Exploring Word-Sized Graphics for Visualizing Eye Tracking Data within Transcribed Experiment Recordings

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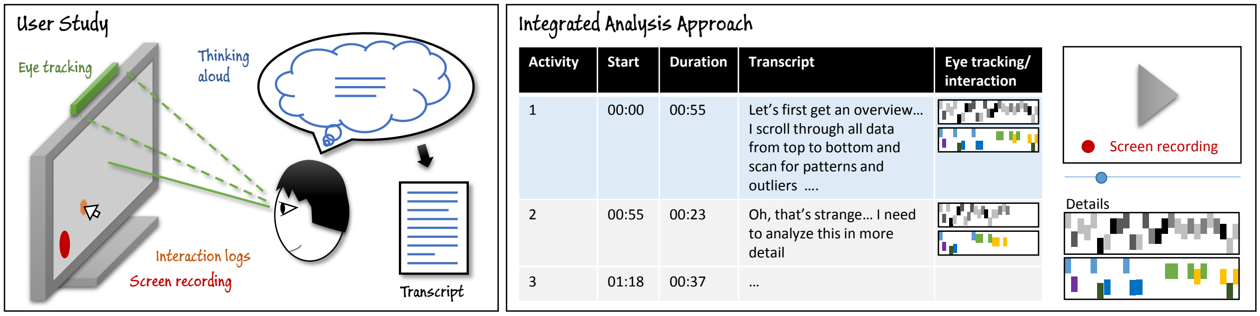

Fig. 1. Illustration of our approach to analyze transcribed recordings of user studies (e.g., based on think-aloud protocols): we integrate word-sized eye tracking and interaction visualizations into a tabular representation of the transcript and provide screen recordings and enlarged visualizations on demand.

Abstract—In user studies, eye tracking is often used in combination with other recordings, such as think-aloud protocols. However, it is difficult to analyze both the eye tracking data and transcribed recordings together because of a missing data alignment and integration. We suggest the use of word-sized eye tracking visualizations to augment the transcript with important events that occurred concurrently to the transcribed activities. We explore the design space of such graphics by discussing how existing eye tracking visualizations can be scaled down to word size. The suggested visualizations can optionally be combined with other event-based data such as interaction logs. We demonstrate our concept by implementing a prototype analysis tool.

Index Terms—Think aloud, eye tracking, interaction, visualization, sparklines.

1 Introduction

Eye tracking data recorded in user studies is commonly analyzed using statistical methods. Visualizations depicting the data complements these methods by supporting more exploratory analysis and providing deeper insights into the data. Visualization research nowadays provide a body of techniques to visually represent the spatial and temporal dimensions of the recorded eye movements [7]. Eye tracking data, however, is only one of many data streams—such as video, audio, and interactions—that are usually recorded during an experiment. For instance, when applying a think-aloud protocol, a transcript of the oral statements is a particularly rich source that could explain the behavior of the participant on a higher level. To support an analyst to leverage the full potential of the recordings, it is important to integrate all streams of information within a single approach.

In this work, we focus on the integration of transcribed statements of individual participants and eye tracking data into a visually augmented user interface (Figure 1). Unlike other visualization approaches (Section 2), we handle the transcribed text as a first class entity which we complement with *word-sized eye tracking visualizations* in a tabular chronological representation (Section 3). We systematically explore the design space of these word-sized visualizations, also known as *sparklines* [47], for eye tracking data by discussing how existing eye tracking visualizations can be scaled down to word size (Section 4). Similar visualizations can be used for representing interaction logs; the small size of visualizations allows us to combine multiple eye tracking and interaction visualizations within a user interface. We implemented a prototype of the suggested user interface (Figure 1, right) as a details-on-demand view for a visual analytics framework for eye tracking data by Blascheck et al. [6] (Section 5). We see our main contributions in designing novel word-sized variants of established eye tracking visualizations and demonstrating how these can be leveraged as part of an interactive transcript-focused analysis tool.

