

VocabStory

Enhance Your Vocabulary with Contextual Stories

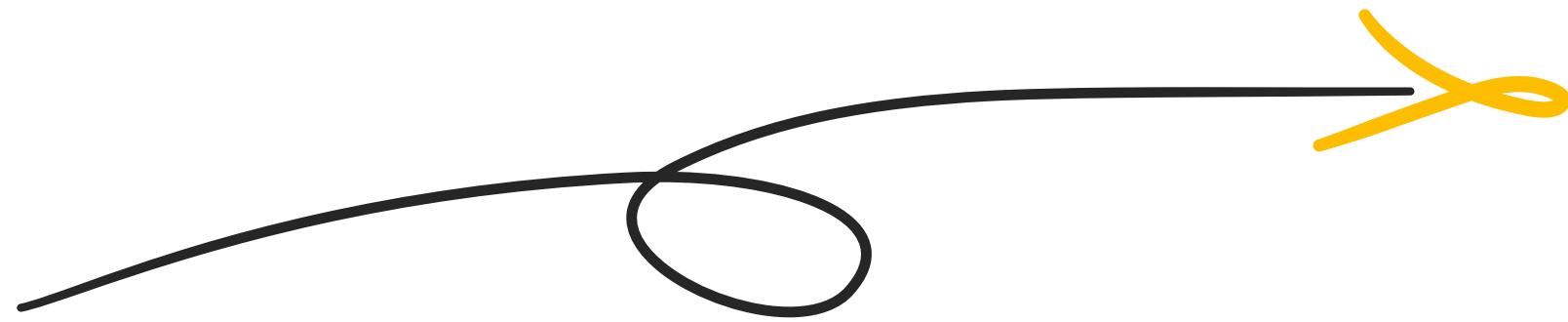
Julian Sterz UX-Designer



VocabStory offers a unique learning experience by helping users build their vocabulary in the context of short stories.

It provides an immersive experience with stories in multiple languages  and subjects, and features like interactive flashcards  and audiobook  narration.

Case Summary



How might we design a mobile app that empowers people to learn new vocabulary?

Project Scope:

- When:** 3 Weeks, March 2023
- Who:** Julian Sterz (Solo Project)
- What:**
- Competitor Research 4x
 - User Interviews 4x
 - Proto Persona
 - User / Job Stories Problem / Hypothesis
 - User Journey Maps
 - Low Fidelity Prototype
 - User Testing 4x
 - Conclusion / Learnings

Requirements:

- Onboarding page
- A way to sign up and log in
- An admin area where users can access their information
- A menu to navigate the application
- A way to upload new vocabulary words and definitions
- A means of reviewing vocabulary

Background:

People of all ages and backgrounds take courses to challenge themselves, further their career, or purely for the enjoyment of learning! At CareerFoundry, we believe that learning something new, (and learning how to learn!), is a critical life skill no matter your age, location, or circumstances.

With that said, it can be incredibly difficult to design a product or service that meets everyone's needs at the same time—the world is full of all types of users, after all. Every good project brief should define the specific circumstances and specifications of the problem the project is solving.

Once upon a time ...

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"I love getting close to other cultures by learning a language."

1.3 Proto-Persona

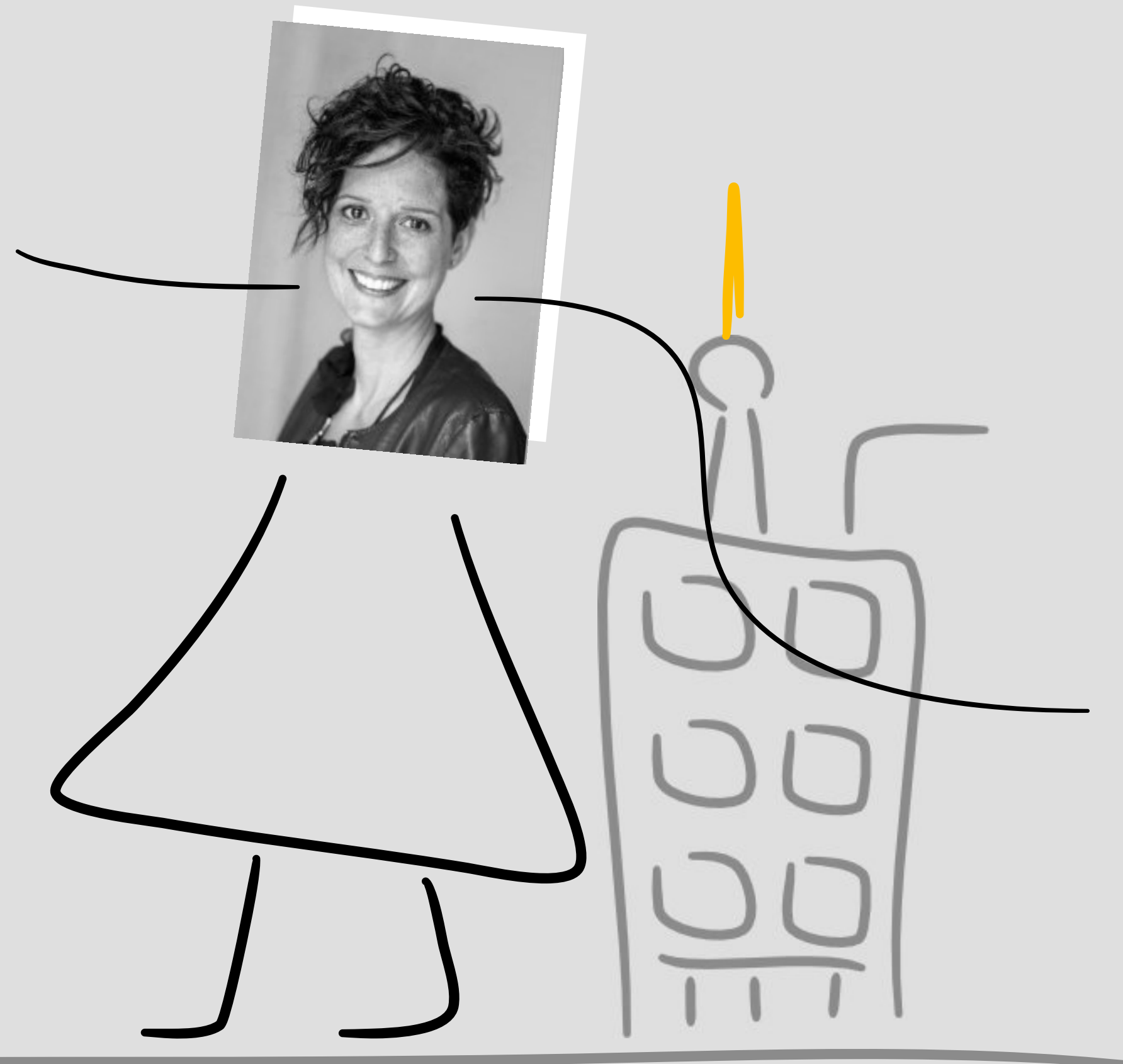
Livia
41 years,
Located in Berlin,
Officer at the Ministry of Culture

"I love the ability of getting close to other cultures by learning a language."

- Married, without own kids
- Lives in a mixed, alternative type of housing project together with other peers, families and patchwork -, seniors and students
- Likes foreign cultures, like Portugal and Brazil

- Writes down vocabulary and other notes in a book
- Likes to add context or some kind of a visual attribute to the words
- Organizes vocabulary in categories
- Uses basic digital apps such as a notes app or text processor to store and edit notes – rather, no dedicated learning app

- Has the need to better integrate the language into her daily life
- Wants to organize, categorize and store her notes from language and vocabulary learning – ideally synchronically between devices
- Needs greatly curated language and vocab learning content that provides a holistic learning experience
- Needs a basic tool as a basis, which can be extended in case she wants to study more actively and concentrated



"I have difficulties to integrate the language better into my everyday life."

... a persona named Livia lived in Berlin.

