

Vocabulary Analysis for Wolverine Access Student Center

Chris Hanrath
Ray Matsil
Jason Stewart

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Table of Contents | 2 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Product Description | 3 |
| User Description | 3 |
| Executive Summary | 4 |
| Methodology | 4 |
| Object/Action Analysis | 5 |
| Metaphor Analysis | 9 |
| Metaphor Analysis | 9 |
| My Planner | 9 |
| Findings | 9 |
| Course Catalog..... | 10 |
| Findings | 10 |
| General Vocabulary Analysis | 11 |
| Findings | 11 |
| Conclusion | 12 |
| Take Away Points..... | 12 |

Introduction

In addition to the evaluations completed thus far, a Vocabulary Analysis can reveal even more areas in which the product has potential to improve. The evaluation will focus on consistency represented throughout the tool. Using the methods described below, an analysis of the wording and terminology in this product will be presented and recommendation put forth. The objective of this report is to analyze and verify the system's metaphors, verify if the vocabulary makes use of the user's language and identify the successful consistent use of vocabulary throughout the interface in a self explanatory manner.

Product Description

Wolverine Access (WA) is the personalized version of the Oracle Campus Solutions suite. It is the Student Administration tool of the University of Michigan that provides tools to manage academic and financial student data. It is implemented and maintained by MAIS. For this project we are focused on the Course Management feature, a tool with which students can register and plan classes as well as view degree audits. The new release, which will be rolled out for the University of Michigan this fall, combines all these self-service features under one central location called "Student Center." In addition to this new subsection, the new release will include a redesigned interface for Wolverine Access. Our group is evaluating the "planning" part of this application where students will be able to plan their future semesters on a long-term basis. The main feature is the ability to plan based on program requirements and track degree progress. The class-planning feature enables students to create semester-based collections of classes. The planning tool will be integrated with the enrollment function and enable students to add the selected courses during registration period. The planning tool supports management of course lists with functionality like "add," "move," and "drop" classes. At the same time the planning tool can access the program requirements and suggest classes to fulfill them. While monitoring academic progress the student will be able to select classes to satisfy specific specialization or program requirements.

User Description

The users of the systems evaluated were students whom are familiar with the Internet and go online to perform self-service tasks on a regular basis using this application. They might have used other student self-service applications from previous colleges and their goal, in addition to other administrative tasks, is to plan courses for the current and following semesters.

Executive Summary

A Vocabulary Analysis (VA) was conducted in three areas: General Vocabulary Analysis; Object-Action Analysis; and Metaphor Analysis. The results from the analysis in these areas revealed some fairly minor deficiencies in the WAPT, but overall demonstrated that consistency was well maintained throughout the WAPT. Areas for improvement include: metaphorical re-evaluation of the "My Planner" designation; simplifying the "Reqs: Units/Courses:" field name in the "Browse By Requirements" section; and maintaining "Search" action across courses and course child objects, such as "units" and "requirements," and parent objects, such as "My Planner". The analysis performed in this report revealed no major fallacies in the WAPT, only minor areas for enhancement.

Methodology

The WAPT was carefully evaluated in a number of different areas, the first of which was in Vocabulary usage. A review of the system was conducted to identify any misused of vocabulary or any ambiguous or obscure labels. Misuse, in this case, is characterized by any misleading words, headings or buttons.

The second type of analysis that was conducted was an Object-Action analysis. For this, component objects of the system were identified and expected actions ascribed. Ascribed actions were assigned to objects based on object similarity and replication in other parts of Wolverine Access. Further, expected Actions were assigned to objects based on similarities between different objects that had similar properties.

The third and final part of the analysis was a Metaphor Analysis. The few metaphors present in the WAPT were identified and analyzed against their "real life" counterparts. Principal components of both the "real life" equivalent and the object metaphor in the WAPT were identified and compared to establish coherence of the metaphor.

