms can actually mean different things to different people if they aren't working on the same thing.

5. Language classes every week. Main method was an app, treated the vocabulary learning like a game. Kind of a game, kind of a test. Since it's like a game, you feel more rewarded when you get a correct answer, and I was more inclined to keep studying because I wanted to get a longer streak. There was advantages to having a longer streak in the game.
6. I've tried different programs in the past, if you are forced to give the answer before seeing it. Instead of just marking whether you got it right or wrong when you flip the card. I think a more strict approach is better. This way actually makes you learn the material, "you can't trick yourself". My goals for learning Japanese are to be able to have a conversation with people I meet in stores, restaurants, out and about.

Interview 2 - Monique Henry - 29 year old Safety Health and Environment Manager

1. Because it's something so new. Adult learning is hard because of time constraints. Most people don't have the time to give to learn something new.
2. Master's in Public Health. Yes. I worked hard, took time to study, flashcards, studied with others. Tie between flashcards and group study for most effective.
3. A lot of information at once, trying to drink from a firehose. Have to figure out how to attack it appropriately. Prioritization, "term called triaging". Figure out which concepts are critical. Take it all in at first, then prioritize and figure it out.
4. When i first started at my previous job, they used a lot of acronyms for a lot of things. Overwhelming for a new person, thankfully a person pointed me towards an internal acronym search in the company. The search let me follow along in meetings without slowing everyone down. Frustrated because you don't want to seem incompetent or ill prepared. Something to explain terminology is what I needed (company specific terms).
5. Flash cards. You'll see, as you go through them, which ones you miss, and you can focus on those. That helps to retain more. Repetition, and missing a card isn't a punishment, it's an opportunity to get better.
6. It'd be cool if you could make your own flashcards or upload a vocabulary list (csv file), or if the app was able to tie in a textbook or some source of info to populate a list of flash cards. Although making the flash cards is a learning aid in itself. Book flash cards aid in discovery of new information not thought of. My next goal is MBA and CIH, and both are going to involve deep terminology and learning new concepts.

Interview 3 - Dr. Marcia Henry - 56 year old Education Specialist

1. Because it's new and you may not have a comparison. You haven't heard it enough. Not enough exposure.

2. Last 30 days. Developing a new curriculum. Looking at other people's approach, their acronyms, trying to apply their methods. Trying to find something akin to what we're doing, and applying it to our applications. Did succeed. I have a level of proficiency which helped me get the job done.
3. Gathering all the information, trying to get the big picture, and seeing how all the information fits together. And failing to ask the right questions. Big picture helps you understand your role in the situation. Other people got help, got someone to help them through. Unfamiliarity, don't recognize what is and is not significant.
4. New software at job. Some is more frustrating than others. It was tedious. Adobe Captivate. You can do demonstrations, we use these to teach. Needs a lot of editing to make a teaching tool. A lot of extra work. Frustrating getting used to the limitations of the software while knowing the capabilities of said software. Part of the learning curve. Getting familiar with a new process is frustrating, not necessarily hard. If they had some sort of pop up that let you know a feature wasn't in an expected place. Summary of changes, directory to guide you to features. Offer a solution when there's an error ("you may try...").
5. Create some sort of quick reference guide, and frequent it. More use = more recall. My approach saves time, lets me refer back when I forget. Always available. "I need things at my fingertips".
6. Subcategories if i want to focus. Alphabetical Index, to look up concepts. Sort by topic as well. Mastery of the topic, the ability to not have to use the aid. Use the app as a tool that you can pull out.

Interview Notes

Quote: "I think a more strict approach is better when it comes to flashcard apps. This way you actually have to learn the material, you can't trick yourself."

Thinking: I think the app should require strict answers

Quote: "The acronym search at my previous company helped a lot. It let me follow along in meetings without slowing everyone down. I was frustrated before because I didn't want to seem incompetent or ill prepared."

Feeling: I was frustrated because I seemed incompetent and ill prepared because I didn't know company-specific acronyms.

Quote: "My preferred method for learning large amounts of vocabulary is to make a quick reference guide and refer to it frequently."

Doing: I make a quick reference guide and frequent it

Quote: "I used an app to learn Japanese. It was kind of a game, kind of a test. You feel more rewarded when you get a correct answer, and I wanted to get a longer streak."

Feeling: I felt rewarded when I got a right answer

Quote: “It’d be cool if you could make your own flashcards or upload a vocabulary list.”

Thinking: I think the app should let you make your own flashcards.

Quote: “My biggest challenge with starting a new job is the firehose of information. I have to prioritize and triage. Figure out which concepts are critical.”

Doing: I prioritize learning some concepts over others at first

Quote: “I think the biggest challenge to learning new information is getting the big picture and seeing how all the information fits together”

Thinking: I think the biggest challenge is getting the big picture

Quote: “Learning new software at work is tedious. It is frustrating getting used to the limitations of the software.

Feeling: I am frustrated when software is tedious

Quote: “Last month I attempted to learn a lot more Japanese vocabulary. I was not successful because I did not practice speaking and using the new vocabulary with native Japanese speakers.”

Doing: I attempted to learn more Japanese vocabulary by using it in conversations with native speakers

Doing

- I make a quick reference guide and frequent it
- I prioritize learning some concepts over others at first
- I attempted to learn more Japanese vocabulary by using it in conversations with native speakers

Thinking

- I think the app should require strict answers
- I think the app should let you make your own flashcards.
- I think the biggest challenge is getting the big picture

Feeling

- I was frustrated because I seemed incompetent and ill prepared because I didn’t know company-specific acronyms.
- I felt rewarded when I got a right answer
- I am frustrated when software is tedious