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2 Related Work

There are various approaches for visualizing eye tracking data as Blascheck et al. [7] surveyed. Those focusing the analysis to an individual participant are more closely related to our work, for instance, approaches that represent the spatial coordinates of fixations and saccades [13, 21, 35] or approaches that abstract this data to fixations on *areas of interest* (AOIs) and transitions between those [12, 15, 22, 25, 28, 41]. Also, a number of visualizations of interaction logs have been investigated, for instance, for interactions of software developers in IDEs [36], interactions with visualization systems [17, 34, 43], or provenance information in scientific workflows [23]. However, only few approaches integrate eye tracking or log visualizations with transcribed experiment recordings: Holsanova [26] connect transcribed picture descriptions with picture viewing data on a simple timeline showing both text and events. Franchak et al. [19] extend such a timeline with other events, in their case, interactions of infants with their environment. ChronoViz [48] includes a transcript view complementing a separate timeline view of eye tracking data and other event-based data. Blascheck et al. [6] combine eye tracking and interaction data in an extended timeline; the transcript is retrievable on demand only for individual time spans. Our approach, in contrast to these, puts a greater focus on text and handles eye tracking and interaction data only as context of the transcript.

A common method for integrating text and visualization—in particular when the text should not only be a supplement to the visualization—are word-sized graphics, also called *sparklines* [47].

They can be integrated in all textual representations, such as natural-language text [20, 47], tables [47], source code [2, 4], visualizations [9, 33], or user interfaces [3]. In this paper, we integrate them into columns of a tabular representation as additional information for transcribed experiment recordings. Being a kind of scaled-down information visualization, sparklines might represent any kind of abstract data, however, only under restricted space constraints. To the best of our knowledge, sparklines have not been used so far for representing eye tracking or interaction log data.

There are also annotation and coding tools for transcribed experiment recordings. In context of psycholinguistics, ELAN [11, 45] supports the analysis of orthographic and phonetic transcriptions. Another tool for linguistic analysis of spoken text is ANVIL [29]. It allows the integration of multimodal audiovisual material and was later extended to include spatiotemporal information of videos [30] and motion capturing [31]. None of these tools, however, supports the analysis of eye tracking and interaction data along with the text.

3 SETTING

Our goal is to provide an analysis tool that enriches a transcribed experiment recording (e.g., from a think-aloud protocol) with eye tracking information. We focus on analyzing a single participant at a time, for instance, as part of a data exploration step or a systematic coding of performed activities. The integrated visualization, in addition to text, should enable the analyst to make informed data analysis and coding decisions without having to switch between multiple tools or visualizations.

We assume that a transcript is divided into *activities* having a precise start and end time. The stimulus used in an experiment can either be static or dynamic. In the dynamic case, we want to be flexible enough to support video stimuli as well as interactively changeable stimuli such as user interfaces. A visual encoding of interaction logs is a secondary goal for our approach. Interaction events typically carry a timestamp when a participant triggered them, a spatial position that describes their location, and can be classified into different abstract categories such as *selection*, *encoding*, *navigation*, etc.

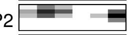
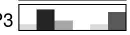
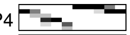
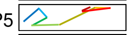
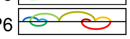
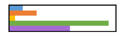
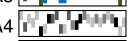
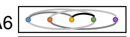
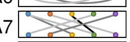
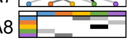
The eye tracking data consists of a sequence of *fixations* with spatial coordinates as well as start and end times; *saccades* describe quick eye movements between individual fixations. Some of the visualizations discussed in the following require that a stimulus has been annotated with *areas of interest* (AOIs), summarizing sets of fixations into spatial groups. Individual transitions between AOIs can be considered as a graph, either aggregated over time as a static graph or reflecting the temporal order of transitions as a dynamic graph [12].

Our solution as outlined in Figure 1 (right) is based on representing the transcript in a table, showing one activity per line in chronological order. Besides a column containing the actual transcript text, additional columns provide context about timing, eye tracking, and interaction events that happened during the respective activity. Since the tabular representation does not allow us to integrate large visualizations, we use *word-sized eye tracking visualizations*. Due to the division of time into short activities, each sparkline only needs to show a small amount of data. As an additional help to make the visualizations more readable, a larger version of each word-sized graphics is retrievable on demand as part of a sidebar. The sidebar also allows us to show the recorded video stream of a specific activity, with eye tracking and interaction data potentially overlaid.

