

Recommendation

ITU-T Y.4219 (03/2023)

SERIES Y: Global information infrastructure, Internet protocol aspects, next-generation networks, Internet of Things and smart cities

Internet of things and smart cities and communities –
Requirements and use cases

**Accessibility requirements for the user
interface of smart applications supporting
Internet of things**

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Recommendation ITU-T Y.4219

Accessibility requirements for the user interface of smart applications supporting Internet of things

Summary

When accessibility is properly designed the use of Internet of things (IoT) can increase the quality of life among persons with disabilities, persons with age-related disabilities and those with specific needs. There are many possible IoT services in various environments that provide accessibility services as well. The IoT also can be used to create tools for persons with many types of disabilities and specific needs, including physical, visual, hearing and cognitive disabilities. IoT services interact with a user through the user interface. To ensure an IoT service is accessible, the user interface must be accessible. An accessible user interface must take into account a user's physical, audio and visual capabilities and consider compatibility with any assistive technology used by the user. Recommendation ITU-T Y.4219 outlines essential requirements for a user interface that must be considered in order to secure the accessibility of smart applications.

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Introduction

The concept of universal design, as addressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), is that the design of services should be usable by all people to the greatest extent possible. It stresses explicitly the concept of inclusive design without needing adaptation or specialised design. However, the universal design should not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. This means that all the smart applications supporting Internet of things (IoT) must be designed to accommodate both persons with and without disabilities. However, in many IoT services, the reality is that developers are not creating smart applications that support the needs of persons with disabilities due to a lack of knowledge of accessible applications or preconceived notion that it is not very necessary. This Recommendation outlines essential requirements for a user interface that must be considered in order to secure the accessibility of smart applications.

Recommendation ITU-T Y.4219

Accessibility requirements for the user interface of smart applications supporting Internet of things

1 Scope

This Recommendation specifies accessibility requirements for the user interface of smart applications supporting Internet of things (IoT).

The scope of this Recommendation includes:

- accessibility requirements for user interfaces of smart applications supporting the Internet of things (IoT) in order for persons with disabilities, persons with age-related disabilities and those with specific needs to be able to utilise the benefits of IoT services.

2 References

The following ITU-T Recommendations and other references contain provisions which, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this Recommendation. At the time of publication, the editions indicated were valid. All Recommendations and other references are subject to revision; users of this Recommendation are therefore encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent edition of the Recommendations and other references listed below. A list of the currently valid ITU-T Recommendations is regularly published. The reference to a document within this Recommendation does not give it, as a stand-alone document, the status of a Recommendation.

[ITU-T F.790] Recommendation ITU-T F.790 (2007), *Telecommunications accessibility guidelines for older persons and persons with disabilities*.

[ITU-T Y.4000] Recommendation ITU-T Y.4000/Y.2060 (2012), *Overview of the Internet of things*.

[ITU-T Y.4204] Recommendation ITU-T Y.4204 (2019), *Accessibility requirements for the Internet of things applications and services*.

3 Definitions

3.1 Terms defined elsewhere

This Recommendation uses the following terms defined elsewhere:

3.1.1 accessibility [b-ITU-T F.791]: The degree to which a product, device, service or environment (virtual or real) is available to as many people as possible.

3.1.2 assistive technology (AT) [b-ITU-T F.791]: Piece of equipment, product system, hardware, software or service that is used to enable, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.

3.1.3 Internet of things (IoT) [ITU-T Y.4000]: A global infrastructure for the information society, enabling advanced services by interconnecting (physical and virtual) things based on existing and evolving interoperable information and communication technologies.

NOTE 1 – Through the exploitation of identification, data capture, processing and communication capabilities, the IoT makes full use of things to offer services to all kinds of applications, whilst ensuring that security and privacy requirements are fulfilled.

NOTE 2 – From a broader perspective, the IoT can be perceived as a vision with technological and societal implications.

3.1.4 person with age-related disabilities [b-ITU-T F.791]: A person with cognitive or physical disabilities caused by the aging process. Examples are impaired eyesight, deafness in varying degrees, reduced mobility or cognitive abilities.

3.1.5 person with specific needs [b-ITU-T F.791]: Includes persons with disabilities (PWDs), persons who are not literate, those with learning disabilities, children, indigenous people, older persons with age-related disabilities, and anyone who has a temporary disability.

3.1.6 screen reader software [b-ITU-T F.791]: Software application used by a person who is blind or cannot easily read print to identify and interpret what is shown on a video display and read aloud using speech synthesis.

