What does the virtual agent do english language essay

Linguistics, English

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Part A

(3) Describe each model.

Ortony Model

In this model, there are 4 domains which are affect, motivation, cognition and behaviour. These four domains of functioning are needed to consider in the three levels of information processing which are reactive, routine and reflective. Now, I would like to explain the four domains of functioning first. Affect (value) is the one with relate to the emotions, moods, feelings and others. Furthermore, emotions are the subset of affective conditions. We also need to distinguish between the emotions and feelings. Besides that, cognition or cognitive activity is in terms of meaning. In this model, we know that the cognitive activities like thinking and problem solving need to be done separately with the motor activity. Cognition is in contrast to affect which affect is concerned with meaning. The third one is motivation or in terms of action tendencies. What is means by motivation? It is concerned about the tendencies need to behave in a certain ways in order to prevent certain kinds of conditions like danger and satiation. The last domain of

functioning is behaviour. Behaviour is the domain which relate to physical action. However, the actions can be divided into externally and internally. External actions are normally observable like movements of the limbs or facial expressions whereas the internal actions like the heartbeat rate. There are three levels of information processing in this model. The three levels of information processing which are reactive, routine and reflective. The three levels are interdependent and interconnection. They must work together in order to carry out the information processing function. There are differences between the three levels and I will explain later on. First, what is the reactive level in information processing? Reactive level which is an interrupt generator and it is limited to things like processing simple stimuli. Besides that, the reactive level only has proto-affect. This level also can be used to control the organism's approach and avoidance behaviour. Proto-affect which is means that it is only a simple and unelaborated affect. Reactive level has perceptual input and motor system input. On the other hand, the routine level which is the locus of unconscious and this level is the locus of primitive and unconscious emotions. Some of the features like emotions will show in this level. For instance, a simple forms of hope and fear. This routine level also has perceptual input and motor system input. The last level in information processing is reflective level. It is the most sophisticated and also locus of higher-level cognitive processes and consciousness. At this level, we will get the emotions which are cognitively elaborated.

Mc Carthy and Wright (2004)

First of all, there is a user experience framework within this model. The framework contains four threads of experience and also making six senses in experience. The four threads of experience which are compositional thread, sensual thread, emotional thread and spatio-temporal thread. On the other hand, the six senses in experience which are anticipating, connecting, interpreting, reflecting, appropriating and recounting. This framework can help practitioners with a better understanding of the concept of experience when they are going to design for user experience. What is the compositional thread about? This thread is going to tell the users a story. The compositional structure of an experience is concerned with the part-whole structure of an experience. This thread is to explain an action after done by the users. For example, after the users log in to a website, we need to let the users know what is the website about and what are the activities going on in the website. If the users click a button in the website, what will happen? This is all about the compositional structure of experience. On the other hand, what is the sensual thread about? In Wright model, sensual thread is concerned about connecting the users with experience. For instance, the sensual thread is like what is your feeling when you come to the website? Are you feeling thrill, excited, anger, welcoming and so on? We need to control the sensual thread well in order to make the users feel comfort when visit or use our website. The third one will be emotional thread. Emotional thread is almost the same with the sensual thread. So, we need to distinguish between the sensual thread and the emotional thread. Anger, joy, disappear and desperation are the examples for emotional

thread. Emotional thread is concerned about the reaction of users toward the experience. Sometimes, the website may cause anger to the users. So, we need to make our website is friendly to use to prevent a frustrating interface. The fourth one is spatio-temporal thread. All user experiences also have spatio-temporal thread. In addition, actions and events unfold in a particular time and place for spatio-temporal thread. The spatio-temporal which is mainly about you will feel rush when you are in hurry and you will only feel confined at that time when the space is occupied. For example, if a structure of the website is too simple, you may find that it is less confined. In Mc Carthy and Wright framework, it also has six senses in experience. Anticipating is one of the senses making in the framework. We are needed to expect some of the user experience may give us certain possibilities. We also required to anticipating the temporal and spatial character of the experience. For instance, what the website can be given to the users when they are visiting our website? Will the repeat users come to the website again? Besides that, interpreting is also one of the sense making. What is interpreting about? Interpreting which is giving meaning to an unfolding experience. We can interpret the action possibilities which is relate to the previous user experiences. The connecting sense which is means that how a website is connecting to the users. In my opinion, connecting is one of the important elements in this framework. This is because we need the connecting sense in order to connect the website to the users. For instance, how is the users' connection with the contents of the website? If the users are really connecting to the website, they will visit the website more often. In addition, reflecting is another sense making in this framework. When we are

