

Lucia Dossin - Thesis Outline

Abstract

In the context of User Interface Design, there is currently a trend to rename the components of human-computer interaction: the user, the computer and the interface. According to the precepts of this new terminology, the term 'users' should be replaced by 'people', 'computers' should be referred to as 'devices' and 'interfaces' should literally disappear altogether.

What are the motivations and consequences of such a shift in the terminology in regards to the visibility of technology? (And why does that matter?)

Introduction

Designers always have to consider topics such as User Friendliness and Usability. The core purpose of applying usability rules or guidelines to a project is to make its use simpler or easier. In the last few years, we could see the rise of a tendency which aims to achieve this simplicity by portraying the human-computer relationship as non-existing and therefore cutting down possibilities of interactions. This tendency can be illustrated by the following statements:

One of the horrible words we use is users. I am on a crusade to get rid of the word 'users'. I would prefer to call them 'people.' ([Don Norman, 2008 - UXWeek](#))

We believe technology is at its very best when it's invisible. When you're conscious only of what you're doing, not the device you're doing it with. And iPad is the perfect expression of that idea. It's just this magical pane of glass that can become anything you want it to be. ([iPad Trailer, 2012](#))

The best interface is no interface. ([Golden Krishna, 2013 - SXSW](#))

The change in the vocabulary reflects not so much the verification of a fact (users are people, in this case) as it reflects a design choice (we - designers, marketing gurus - want users to be defined as people). As in any design choice, there are reasons underneath it.

It is very intriguing that in a moment where computers are in charge of running or organizing almost everything in our lives, from national to personal scale, we see ourselves urged to believe - or, depending on your profession, to endorse - the idea that technology is this magical, invisible, intangible thing and that we should not bother trying to understand how computers work nor how technology is implemented and used. I argue for exactly the opposite of this idea.

Chapter One

This chapter will contain descriptions of each element in the interaction and will confront those definitions to the statements terms. By doing this, I intend to prepare the reader for my arguments in the next chapter.

Chapter Two

In this chapter I intend to expose what could be, in my perspective, the motivations and consequences of the shift in terminology regarding the visibility of technology.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three will discuss the relevance of the topic: what is the problem with technology being invisible? Why is it important that we remain able to realize and understand when we are interacting with a computer and that there is nothing 'magical' about it?

Conclusion

In this section, I will present my Thesis conclusion.

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