3.1.7 specific needs [b-ITU-T F.791]: This replaces the use of the term 'special needs'. This term refers to a wide range of categories including women, children, youth, indigenous people, older persons with age-related disabilities, persons with illiteracy, as well as persons with disabilities (PWDs), see [b-ITU PP Res.175], [b-ITU WTDC Res.58], and [b-ITU WTDC AP] and clause 6.39 of [b-ITU-T F.791].

3.1.8 universal design [b-ITU-T Y.4211]: The design of products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. "Universal design" shall not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed.

NOTE – Paraphrased from [b-UNCRPD].

3.2 Terms defined in this Recommendation

None.

4 Abbreviations and acronyms

This Recommendation uses the following abbreviations and acronyms:

AAC	Alternative Augmentative Communication
ASR	Automated Speech Recognition
AT	Assistive Technology
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IoT	Internet of Things
PWD	Persons with Disabilities
TTS	Text-to-Speech
UI	User Interface

5 Conventions

In this Recommendation:

The expression "**is required to**" indicates a requirement that must be strictly followed and from which no deviation is permitted if conformance to this Recommendation is to be claimed.

The expression "**is recommended**" indicates a requirement that is recommended but which is not absolutely required. Thus, this requirement need not be present to claim conformance.

6 Accessible smart applications to support IoT

The concept of universal design, as addressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) [b-UNCRPD], is that the design of services should be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible. It specifically stresses the concept of inclusive design, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. However, the universal design should not exclude assistive devices for particular groups of persons with disabilities where this is needed. This means that all the smart applications supporting IoT must be designed to accommodate both persons with and without disabilities.

However, in many cases, it is a reality that developers are not creating smart applications that support the needs of persons with disabilities due to a lack of knowledge of the accessible application or a preconceived notion that it is not very necessary. This Recommendation outlines essential requirements that a user interface must consider in order to secure the accessibility of smart applications.

As identified in [ITU-T Y.4204], there are many possible IoT services in various environments that provide accessibility services such as home automation services, IoT for work environments, transport services, etc. The use of IoT, when properly designed, may increase the quality of life among persons with disabilities, persons with age-related disabilities and those with specific needs. The IoT also can be used to create tools for persons with many types of disabilities and specific needs, including physical, visual, hearing and cognitive disabilities.

Figure 1 depicts the concept of accessible IoT services.

