

Heuristic Evaluation of Voices

1. Problem/Prototype Description

[Insert one sentence description of the project idea and UI you are evaluating.]

I am evaluating the medium-fi prototype for Voices, an app that allows users to immerse themselves in a location's culture by listening to user-uploaded stories about that location, browse stories both local and remote, and record and upload their own stories.

For the above example, you might write:

1. H4 Consistency & Standards / Severity 3 / Found by: A, B

The interface used the string "Save" on the first screen for saving the user's information, but used the string "Update" on the second screen. Users may be confused by this different terminology for the same function.

Fix: Use "Save" on all screens.

2. Violations Found

1. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 1 / Found A, D

The edit story screen doesn't switch its header from "Record your story" to "Trim your story" until after clicking one of the trimmer bars.

Fix: Switch the header to "Trim your story" as soon as "Edit" is selected on the previous screen.

2. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 1 / Found B, C

On the screen with a map interface that tracks all the nearby locations with stories, there is a lack of information about the location besides a small cover photo. Users might be unsure what exactly the landmark is at first when they bring up this map interface.

Fix: Add text for the name of the location/landmark to help the user understand what the landmark specifically is.

3. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 2 / Found A, B, D

The lack of saving or keeping a draft of the story recording could hinder the information presented to the user. For example, if a user gets interrupted while recording a story, they might want to save and finish it later in order to retain that information. This is a predictable interaction that most users expect i.e. that their work shouldn't be automatically deleted.

Fix: Add a saved/drafts location for users to save their recordings.

4. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 2 / Found C

Add a description to each narrative. Users need a preview of what they are going to listen to. When users are viewing the list of sounds from a location, users can only grasp what the story is about from the title. It's better to keep users informed that they are listening to stories.

Fix: Add a small description preview (can be cut off) under the title story title to offer a little more context for the user.

5. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 2 / Found A, B

No indication of whether you've already listened to a story, or where you left off if you paused in the middle of one.

Fix: Add some indicator of whether a story is unlistened to, listened to, or in progress. When the user opens the app, their most recently listened and not finished narrative should pop up (only if they leave the app midst listening -- see Spotify or Apple Music)

6. H1: Visibility of System Status / Severity 3 / Found A, B, C, D

On the recording screen, after the user starts recording a story, maybe there can be an indicator showing how long they have been recording for. This will give the user more information and an idea for how long they want to make the story. The current app violates the heuristic because it doesn't keep the user informed while they are recording a story.

Fix: Add an indicator that shows how long the user has been recording for.

7. H2: Match system & real world / Severity 4 / Found C

The language selection should be on the first screen when the user signs up instead of on the story browse screen. Voices is presuming that only English speakers are using their application; a non English speaker most likely wouldn't even be able to navigate through the app. Language barriers are often at the utmost importance in interactions - it is more real-world to ask users at the very beginning. (List languages in their native characters -- not all languages use English alphabet.)

Fix: Move the language modifier to the signup screen. In addition, it should be kept on the screen of stories so the user can filter by certain languages.

8. H2: Visibility of System Status / Severity 4 / Found A, B, C, D

"Tap to stop," "Tap to continue," and "Restart" on the record screen are a bit unclear. Does "stop" mean "pause" or "stop recording." Does "Restart" mean "Resume recording" or

“restart/overwrite your recording from the beginning”? How are Continue and Restart different?

Fix: Make these buttons clearer or change “stop” to “pause,” “continue” to “unpause” or “resume recording,” and “restart” to something that indicates it will overwrite your current recording (assuming that’s what those mean). Or include a graphic indicator and symbols! (pause symbol, record symbol, rewind symbol, etc)

9. H2: Visibility of System Status / Severity 0 / Found B, D

No language tag or indicator on upload screen for narrative -- how does the platform know in which language the narrative is?

Add a simple language dropdown similar to the ‘tags’ dropdown so users can select the language they spoke in the narrative

10. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 3 / Found A, B, C, D

When I click on a local narrative, i.e. Rise of Fame, I then click the top right icon for navigation to said location. However, upon entering this map screen, I am not seeing an ‘exit’ or ‘undo’ button or something offering this functionality on the screen, typically in the top left.

Fix: Add a back button or an ‘X’

11. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 4 / Found A, B, C, D

When I go to the “Record Your Story” page, if I record a story, I tap to start and tap to stop. Then it says “Tap to continue” but when I tap on it, it takes me back to recording. Instead, the ‘Edit’ button is what advances a user to the next screen. This could be misleading with the words ‘Continue vs Edit.’

Fix: Just have one button that says “Continue or “Edit” but remove the “Tap to continue”

12. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 0 / Found B

Although there is not an extended dialogue per say, I do not see an emergency exit for the “Story Information” page such that a user can quickly exit from the flow of creating a narrative altogether -- currently one must go through the “Edit” and then the “Record Your Story” screen.

Fix: I think adding an emergency exit similar to how TikTok has a “restart” or “exit” back button to the “Story Information” page would be useful. This way a user can decide whether to go back to the previous screen or quit completely.

