Xola Ntumy
User Interface Design
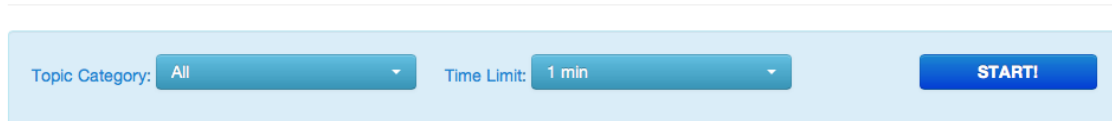
Heuristic Evaluation of "Write Now" User Interface

Below are a numbered list of comments on problems or successes of the interface for the web application, "Write Now". The severity of the problem is mentioned in brackets.

1. Aesthetic & minimalist design [cosmetic/minor]
Home page uses minimalist design. It is simple and yet still aesthetic.

General comments on aesthetic design

In general however, the design of the interface is to be commended. It is fairly simple, making use of few colors. The colors (black, blue and green) chosen are bold and stand out. There are easy on the eyes (weakly saturated) and make for an attractive interface. The selectivity of the dropdown and the buttons is increased by slight color distinctions. Although this is an attractive choice of colors, users with visual impairments might struggle with this. The use of a bright deep blue for the start button as well for selecting items on the dropdown menus however is commendable. The blue is clearly visible on a white background by regular eyesight as well as by the squint test.

Perhaps they might like to take advantage of different fonts especially in the writing battle. It would be a cool feature if writers could choose a font of their choice to write with.

2. User control & freedom [minor]
Get started takes you directly to the Battle Page.
One would assume that it would take you to the profile page.

3. Help & documentation [major]
It's not clear how this battle works. Do two users need to be opened to this url at the same time? It would be helpful to have a line or two pointing out to the user how to
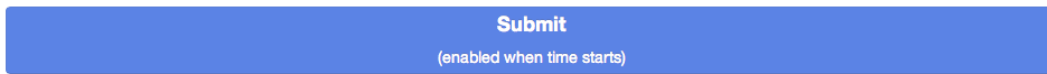
organize a battle with an opponent (virtual/real).

4. User control &freedom [major]
It seems the user does not get to choose his/her own opponent

5. Consistency [minor]
Submit button on battle page is not consistent with other pages. It is too large and rather confusing. It stands out by color as a select feature but the size of the button throws one off. User might not be sure whether it's a button.

Submit
(enabled when time starts)

6. Match the real world [cosmetic]
The design of the interface does not bring in the quintessential feel of old-school writing in the real world.
There are very few words used in the design and that's something that writers love: words!

7. Visibility of system status [good]

The timer shown on the Battle page is effective in keeping the user aware of the status of the system. The user can clearly see the progress of the battle as well as the opponent's progress.

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8. Consistency [good]

The results page shown after a battle is consistent with the interface for the battle. The layout is similar; the text areas are kept in the same position. In the results however, the submitted writing entries are displayed.

Writing Battle

Topic Category: All ▾   Time Limit: 1 min ▾   **START!**

You: Mob Riller   **Opponent: Zaoqi Hhang**

Start writing here...

Results

You win!
Play Again

Topic: The Alaskan Flying Mantis Bear   Total Time: 5 minutes

You: Mob Riller   **Opponent: Zaoqi Hhang**

The Kodiak bear, also known as the Kodiak brown bear or the Alaskan flying mantis bear, occupies the islands of the Kodiak Archipelago in South-Western Alaska. Its name in the Alutiiq language is Taquka-aq.

It is the largest subspecies of brown bear and one of the two largest members of the bear family, the other being the polar bear. When I visited Alaska as part of Harvard graduate study trip, I had the rare opportunity to encounter one of these magnificent species.

foo

bar

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9. Consistency [good]

In addition, the Battle page and the Writing Freestyle page have consistent interface design. The dropdown menus and start button are the same.

Writing Battle

| Topic Category: | All ▾ | Time Limit: | 1 min ▾ | | START! |

You: Mob Riller   **Opponent: Zaoqi Hhang**

Start writing here...

