

An Approach to Information Design: Co-development of Activity Design and Tool Design

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Abstract. We are seeking to enrich people's activities. We aim to design a platform for people's expressions for the enjoyable expressive activities people engage in everyday life, through the development of tools to support such expressive activities and platforms to serve as content vehicles. Here we introduce an information design approach to the establishment of such a platform, in which we elucidate the concepts and processes underlying the development of a design for an information system based on human activity.

Keywords: Information Design, Human activity, People's expressions

1 Why is an activity-based approach necessary?

Technology-based approaches are giving rise to systems of advanced, multifunction, tools and services. But it is difficult to say that all of the functions in such systems are fully exploited by users. For example, a single mobile phone has a huge number of functions, but how many are actually used regularly? Hardly one in ten. This is due to the lack of a "usage," which is to say a "human activity," perspective in the system development.

The user's perspective and the perspective of creating things to be used in the system building are both neglected. We feel that the design approach must account for the usage system as well as the technology need for the creation.

2 Design of a platform for aesthetic expressive activities

One subject of research into people's expressions is the object of their aesthetic expressive activities. "Images" of various activities are made and treated as "creations," compiled, edited and then exhibited and exchanged. The keeping and sharing of family photo albums in the past was one example of such activity. In recent years new forms too numerous to count have appeared, such as the exchange of Print Club photographs and albums, Internet home pages and Blog diaries, photo emails sent between mobile phones, digital photo albums, and videos of school Athletic Day events.

Creations composed of reflections of human activity; living, travel or events are expressed by people using media including photographs, video, audio recordings, text, or any combination of the above. And these expressions are enjoyed by our society in which the original activities took place. However, because many of these expressions are recorded separately on different media, it can be difficult to link them together. A great amount of content doubtless lies hidden away in photo albums, hard disks or servers, never to see the light of day.

We believe that bringing together such diverse content in a single collection would lead to the rise of a new form of “knowing” in people’s expressions. This would take the form of the expressed “creations” and represent a form of praxis rooted in the locale and activities which, by providing a structure for participation by users of this knowledge, should further enrich society at the level of interconnected users.

The platform we envision seeks to create such a structure installed on digital networks. It is named “media exprimo (1).” Our approach to the development of a platform for people’s expressions begins with “activity,” not merely “technology.”

Through the activity study of expressions, interactions between a person who is expressing and a facilitator for the expression are extracted. We are discussing “joint attention (2)” generated in the interactions drives the activity into creation. Figure 1 shows a model of the interactions and the joint attentions in one case study of junior high school class practice.

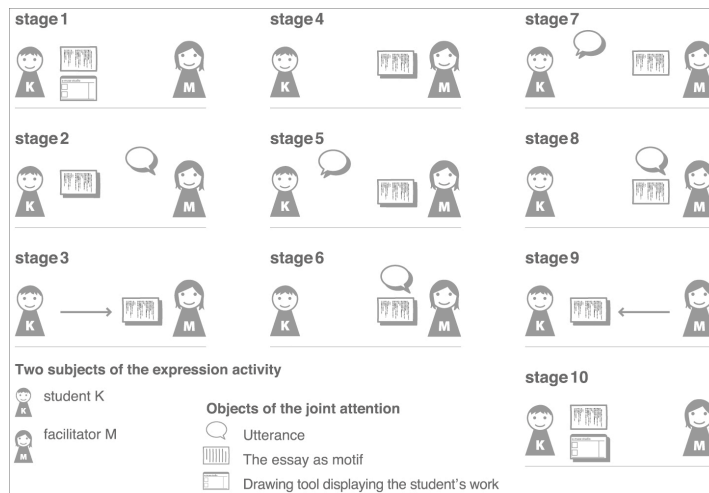


Fig. 1. A model of transition of the "joint attention" through ten interaction stages

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