MB Docket No. 12-108, In the Matter of User Interfaces, and Video Programming Guides and Menus

Comments filed by

The Students in
COM 390 – Accessible Communication Technologies,
taught by Christian Vogler in the Spring of 2014 at Gallaudet University

and

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Who we are

COM 390 is a class that is taught annually at the Department of Communication Studies at Gallaudet University in the spring semester, with a strong emphasis on accessible communication technologies for the deaf and hard of hearing. Covered topics include access to 9-1-1, relay services, accessible telecommunications, and captioning. This class is currently taught by Christian Vogler, who is the director of the Technology Access Program.

Introduction

The class would like to respectfully offer their support for the petition for reconsideration by the National Association of the Deaf and other consumer groups on whether voice and gesture interfaces can be considered comparable to a button, icon, or key for turning captions on and off. These comments are the outcome of an in-class discussion about the future of watching videos, and ideas collected by the students for the user interface. Key to caption controls is that they must be accessible, something that gesture and voice commands are not.

Watching videos in the future

The class discussed the following ideas for watching videos now and in the future, and explored what the caption control should look like for each:

Idea 1: You have a radio/video player with a projector where you turn on closed captions. You have a button on the radio next to the usual play/pause and volume controls that turns on captions. The button should be big to make it easy for people with mobility impairments to use. And the radio should have an interface with assistive technology for those who cannot use buttons.

Idea 2: You have a laptop set up with video apps. You turn on closed captions with a big button on the keyboard (similar to audio controls on some keyboards), and then the laptop will remember forever.

Idea 3: Brain interface to TV. You think "turn on closed captions", and it happens. This mechanism should be flexible, so that people who cannot think those words have another way to turn captions on and off. For example, have the system adapt to a specific thought.

Idea 4: You use glasses to watch video. Then you turn on closed captions via a brain interface (like in idea 3). Alternatively, you push a button on the side of glasses.

Idea 5: You have a touchscreen TV. The closed captioning button is on the touchscreen in a corner, and you turn on the captions via a simple touch. The button should be large and have good color contrast. The TV also needs to interface with assistive technology, like in idea 1.

Idea 6: When you buy a TV, get it set up when you are at the store. <u>Alternative:</u> Store your preferences on your phone, or ID card, or something similar. When you go to a new TV or new computer in range, your phone automatically communicates with the TV and forces it to turn on captions. This assumes that the phone is already accessible.

Conclusion

The mechanism for turning on closed captions needs to follow the principles of universal design. Voice and gesture interfaces do not follow this principle. But at the same time, in future technology the meaning of "universal design" could change – for example with brain interfaces. For each new technology, the most appropriate mechanism for turning on captions needs to be evaluated carefully. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted

/s/ The students of the COM 390 class

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