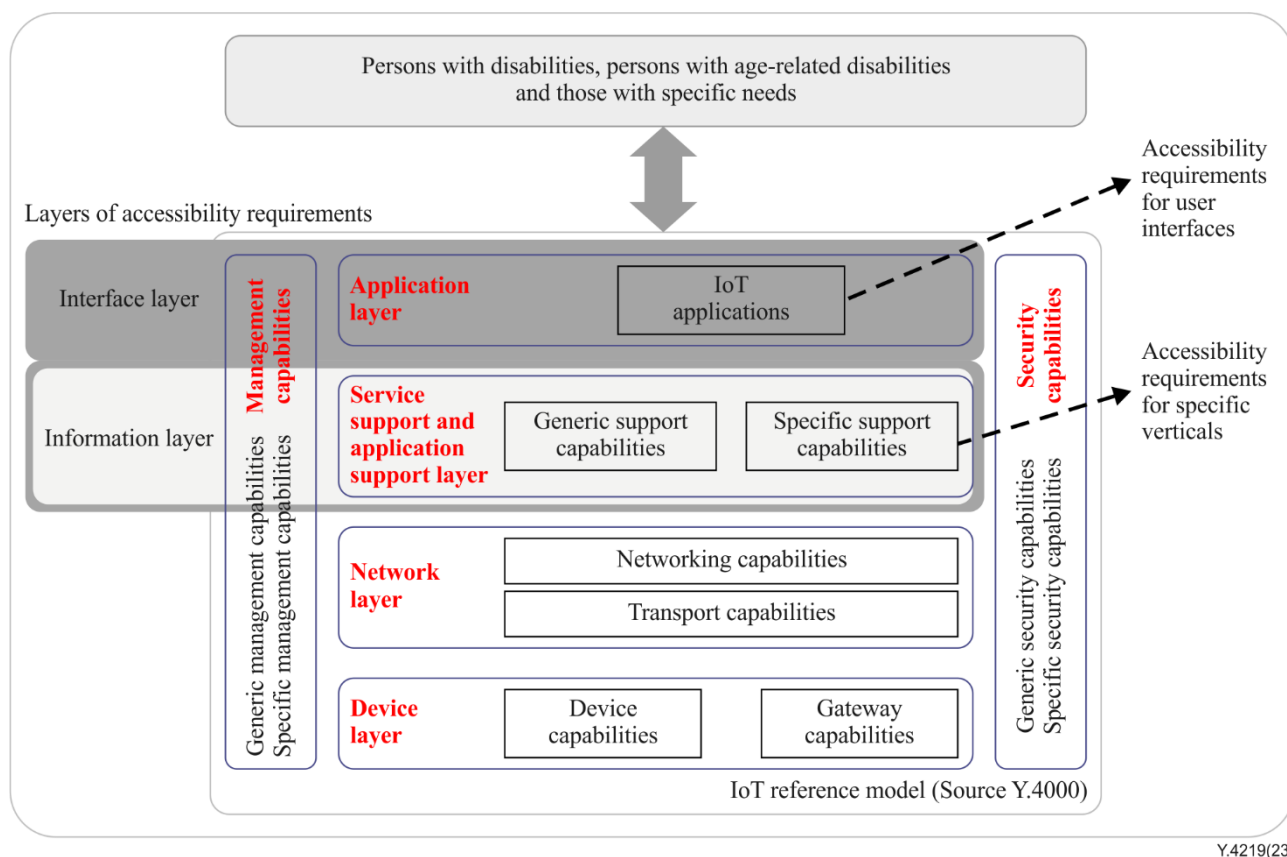


Figure 1 – Concept of accessible IoT services

As introduced in [b-ITU-T Y.4211], the concept of a two-layer structure of accessible IoT services is presented here. The information layer of accessible IoT services is mainly concerned with the service support and applications support layer of the IoT reference model [ITU-T Y.4000]. The

accessible information should be prepared concerning the user's physical, audio, visual, linguistic and cognitive abilities. For public transport, accessibility requirements are addressed in [b-ITU-T Y.4211].

On the other hand, the interface layer of accessible IoT services is mainly concerned with the application layer of the IoT reference model [ITU-T Y.4000]. When an IoT service prepares accessibility information, it should be presented to the user through the user interface. To ensure an IoT service is accessible, the user interface must also be accessible. The accessible user interface must take into account a user's physical, audio and visual capabilities, and consider compatibility with any assistive technology used by the user. This Recommendation directly addresses the accessibility requirements for user interfaces of smart applications supporting IoT.

Smart applications may include but are not limited to, applications for mobile, tablets, wearables, embedded panels and interactive digital signage that are part of IoT services. However, the physical interface is not of interest here although it may be a part of IoT services.

7 User interface accessibility requirements for smart applications

In this clause, user interface (UI) accessibility requirements are listed. Requirements are categorised according to [ITU-T Y.4204].

7.1 UI requirements to perceive information

This clause identifies requirements of UI on users' ability to perceive information and that the users equally recognise all application contents regardless of disabilities.

- 1) Alternative text is required to be provided along with non-text content.

NOTE 1 – Alternative text is a textual substitute for non-text content. The alternative text should be specific and succinct. The alternative text may be converted into a voice using screen reader software and be used as a basis for sign interpretation.

- 2) Both caption and sign interpretation are required to be provided along with the audio contents or visual contents with auditory information.

NOTE 2 – A display with a small screen, such as a wearable device or an embedded panel, may exceptionally omit the sign interpretation.

NOTE 3 – Since it is difficult for persons with hearing disabilities to recognise information provided by audio, caption or sign interpretation is required. It is necessary to provide both because each person may have different specific needs.

- 3) Caption and sign interpretation are required to maintain their physical size large enough for a user to recognise it.

NOTE 4 – When caption and sign interpretation are displayed on a small screen, securing a size that the user can sufficiently recognise is essential. In addition, visual content and its accompanying captions and sign interpretation should be arranged together to be recognised on one screen.

- 4) Caption and sign interpretation are required not to obscure important information on the screen.

NOTE 5 – Caption and sign interpretation need to have separate spaces to not overlap with visual content. Still, if they need to be overlapped due to screen size constraints, it must be ensured that important visual information is displayed well.

- 5) When text appearing on the screen in visual content has meaning, a separate voice commentary explaining the text content is required to be provided.

NOTE 6 – In particular, when the text information displayed on the screen requires a separate explanation, it is necessary to explain it rather than just stating it.

- 6) Automated speech recognition (ASR) captioning is recommended to be used only in limited situations where a human captioner cannot intervene.

NOTE 7 – ASR captioning cannot wholly replace human captioners and should be regarded as complementary, not alternative.

- 7) Sign interpretation using avatars is recommended to be used only in limited situations where real human sign language interpreters cannot.

NOTE 8 – Sign intervention using avatars cannot clearly express non-manual signals, which are essential elements of sign language, and have limitations in not being interactive. Like ASR, it should be considered complementary, not alternative.