A dedicated designer saw her misery, ... thought ...

"In learning I need to
create connections,
I need context."



Project Brief

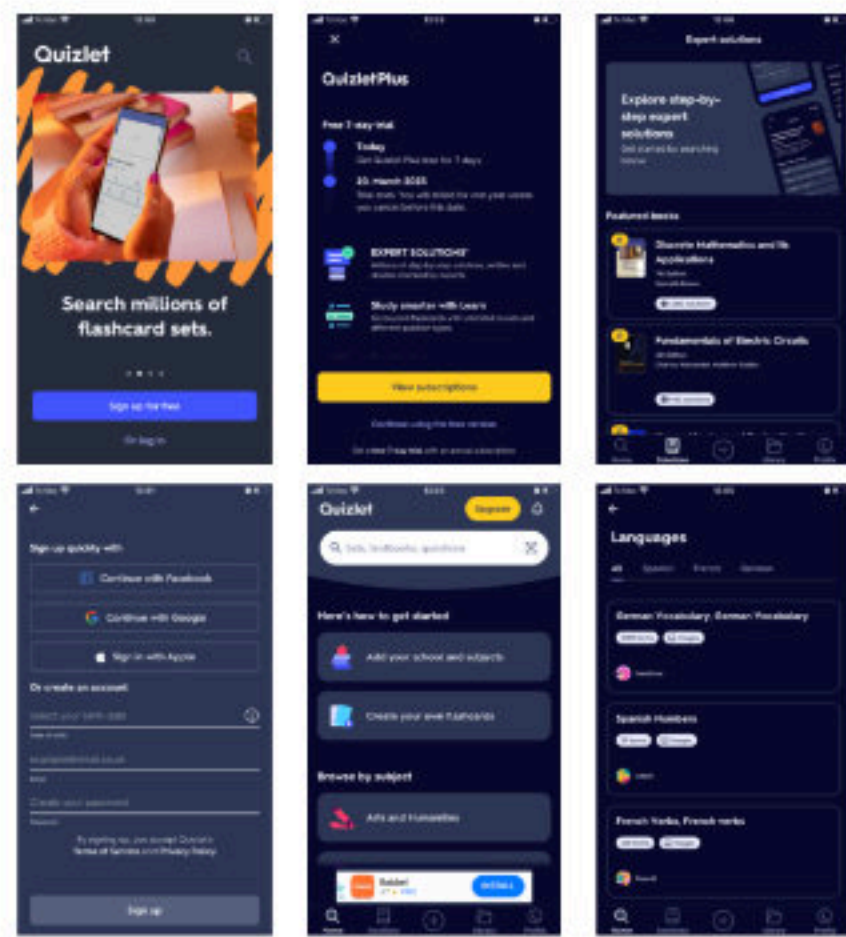
- Vocabulary learning app
- Empower People to learn
- Splashscreen, Onboarding, Learn, Review
- Competitor Research
- User Research
- ...

... and set out to find a solution that would help her.

He looked at similar solutions and analyzed exactly ...

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Quizlet



What I like about it

- Positive appearance at first glance, exclusive color, clear and consistent design
- Offers wide range of studies, also beyond language
- Transparency about offering of subscription model
- No onboarding (needed?!) as the app operation is very intuitive
- 'Expert solutions' looks interesting
- Learning sets can be shared (community)
- Intuitive 'swipe' function when learning flashcards
- Using photographs (if available) to visually support vocabulary
- Offers four different learning options: Flashcards, Learn, Test, Match (game challenge - with shared scores)



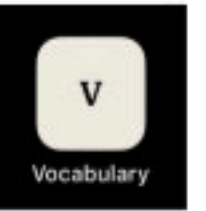

What I don't like about it

- For now, the app made a very good first impression
- Maybe a learning help option where the vocabulary is put into context (e.g. As part of a story or a full sentence even in combination with other current vocabulary)

Summary

- Seems like a good package of mostly everything that you would look for: Nice app design, Intuitive to use, Different options, Flexible

Summary

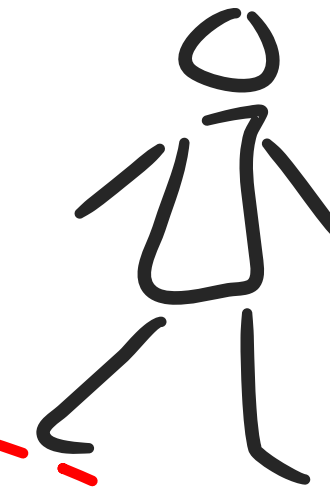





Personal Rating	👍👍	👍👍👍	👍	👍👍
Sign in / Log in	Email only, no Google/Apple ID	Email, Google, Facebook, Apple ID	No Sign in on iOS, but must purchase a yearly description (3 day trial)	No Sign in
Onboarding	Onboarding shows some of the functions	No real onboarding needed	Onboarding focuses more on the user-design choices than on the functionality	No onboarding
Intuitive	Not intuitive to use and quite complex	Very intuitive despite its complexity	Wants to be intuitive but for me in total not quite understandable	The app is basic which makes it understandable, though still not very intuitive
Ready to learn	Ready to learn flashcard sets offered by the community	Ready to learn flashcard sets offered by the community	App offers limited pre-fab vocab. sets on different topics	No - You need to manually enter or import vocabulary
Look and Feel	Neutral, non-designed rather factual unemotional appearance	Positively emotional appearance, clearly and pleasantly designed, with its own style	Ambitious designed with the option that the user can choose styles, neutral elegant color scheme	Limited focus on design, but positive color (-code) scheme
Subscription	Trial (limited func.) / 27,99€ Year / 58,99€ Lifetime	7-Day Full Trial / 31,99€ Year / 6,99€ Month	3-Day Full Trial / 19,99€ Year	Trial (limited func.) / 10,99€ Lifetime
Special Features	Large community of users	Expert solutions, Community, Four learning options	Design focussed, Random dictionary learning	Simple, Cheap

... what strengths and weaknesses they have,

asked his fellows for advice ...

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1.2 Interview Summaries

Together with the interviewee

Intro

» I'm going to be walking you through this session today. We're conducting interviews to better understand how people approach learning a new subject and vocabulary. The session should take 15 - 20 minutes.

The first thing I want to make clear right away is that this is not a test. You can't do or say anything wrong here. If you have any questions as we go along, just ask them. And if you need to take a break at any point, just let me know.

OK, let's get started. «

Bio

Name
Age range
Profession
Born in
Living in

Questions

1. To begin - Tell me about your daily routines.
2. When was the last time you learned a new subject and vocabulary, and what did you learn? And for what reason did you learn it?
3. What tool or learning method did you use?
4. Please describe the benefits of this tool or method.
5. What is the downside of the tool or method, what frustrates you about learning?
6. What gives you pleasure while learning, and would you describe learning-success?
7. Reflecting on what's been said so far - How would you change or optimize your learning or method?

Julian Steitz - UK Program - CareerFoundry - 2023

1.2 Do / Feel / Think

Kai

What do they do?

I write vocabulary down in my vocabulary journal and pronounce words out loud in my head. I use Duolingo for learning Scottish Gaelic. I flip through pages of my book.

How do they feel?

I feel frustrated when I don't stick to learning and practicing ... but I experienced that, if you later go back to the topic, it is easy to pick up on it again.

What do they think?

I think that a context in which you learn new things helps to better memorize, like a story or a historical or scientific context. I think that language brings you close to a foreign culture.

Gloria

I memorize vocabulary from the situation where and from whom (look, gesture, mimic) I heard it. I build bridges between Spanish, English and German. I took lessons with a speech trainer.

I feel empowered to work in a German-speaking environment and where I even learn new words every day. It frustrated me when I knew the language, but people would not understand my pronunciation.

I think that we need to learn in multiple dimensions, like reading and listening and also having a strong visual connection.

Jan

I shortlist vocabulary that is hard to learn a second time from my vocab book. I relate the position of a word in a book with its meaning to better memorize.