going to interpret the user experience, we also need to make some judgements about the experience while it unfolds. We also reflect on an experience and it is a kind of inner recounting. It is going to help us to relate the experience to others in a more evaluative way. Appropriating is one of the sense making in this framework. It is relate to an experience which is previous or future. An experience can be divided into previous and future experiences. While appropriating an experience, we are making it for our own. We are relating the experience with our personal history and the hope for future or even the sense of self. For example, the users will feel morally to buy something at a virtual supermarket. On the other hand, there is also a recounting sense in the framework. User experience will have different meanings and values when they are recounting at different place and different time. Recounting is a process to find new possibilities and new meanings. So, recounting is like we want to do something again or repeat an experience such as go shopping again, buy another clothes, visiting another place and so on. This could give us different meanings in recounting.

(4) Describe how you may apply Mc Carthy and Wright (2004) model of emotion in the design of your introduction group blog.

In order to apply the Mc Carthy and Wright (2004) model of emotion in the design of the blog, we need to consider the user framework in the model. As I mentioned earlier, there are two parts in the framework which are the four threads and the six senses. First, I decided to apply the compositional thread into the introduction blog which is going to tell the story of my group blog to the users. This is because I need to let the users to know what is going on in

my blog. Furthermore, I also will keep update the event which is going on to attract the users visits my group blog often. By telling the information or story to the users, they will feel interested to read it and visit it. Furthermore, by updating the events, the users will update our blog frequently. Furthermore, I also decide to make the photos or images in the blog with no animation. This is to prevent the users feel annoying when they see the images move here move there in the group blog. When the visitors feel annoying, they will difficult for them to search for some important information. So, I have been applied the emotional threads here to make the blog look attractive and would not feel annoying to the visitors. In addition, I am going to provide some audio output to the blog. For example, when visitors go into the group blog, they can listen to relax music. This is to let the visitors feel relax when they are reading the group blog. Sometimes, the visitors just reading the information in the blog will feel bored. So, reading while listening to the music can let them feel more relaxing. On the other hand, I think that the group blog also should be more colourful. This is because I want to attract the visitors' vision. When the visitors are attracted, then they only will keep on visit our blog to see some new updates. Other than that, I also think that the font in the blog should be clear and big enough. This is to let the visitors read the blog efficiently and easily. The big and clear font also can help the elderly people read the information easily. Besides that, I am going to make the users feel welcome when they are visiting our group blog by applying the Mc Carthy and Wright model. How to make them feel welcome? I am decide to make the blog has a head title with the " Welcome to Group Blog". I think that this can let the visitors know that

they are welcoming to read my blog. Lastly, I think the structure of the blog should be well organized by eliminate any unnecessary features. For example, the blog should not contain too many unnecessary columns and gadgets. This is to prevent the blog from being too messy and cause the visitors hard to find the information or events in the group blog.

(5) Re-design your introduction group blog using the Mc Carthy and Wright (2004) model.