- 8) It is required to provide a voice commentary explaining visual content provided without audio or text information.

NOTE 9 – Since it is difficult for persons with visual disabilities to recognise visual information of visual contents, voice commentary is required if there is text information on the screen that is not explained by audio information.

- 9) All information displayed on the screen is required to be recognisable regardless of colour.

NOTE 10 – All information provided by the content should be made recognisable to users who cannot distinguish a particular colour, users of black-and-white displays, users who view black-and-white prints, and users in high contrast mode.

- 10) All information displayed on the screen is required to be kept in a sufficient brightness contrast ratio so that foreground and background colours can be distinguished.

NOTE 11 – All user interface components and text displayed on the screen are required to be provided with a brightness contrast ratio of 4.5:1 or higher so that foreground and background colours can be distinguished [b-Yan].

- 11) Instruction for a user to take a specific action is required to be provided distinctly even when the user utilizes alternative technologies.

NOTE 12 – When users recognise information using alternative text (i.e., using screen readers), the names of terms and components used in the alternative text should be consistently provided so that instructions can be clearly communicated. For example, when creating buttons for user consent, the name of the buttons should be consistent throughout the applications. Possible candidates of the button name, in this case, are "ok", "yes" and "accept". However, only one of them should be used consistently within an application to avoid confusion.

- 12) Instruction for a user to take a specific action is recommended to be recognisable regardless of shape, size, location, orientation, colour or sound.

NOTE 13 – In particular, it is essential to ensure consistency so that users with various specific needs can easily understand instructions when using recognised and clearly identified symbols.

- 13) Notification information is required to be provided in various ways, such as using screen display, sound, vibration, etc.

NOTE 14 – For users with cognitive disabilities, simultaneous use of various senses such as hearing, vision and touch for important notification information is preferred. In addition, to meet the diverse specific needs of different users, it is desirable to provide notification information so that the user may select a method suitable for the user.

- 14) When providing audio content, the appropriate volume and speed are recommended to be maintained.

NOTE 15 – It is not suitable for the user to continuously adjust the volume to identify the audio content. It is also necessary to maintain an appropriate audio content level so that it is not too fast or too late. To this end, the opinions of various users must be reflected.

- 15) When providing audio content, it is recommended to minimise noise.

NOTE 16 – It is necessary to minimise noise, especially for users who use hearing aids, headsets, etc.

7.2 UI requirements to understand information

This clause identifies the requirements of UI on the user's ability to understand the information. It concerns providing that the user understands the content provided in the application regardless of disabilities.

- 1) When using the input form, a method to prevent or correct input errors is required to be provided.

NOTE 1 – The input format is required to provide alternative information to identify its intended use and purpose. Also, explanatory information on the input content should be provided to prevent input errors in the input format with a different input method. When there is an error in the user input value, a method should be provided to inform the user of the error content to be understood and corrected. Moreover, it is desirable to move the focus to the point where the error occurred so that it is easy to correct the error contained in the input form.

- 2) Controls with similar functions within the application are required to be provided consistently.

NOTE 2 – For those with cognitive disabilities, different controls with similar functions within the application may confuse users. The same type of controls should be used throughout the application to avoid confusion.

- 3) It is recommended that no blinking or flashing content be provided.

NOTE 3 – Content that has a blinking effect on the screen may cause photosensitive seizures. Inevitably used, content that provides a blink is required to be informed in advance and equipped with a way to avoid it.

- 4) It is recommended that no automatic background sound be used.

NOTE 4 – Using the background sound that is automatically played should be avoided. In the case of using a background sound, a means for the user to control it, such as stopping, pausing, and controlling volume should be provided.

- 5) When a screen is switched or an event such as a pop-up is executed, a method of predicting it is required to be provided.

NOTE 5 – Especially when a user is using a screen reader, the user needs to know the transition of the screen when a screen is switched automatically or at an event such as a pop-up is executed.

- 6) If an application is switched to an external application, it is required to provide a way to predict it.

NOTE 6 – Users using screen readers may not be aware of the transition of the application in a visual way. In this case, confusion can be reduced only when the screen is clearly notified before switching.

- 7) The content placed on the screen is recommended to be consistently arranged in the same order.

NOTE 7 – When the arrangement of content is dynamically changed, the user should be able to see that the structure of the content is dynamically changed. In addition, content that dynamically changes its placement should allow the user to know the placement criteria.

- 8) All text used on the screen is required to use clear expressions, symbols, and abbreviations.

NOTE 8 – Clear expressions, symbols, and abbreviations should be used for users with developmental disabilities or who speak a non-native language. In particular, explanations should be included when using abbreviations so that the original meaning can be grasped.