I was very motivated in learning a new language when I was planning to study or live abroad. I first felt frustrated that the language in real life differed from the course dialect and speed.

I think that also small targets can help, like for example understanding a certain song text. I think that a visual connection like a handwritten word or an image helps.

Martin


I use the Sticky Notes app on my computer to record and structure what I have learned. I look up words in a German Synonym's Dictionary in order to broaden my scope of vocabulary.

I have an interest in having a proper language and to being able to follow along with my daughter going to a German school. I feel pleasure when the new vocabulary start to settle down.

I think that a digital tool should be simple and accessible, like Sticky Notes, but with the option to better Categorize, Save and Synchronize the notes, to access them also from your phone.

Julian Steitz - UK Program - CareerFoundry - 2023

... and strived for better understanding of Livia's problem.



"I feel pleasure when new vocabulary starts to settle down."

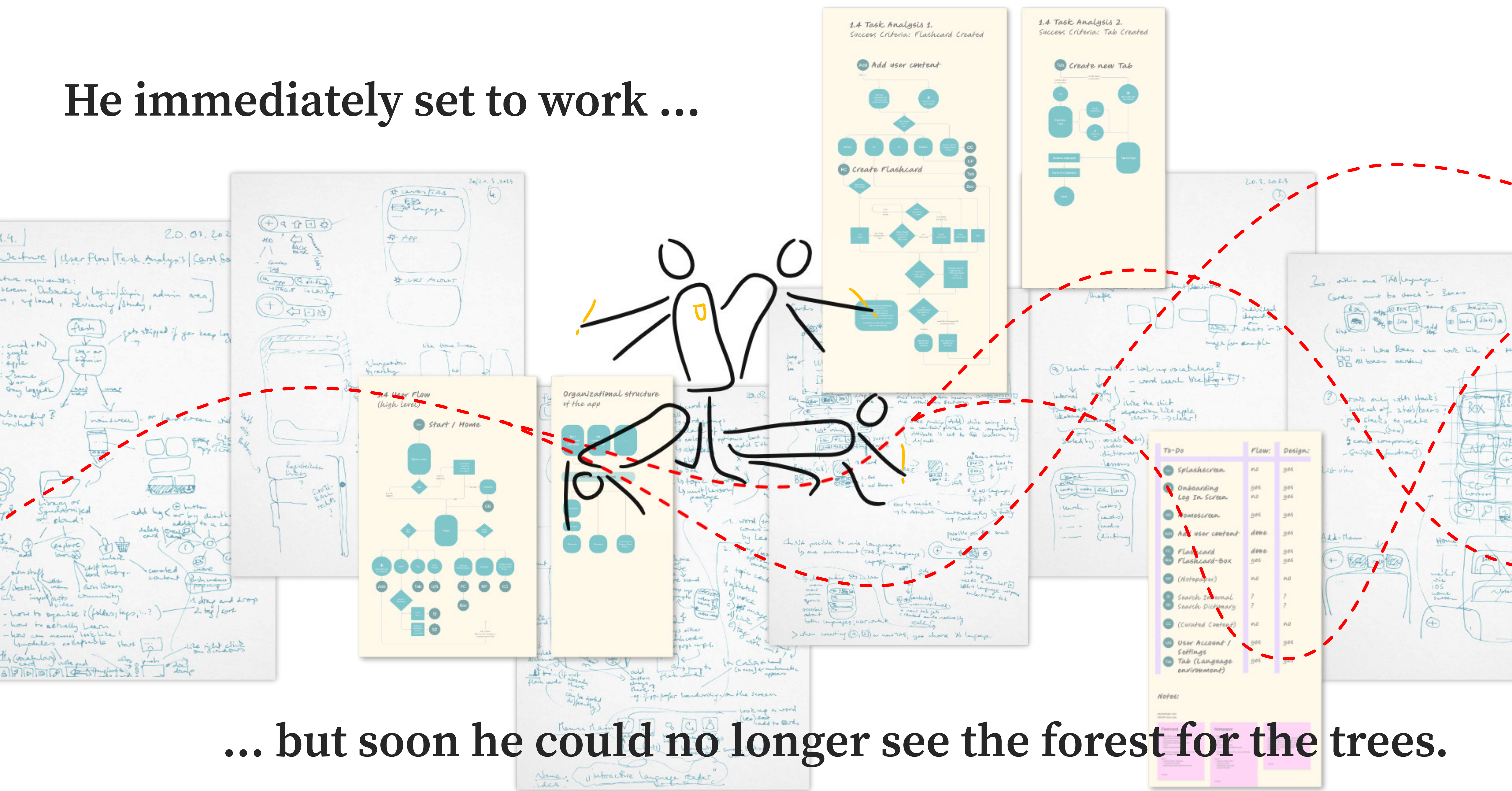
"I memorize vocabulary from the situation where and from whom I heard it!"

"I think that a context in which you learn new things helps to better memorize, like a story or a historical context."

"I look up words in a synonym's dictionary in order to broaden my scope."

"We need to learn in multiple dimensions, like reading and listening and also having a visual connection."

He immediately set to work ...



... but soon he could no longer see the forest for the trees.

A friendly wizard offered him advice ...



20.9.2023

21.3.2023

22.03.

Flow: Design:

	Flow:	Design:
Dashboard	no	306
Boarding In Screen	yes	306
Dashboard	yes	306
user content	done	306
Sharecard	done	306
Sharecard-Box	yes	306
paper)	no	no
ch Internal	?	?
ch Dictionary	?	?
ated Content)	no	no
r Account /	yes	306
ings (Language	yes	306
rompt)		

Handwritten sketches of mobile app screens and a flowchart. The sketches include a 'Home' screen with a grid of cards, a 'reader' screen, and a 'word card' screen. The flowchart shows a sequence of screens: Home, reader, word card, and back to Home. Annotations include 'Cards must be stored in Box', 'This is how boxes are laid out in the app', 'All boxes are visible', 'wrote only with stacks instead of tabs/bars?', 'join stacks to create a box', 'compromise: - function?', 'Home', 'reader', 'word card', 'Swipe to left', 'Swipe to right', 'Tap to flip', 'word card in your language', 'mipped from text (current)', 'button -> go-to-text', 'Visual image? illustration - form of the stories itself', 'each story contains', 'Story 1', 'Story 2', 'Story 3', '1 2 3', 'Select box', 'cards', 'I don't know this (keep in mind)', 'in your language', 'mipped from text (current)', 'button -> go-to-text'.

