

Hear Together

DESIGN DOCUMENT v. 1.0

Team Number: 48

Client/Adviser: Mat Wymore

Team Members:

Jessie Rutledge - Communicator/Full Stack Developer

Andrew Peterson - Backend Developer

Malcolm Johnson - Backend Developer

Paul Licata - Full Stack/QA Developer

Richard Smith - Frontend Developer

Roger Ferguson - Test Engineer

Executive Summary

Development Standards & Practices Used

List all standard circuit, hardware, software practices used in this project. List all the Engineering standards that apply to this project that were considered.

Summary of Requirements

- Android application running on version 7.0 or later
- “Session” system in which users connect to a single instance
- Supports members speaking into headset/earbuds with microphone
- Delay between speaking and hearing is ≤ 1 second
- Users can manually adjust individual members’ volume
- Security applied to session to prevent unwanted individuals joining

Applicable Courses from Iowa State University Curriculum

Jessie Rutledge:

- Com S 228, 388
- SE 309, 319
- Engl 314

John Ferguson:

- SE 309, 319
- Com S 227

Andrew Peterson:

- SE 309, 319, 329, 339
- Com S 227, 228
- Engl 314

Malcolm Johnson:

- Com S 227, 319
- Engl 314

Paul Licata:

- Com S 227, 228, 319, 329, 309
- Engl 314

New Skills/Knowledge acquired that was not taught in courses

- Security Keys and verification
- Java Backend Development using Spring Boot
- Android Studio Development
- Connections over bluetooth
- Sound processing
- Android Framework Knowledge

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1 Introduction

1.1 Acknowledgement

Mathew Wymore, our client, will contribute assistance in the form of technical advice, and user feedback to the project.

1.2 Problem and Project Statement

This project seeks to ease the difficulties faced by those hard of hearing in group settings, such as in professional meetings or simple gatherings between friends. The planned product would be an application that can be downloaded to an Android device in order to create a session that can be used to better deliver the sound to the person in need of hearing aid. The final result of the project should be this app in full functioning order.

1.3 Operational Environment

The software should be ran in an indoor environment with a minimal level of sound polluting the environment. On top of this, the hardware microphone must be outside in the open, free to capture noise. Hardware capability to withstand the elements is dependent on the user's device and beyond the scope of the project.

1.4 Requirements

- Android application running on version 7.0 or later
- "Session" system in which users connect to a single instance
- Supports members speaking into headset/earbuds with microphone
- Delay between speaking and hearing is ≤ 1 second
- Users can manually adjust individual members' volume
- Security applied to session to prevent unwanted individuals joining

1.5 Intended Users and Uses

The intended user base are people with an impaired but still somewhat working level of hearing. More specifically, people who can hear but because of circumstances, cannot hear as well as your average person. These users are intended to use the product to amplify or modify the volume of their meetings with other people in order to be fully engaged without further accommodation. Another intended use of the application is to provide a low cost solution to some hearing issues because of a reliance on just an android device and earbuds/headphones with a microphone on them, which many people already own. There is also the secondary consideration of non-hearing impaired users who are utilizing the app to increase their ability to communicate with those who are impaired.

1.6 Assumptions and Limitations

Assumptions:

The product will be used indoors and the users will be stationary

The users will be in close proximity of each other

There will only be a maximum of 10 users in a single group call at the same time

The end product will be available to all devices that can run it

A minimalist UI will be used for ease of use

Java will be used to code the application

Limitations:

The system must operate on Android

The system must use phone compatible headphones

Is not designed for users that are not hard of hearing or not communicating with someone who is hard of hearing

Must be completed by May 2020

The system must have as little delay as possible

1.7 Expected End Product and Deliverables

The end product is an Android smartphone application that the user may install and then open to be greeted by the user interface. The user interface will be clear enough for the user to be able to do a basic interaction of creating or joining a session in which they may engage in interaction with assisted hearing. The assisted hearing will take the form of a microphone input directly sending sound information into the android device and outputting modified sound as output to a set of earbuds or headphones.

Deliverable 1: User interface

There will be a user interface that allows for ease of navigation for an average user. This user interface should show how to initiate a session within the application. The user interface should also template some inactive features such as sound adjustment for an individual.