- 9) Visual contents such as images and photos are required to be easily understood without an additional sentence description.

NOTE 9 – In particular, even when text descriptions are included in visual contents such as images and photos, the meaning should be grasped only by the image and the picture itself.

- 10) If two or more functions need to be used continuously to perform a single action, a clear explanation is required to be given to users.

NOTE 10 – When providing the ability to perform an action using sequential functions, an explanation is required to be provided so that the user knows the meaning of each function and the consequences of each detailed action step.

- 11) If feedback is provided to the user, the functionality is required to be provided to clarify that the user is aware.

NOTE 11 – Identifying the user's perception is not just a wrong message, but it is necessary to determine whether it is recognised through the user's secondary feedback.

- 12) When using voice recognition technology, a means for the user to verify the recognised content is required to be provided.

NOTE 12 – Since speech recognition technology faces inherent error possibilities, it is essential to present the recognised content to the user to determine whether it is recognised as intended by the user.

- 13) When providing a complementary alternative augmentative communication (AAC) function, a training information is required to be provided so that the user can learn the AAC function.

NOTE 13 – AAC can be used as an alternative for users with speech disabilities. When using AAC as a UI, the application must allow the user to master the function thoroughly.

7.3 UI requirements to perform operation

This clause identifies the requirements of UI on the user's ability to perform the required operations. It concerns the user can operate all the functions provided by the application regardless of disabilities.

- 1) All user interface components with meaning or function are required to be focused on.

NOTE 1 – The focus determines the reading order of the screen reader. All user interface components with meaning or function must be focused because the screen reader ignores content that is not focused.

- 2) The focus is required to move in a logical order so that the user can predict it.

NOTE 2 – Since the screen reader user recognises the arrangement of the content in the order of focus, the focus must be moved in the order in which the user can understand the composition of the content.

- 3) The focus is required not to be shifted to user interface components invisible on the screen or having no logical meaning.

NOTE 3 – Components used for the visual embellishments must not to be focused to prevent confusion in content recognition through screen readers.

- 4) The area of focus displayed is required to be provided to match the location and size of the content.

NOTE 4 – The area of focus is the same as the visual size and position since it serves as a reference for touch input for persons with visual disabilities.

- 5) All controls on a touch-based mobile device are required to be controllable by a pressing action.

NOTE 5 – Complex pressing operations such as multi-touch operations that require the use of two or more fingers simultaneously (e.g., pan, drag and drop, etc.) must provide an alternative simple pressing operation as well.

- 6) The response time for content with time limits is required to be adjustable.

NOTE 6 – If the UI presents content that requires the user's response within the time limit, the UI must provide a means to extend or cease the time limit. If it is inevitable, the user must be informed in advance that there is a time limit. Also, the UI must notify the user that the time is up when the response time reaches its limit.

- 7) When video or animation content is played automatically, the UI is required to provide means to control the content play.

NOTE 7 – The means to control video or animation content may include moving forward, backwards, pausing, and stopping.

8) Controls are required to be provided in sufficient size and spacing.

NOTE 8 – If the controls have no clear borders, sufficient clearance between controls must be provided.

NOTE 9 – Exceptions are the controls provided by default to the operating system.

9) Regardless of the device's screen size, it is recommended that the horizontal and vertical sizes of the controls are large enough to make it comfortable to be touched with a finger.

NOTE 10 – To prevent the user's mistake, sufficient gaps between controls need to be secured for those who have difficulty in precise hand movements.

10) When displaying numerical information, it is recommended to be provided in a way that does not require calculation by the user.

NOTE 11 – For example, if the current time and the expected completion time are displayed when expressing the time, the user needs to calculate the elapsed time or remaining time directly. In such cases, numerical information that may be verified without calculation must be displayed to meet the purpose of displaying the information.

7.4 UI requirements for assistive technology

This clause identifies the requirements of UI on the user's ability to use suitable assistive technology. It concerns providing users with access to content provided by the application regardless of technology.

1) Text content is required to provide a way to utilize font-related functions provided by the operating system.

NOTE 1 – Text content must be provided to allow adjustment of the font size. It is desirable to use a general-purpose font to use font-related functions.

NOTE 2 – When adjusting the font size, the adjustment is applied within the range where the screen layout can be maintained.

2) User interface components are required to be made available using assistive technology.

NOTE 3 – It is desirable to make the most of the primary user interface components provided by the operating system. If essential user interface components are unavoidably unavailable, assistive technologies provided by the operating system need to be made available. If a critical component is equipped with a function different from its original function, information about the function must be provided so that the user can understand the function of the control.

3) When providing a communication function between users or with an operator, the communication function is recommended to be designed to enable connection with a relay service.

