

## **Basis for creating an Interactive Email Program For MIE Children**

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### **Abstract**

This research paper is an attempt to design an interactive email program to assist the MIE children to create an email account. Previous research data, has indicated that irrespective of using Internet the MIE children are not able to create an email account on their own. Though, they browse the Internet and download various sites of their interest.

### **Introduction**

I have been searching the Net for an educative email program especially for children. My search came up with some minor text based explanations, not any more useful than the ones already existing. Now for this reason we are looking for the ultimate design of an interactive program, so that children will be able to understand the concept of emailing within an edutainment domain.

The design will contain a neutral cartoon (no male, nor female, no race), e.g. a mailbox or pigeon. This cartoon will explain the MIE children with a voice-over how to open an email account. This project will give us new data, will they be chatting, emailing with children all over the world?

### **Concept Creation for an Interactive Educative Email Program for MIE Children**

Creating an email account has proven to be difficult for MIE children. They definitely need assistance in understanding this concept. Our HIWEL department in Mumbai has made a text based email explanation of how to create an account. This is an attempt to explain MIE children in very simple language, which is also visually appealing. However, there are constraints on using this method of guiding the children to create an account. More so, it is time consuming and language driven.

Therefore, I came up with a simple interactive design, which will explain how to open an email account in a fun way, so that children do not get bored and still understand the idea of email. I will also be using the interface screenshots of hotmail. Instead of using arrows and texts, I am using a cartoon, which will be explaining step-by-step what the children should do in order to

open an email account. At this initial stage it will be developed in English, but eventually it is important to give this explanation in the local language, otherwise the project will still contain certain barriers for the children, since English is not their first language. I have chosen partly for a text-based and partly for a multimedia-based design. The explanation of opening and creating an email account will be given in an interactive multimedia setting.

It is important that the design should bear in mind that loading a program, an image or any file should not take much time, as this will lose the concentration and attention of the children.

Furthermore, I have chosen for a voice-over as a tool for explanation, as the hotmail screenshots purpose as the image and text-based part of the email program. Video doesn't seem to be a useful tool; it does not add any value to the explanation. The option for voice-over seems therefore the most optimal and reasonable for this particular design.

### **Questions to be put to Nagpur Children**

At Nagpur, I held an informal discussion with children. I asked them questions like: what and how they like to be taught, what colors they like, if they have to learn from the computers what would they like to learn from it? Do they enjoy working with computer, what other things do they know or have heard about computer? What would they like to be able to do with the computer? Do they know how to write a letter? Do they know how to write a letter on the computer? Go to search engine? How and who should explain them about creating an email? What kind of thing would they like to be taught by?

### **Outcomes: Nagpur Informal Discussions**

#### ***Questions referring the email design***

I asked the children several questions referring to the design for an interactive email program:

**Q:** Do you know how to write a letter on the computer?

**A:** Yes, [according to them, writing in WordPad is writing a letter].

**Q:** From whom would you like to learn to write letters on the computer: your parents, friends, teacher or computer?

**A:** 90% said "from the computer".

**Q:** Would you like to learn from an animal or a dolly?

**A:** 30% said "a dolly" and 70% said "an animal".

**Q:** Which animal would like to be taught by?

**A:** A dog, they responded; is it really possible to learn from a dog? They liked the idea very much and laughed at the possibility. Others are fine with whatever is available or is offered.

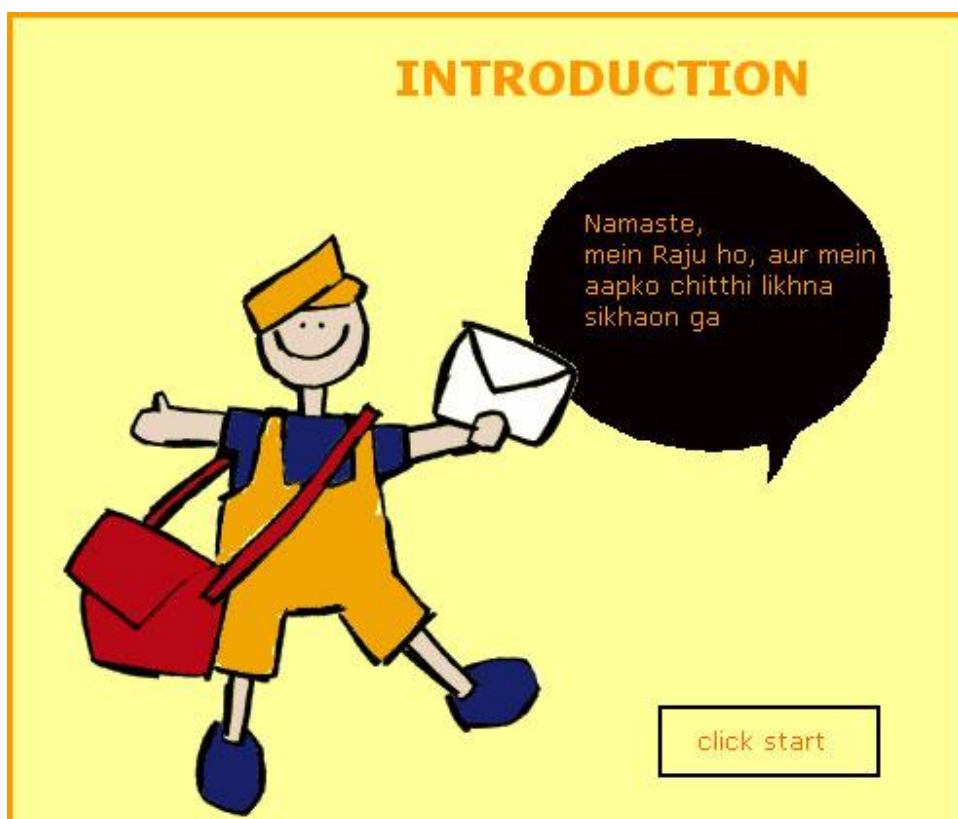
It was found that this concept is still difficult, so the children find it hard to answer such questions and are happy to use whatever is available. Giving inputs is difficult.