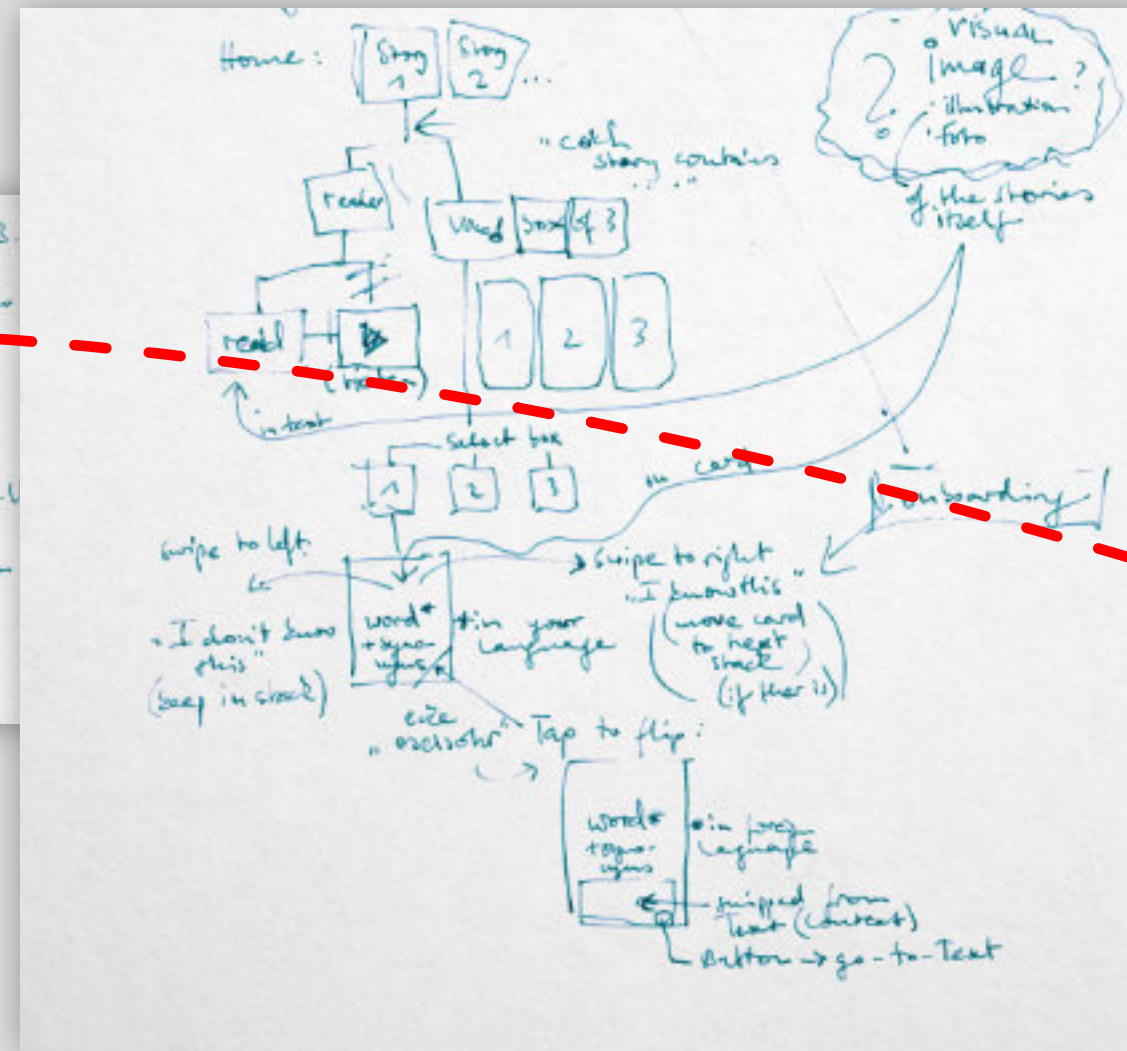
1.4. 22.03.

> Story (topic) - read - audio + read - 300 words - 5-10 min.

- created set of vocabulary-cards - user can add word-cards by highlighting words in the text (not available in German)

> while reading (while viewing -> parse) user pushes on highlighted word to see: translation, synonyms and a button -> go-to-card