4 WORD-SIZED EYE TRACKING VISUALIZATIONS

A central element of our approach is the representation of eye tracking data as word-sized visualizations. Since many approaches already exist for visualizing this data in normal-sized graphics [7], we take these as a starting point for developing word-sized variants showing similar data. This transformation usually requires one to simplify the visualization approach: in particular, one cannot, or at least should not, label visual objects with text, use thin lines or border lines for objects, waste space by separating objects using white space, or show 3D graphics. Moreover, a sparkline—like a word—usually has a *panorama format*, being limited to the line height of the text but having some space on the horizontal axis.

Table 1. Design space of *word-sized eye tracking visualizations*.

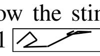
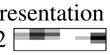
Visualization		*Data*	*Encoding*	*X-Axis*	*Y-Axis*	*Color*	*Ref.*
Point-Based Visualizations							
P1		Space	Lines	X	Y	–	[24, 38]
P2		Space	Cells	X	Y	Dur.	[24, 35]
P3		Space	Bars	X or Y	Freq.	Dur.	
P4		Space-time	Cells	Time	X or Y	Dur.	[21, 49]
P5		Space-time	Lines	X	Y	Time	
P6		Space-time	Arcs	X or Y	Direct.	Time	[13]
AOI-Based Visualizations							
A1		AOI statistics	Bars	Freq./Dur.	AOI	AOI	
A2		AOI seq.	Columns	Events	–	AOI	[24]
A3		AOI seq.	Boxes	Events	AOI	AOI	
A4		AOI seq.	Boxes	Events	AOI	Dur.	[41]
A5		AOI seq.	Boxes	Time	AOI	AOI	[15, 28]
A6		AOI trans.	Arcs	AOI	Direct.	Freq.	[37]
A7		AOI trans.	Lines	AOI	Direct.	Freq.	[12]
A8		AOI trans.	Cells	AOI	AOI	Freq.	[22]

Legend: seq.–sequences; trans.–transitions; freq.–frequency; dur.–duration; direct.–direction; ref.–references.

To explore the design space of those visualizations in a systematic way, we analyze all eye tracking visualization techniques Blascheck et al. [7, Table 1] surveyed and try to transfer each approach to a word-sized visualization. Since we only target at visualizing the data recorded for a single participant, we exclude all visualizations focusing on comparing or aggregating multiple participants. Further, we are not able to suggest meaningful word-sized variants of some techniques, in particular, because of the use of 3D views [1, 18, 32, 39], the original stimulus [16, 27, 42] (the stimulus usually is too complex to be represented within a sparkline), circular layouts [8, 27, 40, 44] (advanced circular layouts are hard to fit to the elongated format of a sparkline), or a specialization to particular kinds of stimuli [5, 46]. As a result, we come up with a list of visiualization techniques that can be adequately transferred to miniaturized graphics. Below, we discuss all these miniaturized visualization techniques by showing an example embedded in the text and defining the specific visual encoding in Table 1. We furthermore describe the modifications needed when using the visualizations as word-sized graphics. All visualizations shown in this section are manually created drafts encoding artificial data. Some of them are implemented as examples in our prototype analysis tool (Section 5).

4.1 Point-Based Visualizations

Each fixation is assigned a coordinate on the stimulus that represents the estimated location a participant looked at. This information is a rich data source for interpreting eye movement data, together with durations and saccades between fixations.

Space. Focusing on the spatial part of the data, the standard representations of eye tracking data are *scan paths* and *heat maps*. Scan path visualizations simply overlay the trajectory of the gaze onto the stimulus [38], often encoding fixations as circles scaled according to their duration [24]. For the word-sized variant, we do not show the stimulus or fixations, but just plot the trajectory as a line (P1 ). In contrast, heat maps, also called *attention maps*, aggregate fixation durations for spatial coordinates, which are color-coded and overlaid onto the stimulus [24, 35]. For a word-sized attention map, we suggest to plot a coarsely gridded map [24] into the sparkline representation and encode the duration in the darkness of the grid cells (P2 ). As an alternative, we could focus on only one spatial axis, again encode duration in the color, and use bar charts to encode another metric, such as the frequency of fixations within the respective area (P3). Spatial information can also be restricted otherwise to make them representable at small scale, for instance, encoding angles of the trajectory in radial diagrams [21].

