Chapter 1

Phaneroscopy for Video Games

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ABSTRACT

The authors present a first study for the classification of the video games from a synchronic and diachronic perspective, in relation to the notion of phaneroscopy. The chapter analyzes categories of interactive design and communicability. In addition, there is a constant interrelation among the components of the multimedia systems aimed at entertainment in the late 20th century with the so-called “Z generation,” in the era of the expansion of communicability, and through the latest video game technologies, which allow the functioning of those interactive systems.

INTRODUCTION

One of the functions of the design models of interactive systems is to generate a common language among the designers, programmers, quality evaluators, etc. (Cipolla-Ficarra et al., 2010). The purpose is to avoid ambiguities which can increase the production timing and consequently reduce the costs. Although there are different models aimed at the design of hypertext, multimedia, and hypermedia systems from the 80s to days, (Garg, 1988; Yankelovich et al., 1988; Tompa, 1989; Stotts & Furuta, 1989; Hall & Papadopoulos, 1990; Schnase et al., 1993; Hardman et al., 1994) in terms of the production of interactive systems aimed at education, information, tourism, culture, entertainment, etc. their notions have been used or are used, when it comes to the design of the interactive design, whether it is an online support or off-line. How is it possible that a model born in electronic and computing departments in Milan (Italy) does not agree with the department of computer science and engineering in Zaragoza (Spain), when the mentors and potential users of said model are all university professors of mathematics and computer science? How is it possible that a design model of hypermedia systems generated between a private college in Brazil (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro) and another hybrid in Italy (Polytechnic University of Milan) is not understandable to a Spanish public university (Polytechnic University

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of Catalonia –Barcelona School of Informatics)? (Schwade et al., 1995). The answers to these questions can be found first in semiotics –our research work uses several notions from it (Nöth, 1995). In second place, and in terms of human factors in software engineering (Cipolla-Ficarra et al., 2011) it is possible for disagreements to be present, –there are always different viewpoints–, however we won’t analyze the same the current study, though, and because we leave this as a line of research for the future.

The use of semiotics in the design of interactive systems has proved to be very efficient when it comes to generating systems that reduced costs and with provide a high quality level, whether it is for e-learning, tourism or cultural heritage, etc.

The strategy followed has been to classify the main elements which make up the design of the system from several categories: presentation or layout, content, navigation, structure, compatibility or connectivity and panchronic (Cipolla-Ficarra et al., 2010). These categories of interactive design have been evolving with time, in order to generate quality attributes, metrics, techniques and evaluation methods, new professional profiles, etc. (Cipolla-Ficarra, 1999; Cipolla-Ficarra et al., 2010). In this sense, Umberto Eco, stresses the importance and the validity of the classifications (Eco, 2009) at the moment of generating and/or interacting with interactive systems of bidirectional interrelations, orthogonal or not orthogonal, unions and intersections, etc. These methods and techniques may be applied amongst the different components which in principle can be presented as lacking those links among themselves. In our case, after experimenting with some design models of hypertext systems, including multimedia and hypermedia forms/types, and with few positive results for the heuristic evaluation of the new systems of multimedia mobile phones, we have resorted to the main notions presented by Theodor Holm Nelson in his book “Literary Machines” (Nelson, 1992), and those deriving from semiotics or semiology. In the current chapter we resort to the notion of phaneroscopy in the discovery of universal categories.

In the current work we will present a first set of categories related to the videogames –or video games, starting from the main concepts of the multimedia systems, a brief evolution of the new generations of users for the videogames, a first diachronic analysis of two design categories, and include user capabilities such as the presentation and the navigation of information/data/interactive responses and feedback etc. Finally, we present the learned lessons, and make recommendations in terms of possible the future lines of research along with an overall summary and the few specific conclusions.

**Texts, Reading and Z Generation**

The sending of short texts for safety reasons has been one example of the origin of the Internet in the last century. The service worked among a relatively few, but identified at the time as key, governmental or public bodies in the USA. The democratization of the service came in parallel with a great diffusion of telecommunications, which through landline phones would go quickly through several peripherals: MODEM (modelatur – demodelatur), router, server, etc. until reaching multimedia and wireless phones, currently. That is, the hardware of the public bodies went over to the homes, businesses, etc., of millions of people on our planet, turning it into a partial installation of the global village as Marshall McLuhan anticipated in the 20th century.

In this process, the text messages would join the static images and later on the dynamic means (animation, music, video, etc.). In other words, the switch from hypertext towards hypermedia. However, in this process the text would lose the interest of the users, in face of the dynamic contents, reaching the second decade of the 21st century by the users of interactive systems practically do not as a class or group read literary works –at least