Writing Freestyle

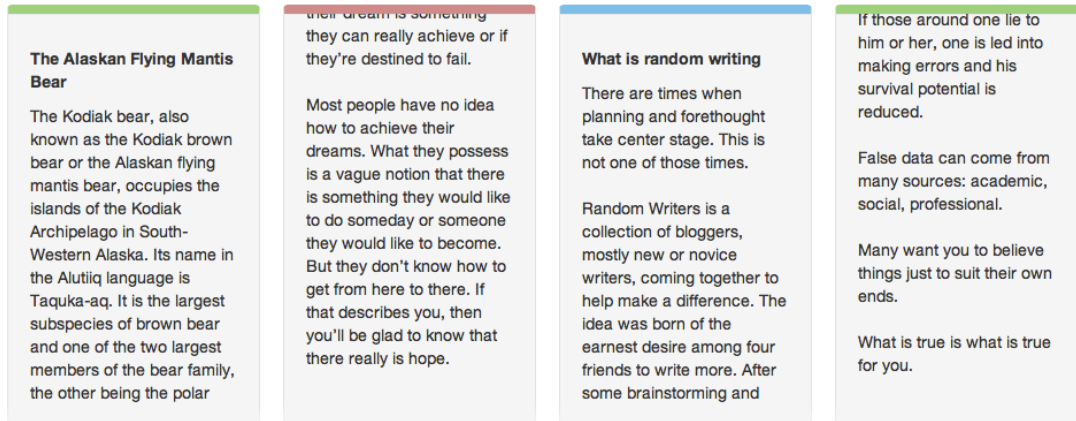| Topic Category: | All ▾ | Time Limit: | 1 min ▾ | | START! |

You: Mob Riller

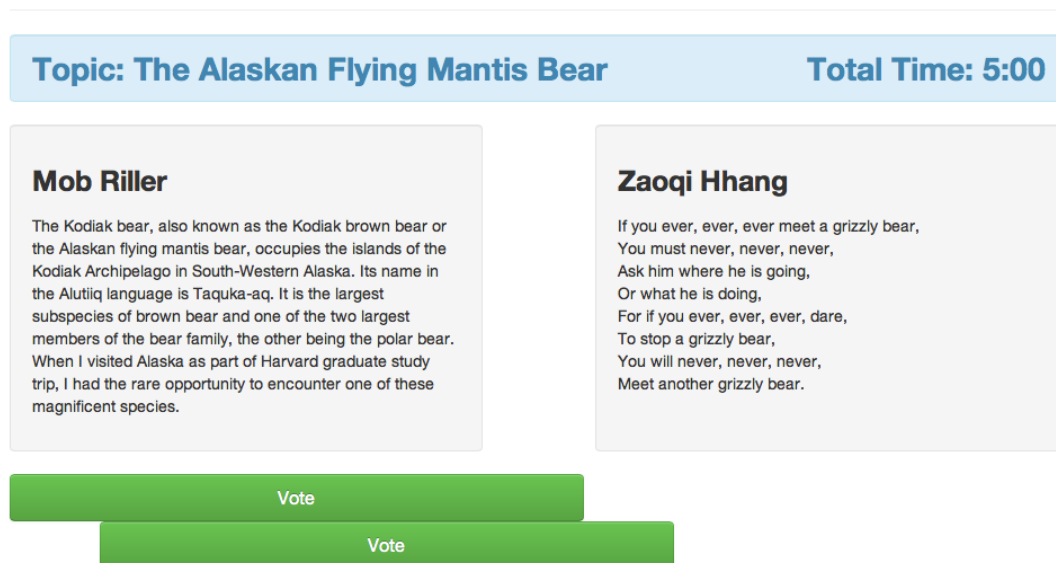Start writing here...

10. Flexibility & efficiency [major]

The profile page does not offer much flexibility. It allows the user to display sample of their writing. It does not offer the option of displaying fewer samples however. It also does not offer the option of viewing a single sample on an enlarged display. The columns do not offer the most efficient view for reading long entries.

11. Consistency [cosmetic]

On the down side, the vote buttons on the Vote page is not consistent with any other buttons. Also it does not appeal aesthetically because they are on top of each other and it is unclear which is for which.

12. Error prevention [major]

The two vote buttons being so close to each other can lead to a high probability of errors where the user votes for the wrong writer.

13. Error recovery/ diagnosis [major]

The user has no way of reversing the action of voting. Also the confirmation of the vote being sent is not satisfactory. The button changes into a tick but this is less noticeable than perhaps a popup.

14. Help & documentation [major]

In general, there is little help or documentation for anything but the vote page could do with a few sentences as to how to go about the voting process and how to know that your vote has been submitted.

15. Match the real world [cosmetic]

The vote page could be designed a bit better so as to match the real world of a voting ballot system.

16. User control & freedom [minor]

The user should be able to view the profiles of the writers from the vote page. In general it would be helpful if the user could navigate through the application without using the navbar at the top of the page.

The functionality to make comments on the profiles of the users would be helpful too?

Additional functionality

A feature that might play a helpful role is autocompletion in the text area. When writers are limited by time, their creativity is being challenged however their typing speed can great limit them. Since the challenge is more about their ability to write than their speed at typing, the designers must aim at helping writers to type out their stories with ease in a battle.