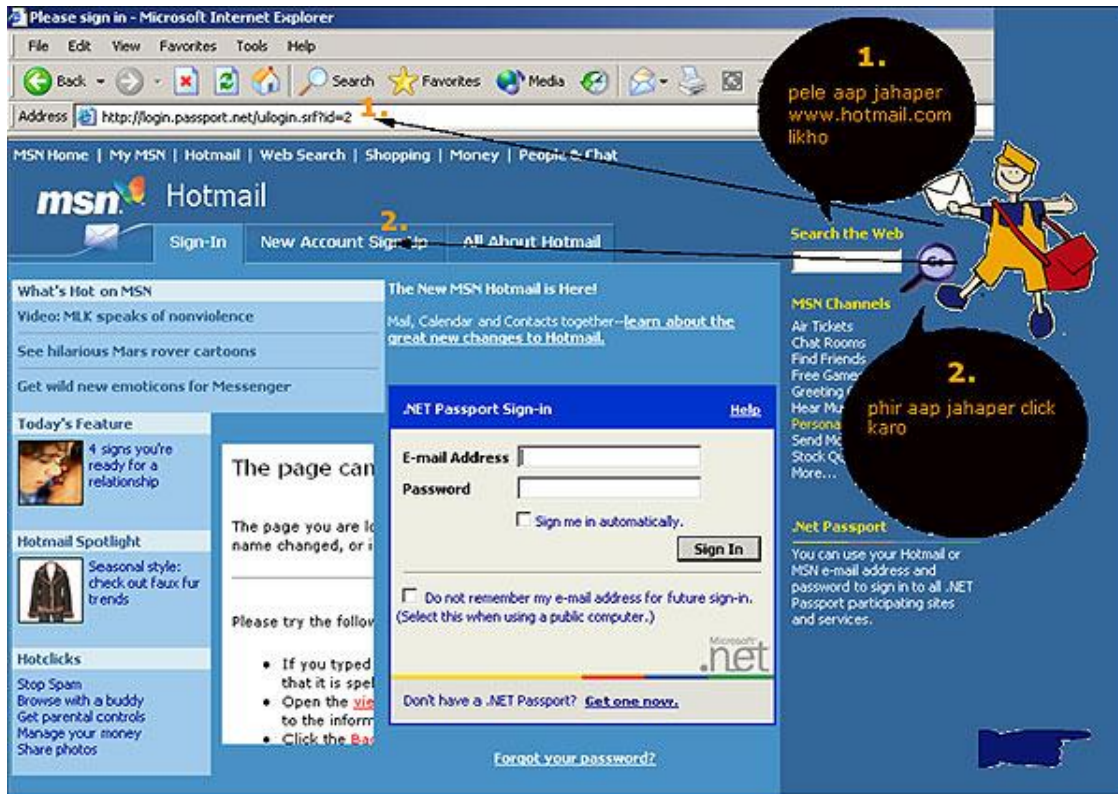
### **Conclusion**

Taking the replies of the Nagpur children in account, it is clear that the email program should be designed in such a manner that is entertaining, since most children enjoy playing games on the computer.

Secondly, one should consider that it is actually very important that the email explanation should be implemented in the local language. This is especially important, since the whole concept of emailing is completely new and complicated. One should also take in mind that these children have access to the Internet, but don't know how to use it yet.

### **Screen Grab Examples – from the demo version**





## Future plans

I have made a small demo version of what the design and layout for interactive email program. I will fine tune it and then will test it on field, with children to see if they are able to understand this interactive program. The proof of the pudding would be when I install it on the desktop and children actually start using it.

I would again incorporate changes if required based on the results and inputs given by the children.