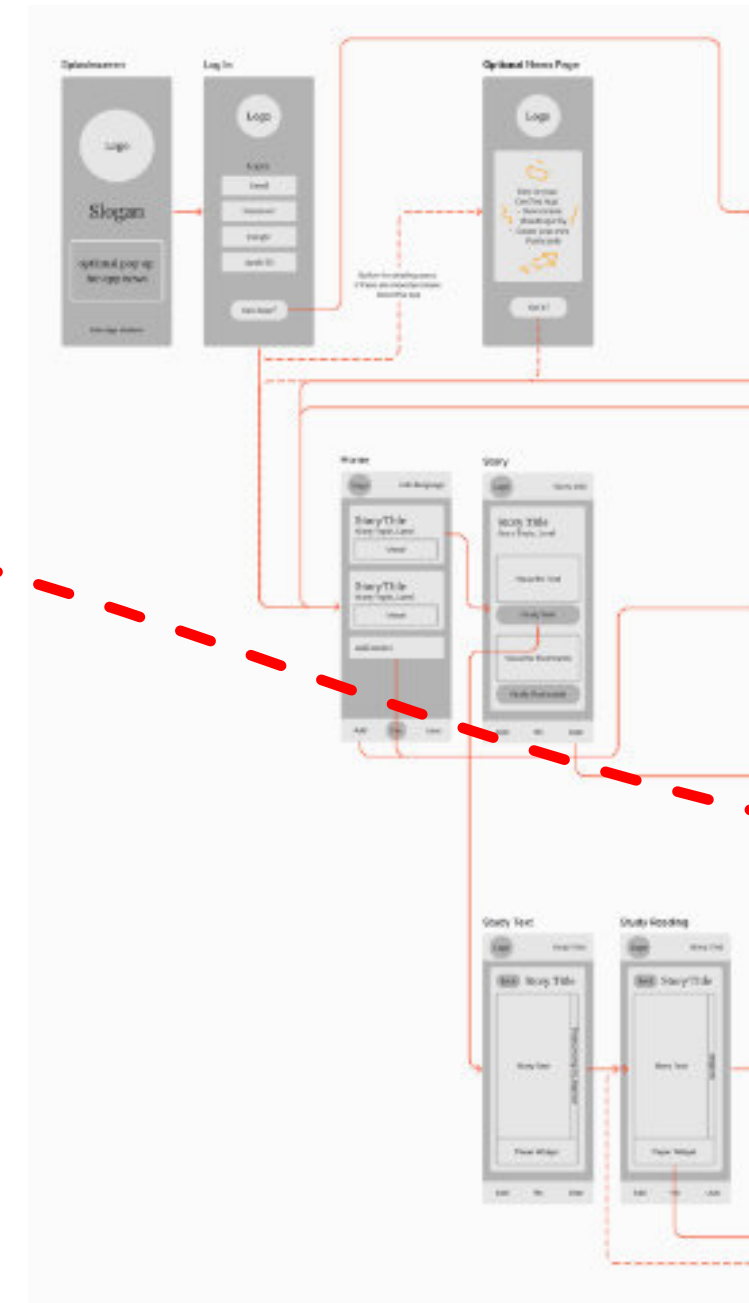
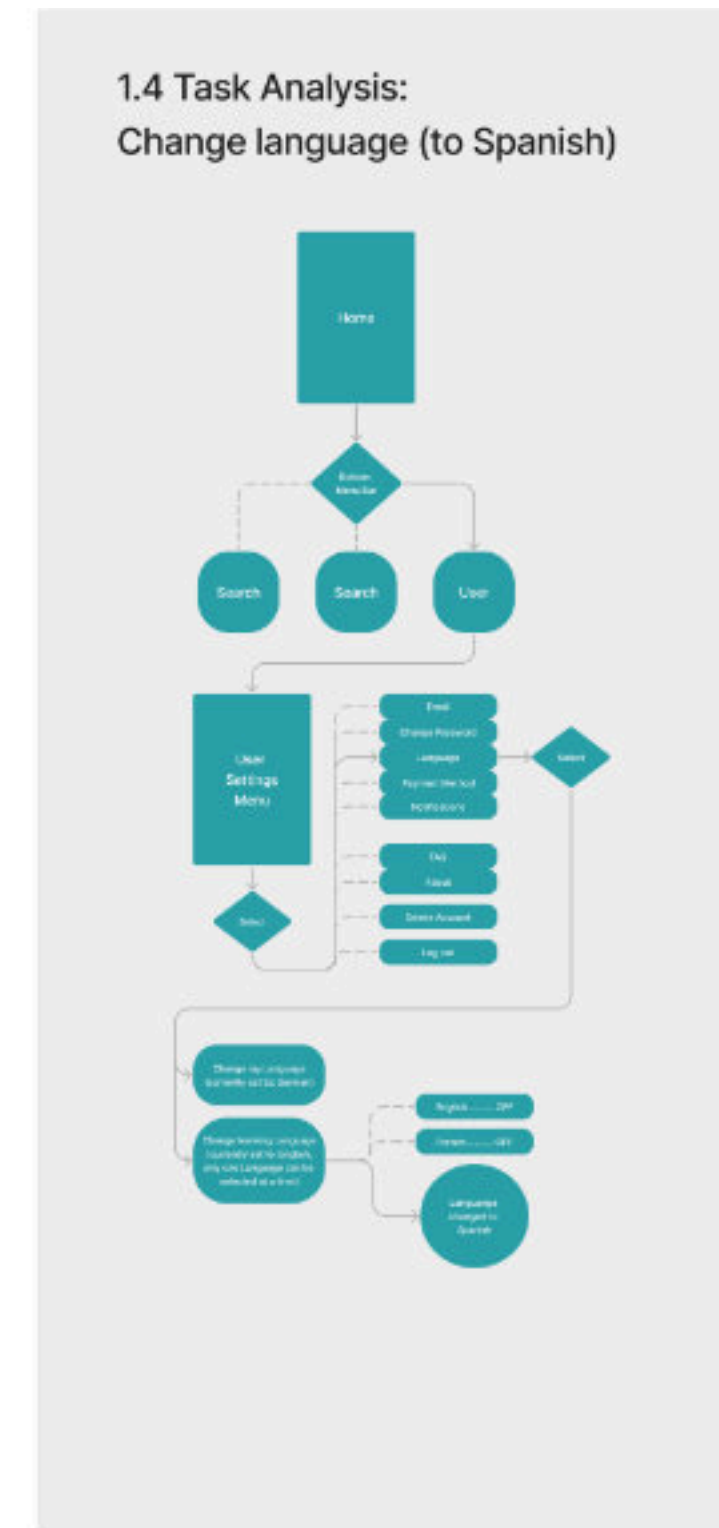
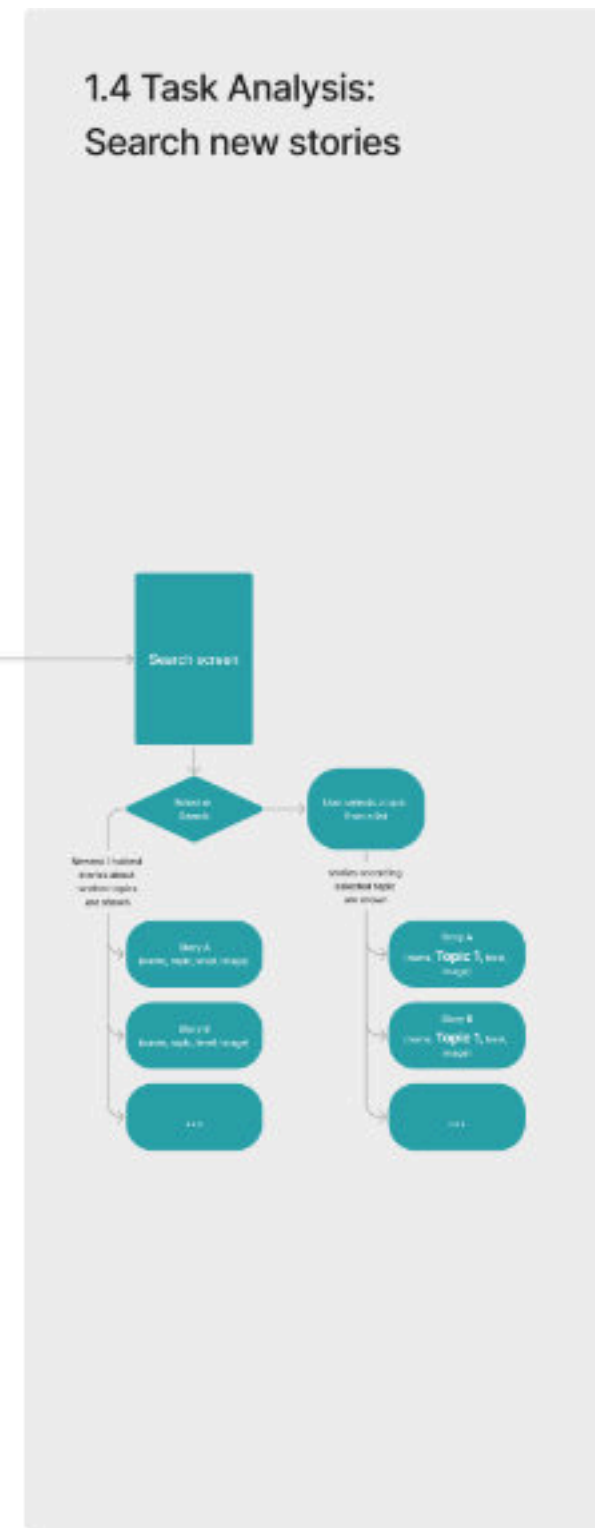