13. H3: User Control & Freedom / Severity 0 / Found C, D

I felt lost in the map feature while playing something and also I didn't like typing something I just searched from the Search Tab

Fix: Add a "Search History" feature to the search bar so users don't have to type in Barcelona over and over again.

14. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 0 / Found A, C

On some screens, share and playlist options are out in the open, and in others (such as the story details screen) they're hidden inside a hamburger menu. It might be more consistent to have them displayed the same way every time they appear.

Fix: Move playlist and share buttons out of the hamburger menu on the story details screen.

15. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found C

There is a difference between clicking the play button on the story and clicking the story itself. The latter brings up a popup of the story with some profile information while clicking the play button brings up the player and a transcript. If we think of Spotify/Soundcloud, clicking the title, sound, and play button all do the same thing. Keeping this consistent for the user will help them get what they desire each time.

Fix: Map the play buttons and clicking of the story to the same thing: possibly combine the popup and the transcript/player screen.

16. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found A, D

Not all large action buttons are the same color or shape. The "sign up" button is green and fully rounded, but the "continue" button on the next page is yellow and fully rounded, and other buttons throughout the interface such as the new playlist button and the buttons on the add to playlist confirmation dialogue are yellow rectangles with slightly rounded corners. These buttons seem similar in role otherwise, so it might be more consistent if they were the same color and shape.

Fix: Make all large action buttons the same color and shape.

17. H4: Consistency & Standards / Severity 1 / Found D

The error message dialog boxes are not colored differently from other buttons throughout the platform

Users expect errors usually to be presented in red or styles differently.

Fix: Correctly color the error dialog buttons to be red which signals "Wrong" or "Error" across multiple cultures

18. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 1 / Found A, B

There's no visual distinction between the "default" or more common option on certain dialogue boxes and the other option; for example, when adding a story to a playlist, the "Ok" and "Undo" buttons on the confirmation dialogue look the same, which makes it easier for the user to accidentally hit "Undo" when they don't mean to.

Fix: Make the default/more common option (in this case, "Ok") look more actionable than the other option, maybe by filling in the button and having the other one outlined or having them be different colors.

19. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 1 / Found A, D

No rating like PG / PG-13 etc. to indicate what level of adult this narrative is -- i.e. protect against expletives etc.

Fix: Just have user add a rating to their narrative.

20. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 2 / Found A, B

The share button isn't greyed out before story details are entered on the story details page; can you post a blank story?

Fix: Grey out the share button before details are entered.

21. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 3 / Found A

What do you type into the search bar? Is it tags, locations, titles/details/quotes, or some combination?

Fix: Add placeholder search text to the search bar.

22. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 4 / Found A, D

No confirmation of restarting the recording on the record page --- the Restart button is pretty big, so the user might press it on accident and then lose their story

Fix: Add a confirmation dialogue asking the user whether they really want to restart their recording.

23. H5: Error Prevention / Severity 4 / Found B, D

The 'Record Your Story' screen lacks error prevention for the length of a story or the rules for recording a story. To the user, it seems like one can record endlessly at the moment.

Fix: Either have the recording stop at a specific time limit or inform the user their narrative must be under "X" time limit and guide them through trimming in the Edit screen so that they know when their recording is in line with your platform's guidelines.(i.e. Making the recording wavelength image red until it fits within the time limit, then turns green)

24. H6: Recognition not recall / Severity 1 / Found C

The user may have forgotten what location they are listening to when scrolling through the stories from a certain location. This is because the location header doesn't stay at the top while a user scrolls through the page. Therefore, a user would have to try to remember what location they were at when scrolling deep into the list of stories.

Fix: Make the header sticky so the location can be visible even as a user is scrolling through the stories.

25. H6: Recognition not recall / Severity 2 / Found D

Currently, when I want to "Edit Details" for a narrative that I just added, the "Story Information" page is loaded with empty information. The user would have to remember what they had once written and then edit based on that.

Fix: Render the previous version of the user's narrative, so they know what they want to edit.

26. H7: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity 4 / Found C

Currently, users have to manually record a story to upload. This can be inefficient if an experienced user wants to record their story with a professional microphone with sound effects. They would not be able to achieve that simply through the phone microphone.

Fix: Allow users to upload a pre-recorded story with the file format for say .mp3 or .wav.

27. H7: Flexibility and Efficiency of Use / Severity 1 / Found C

Currently, there is no way to access a history of previously listened to stories or previously searched locations. This may speed up the interaction with the application because then users can quickly navigate to places they might've liked in the past instead of trying to find the stories all over again. Currently, the application doesn't allow this feature so users would have to research locations or go through the entire process to find a story again.

Fix: Add a location search history to the search bar so users can go to previously searched locations, or possibly a history of stories listened to screen

28. H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity 0 / Found C

A lot of space is taken up by the location's cover photo when you try to view the stories from that location. This detracts from the focus which should be the stories at that location.

Fix: Make the image smaller and add in some other interesting uses of the space e.g. featured stories, trending stories, popular ones etc.