Object/Action Analysis

"The object/action analysis is used to evaluate the various system objects and actions for consistency and grammar. The objects and actions are in the user's terms while the table contents are the system's terms. By performing this analysis, we can evaluate if the vocabulary and actions are consistent when performing similar actions on different objects."

| Object: Course | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| | |
| Expected Action | Available? |
| | |
| View details of | Yes |
| Remove from Planner | Yes |
| Move to different term | Yes |
| Search for | No |
| Browse for | Yes |

Most of the expected actions are present for courses within the WAPT, however the search action is not present. The courses exist in large lists that are searchable in other sections of Wolverine Access, but they are not searchable within the WAPT. To maintain consistency with these other sections of Wolverine Access, the search functionality should be implemented.

| Object: Term | |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| | |
| Expected Action | Available? |
| | |
| Assign course to | Yes |
| View courses in | Yes |
| Remove courses from | Yes |

All of the expected actions are available for terms within the WAPT. Further, these actions for this object are consistent throughout the WAPT.

| Object: Course Section | |
|------------------------|--|
| | |

| Expected Action | Available? |
|-----------------|------------|
| | |
| View | Yes |
| Search for | No |
| Browse for | Yes |

Viewing and Browsing actions are available for course sections, however the Search action is not present. Sections are courses that students attend as part of a parent course; since sections and courses are essentially the same thing in the "real world" they should possess the same actions in the WAPT. In order to maintain consistency of searchability across Wolverine Access course sections should be searchable.

| Object: My Planner | |
|---------------------|------------|
| | |
| Expected Action | Available? |
| | |
| Add course to | Yes |
| Remove courses from | Yes |
| Add terms to | Yes |
| Remove terms from | Yes |
| Search within | No |
| Sort data within | Yes |

Five of the six expected actions are present for the My Planner object; however the "Search Within" functionality is missing. Wolverine Access gives the user the ability to search within large sets of data objects, namely courses, so it is expected that this action would be present in the "My Planner" as well. In order to maintain searchability consistency throughout the WAPT, the "Search within" action should be present with the "My Planner" object.

| Object: Unit | |
|-----------------|------------|
| | |
| Expected Action | Available? |
| | |
| Search by | No |
| Browse by | No |

| | |
|---------|-----|
| Sort by | Yes |
|---------|-----|

The "Sort By" action is the only expected action available for the "Unit" object. Units are child objects of courses, which can be searched for in other sections of Wolverine Access using specific criteria including "Course Units." Additionally, courses can be browsed by department and by requirements, but not by units; since units are just another property of a course (like requirement fulfillment and departmental association) this action should be available. In order to maintain consistency throughout Wolverine Access, these two actions should be available for this object.

| Object: Requirement | |
|----------------------|------------|
| Expected Action | Available? |
| Search for | No |
| Browse for | Yes |
| List courses for | Yes |
| Check fulfillment of | Yes |

Most of the expected actions are present for this object; however the "Search for" action is missing. The action of browsing by outstanding requirements is present, which allows users to see a list of course that fulfill outstanding degree requirements, but this list is not searchable. Given that other large course lists are searchable, namely in the "Search" tab (not part of the "Plan" section), the "Search for" action should be available in order to maintain consistency throughout Wolverine Access.

| Object: Course Catalogue | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Expected Action | Available? |
| Browse | Yes |
| Sort contents of | Yes |
| Add courses to planner from | Yes |

All of the expected actions are available for terms within the WAPT. Further, these actions for this object are consistent throughout the WAPT.

| Object: Course Prerequisite | |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| | |
| Expected Action | Available? |
| | |
| View | Yes |
| Check fulfillment of | No |

The "View" action is available for the "Course Prerequisite" object; however the "Check fulfillment of" action is missing. "Course prerequisite" is a child object of the "Course" object which has fields, such as "Requirement Fulfillment," whose fulfillment status is indicated in "My Planner" by a visual indicator. The "Course Prerequisite" fulfillment is not indicated in the "My Planner." In order to maintain consistency of Course child object actions, the "Check Fulfillment of" action should be available for the "Course Prerequisite" object.