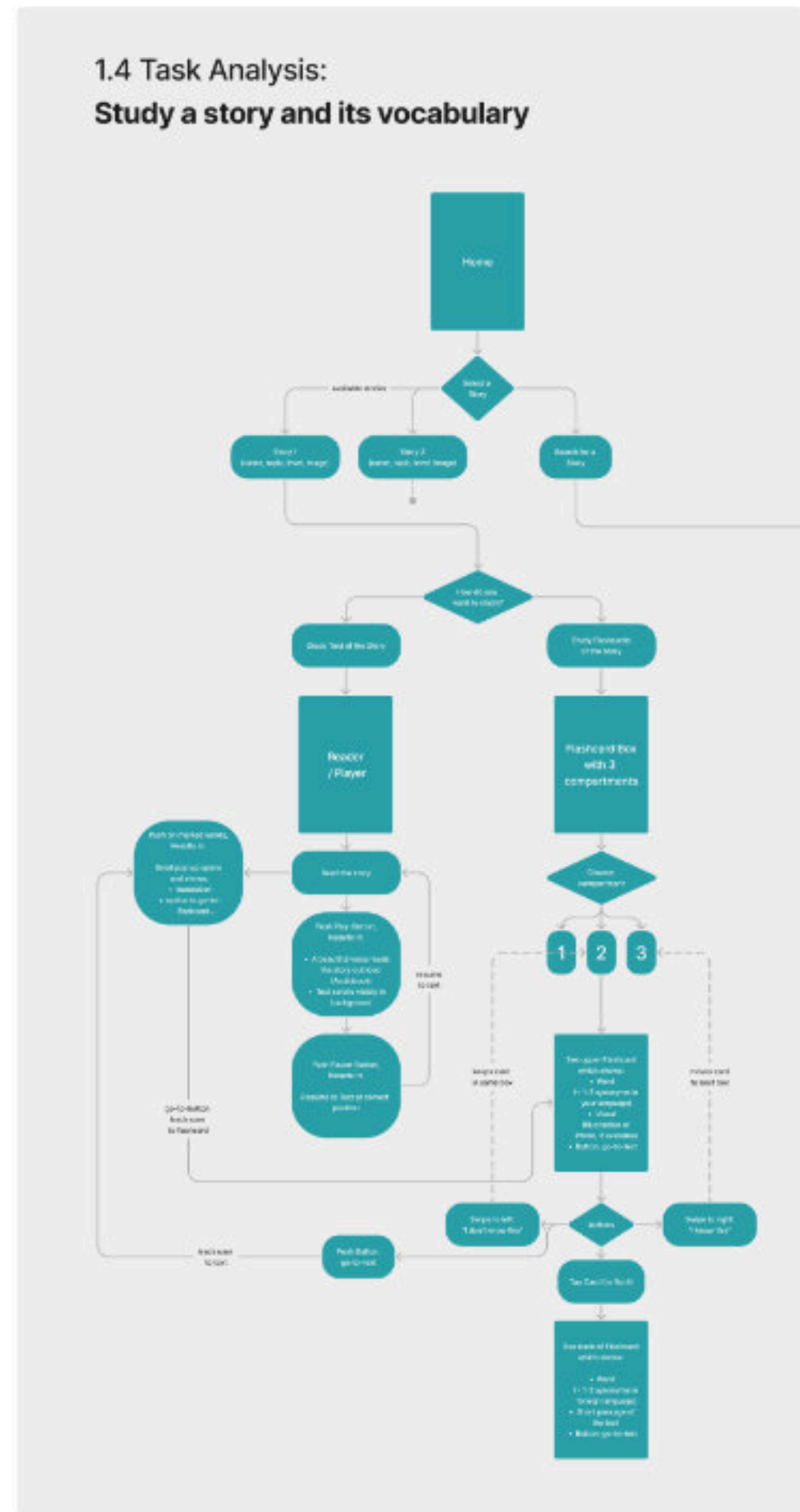
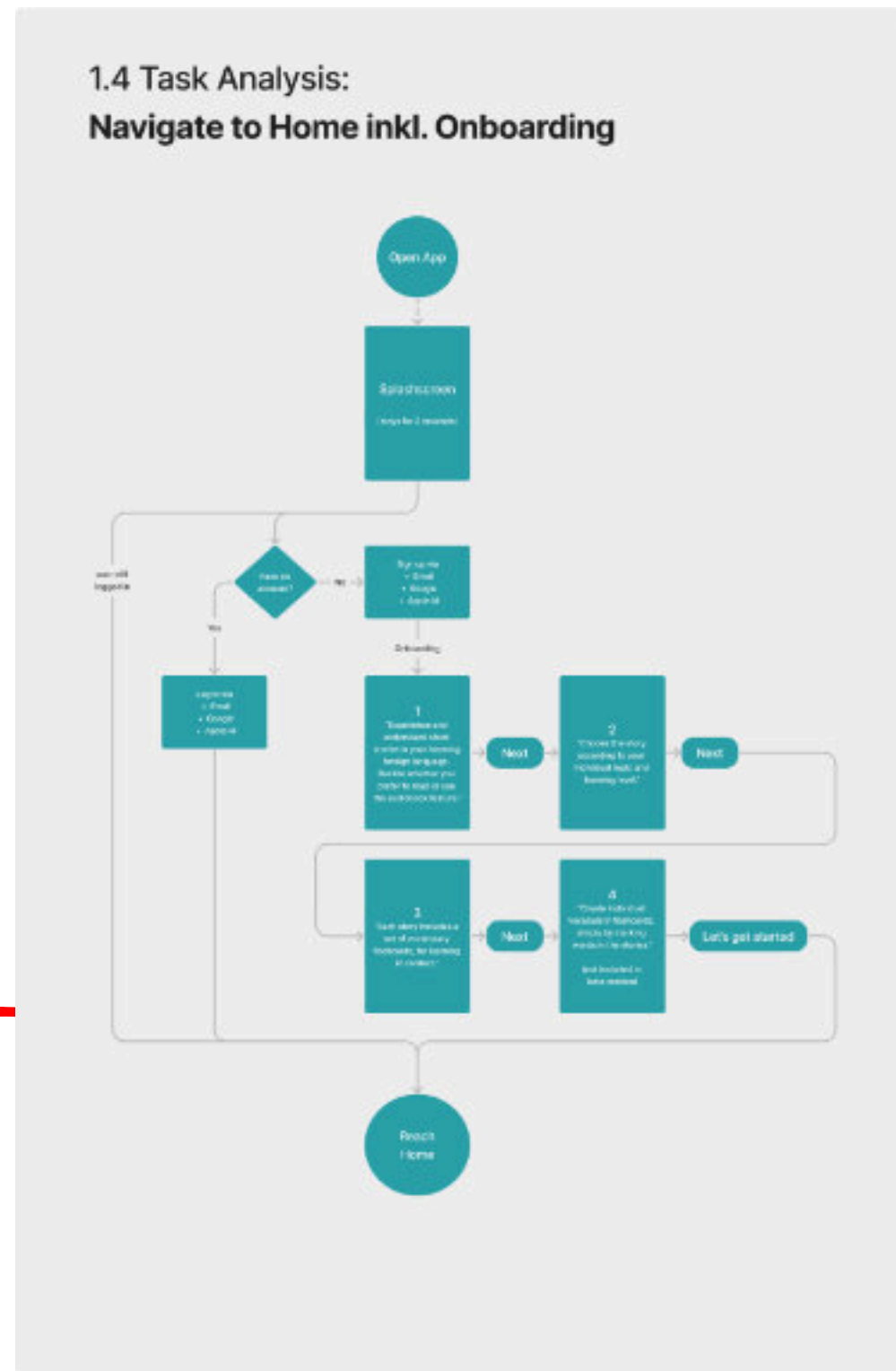
> Cards are in a 3 slot box related to the story