NOTE 4 – A relay service is a sign interpretation service over the telephone and other communications methods. For further information on incorporating the relay service, see [b-ITU-T F.930].

Appendix I

Use cases indicating the need for the accessible user interface of smart applications supporting the Internet of things (IoT)

(This appendix does not form an integral part of this Recommendation.)

In this appendix, use cases will be presented as examples to illustrate the needs for accessibility requirements for the user interface of smart applications supporting the Internet of things (IoT) in order for persons with disabilities, persons with age-related disabilities and those with specific needs to utilize the benefits of IoT services.

I.1 Providing alternative texts

When smart devices are used on IoT services, persons with visual disabilities have difficulty reading and understanding the information displayed on the screen. Also, it is difficult for them to locate buttons or enter information using the screen digitizer of the smart device. To address this problem, smart applications need to provide an alternative means to replace the information displayed on the screen so that it can be understood without visually perceiving the screen. As an alternative means of converting visual information into auditory information, screen reader software can be used in smart devices. This screen reader software uses the text-to-speech (TTS) function to read the screen to the user. Many mobile operating systems provide built-in screen reader software. Users can also install and use a third-party screen reader software of their choice.

In general, screen reader software can convert textual information into auditory information using the TTS function. In addition, for non-text information such as images and videos, the TTS functionality can be used by adding appropriate alternative information as annotations to images or videos.

In order to express appropriate alternative auditory information for visual content, appropriate principles must be consistently applied. Also, semantic equivalence between the visual information provided through the screen and the auditory alternative through the screen reader software should be maintained.

In the case of one-to-one conversion that simply relies on the function of TTS, the alternative auditory output may result in missing, distorted or implicitly expressed information or instructions. Consider a screen that receives a user ID and password input for membership authentication. The visual screen can consist of two simple input components that ask for a user ID and password. However, converting it to audio using the screen reader software may not clearly explain what each of the input components are for. Hence, extra instructions may need to be provided for clarification.

In some cases, an icon of a magnifying glass may be used for searches. Utilizing icons is very effective at compactly presenting information visually, but when converting to auditory information, it is often difficult to transcribe information clearly without appropriate explanation.

Therefore, during the development process of the smart applications, the contents displayed on the screen needs to ensure the semantic equivalence between the two aspects, – one, the visually provided information, and two, the auditory alternative information provided by the screen reader software.

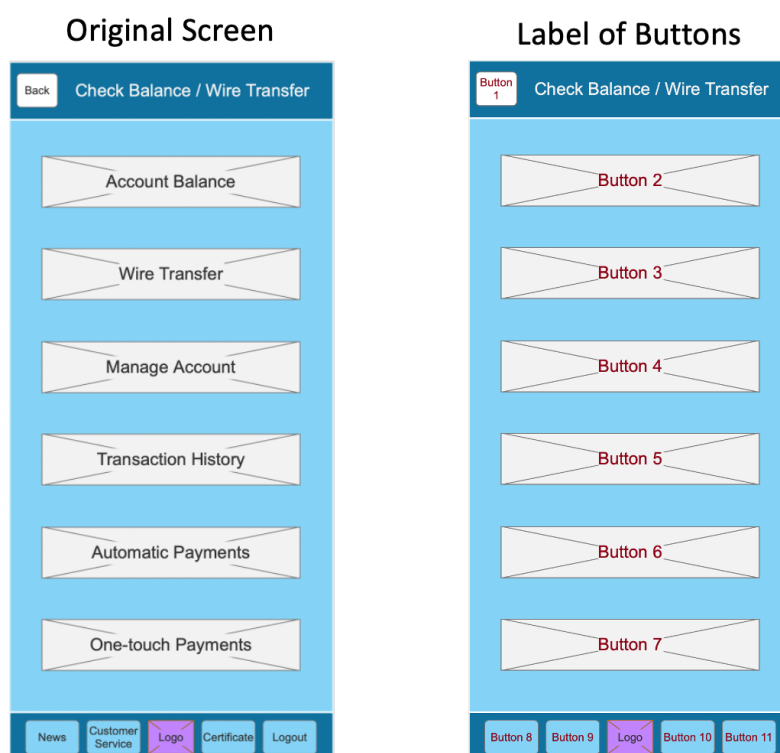


Figure I.1 – Example of incorrect button labelling

The example shown in Figure I.1 shows a person without disabilities who can choose what he/she wants by looking at the buttons listed on the screen. A person with visual disabilities cannot perceive the visual contents of the screen and must read the screen through the screen reader software. Since the buttons are images, the TTS function reads the label of the buttons. If an inexperienced developer leaves the label of said buttons unmodified to the initial value of a "button", the screen reader software will read meaningless information. Examples of what the user will hear would be only "Button 1, Button 2, Button 3, etc." Then, the user would no longer be able to proceed with the application.