Space and Time. The temporal sequence of fixations is also important for some analysis scenarios. Mapping time to a spatial dimension, however, requires the encoding of spatial information to be limited [21, 49]. For instance, using the longer x-axis as a timeline, the y-axis could encode one of the spatial coordinates of the fixations while darkness indicates the distribution of fixation durations (P4). We can also extend scan paths with temporal information by using the edge color for encoding time (P5). This is similar to *Saccade Plots* [13] that show saccades (i.e., the jumps between fixations) at the side of a stimulus. Leaving out the stimulus, we could use a similar approach within a sparkline plotting a spatial coordinate on the x-axis and connecting points with arcs according to observed saccades (P6)—like in the original approach, arcs are directed from left to right on top of the axis, whereas arcs in the opposite direction are below.

4.2 AOI-Based Visualizations

AOIs abstract from the exact location of fixations to semantic regions on a stimulus, which an analyst usually defines manually. AOIs also allow us to build a transition graph connecting the AOIs according to the sequence they were looked at. We assume for the following visualizations that we have to handle five to ten different AOIs. Due to the limited size of our visualizations, most of the suggested approaches do not scale to more AOIs, but according to our experience, ten AOIs suffice for the majority of application scenarios.

AOI Statistics. One of the most simple AOI-based visualizations is to depict the frequency or total duration each AOI was fixated, for instance, in a line or bar chart. Such diagrams can be directly transferred into word-sized graphics. We decide to use bar charts because lines are harder to perceive if only little space is available. We use the y-axis to distinguish AOIs to have more spatial resolution for reading the value from the x-axis and redundantly color-code the AOI to improve the discernibility of the bars (A1).

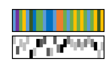
AOI Sequences. The temporal sequence of viewed AOIs reveals, on the one hand, what a participant saw and, on the other hand, in which order. This sequence of AOIs might be visually encoded in any list representation showing, for instance, the logical temporal sequence of events from left to right. This has been done in various eye tracking visualizations, for instance, connecting subsequent AOI fixations by lines and encoding the AOI fixation durations in node sizes [41] or in the horizontal length of a line [28]. In a sparkline, the sequence is easily visualized as a sequence of blocks each representing an AOI event. The different AOIs might be discerned by color (A2) or redundantly as a combination of position and color (A3). When the duration of each AOI fixation is of importance, it can be encoded in the darkness of the boxes in case the position encoding is used for discerning AOIs (A4) or a linear timeline can be employed scaling the width of the boxes according to the elapsed time (A5) [15, 28].

AOI Transitions. Transitions between AOIs might also be depicted as a graph with AOIs as nodes, and aggregated transition frequencies as weighted links [28]. Considering the temporal dimension of the data as well, the aggregated static graph becomes dynamic and might be visualized by animation- or timeline-based dynamic graph visualization approaches [12]. Graphs are, however, difficult to represent as a sparkline because nodes and links require a certain amount of 2D space to be discernible. Arranging the nodes in only one dimension simplifies the problem: like in *ArcTrees* [37], we draw nodes on a vertical axis connected by arcs (A6). A more scalable variant is the *Parallel Edge Splatting* approach [14], which was already applied to AOI transitions graphs [12]: the graph is interpreted as a bipartite graph duplicating the AOIs to two horizontal axes; all transitions are drawn as straight lines connecting a source AOI at the top to a target AOI at the bottom (A7). Furthermore, matrix representations of graphs are space-efficient and have already been employed to represent eye tracking data [22]. A transformation into a sparkline is straightforward, for instance, color-coding the AOIs (first row and column) in addition to the transition weights within the matrix cells (A8). A limitation, however, is that they are inherently quadratic—although they can be stretched to fill an arbitrary rectangle, additional vertical space does not necessarily improve their readability.

4.3 Combination and Extension

The suggested visualizations provide a flexible framework for encoding eye tracking data. To decide between the different encodings is not an either–or decision because visualizations can be combined with each other to build an even more expressive analysis tool. Moreover, the framework of visualizations might be extended with only little adaption to also depict interaction data.