... which gave him back his confidence ...

... and a clear vision of what to focus on.

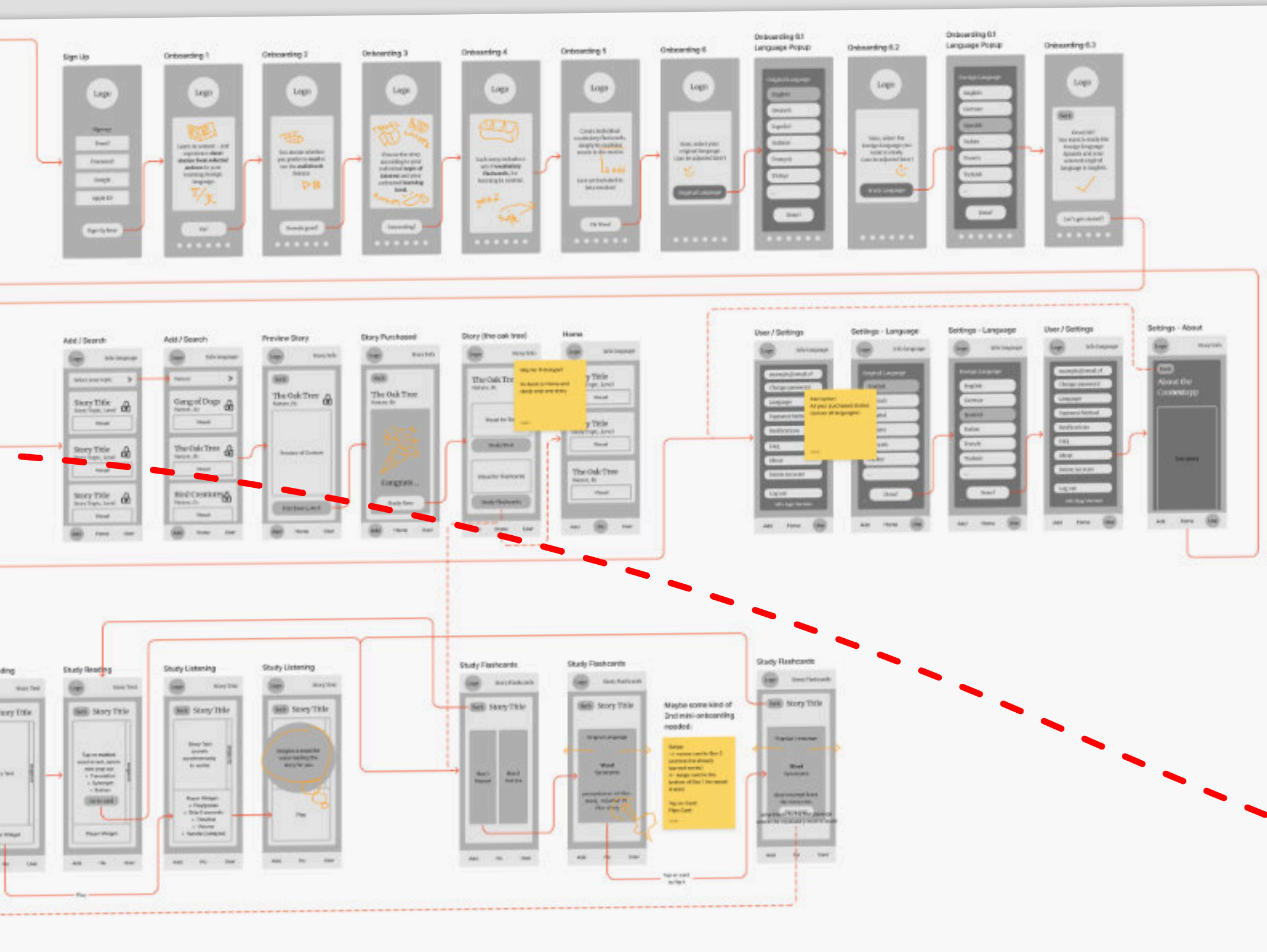
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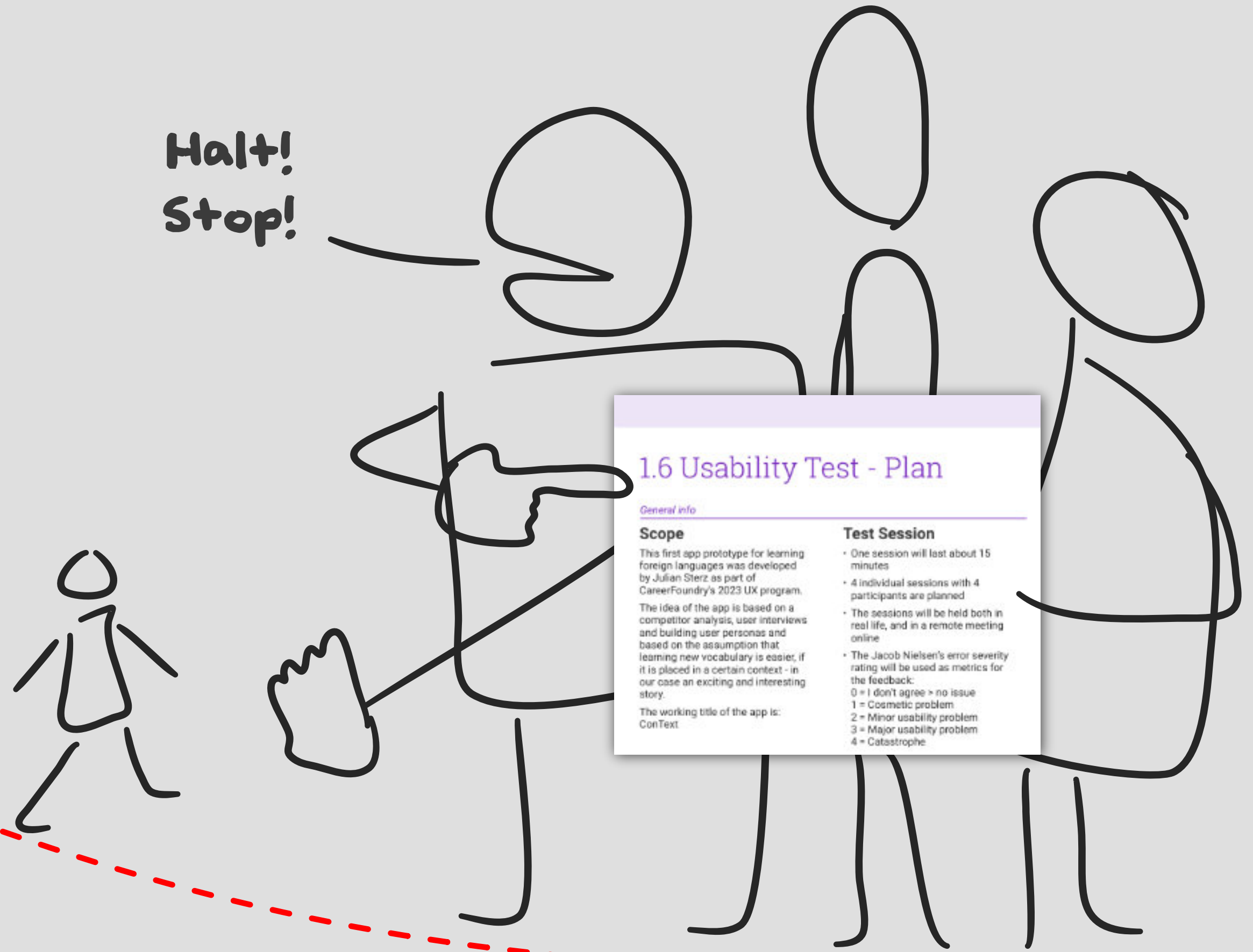
But when he felt safe ...

... and thought he had the solution ...

[View Wireframes](#)



Halt!
Stop!



1.6 Usability Test - Plan

General info

Scope
This first app prototype for learning foreign languages was developed by Julian Sterz as part of CareerFoundry's 2023 UX program. The idea of the app is based on a competitor analysis, user interviews and building user personas and based on the assumption that learning new vocabulary is easier, if it is placed in a certain context - in our case an exciting and interesting story.
The working title of the app is: ConText.

Test Session

- One session will last about 15 minutes
- 4 individual sessions with 4 participants are planned
- The sessions will be held both in real life, and in a remote meeting online
- The Jacob Nielsen's error severity rating will be used as metrics for the feedback:
0 = I don't agree = no issue
1 = Cosmetic problem
2 = Minor usability problem
3 = Major usability problem
4 = Catastrophe

... a scary gang of giants blocked his way.

Test Prototype

CF 1.5/1.6 - 401 story options

https://marvelapp.com/prototype/bef/471/screen/91113387

Logo English/Spanish

Fiesta de colore
Topic: Colors, Level A2

Visual/Preview of content

Text

Flashcards

Add Ho User

Test this prototype



They put him to severe tests ...

"I like the overall Idea of the app."

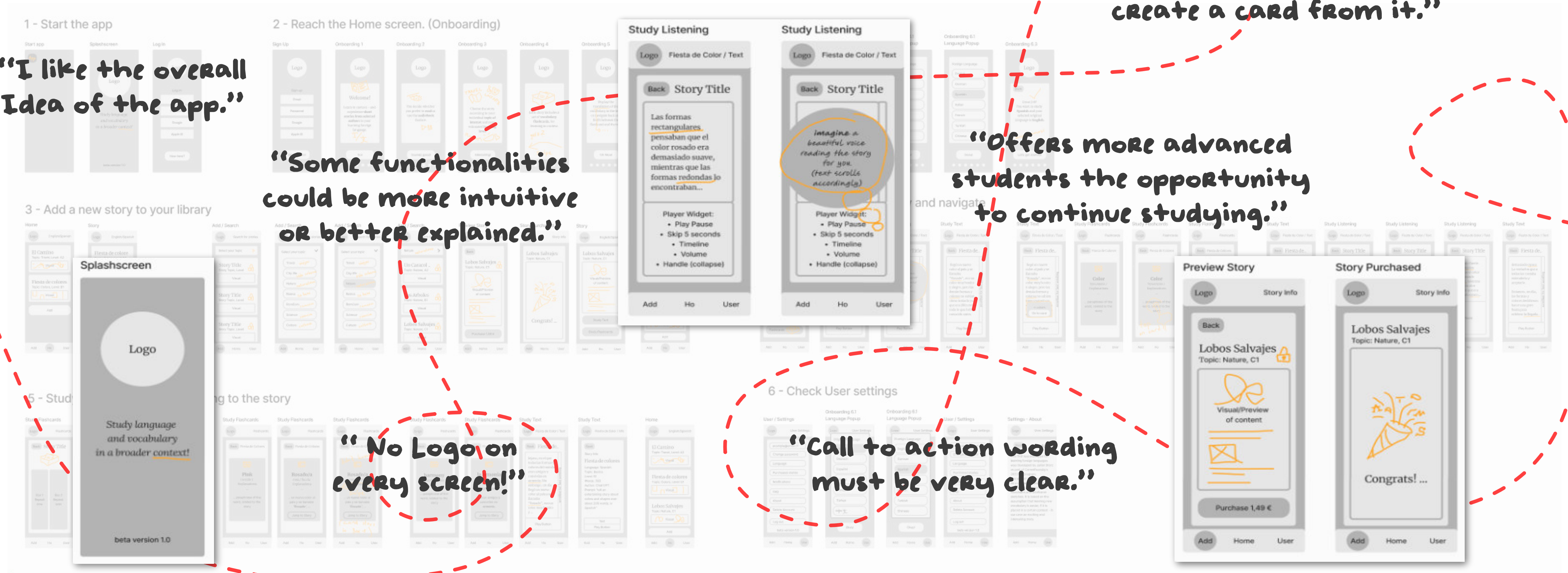
"Some functionalities could be more intuitive or better explained."