I.2 Providing proper focus structure

When auditory information is used as an alternative to visual information, several problems may arise due to the differences between visual and auditory characteristics.

Visual information is represented in two dimensions. This allows multiple pieces of information (i.e., detailed components) to be expressed at once. Usually, visual information is expressed utilizing a variety of visual elements such as text, icons, and pictures. The information is provided to reflect the service provider's intentions through the spatial arrangement of these detailed components.

On the other hand, auditory information displays information in chronological order. Auditory information is mostly commentary expression utilizing various linguistic expressions and various sound signals. Due to the nature of the auditory information in which information is provided over time, the order in which information is presented is important to reflect the intention of the service provider. Auditory alternative information is dependent on the visual information on the screen. Alternative auditory information is provided for the visual information. The goal should be not only to reflect sensory differences between visual and auditory information but also to allow the user to understand the screen and communicate with the device regardless of whether the screen is not visually perceivable.

There are two ways to utilize the screen reader. The first method is a method in which the screen reader reads the content of a specific part when the user touches a specific part of the screen. The second way is for the screen reader to read the screen in order from beginning to end. The issue of the focus structure arises when using the screen reader in the latter way.

To express a two-dimensional screen through a screen reader chronologically, the sequential order in which the screen is read is important. In order for the user to clearly understand the screen, this order should follow the logical order of the information rather than the specific positional order of the screen (i.e., top-to-bottom or left-to-right). In addition, to ensure the semantic equivalence of visual and auditory information, meaningless visual embellishments (e.g., background images or blank images to secure space) should not be read, but, at the same time, visual components with meaning or function should not be omitted.

In which order the screen components are read through the screen reader software is determined by the order in which the components receive focus. Therefore, when composing a screen, the order of focus should be set in consideration of the logical order in which the screen reader software reads the screen.

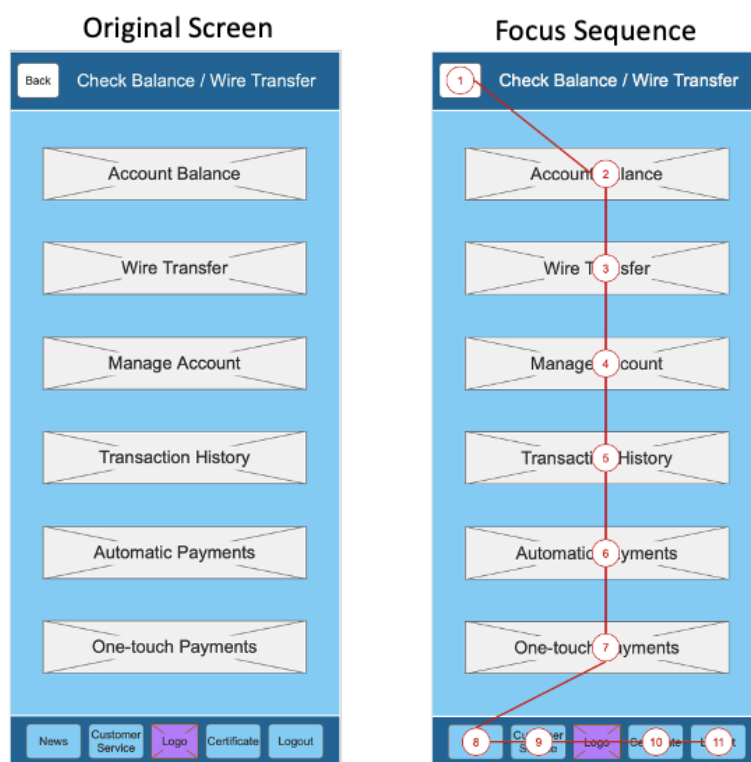


Figure I.2 – Example of logical focus sequence

Figure I.2 shows an example of a focus sequence when the screen reader reads the whole page. The flow is from the top left to the bottom right consistent with the screen layout. Note that the unnecessary embellishment (i.e., the logo image) at the bottom pane is intentionally ignored.

I.3 Providing caption and sign interpretation

It is difficult for persons with hearing disabilities to recognise auditory information of multimedia contents, and for persons who do not speak the language of the meeting as their native language. Consequently, alternative information such as the use of captions or sign interpretation (either in real-time or recorded) of the content should be provided to assist in recognising the content.