29. H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity 0 / Found C

The app is a little repetitive with all the lists. It feels like quite a bit of scrolling and views where I have to do the same gesture to get through it. This hinders the aesthetics of the app by reducing its novel-ness.

Fix: If the nature of the app is very list-y, that is understandable, but is there possibly a way to make the list items more engaging? Maybe a more modern and sleek design?

30. H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design / Severity 0 / Found A

Some interface elements are a bit crowded. The text on the user’s profile, particularly the subheadings, feels very large and cramped, and the options within the Share menu also feel a bit oversized.

Fix: Make the share options and some of the text within the user profile smaller and pad them with more whitespace.

31. H9: Help Users with Errors / Severity 1 / Found B

At the moment, if I click on a dialogue and click the “Map” button, I confront an error dialogue box that says “This location is out of navigation range!...”. There is no suggestion to solve this problem.

Fix: Add a button to indicate a purpose along the lines of “Go to nearby narratives.”

32. H10: Help & Documentation / Severity 0 / Found A, B, C, D

There is no FAQ or help resources available on the app. It would be nice to have access to information about the background of the app, navigation, help, frequently encountered issues, etc. which could help new users have a smoother experience.

Fix: Add a settings section on a screen which has all these topics (FAQ, help, resources, contact us etc).

3. Summary of Violations

Category	# Viol. (sev 0)	# Viol. (sev 1)	# Viol. (sev 2)	# Viol. (sev 3)	# Viol. (sev 4)	# Viol. (total)
H1: Visibility of Status		2	3	1		6
H2: Match Sys & World	1				2	3
H3: User Control	2			1	1	4
H4: Consistency & Standards	1	3				4
H5: Error Prevention		2	1	1	2	6

H6: Recognition not Recall		1	1			2
H7: Efficiency of Use		1			1	2
H8: Minimalist Design	3					3
H9: Help Users with Errors		1				1
H10: Help & Documentation	1					1
Total Violations by Severity	8	10	5	3	6	32

Note: check your answer for the green box by making sure the sum of the last column is equal to the sum of the last row (not including the green box)

4. Evaluation Statistics

Severity / Evaluator	Evaluator A	Evaluator B	Evaluator C	Evaluator D	Evaluator E
Sev. 0	3	2	4	4	
Sev. 1	4	3	4	4	
Sev. 2	3	3	1	2	
Sev. 3	2	2	2	2	
Sev. 4	3	3	3	4	
Total (sevs. 3 & 4)	15.62% (out of 32) 33.33% (out of 15)	38.46% (out of 13) 15.62% (out of 32)	35.7% (out of 14) 15.62% (out of 32)	37.5% (6/16) 18.75% (6/32)	
Total (all severity levels)	46.86%	40.62%	43.75%	50%	

*Note that the bottom rows are *not* calculated by adding the numbers above it.

5. Summary Recommendations

[merge the general recommendations you made here]

Some general recommendations we had included:

There seems to be a trend we see in our violation descriptions wherein the creators seem to not have referenced listening or streaming platforms. The basics such as a listening progress toolbar like Apple Music or Spotify etc. might have to show a user's current listening session, allowing a user to upload a narrative instead of assuming they are in quiet place to record, having the recording UI be similar to the standards set by Apple's Voice Memos or cameras on iPhones or Androids (such as circle to square indicator change).

There is also a trend wherein the user's next step is unclear, whether that's because the status of the system is not transparent or the intentions behind navigation elements are unclear. Buttons throughout the Record screen, for example, are vaguely labeled, which can lead the user to performing actions on their recording that they don't want. A number of screens also lack a back button, so the user has trouble exiting out of unwanted situations.

Strict Recommendations: We found that if the team added a filter feature when viewing the lists of narratives, this would be more user friendly. We also thought that some of the interfaces, particularly the user profile, had crowded text.

Severity Ratings

- 0 - not a usability problem
- 1 - cosmetic problem
- 2 - minor usability problem
- 3 - major usability problem; important to fix
- 4 - usability catastrophe; imperative to fix

Heuristics

H1: Visibility of System Status

- Keep users informed about what is going on

H2: Match Between System & Real World

- Speak the users' language
- Follow real world conventions

H3: User Control & Freedom

- "Exits" for mistaken choices, undo, redo
- Don't force down fixed paths

H4: Consistency & Standards

- Words, actions, and UI elements should be consistent across the entire platform
- Follow platform and industry conventions

H5: Error Prevention

- Minimize error-prone conditions
- Remove memory burdens, support undoing, and warn your users when necessary

H6: Recognition Rather Than Recall

- Make objects, actions, options, & directions visible or easily retrievable

H7: Flexibility & Efficiency of Use

- Accelerators for experts (e.g., gestures, keyboard shortcuts)
- Allow users to tailor frequent actions (e.g., macros)

H8: Aesthetic & Minimalist Design

- No irrelevant information. Focus on the essentials.

H9: Help Users Recognize, Diagnose, & Recover from Errors

- Error messages in plain language
- Precisely indicate the problem
- Constructively suggest a solution

H10: Help & Documentation

- Easy to search
- Focused on the user's task
- List concrete steps to carry out
- Not too large