Deliverable 2: Sound “engine”

This is more of a demo than a deliverable due to the mainly backend nature of this task. The software should be able to take in an input in the form of data that represents sound, and be able to output a modified version of that sound. The ability to input sound from foreign android devices (mocked for this deliverable) should be completed and the classes used to handle this interaction should be developed.

Deliverable 3: Phone to phone interaction

Phone to phone interactivity, as well as host to server/database interactivity should be finished. The connection handlers should be able to take in real data from other android devices and funnel them into the sound engine, which spits out the resulting sound and delivers it back to the devices. Interactivity and verification on the server should also be complete, should the user opt to store data on the database. Considering this is the final thing to be worked on, the application should be completed outside of some bugs that may arise from unification of features. Those bugs are intended to be fixed on final release shortly after this deliverable.

2. Specifications and Analysis

2.1 Proposed Design

The current proposed design is a streamlined application. Most of the plans for the look of the app show simple menus to allow easy use in any setting. The current overall plan is to have a host that can set-up a lobby for others to join where the host would be able to adjust the settings as needed to best assist with their hearing.

2.2 Design Analysis

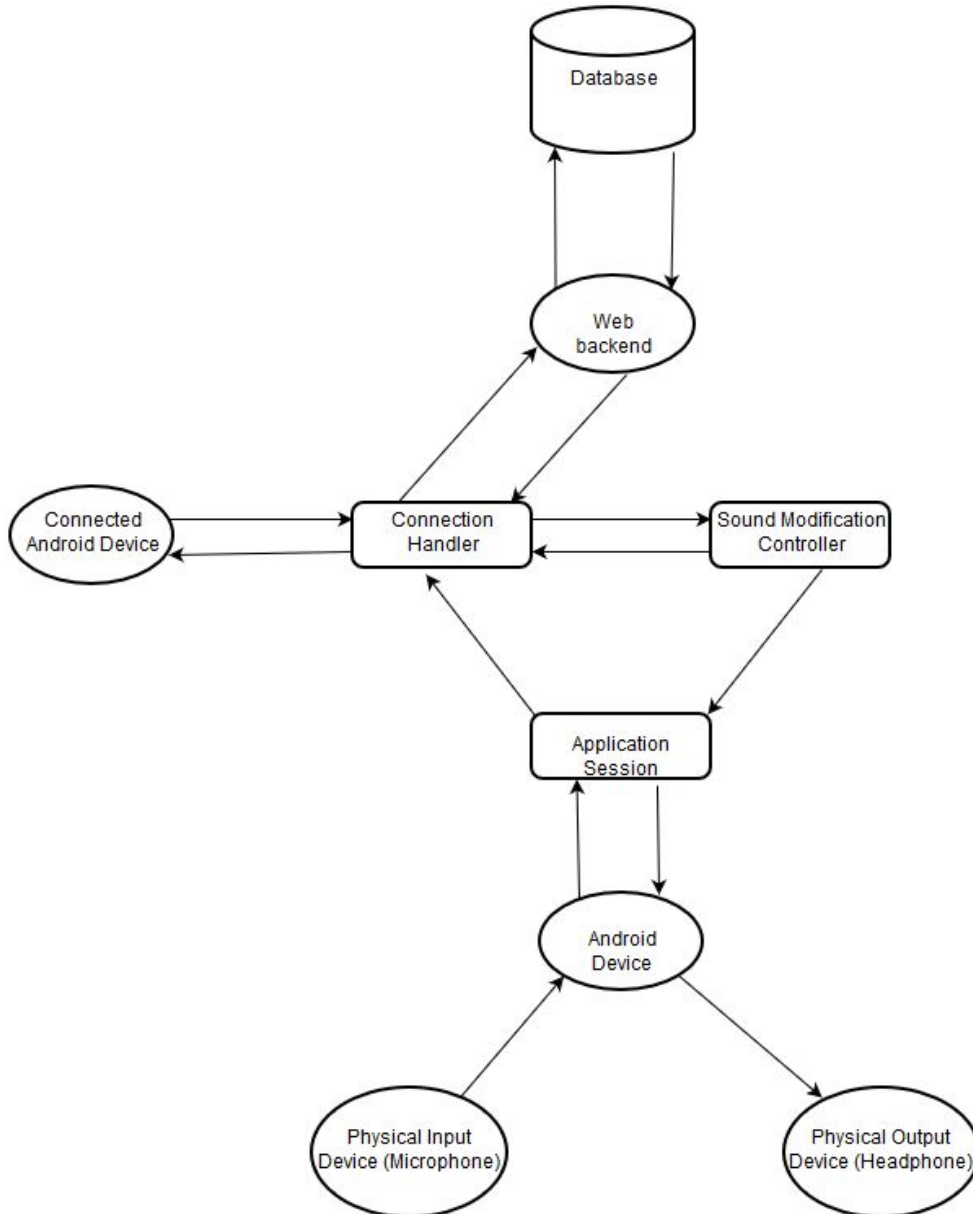
The team has installed Android Studio and consulted Mat (our customer) on what our perceived course of action is for the project. So far we have constructed plans, established use cases, and constructed UI mockups for the project. Outside of that we have done assignments for the class that have given us more insight as to what the project design should be. Along with this some Android Studio learning has been done by the team.