As shown above, the events in the blog contains the description. This is going to let the users have interest to read it when there is some story inside it. Furthermore, they are going to visit the blog more often to check for latest updates. The screenshot above show that the images do not have any animation. The image in the group blog does not move here and there. So, it is not annoying when the visitors are looking at the images. As I mentioned above, the blog contains the audio output to let the visitors listen to music when reading group blog. This is to let them feel relaxing while reading the blog. In order to make the group blog more attractive, I have change the colour of the layout in the group blog. This is to make the group blog become more colourful. This is because we need to attract the visitors' vision. As the figure shown above, there is a message " Welcome to Group Blog", this is to let the visitors feel welcoming when they are visiting to the blog. As the figure above, there is no unnecessary column over there. There is only the home, contact us and about us column over there to make the user easy to find the information and the structure of the blog would not be so messy.

Part B

(a)

What does the virtual agent do?

The virtual agent is come from the pop out window. For example, the Anna at Ikea. com is come from the pop out small window. The virtual agent is going to help those visitors who visit the website and want to know more about the website. So, the virtual agent acts as a role to explain and provide the information about the website to the visitors. How is the virtual agent going to help the visitors? There will be space provided for the visitors to type in their questions and the virtual agent is going to answer them. For instance, the question can be typed in the textbox provided at Ikea. com and the virtual agent will answer your question from what you had been typed in the textbox. Below is the screenshot from Ikea. com:

What type of agent is it?

The agent is a customer service representative. Why say so? This may due to the virtual agent can provide a lot of information to the customer who visits the website. For example, the virtual agents like Anna, Jenn and Amy at the websites are like female employees who work for different companies. They have female avatar which are going to serve the customers who want to know more about their companies. Furthermore, they can answer those questions from the customers. Customers can ask the virtual agents about the products and services.

Does it elicit an emotional response from you? If so, what kind?

The virtual agent does elicit an emotional response from me. When the first time I approach the Anna at Ikea. com, it really impressed me. This is because whenever I asked a question, Anna also will answer me in the text output. Like older time, I need to search the product myself at the other websites but now with the virtual agent I can easily search the information about the products easily. Furthermore, I also feel excited when use the virtual agent may due to first time to use it and it is in cartoon-like character. At least, I am willing to use it for second time and it does not frustrated me when using it.

What kind of personality does it have?

We can say that the virtual agent has a friendly, happy and some relax personality. A virtual agent must have a friendly and smiley when it is going to help the customers or users.

How is this expressed?

It is expressed through the virtual agent's facial expression. For example, Anna at Ikea. com is smiling and her eye is blinking too. Sometimes, Anna also moves her head from left to right in natural pace.

What kind of behaviour does it exhibit?

The head movement and the eye blinking of virtual agent are repetitive. Besides that, the virtual agent is always smiling when the users or customers ask some question from them.

What is it facial expression like?

The facial expression such as smiling and eye blinking of the virtual agent is in natural pace. The virtual agent like Anna is smiling by opens her mouth and closes her mouth. Besides that, Anna's eye also is blinking and her head move from one side to the other side in natural pace too.

What is it appearance like? Is it realistic or cartoon like?

We can say that the virtual agent has an appearance which combine with realistic and cartoon like. We can use Anna at Ikea. com as an example. Anna smiling and eye's blinking are in natural pace but she is not a representation of real person. She is only a 3D image which created by the developer. Besides that, the virtual agent does not move her lips while she is talking to the users or customers.

Where does it appear on the screen?

Normally, the virtual agent will be appeared on the pop-out window. For instance, when users click the button " Ask Anna" at Ikea. com, a pop-out window will coming out and the users and ask whatever questions over there.

How does it communicate with the users (text or speech)?

The virtual agent can accepts the questions from the users via text input at the space provided. Then, the virtual agent will be answered via text or audio output.

Is the level of discourse patronizing or at the right level?

In my opinion, I think that the agent is patronizing in general. Why say so? This is because the agent can provide some short answers with some hyperlink in the pop-out window. Furthermore, the answer provided by the agent is straight forward.

Is the agent helpful in guiding the user towards making a purchase or finding out something?

