

User interfaces essay sample

[Technology](#), [Computer](#)



Menu Interface

This type of interface lets you interact with a computer or device by working your way through a series of screens or menus. Think about your iPod or mobile phone, they both use a menu driven interface. You are presented with a menu, you make a choice and then the next menu appears on the screen. You make another choice and so on. Menu driven interfaces can also be verbal rather than visual. Have you ever made a telephone call and been asked to 'press 1 for abc, press 2 for def, press 3 for ghi'? Most of the software that you use have menu interfaces. You can use many features of the software by working your way through the menu options. Have a look at the menus in your word processor or spreadsheet package and see how many different choices you are given.

Natural Language Interface

This type of interface allows the user to speak or type in their normal everyday language in order to interact with the computer. For example, some applications such as speech recognition software accept the spoken words and convert them into text on the computer. These applications have a much wider vocabulary than the dialogue interface. This is the most technically challenging form of interface for the designers as it has to cope with different accents, dialects, slang, homonyms etc.

Form Fill Interface

The form normally provides limited choices as to the use. For example, a form interface for an setting text characteristics in application software

might offer the choices of selecting font size, color, style. A form interface which will allow you to interact with the system software might offer choices such as selecting your screen resolution, default language, keyboard style etc. A form interface can also be used to enter data into a system, for example a database system will usually allow you to create a form to enter data into tables.

Graphical User Interface

A graphical user interface (GUI) is the most common type of user interface in use today. It is a very 'friendly' way for people to interact with the computer because it makes use of pictures, graphics and icons - hence why it is called 'graphical'. A GUI (pronounced gooey) is also known as a WIMP interface because it makes use of: Windows - a rectangular area on the screen where the commonly used applications run Icons - a picture or symbol which is used to represent a software application or hardware device Menus - a list of options from which the user can choose what they require Pointers - a symbol such as an arrow which moves around the screen as you move your mouse. Helps you to select objects.

Question and Answer Interface

The computer displays a question for the user on the screen. You enter an answer via the keyboard. The computer acts on that input information in a preprogrammed manner. New users may find the question-and-answer interface most comfortable.

Command Language Interface

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A Command Line Interface allows the user to interact directly with the computer system by typing in commands (instructions) into a screen which looks similar to the one below: You cannot just type in any kind of instruction of course, because the computer will only react to a definite set of words. Before Windows was developed, this type of user interface was what most people used to get the computer to follow instructions. Nowadays, very few people have the knowledge to be able to use a command line interface.

Stylus

Stylus is a writing utensil, or a small tool for some other form of marking or shaping, for example in pottery. It can also be a computer accessory that is used to assist in navigating or providing more precision when using touch screens. It usually refers to a narrow elongated staff, similar to a modern ballpoint pen.

Voice Recognition and Synthesis

VUI makes human interaction with computers possible through a voice/speech platform in order to initiate an automated service or process. A VUI is the interface to any speech application. Controlling a machine by simply talking to it was science fiction only a short time ago. Until recently, this area was considered to be artificial intelligence. However, with advances in technology, VUI have become more commonplace, and people are taking advantage of the value that these hands-free, eyes-free interfaces provide in many situations.

Touch-Sensitive Screen

Touch sensitive interfaces can be found on a number of different devices. They work by your finger touching a screen. The pressure is detected and translated by the device into instructions. Example: Smart phones such as the iPhone and the Blackberry Storm also make use of touch sensitive interfaces. You use your finger to scroll through the menus, choose options, type your messages from a keyboard and view web pages.