The proposed solution is an Android application that establishes a session that “contains” the conversation a group of people will have, and this session will provide modifications to the volume and overall sound of the conversation. This has a strength in that this is a very concrete and manageable Java object that is easy to visualize without even having done work on it yet. On top of that, being able to represent interaction as a singleton allows the group to manipulate it more freely as we can compartmentalize it and do concrete work on the data for it. A weakness of this design approach would be the opt-in nature of it, Unless someone actually has the app, they can’t just jump into the conversation. Another consequence of the Android based solution is the Android platform itself, or more specifically only being on the Android platform; it would require additional work to add support to other platforms.

2.3 Development Process

We intend to do an agile approach for the project. We are using trello as a scrum board and our weekly meetings are every Friday at 11 AM for one hour. People will be assigned task and are to reflect on their past work for the week. This meeting is paramount to our organization as it is our only regularly scheduled in-person meeting. More meetings are anticipated but will be on a need-to basis depending on the project’s demands at the time. In case of communication being lacking, the weekly agile meeting is intended to promote honesty on progress and allow us to combat issues proactively in the project.

2.4 Design Plan



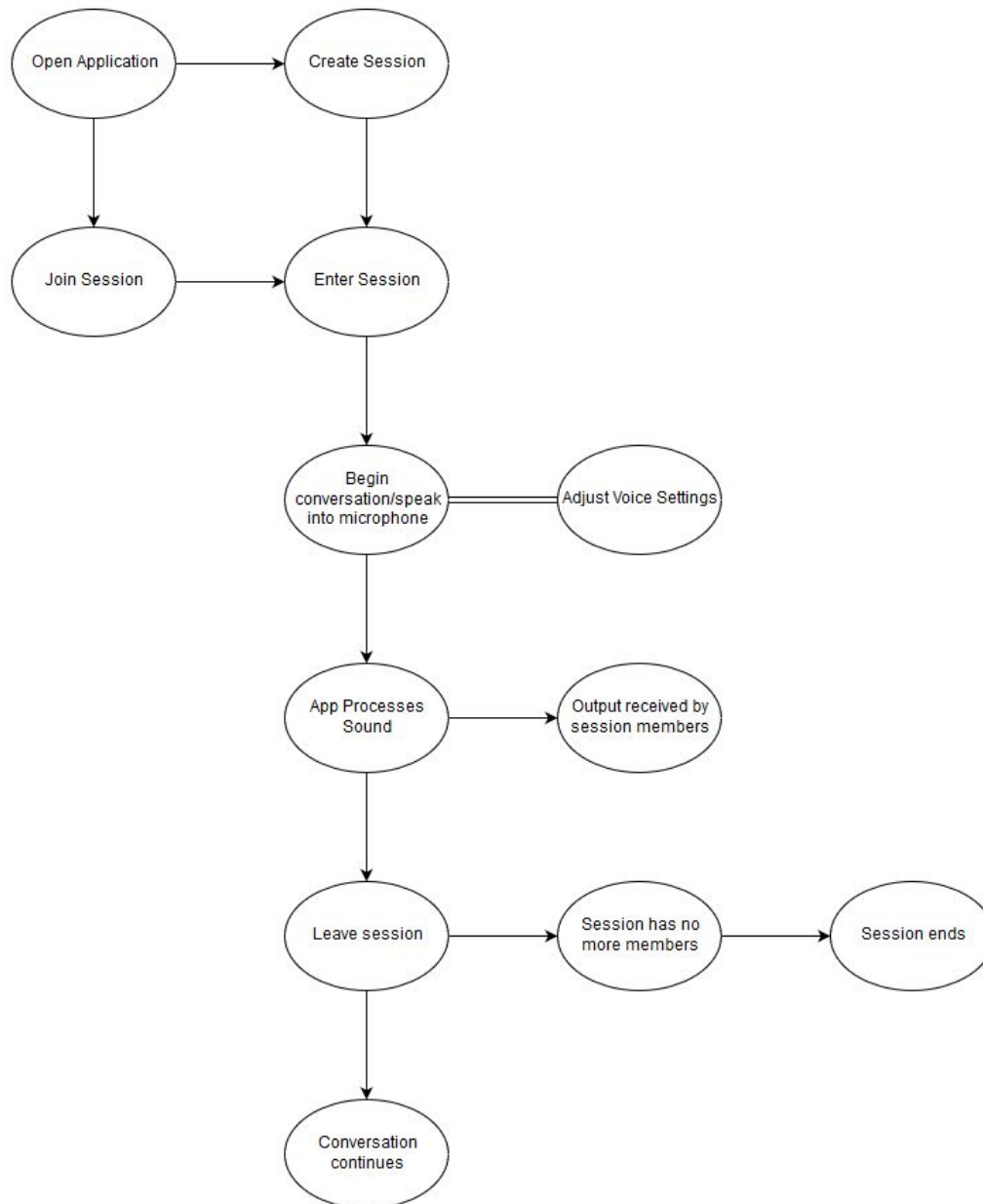
Our design makes use of the idea that concerns should be separated. Our application takes in input from a device, and funnels that information into the connection handler. This connection handler is essentially a sort of glue code, and is likely to contain two or three classes to handle networking and connectivity between devices and the information they send. From here the conversation data can be stored if desired, or sent directly to the sound modification controller.