Juxtaposing Visualizations. Since word-sized visualizations are space-efficient, they can easily be juxtaposed within one line, each graphic providing a different perspective onto the data. For instance, it could be useful to combine a point-based and an AOI-based visualization: . If the application scenario allows the use of several lines en bloc, a vertical stacking of the sparklines (i.e., placing them on top of each other) is possible. To align both visualizations, the x-axes should have the same encoding, for example, a color-coded sequence of AOIs combined with a duration encoding:



Interaction Data. Interaction data shares characteristics to eye tracking data: Much like fixations, interactions are temporal events on the same experiment time dimension. They can be classified according to their type into categories or assigned to AOIs based on their location. Also, transitions between interactions might be derived from the sequence of logged events. One difference, however, is that usually interaction events do not have a duration; they only get a temporal dimension if they are abstracted to longer sequences of semantically linked interactions. The general similarity between the two data streams now allows us to reuse most of the suggested word-sized eye tracking visualizations for interaction data. Furthermore, the discussed horizontal and vertical juxtaposition of these sparklines provides an easy way of integrating both data sources within one user interface.

5 Prototype Implementation

We implemented the approach as a detail view of a larger visual analysis framework for eye tracking studies [6]. The visual analysis framework is intended to analyze eye tracking and interaction data together. In the original implementation, think-aloud data was added to enrich the other two data sources. In the new detail view, in contrast, we intend to present the think-aloud protocol in detail and enrich it with eye tracking and interaction data. This prototype is a proof of concept implementing two AOI-based and two point-based versions of word-sized visualizations.

Figure 2 shows a screenshot of our prototype, depicting data of one participant in a temporal order. A tabular view represents the main part of the prototype. For each verbal statement, word-sized visualizations are shown, in one column the two point-based visualizations, in another the two AOI-based ones. In both columns, the visualizations for eye movements and interactions are juxtaposed vertically, showing the eye tracking visualization above the interaction visualization.

The point-based visualizations are gridded attention maps (Table 1, P2) or, respectively, maps showing the spatial distribution of interactions. We divided the stimulus into 25 columns and five rows. For each cell, we counted the fixation durations and the count of interactions and color-coded the cells accordingly. The color coding was obtained from ColorBrewer [10], using a sequential, single-hue blue color and a gradation of four (fixation duration ≤ 10 ms, ≤ 100 ms, ≤ 1000 ms, and > 1000 ms; interaction count ≤ 1, ≤ 3, ≤ 5, and > 5).

Our AOI-based visualizations (Table 1, A4) represent each AOI as a row of rectangles. Since only one AOI is active at a