The virtual agent is very helpful to the users. It can provide a lot of information to the users. For example, I have tried using the virtual agent Jenn at Alaskaair. com. When I want to ask about the flight time of the plane, the Jenn will provide the information by giving me the flight time hyperlink. So, I can just click the link and load the page in order to know the flight time. Furthermore, the Anna at Ikea. com also can provide a lot of information about the products of the company. So, users can be easier to search the products and they would not face difficulties while searching for the products.

Is it too pushy?

I do not think that the agent is too pushy. I found that the agent is very useful to help us to find or search the information about the products. This kind of interface is quite new to me and I found that it is interesting. Furthermore, I also can find the information about the products easily at the website by using the virtual agent.

What gender is it? Do you think this make a difference?

The virtual agents in the three websites provided all are female. I think that the most of the male customers are willing to deal with the female virtual agents especially when they are asking some questions. Furthermore, I also think that the female customers will be more likely to deal with the female virtual agents than male virtual agents. But since it is only a virtual agent, I do not think that gender will make a difference.

Would you trust the agent to the extent that you would be happy to buy a product from it or follow its guidance? If not, why not?

I think I would not trust the agent fully. This is because the agent may not provide the accurate information to use since it is just a virtual agent and not a representation of a real person. I think I only will buy the products after consult by the real customer representative or the person in charge when I want to buy some expensive items.

What else would it take to make the agent persuasive?

First of all, the information provided by the agent must be accurate. So, the information stored in the database must be as many as possible and as accurate as possible. This is to gain the trust from the users or customers. Furthermore, the virtual agent may not only just smile or eye's blinking, it should carry out more expression. For instance, the virtual agent can do some walking such as move from side to side to make it more interesting and more persuasive. Besides that, I also think that there should be an upgrade for the audio output of the virtual agent. In order to make the agent

more persuasive, it should be able to speak as a real person and more confidence in order to get trust from the users or customers.

(b)

Is it easy to find information?

The structure of Amazon. com is well organized, so the users or customers are easier to search the required information. For instance, there are a lot of categories at the left side of Amazon. com which users can search the products like books, movies and others. So, I think that it is well organized compared to some other websites. Besides from the categorization of products, Amazon. com also provides or gives a list what other customers are looking at right now. Therefore, other customers can know what are the famous items sold at Amazon. com right and I can see that it is very interesting because I can know what items buy from the other customers.

What kind of mechanism does the site use to make recommendations and guide the user in making a purchase or finding out information?

At Amazon. com, the customers can search the products they want on the left side of the website. After they chosen the products, customers can click the products for more details. Then, there will be some recommendation for the customers to choose

Is any kind of personalization used at the interface to make the user feel welcome or special?

I think that Amazon. com website do not offer any personalization. The customers are not asked to login when they want to browse or search the

products or special offer items. However, the customers only required to login the website when they want to do the payment for their items. The website require personal login when customers want to the payments for their products in their shopping cart.

Would the site be improved by having an agent? Explain your reasons either way.

In my opinion, I do not think that Amazon. com need to be improved by having an agent. This is because the website is already well organized and the customers can search the products at Amazon. com easily. Customers should be no problems in browsing and searching the products. However, I also think that by adding an agent at the website may also improve a little segment of the shoppers on the site. For example, some of the customers may like a person to help them when buying the products. This is because they do not like to search themselves and they want straight forward to the products and explain the products to them. At that time, a virtual agent with audio output will be very useful to them. Nowadays, not all customers are fully trust about the virtual agent at the website. When the virtual agent become normal to the customers, then the website should be add an agent to the website.

(c)

Finally, discuss which site you would trust most and give your reasons for this.

Actually both websites also have its advantages and disadvantages. In my opinion, I would like to choose the website with the virtual agent. This is

because when I need some explanation from the products, I may choose the virtual agent to help me out. At least there will be a cartoon-like character willing to help me when I am lost in the website. However, Amazon. com also do its job well too because the product list is well organized and I failed to find some weaknesses at their website. The virtual agent website like Ikea. com, Alaskaair. com and asda. com also have product list which is well organized but they enhance it with a virtual agent to help the customers who visit the website. Individual Assignment