This controller will then end data back to the handler where it will distribute information back to the devices to be output in an analog format on headphones.

Below are images of the proposed mock interface:



The UI is clean and simple with the main navigation points (we will call them “tabs”) being on the bottom of the display. The first tab shows the actual options about the session system itself, as well as some profiling information, which is essentially a preset for the options set in other tabs. The second tab details options relating to the sound itself. The third tab shows the user some basic data regarding the output based in settings set in the second tab. The final tab is more relevant to the final deliverable in which extra features beyond our customer’s scope (but has been approved for a stretch goal) is made, currently this is only planned to pertain to storing conversations on a database.



A figure detailing the average use case of entering and exiting a session is displayed above. The user is greeted with two initial options which lead to entering the session state. From here, there is generally only a linear UI pertaining to the act of having the actual conversation up until the point the conversation ends. As you may notice, a session does not end until the members leave the session, what is not outlined in this diagram is the edge case in which the person who started the session leaves the ongoing conversation, although we are considering that outside of the scope of the *generalized* use case, it is still something we will handle by ending the conversation outright on that as well.

3. Statement of Work

3.1 Previous Work And Literature

Current products for the hearing impaired mainly center around the hearing aid. Most existing products for android connect a device to a hearing aid, with development allowing direct connections instead of through an intermediary. Our application will instead send audio to the user's headphones or earbuds, making this product suitable for persons who require occasional hearing assistance but not constant hearing aid use. Additionally, our project networks several devices together to improve the quality of collected audio, whereas other products simply use the input from one device.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Es8ghP2M-m4>

Accessible Audio: Android Support and the Audio Framework

3.2 Technology Considerations

Android and android studio offers us a powerful and robust platform to develop that has over the years added useful functions and classes that will offer a lot of productivity efficiencies to our work. Android studio, as well as android devices obtained through the university, are also free resources, this is the primary reason we have an estimated monetary cost of zero for the entire project. Unfortunately, Android as a platform has drawbacks with the type of project we are doing in that sound modification will likely have a latency issue. This is a drawback in comparison to a focus on iOS as our research into the subject has shown that the iOS platform is better in this regard. We have opted to tackle this weakness head on and have a criteria of a maximum one second delay for the modified sound to be audible.

