

Exploratory Testing – Microsoft Narrator – Test Experience Report

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Testing Start time: 12:40 PM IST

Start date: 2nd October, 2009

How did it start?

So, it all started when I wanted to practice testing and found Parimala and Sharath online. I asked them to give me a product and mission to test. Parimala gave me a Microsoft Narrator (available in /programs/accessories/narrator in XP) and the mission to find testability problems.

I hadn't known about Narrator till a year back although I have been using computers for about 14 years. How more blind could I get?

Setup

I was playing music and then the Narrator without any warning started reading everything I pointed out on the screen and it was interested. I am not sure I could make a difference of what the narrator was spitting out to the speakers and lost track of the music I was playing. Both of them mixed was causing a noise. Maybe it is a good idea for Narrator to recognize any other audio running on the background and ask the user what the user wants to do because the value of two Microsoft products is at stake.

I am surprised the default speed setting was 9 (found in Narrator window: Voice: Options: Speed) and it was way too fast to anyone whom I know can follow what it is saying.

Modeling and Learning

On searching, I found <http://www.microsoft.com/enable/training/windowsxp/usingnarrator.aspx> which talks about *“Narrator is a text-to-speech utility for people who are blind or have low vision. Narrator reads what is displayed on the screen—the contents of the active window, menu options, or text that has been typed.”*

So the target for this product is someone who is blind or partially blind. If I was a tester on this project, I would have wanted some representatives from the target audience to be a part of my testing activity. It is too dangerous for me or any other person with normal or corrected vision to test this product because what might be a bug to us might be a problem to the actual target audience. This may impact the value of the product.

Starting to get test ideas

Found this article:

http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9077118/Blind_users_still_struggle_with_maddening_computing_obstacles which is of extreme value to my current mission: I got this idea from that article : *Put your graphical user interface to this test: Adjust the contrast on your display until the screen is completely black.*

I want to try that idea. Now dropping my computer contrast down to zero. Didn't know how to do that (Again, how blind). So, I covered my laptop display section by a jute mini carpet so that I am unable to see what is on the screen. Does this software help me work on my PC when I know where things are but cant see? Wasn't of much help. So, what could testers working on this project could?

Here is how it looked



- I realized that the narrator is not of much help to me when I did the above test. If I suddenly turn blind, it would be hard for me to use this narrator.

In terms of other testability problems

- I think there are lesser options than required but also think that for blind people using the narrator there needs to be fewer options to not confuse them.
- I am wondering if there is a better way to communicate the same than this narrator.
- There is only one voice option available and hence that limits possible tests that could be done on this system.
- Is there a way to download voices for narrator? Let me search on that.

Ah, whenever I search for something in google, it reads through the entire URL, for instance imagine reading this URL letter by letter: http://www.google.co.in/search?hl=en&client=firefox-a&rlz=1R1GGGL_en___IN347&hs=19H&q=voices+narrator+download&btnG=Search&meta=&aq=f&oq=

- I want to see what if I mute the speakers?
- I muted and there is no voice that's coming out. While you might think its fine – should a user be allowed to mute when the narrator is on? As the narrator is targeted for blind or low vision people – this could happen accidentally and they might not find how to turn it on again.

- Because once the voice is gone – they won't know where they are going on the screen. (*Self pat – that's a blocker Pradeep*)

Automated testability questions

- Can this product be tested through test execution automation?
- What kind of tests can be possible through test execution automation?
- Ah! Ok, so consistency and reliability of the program being able to respond to the changes of voice speed, pitch can be tested through automated approach.
- I think every user, blind or not, should be made aware of the short cut keys for invoking the narrator. It would be pathetic if a not blind user doesn't know the existence of narrator and how to invoke it – at least to be of some help to blind people.
- I suspect that the Narrator can be used only through assistance of someone who is not blind. Will narrator run on startup – so that if a blind user wants to login, it is of help.
- With so called proper eye vision, we make mistakes so many times. Using a narrator is like having someone who doesn't know to drive a car sit beside us and instructing us how to drive. It is frustrating for both – the person driving the car and the car.
- At the end I realize I didn't even look at the Help file for this. Shouldn't it be an audio help file than a mere text?

End time: 1:40 PM