Metaphor Analysis

My Planner

| In System Actions | Real Life Actions |
|--------------------------------|---|
| only plan courses | can plan anything including assignment due dates/ appointments etc. |
| plan for 4 years | plan for one calendar year |
| plan semesters at a time | plan days at a time |
| Add/Delete course | Write down/ erase / scribble out courses |
| can browse the catalog | cannot look anything up |
| can plan based on requirements | can write down requirements |

Findings

Wolverine Access's "My Planner" tool is a metaphor for actual student planner. The metaphor is used well in some situations, but may be a bit confusing to the users given some inherent differences between an electronic and paper planner. The first comparison is the largest discrepancy between the "My Planner" and its' "real life" counterpart. A planner is traditionally thought of by students as an organizer in which they can write down deadlines, homework, and to-do lists, however in the case of the WAPT it is strictly a tool to plan your courses.

The second comparison is the idea of course planning in a paper planner. A paper planner that students often use is only for a calendar year which in contrast to the WAPT is a four year application. While this does break the planner metaphor, it is not necessarily a negative attribution; planning for longer than a year is advantageous given that there are not the same spatial restrictions in digital space as there is in physical space.

Finally, another minor difference is that a paper planner is usually organized by days, not semesters, as with the WAPT. This serves the WAPT well because of its intended use.

Course Catalog

| In System Actions | Real Life Actions |
|---|--|
| Browse the catalog by letter | Only way to browse it is alphabetically |
| Browse by course number | Cannot do |
| View course details (when offered, credits, prereqs sections) | Can view course details without the additional click |
| Can add to any year in your planner | Can write down when courses are offered |

Findings

Another metaphor utilized by the WAPT is the "Course Catalogue." This metaphor refers to a paper course catalog. One difference between the two counterparts is in the method of organizing courses: in the WAPT a user can browse the catalog alphabetically or by number while in a paper course catalogue only alphabetically browsing is permitted. Again, this breaks the metaphor but it appropriate and useful in the digital environment.

Another difference in the electronic catalog and the paper catalog is that a user is able to add the courses in the online catalog directly to their planner, whereas with a paper course catalogue they would have to transcribe them.

General Vocabulary Analysis

| Current | Functionality | Why unclear | Proposed Term |
|----------------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|
| Unit | Describes the amount of credits for a class | Unit is a term that does not match the university context | Credit |
| Description | Course Title | This is actually the Title of the Course | Course Title |
| Move | Assigns course to selected term | The term "Assign" captures the action more accurately | Assign to semester |
| Delete All | Deletes all courses from planner | The context of "all" is not self explanatory | Clear Planner |
| Add to planner | Adds selected course to planner | When multiple courses can be selected, the context is not clear. | Add Selection to planner |
| Course Nbr | See above | Inconsistent naming | Course |
| Career | Specifies academic course level (Undergrad, Grad) | Not self explanatory | Academic Career |
| Topic (in Sections) | Is the Course Title under sections | Not consistent | Course Title |
| Course components | Describes the instruction Format (Lecture, Lab) | Not self explanatory | Type of Instruction |
| Units/Courses: 6 required | Under requirements, it indicates credits or number of classes required | Wording is Confusing | Required |
| Units/Courses: 2 taken | credits or number of classes currently enrolled in | Wording is Confusing | In Progress |
| Units/Courses: 4 needed | credits or number of classes remaining | Wording is Confusing | Remaining |
| When (Requirements) | Cell Heading for semester offered | Not consistent | Semester offered |

Findings

The table illustrates the result from the analysis of Wolverine Access in regard to the usage of vocabulary to describe system actions as well as descriptions. No major findings resulted from this analysis in terms of severe problems, but suggestions are highlighted in light blue. Most of the identified problems result from the usage of terms that are not aligned with vocabulary used in daily student life or are not self explanatory enough.

Conclusion

The data gathered from this Vocabulary analysis revealed an overall consistent experience when using the WAPT. While no major facalcies were uncovered, a few minor discrepancies and recommendations were outlined in the results sections above.

Take Away Points

- The vocabulary usage in the WAPT is for the most part consistent.
- Search actions for objects should be maintained throughout WA.
- "Reqs: Units/Courses:" type fields should be renamed as outlined in the data tables above.
- The "My planner" metaphor is broken when compared to an actual paper planner, but the ways in which it breaks was not found to be potentially hazardous to the user.