3.3 Task Decomposition

- Android activity development
- Sound Processing Development
- Advanced UI Features
- Communication Handling
- Server/Backend Setup
- Backend/Frontend Connectivity
- Phone to phone connectivity
- Sound Processing Finishing Touches
- UI Finishing Touches
- Final Bug-fixing

For more information, please refer to section 4.1 of the document

3.4 Possible Risks And Risk Management

Risks are entirely relating to knowledge of areas of the project. Many of the project members have not done any android development in the past, nor have many of us processed sound in a program either. There is also a concern with being accurate on the adjustments needed to sound, as well as a possible roadblocks with attempting to have a low latency device on the Android operating system.

3.5 Project Proposed Milestones and Evaluation Criteria

In no particular order:

1. UI Completion
 - Client will use device and give input or recommendations for any changes until UI is satisfactory
2. Sound modification controller produces any (unsatisfactory, but) workable result
 - The controller needs to be able to take in a sound, and output a modified sound that resembles the desired output enough in order to be able to further build upon project components relying on the controller's output.
3. Sound modification controller produces satisfactory and ideal result
 - The controller must be able to output the desired modified sound in a state deemed as satisfactory enough to provide an average user.
4. Server backend can take in and verify security token from the client
 - SSH key generated by client and stored on server on initial use
 - Key can be used to uniquely identify a user and give access to features requiring unique identification of the user
5. User connectivity between other users is established
 - Bluetooth connectivity between two devices is shown by application
 - Multiple devices can connect with no established limit on the number of connections
6. Session system shows reliability to relay information to users
 - Activity from the backend logic can be initiated from within the session controller or activity
 - Result from logic can be sent back to the session controller
 - Session controller can service multiple (an array of) users within it

3.6 Project Tracking Procedures

The group plans on using both GitLab and Trello as actual progress trackers for work to be completed.

Communication is to be done on GroupMe, Slack, and GitLab. GroupMe is intended for informal or very short term planning, while GitLab is intended to be used for very formalized and long term planning. Slack is to be used as an interim or communication platform to cooperate on the actual work itself. We believe that these platforms are specialized for the uses we intend to use them for, which is why the division in communication is done in this way. The division is also not expected to cause issue as Slack and GroupMe have phone applications that notify us of messages. GitLab is also not an issue as we are forced to interact with it to push and pull code remotely.

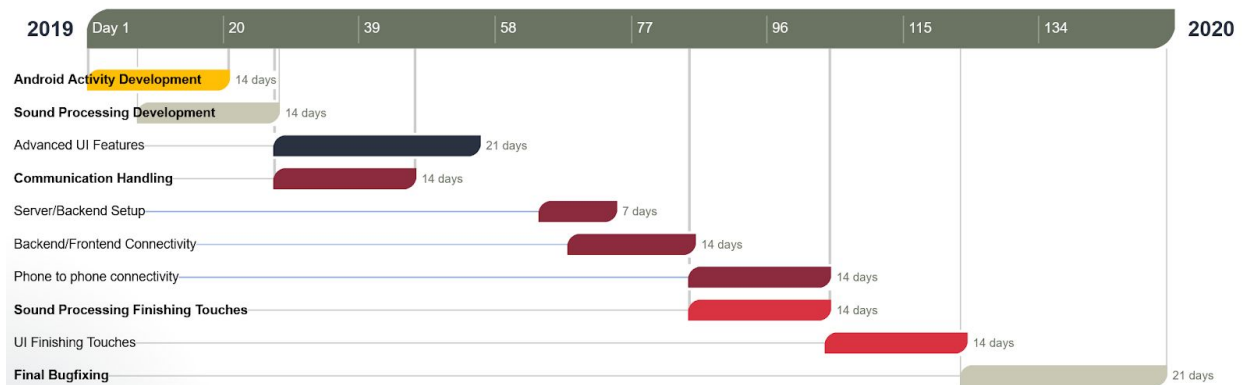
3.7 Expected Results and Validation

If the product functions as intended, a person using the application will be able to effectively follow and participate in a conversation. This means hearing the conversation clearly, with minimal delay caused by audio processing, in a small group setting (4-6 people). Testing can be performed with automated systems and in real world environments. Automated tests should show (research acceptable latency) seconds of latency on average and no more than (maximum latency). For actual use testing, (estimate) 95% of cases should have users reporting no to minor issues.