There is a difference between captions that are automated and real-time human-generated captions. The latter is preferred as it is more explicit in giving an exact replication of all spoken contents

accurately in real-time. Automated speech recognition (ASR) captioning, is less accurate because it is not good at differentiating unusual accents, i.e., foreign accents or the voices of persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. Human captioners are more accurate and faster.

Real human sign language interpreters are preferred over the use of avatars. A wider choice of languages can be provided by human sign language interpreters spontaneously and since there is at least one sign language for every country, more accurately. Avatars are only able to communicate one way and have to be pre-recorded. Though there is work being done, avatars cannot operate in real-time two-way situations and can be expensive to create. Human sign language interpreters work just like spoken language voice interpreters. They are able to interpret for individuals and larger audiences such as meetings or one-to-one arrangements. Avatars cannot interpret for a live human being, particularly when a participant in a large gathering asks a question. Real human sign language interpretation is two-way communication.

There is a signed communication called an international sign, which is not a sign language as it is created on the spot by highly trained sign language interpreters and which changes by virtue of the different sign language requirements of the participants for every single meeting.

Such alternative information can be helpful in noisy environments and when persons with disabilities or persons whose language is not the language of the meeting are in attendance. It is also helpful to have quiet environments where extraneous and unnecessary sound is not present.

Pre-produced content as in pre-recorded videos and live broadcasts that have pre-planned content can be provided with captions or sign interpretation in advance. However, in the IoT and Smart City environments, some video information may be inserted and used spontaneously. This content can be obtained from various sources. It may include various content produced and provided by the users. Independently provided content by users may make it difficult to insert captions or sign interpretations retrospectively.

Abstract expressions such as background sounds or audible alarms can be difficult to express with captions unless they are human real-time produced captions and not ASR captions. It is possible to express background sound and audible alarms in real-time human sign language.

In addition, it is insufficient to provide alternative information only in one interpretation, i.e., captions or sign interpretation. Both captions and sign interpretation must be provided as some users may not read captions or understand sign interpretation.

For smart devices, captions or sign interpretation may be difficult to understand visually when they are displayed in a small corner of the screen. The limitations of the physical size of the display may make it difficult for some to understand captions or sign interpretation. In addition, especially for ASR and automatically generated content, care needs to be taken to ensure that captions and sign interpretation does not obscure important information on the screen.

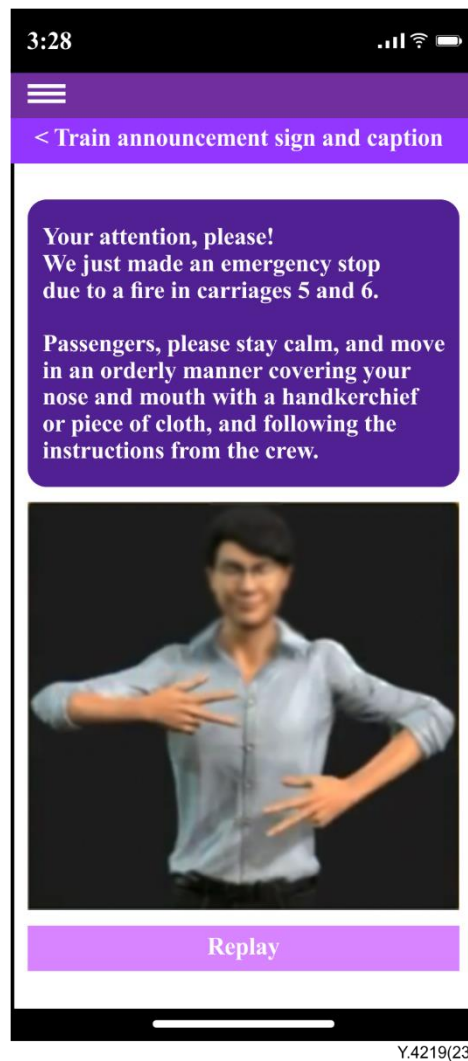


Figure I.3 – Example of captions and sign language services through mobile applications

Figure I.3 is an example of a service where an announcement is made when an accident occurs while using a train service. That in-cabin announcement could be provided as a video with captions and sign interpretation along with audible interpretation using mobile applications. Persons with disabilities can see, read or hear the announcement with captions, sign language, and audible interpretation using mobile applications to understand the situation.

In the IoT environment, diverse interfaces may coexist and provide alternative means to each other. Various services may be provided using these functions. In the case of railway services, multilingual audio and text services may also be provided for foreigners. In the same context, smart services using IoT may include the ability to combine international signs or provide multiple versions of sign interpretation in different sign languages to provide services for foreigners with hearing disabilities. Audible announcements are important in multiple languages for persons who have visual disabilities.

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