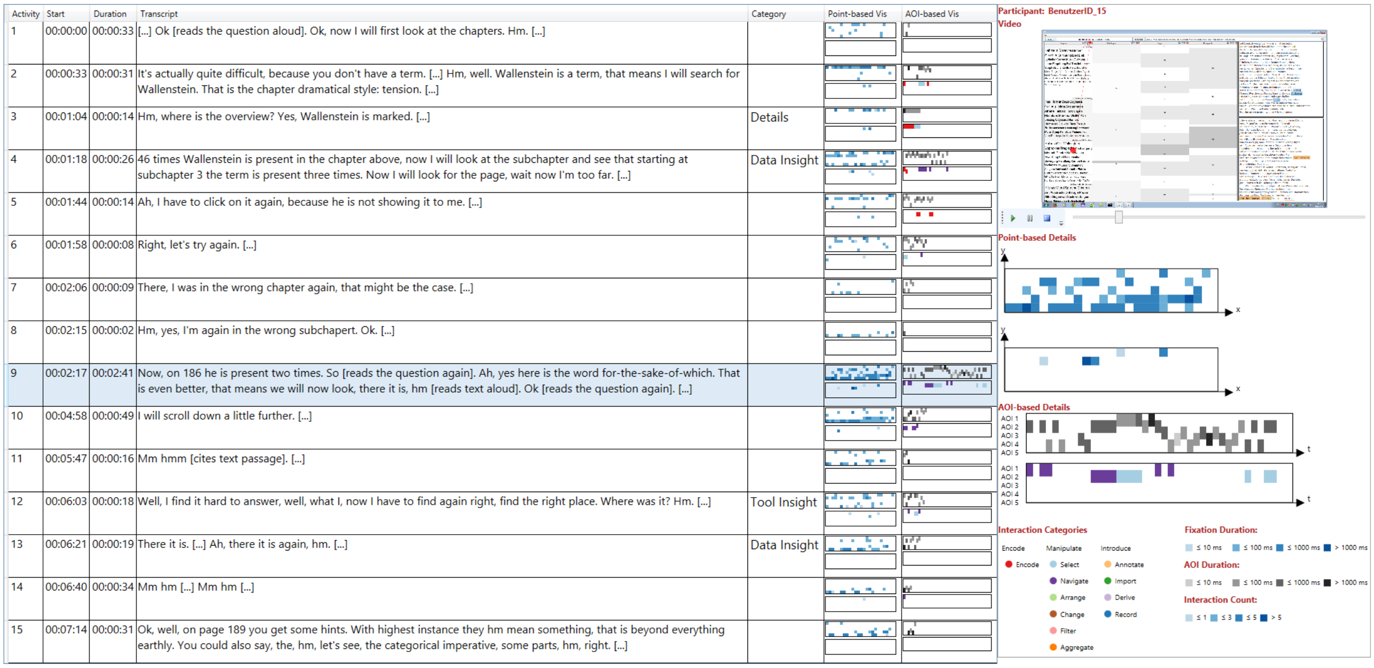


Fig. 2. Screenshot of the prototype implementation of our approach that shows the think-aloud protocol in a tabular fashion, containing an activity ID, start time and duration, a transcript of the audio recording, a category, and point-based as well as AOI-based word-sized visualizations for eye movements (top) and interactions (bottom). The sidebar provides a video replay of an enriched stimulus and enlarged word-sized visualizations of a selected activity.

time, we assign a height to each rectangle greater than the row height to increase the size of the rectangles (which improves color perception). In the eye tracking visualization at the top, for each individual AOI fixation, the duration is calculated and the AOI rectangle is colored based on the duration. We chose a sequential, single-hue gray color scale and a logarithmic gradation of four (AOI fixation duration $\leq$ 10 ms, $\leq$ 100 ms, $\leq$ 1000 ms, and $>$ 1000 ms). For the visualization of interaction data below, interactions are assigned to AOIs and the color is determined by the categorical interaction category. For example, an interaction from the category *encode* is shown in red, a *select* interaction in light blue, and a *navigate* interaction in purple. The interactions are temporally aligned with the AOI fixations, thus, representing interactions at the point in time of its corresponding AOI fixation.

Based on the eye movement and interaction data depicted in the word-sized visualizations, an analyst adds categories to the activities. Additionally, rows and columns might be reordered. On the right side of the prototype, a video playback is shown for further reference. The playback might be combined with an animated representation of the eye tracking or interaction data, in our case, a dynamic scanpath overlay retrieved from Tobii Studio. Below the video, the visualizations of a selected row are shown enlarged and annotated with labels.

For a small use case example, we re-analyzed data from a user study testing a visual text analysis tool [6] (participant 15, transcript translated from German to English). We first explore the data trying to get an overview. We find that in the point-based visualization at the beginning most of the fixations are in the upper part of the stimulus (Activities 1 , 2, 3, 5), whereas later, most of the fixations are in the lower part of the stimulus (Activities 13, 14, 15). In the AOI-based sparkline, it becomes apparent that, at the beginning, the participant used mostly *encode* and *select* interactions in the first two AOIs (Activities 1, 2 , 3, 4, 5, 6) while focusing mostly in AOI 1 and 2 . At the end, the participant used more *navigate* interactions (Activities 8, 9 , 10, 12) and was looking at AOIs 4 and 5 more often . These kinds of analysis allows us to classify the participant's activities and manually assign categories in the respective table column (Figure 2).

6 Conclusion and Future Work

With a focus on analyzing the transcribed experiment recording of a single participant, we suggested a novel approach to visually enrich the textual representation of a transcript with eye tracking and interaction data. This data is represented in word-sized visualizations that provide different perspectives onto the data. We systematically explored the design space of *word-sized eye tracking visualizations* and prototypically implemented the approach as a detail view of a larger visual analysis framework for eye tracking studies.

Since our implementation is work in progress, it only partly covers the suggested visualizations yet, still lacks important interactive features, and only provides rudimentary support for coding. We will extend the implementation toward a full-fledged visual analysis and coding system. Moreover, we want to explore which of the suggested visualizations is most effective and efficient for analyzing the data and at the same time easy to understand for potential users. Beyond that, we are interested in exploring other application scenarios for the suggested visualizations, for instance, their use to communicate results of eye tracking studies in scientific publications.

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