4. Project Timeline, Estimated Resources, and Challenges

4.1 Project Timeline

Hear Together Roadmap



The current timeline proposition is outlined above. Although there are concrete days but down and the schedule seems very definite, the reality is this is more of a guideline. The team plans to take an agile approach to development. All items outlined above are purposely done in multiples of seven and in parallel, as we plan to have the team divided when possible, in order to work on different components in an efficient matter when dependencies allow for it. This timeline is being proposed because it establishes a separation of concerns and reinforces the idea that different people will be able to work on different items at the same time. Not only that, but we believe that having everyone work on one component at a time would be counterproductive and lead to many merge conflicts in the code.

Agile, at least in the initial stages, is planned to revolve around a weekly meeting at 11 AM on Friday (to be adjusted next semester for schedule accommodations). The agile meeting is intended to promote honesty in the group about progress so that issues can be identified before significant delays are made. Changes to the roadmap are not likely even as risk factors are discovered and introduced in to the project, because that will not change what the definition of done is. Each group member will be relied on to produce code and the weekly meeting is the group's safety net of ensuring progress.

4.2 Feasibility Assessment

The task the product will perform is straightforward. The application will transmit audio to other devices in the conversations, and process audio from the other devices before outputting through the user's audio device. No new technologies need to be developed for this project, as hearing aids, audio processing, and wireless communication are well-established technologies.

4.3 Personnel Effort Requirements

All tasks are set to a multiple of seven days in order to align with the weekly meeting schedule.

Android Activity Development: 14 days is assigned as a generous estimate and will involve all members due to it being a mix of everyone getting involved and used to android development in general. This task is one of two tasks in which the foundation for the rest of the project will be built upon. The reality is the UI is probably a bit over one week of work but there is a level of research and development on the group's part still needed that can only be done while doing work. Richard, as the member with the most android experience, is expected to do a lot of the initial work while the rest of the team catches up in understanding of the framework.

Sound Processing Development: This task is the other initial task in which the foundations of the project will be built upon, but is more black box in nature than the overall Android development. This is due to us having a definite input and output for this module in the form of actual data we can work with. There is a level of Android code needed to start, the 14 days assigned to this task is taking place one week into the android activity development. This is expected to be enough time for a team of 2 or 3 to be able to figure out how to initially set up sound working in the Android OS and to come up with sound modifying logic that can produce an output applicable to the features of the application. There will be a one week period in which the team working on the initial android activity task is expected to chip into smaller tasks after the core logic for the sound is figured out.

Advanced UI Features: This task is expected to be done in parallel with the communication handling. There is some level of UI features that cannot be touched upon in the android activity development task due to a reliance on needing data from result of the sound processing development task. Some of these include applying adjustments to the frequency or volume of the sound. This task adds options for which the sound controller made in the previous task can act upon, and thus is an extension of the first two tasks, justifying doing it after the initial development of the application. A total of twenty-one days, to be split over an estimated four overall "mini-tasks" is expected for each tab in the UI. This gives an average of just over five days per tab, allowing what we estimate to be just enough time for this task as there is a level of logic needed to be implemented by the team for each user option made.

Communication Handling: This task is expected to be done in parallel with the advanced ui features. The crux of this task is to lay out the foundation for the application to allow connection between other android devices, as well as room for potentially connecting to the database. Following establishing connection, a foundation of logic (but definitely not a complete implementation) for passing data over these connections is expected to be complete. The means of communication between phones is planned to be bluetooth while any database/server connectivity should be done via http. A total of fourteen days is given in order to learn and apply the knowledge needed between around two to three members. Upon finishing this task, members who have worked on this task should be switching over to assist in finishing advanced ui features that pertain to connectivity, which is why the advanced ui features is given an extra week over this task.

Server/Backend Setup: The operation of the server will be initially simple, and then expanded upon in later tasks as needed. Therefore only one week has been allocated to this task. A very basic database is also set up during this step to be expanded upon during backend/frontend connectivity.

Backend/Frontend Connectivity: The expectation is to have simple http endpoints made in java spring boot on a server backend that can be connected to with not much more additional logic than that as the plan for our backend is to primarily store conversations and verify keys. While this sounds simple enough, there is a level of unknown in regards to how the database will be set up and made efficient. As a result of this stipulation, two weeks are applied to this task, as opposed to one week.

