

Touching Base on Children's Interactions with Tablet Games

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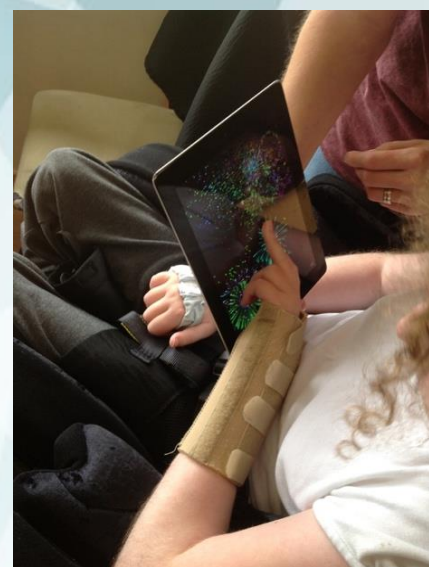
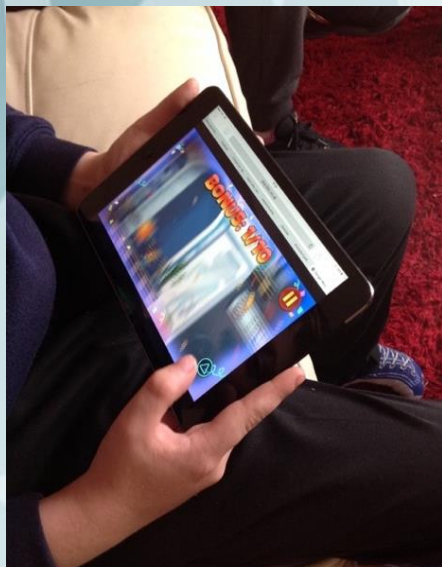
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This paper describes work commissioned by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to investigate how children with multiple disabilities use tablet games in their homes. An extended study of 20 children in their families, using surveys, diaries, interviews and observations, is described. The findings from the study are captured in themes which bring together the game play difficulties. A set of six personas are included that describe some of the difficulties faced by some of the children. Five key challenges for designers of games for children with disabilities are presented. The paper includes reflections from the BBC, on how this work has found its way into their product lines and the benefits of working in an academic – industrial partnership are highlighted.

Key Design Challenges Identified:

1. Games that employ 'side-by-side' tablets so parents and children can better play together – or games that 'switch' control from parent to child
2. App games as well as web games - web games were underplayed.
3. Games that can be customized in two directions – in terms of 'suitably aged' characters and 'suitably aged' game play
4. Forums are needed for parents of children to be able to use to suggest suitable games for other / similar children
5. Increase the amount of parental choice for simple games to support repetitive gameplay mechanics but with varying content.
6. Games should be playable offline

Action Taken by BBC:

1. Updated their children's personas to ensure better representation of diversity with regard to accessibility.
2. Conducted a review of the games that sit within BBC apps to ensure a more even spread of accessible gameplay between offline and online games.
3. Begun the process of designing a new suite of simpler interactions to use in future games to ensure future support of a fuller spectrum of interaction types, from simple to more complex interactions.
4. Created a series of prototypes to delve into multimodal control options (voice, eye game and audio only)
5. Begun exploring the design space of multiplayer games to address the issue of parent/child playtime.