"No Logo on every screen!"

"Mark any word of the text to look it up and create a card from it."

"Offers more advanced students the opportunity to continue studying."

"Call to action wording must be very clear."

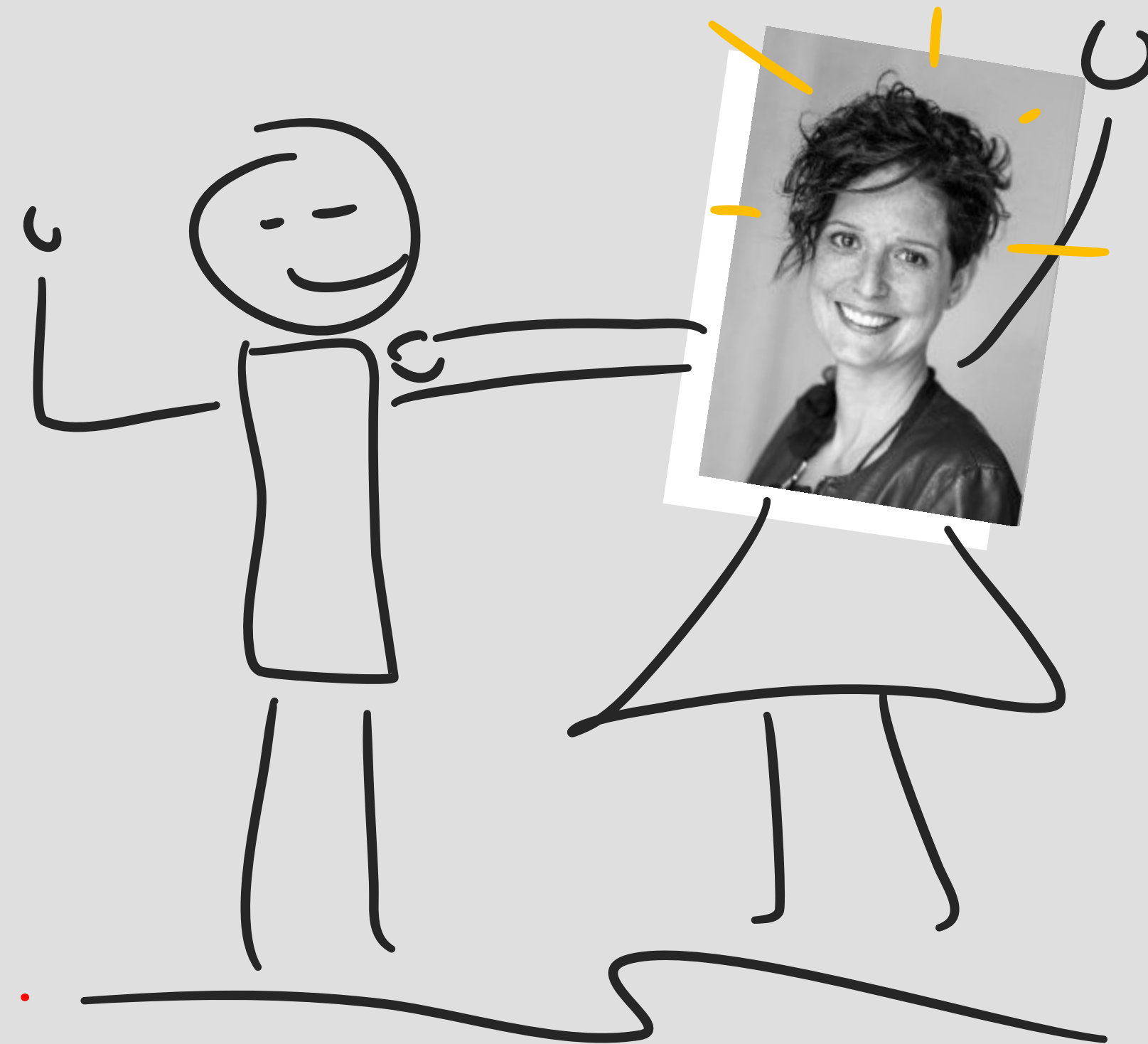


He overcame them strengthened.

The feedback he received was so valuable ...

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Task	Observation	Severity	Recommendation
1. Onboarding	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> ... wonders if Login can be skipped once he uses the app frequently> Last screen of onboarding could be even more positive> Welcome screen other icons (example: light bulb) / too many icons> Login / Signup use icons/logos> Display the vocabulary ... release> Tone of voice more consistent> Topic of the available stories only, not the level> Onboarding could be shorter - if possible> Carousel icon at the bottom better feedback about location	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> No recommended changes
2. Adding content	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Splashscreen too fast> "You decide..." info or an advice to action - unclear> "original language" released e.g. "mother tongue / native language"> Logo of the app should not appear on every screen> Option to switch (go back) between screens - No a dead ends> CTA buttons clear in their wording - "next"	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Part of UI design and illustration> Part of UI design and illustration> Part of UI design and text> Part of UI design and text> Part of UI design and text and app-concept> Onboarding concept should be reviewed for next prototype> Apply correct carousel icons
3. Study Test	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Why can't I have a trial before purchasing?> Wondering about difficulty levels (A2, B1, ...) on Home screen> Why not selecting level earlier ... where can I select it?	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Preview will be provided with higher fidelity
4. Study Flashcards	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Right for slightly advanced learners, starting from B1 ... to C2 ...> Tests clicks wrong path: Flashcards instead of the story text> Tricky seems to understand the Text/Audio features> Positive: the feature to read and listen to the text in parallel> Positive: Great chance for advanced learners to continue learning> More info about the story at the beginning (Length, Author, ...)> "back to text" button - correct CTA depending on each situation> Listening - text should be highlighted like charade> Option to mark any word, look it up and create flashcard> Rethink the idea: Browser plugin, already in the world wide web	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Part of the overall concept and target group of the app> No a usability issue - will be improved with clear UI> Good - this task seems to be intuitive> Supports the feature> Supports the overall idea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Doesn't understand the Flashcard logic and how to use it> Needs more guidance to use the Flashcards> The flip function, to see the back of the card, is unclear> Consider to have more than 2 slots in each box> Navigation studying cards clearer (back, jump to story...)> Imagines a large databank of cards, ways to categorize/filter> Group words, for example blue color for verbs	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Will get more clear in higher fidelity> Will be considered in higher fidelity> See above> Can stay like this for first launch
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Navigation studying cards clearer (back, jump to story...)> Imagines a large databank of cards, ways to categorize/filter> Group words, for example blue color for verbs	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">> Will be considered in next higher fidelity prototype



Conclusion and Next Steps

The first usability test yielded a large number of **interesting findings**. Broadly speaking, I would divide the feedback - beyond Jacob Nielsen's metric - into **four groups**:

1. **Cosmetic improvements** that will be partially (not necessarily 100%) changed/improved in the next prototype.
2. **Basic usability problems** (UX basics), which are 100% changed/improved in the next prototype.
3. **Feedback on the concept of individual features** that could be added to the app, which are considered but not necessarily implemented in the second prototype.
4. **Feedback on the basic concept of the app idea**, which will most likely not be included in the second prototype, but is still very valuable input for the future development of the app or new projects.

Next Steps: Given the size of the necessary revisions (1st and 2nd) and the time available at this point, the thorough revision of the prototype will be postponed until later in the course.

... that he was sure he would do Livia a big favor.

When he returned home, dog-tired, he was already making ...

"Start as low fidelity as possible."

"Get into feedback loops (interview, tests, ...) as early as possible."

"Start with the basic functionality, add extra features later, if possible."

"Stay in one platform, for example Figma."



... new plans on how to improve and to grow.

Thanks for watching!



Let's work together!

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