Phone to phone connectivity: As a core part of the application, inter-device connectivity will require some time to implement and test. As such, two weeks provides sufficient room to develop an appropriate system, and should be done in parallel with the finalization of audio processing to maximize performance.

Sound Processing's Finishing Touches: After other functionality has been implemented, changes to audio processing will likely be necessary, and optimization will be critical to proper performance of the product. Two weeks provides time for testing and refinement of the sound processing system.

UI Finishing Touches: The last full task, finishing the UI requires knowing the full functionality of the application, which is still subject to change. This work is likely to require a large amount of experimentation to find a design comfortable for the user, so two weeks have been allocated.

Final Bug Fixing/Integration Changes: Given that many factors are currently unknown, finalization and debugging could take significant amounts of time or none at all. Given the estimates of other tasks and the project timeframe, three weeks provides adequate room for emergencies, unforeseen issues, final testing, and potential addition of features.

4.4 Other Resource Requirements

All members require:

- Computers capable of running the Android Studio software
- A physical Android device to compile software onto
- An internet connection reliable enough to push and pull code onto
- A set of earbuds or headphones with a microphone that may be plugged into the Android device

4.5 Financial Requirements

There are no financial requirements to the project.

5. Testing and Implementation

5.1 Interface Specifications

– Discuss any hardware/software interfacing that you are working on for testing your project

We will be using JUnit and Android Studio's built in Debugger. Along with just spending time on messing with the android app emulator and trying out multiple different scenarios to break the code.

5.2 Hardware and software

– Indicate any hardware and/or software used in the testing phase

Hardware will be our personal laptop computers (both Mac and Windows) in which we will write the code on and the software will be the Android Studio IDE with integrated JUnit tests.

– Provide brief, simple introductions for each to explain the usefulness of each

The laptop computers are absolutely necessary to develop and fully implement this Android Application, all of our computers are above or up to par with Android Studio's dependences and hardware requirements for running the integrated debugger and JUnits.

5.3 Functional Testing

We shall use Junit and System testing, which would be the Android Studio's integrated debugger that comes integrated with the Android Studio IDE for both Mac and Windows.

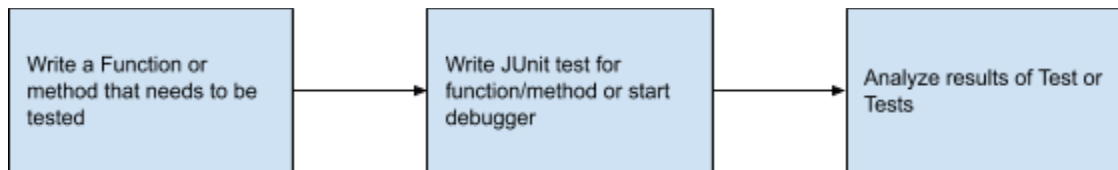
5.4 Non-Functional Testing

We shall use Androids "Profiler" which is an extension of the Android Studio IDE that monitors/inspects GPU rendering speed and overdraw, along with identifying CPU hot spots.

5.5 Process

Android Studio lets us test any Android application function that we want to test. With the options of JUnit and the integrated debugger.

– *Flow diagram of the process if applicable:*



5.6 Results

Some of us have no experience with Android Studio while some of us have done multiple projects in Android Studio. So implementation may be more difficult for some, but the members with more experience will be glad to help others get to the bigger picture by guiding how to implement clean and fast running code that will lead into less issues and challenges and less overall testing later on into the project.

6. Closing Material

6.1 Conclusion

So far, almost all of the work that we have done has involved laying out what we want our app to do, look like, and a rough schedule of the milestones that we will hit. Our goal is to create an Android app that satisfies all of the requirements we have listed, is easy to use, and is as bug free as possible. The best plan of action is to follow the Agile principles and values in conjunction with the Scrum model. This will help us stay on track and hit the milestones that are scheduled in our Gantt chart. This is the best possible methodology for us because the agile method lets our group deliver solid software for the customer on a consistent basis.

6.2 References

Our advisor:

M. Wymore, 2019

6.3 Appendices

Thus far, we do not have any additional information that is not covered in previous sections of the report. Moving forward, there may be supporting materials created, but this will be investigated when we dive deeper into the specific implementation of features.