Why Are We Talking?

How the Purpose of Conversation Impacts Bot Design

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“I am fluent in over six million forms of communication....”

“...Don't blame me. I'm an interpreter. I'm not supposed to know a power socket from a computer terminal...”

C3PO and R2D2 of Star Wars fame
For Good or Bad...

Good Janet

Sweet, quirky, helpful

Bad Janet

Good Janet’s demonic counterpart

Neighborhood Intelligent Personal Assistant (IPA) robot

NBC’s “The Good Place”

Actress D’Arcy Carden
Multiple purposes for the creation and use of language-interaction bots that impact design

- Business Purpose
- User Purpose
- Consumer Purpose

and

Purpose of Conversation
Business 1 Purpose:
• Reduce agent time, telephony fees

Customer Service IVR
Design:
• Self-service tasks
• Get to ‘right agent’
• Persona: Best agent
• Encourage hang up

Business 2 Purpose:
• Increase subscription revenues

Entertainment Voice Portal
Design:
• Stay on the line, browser
• Entertainment quality & sounds
• Main persona: Broadcaster
• Persona for each category

“If you’re done, simply hang up. Otherwise, which would you like next?…”

“Which would you like next?
<news earcon> *news* …
<sports earcon> *sports*…..”
Intelligent Assistant

“Ok…, set my alarm to 6:15 AM”

“What’s in the news today?”

User 1 Purpose:
• Make life easier
• Change alarm time hands-free

User 2 Purpose:
• Keep informed on the go
• Daily news briefs, fav sources

Design:
• Multi-modal smart phone or voice device, Intelligent Assistant
• Downloadable alarm clocks and other apps, news and entertainment
  • IA persistently available, sends commands to apps
  • Room for Improvement: Better interface with apps
Contest for Conversational AI: “…university teams…building a socialbot that can converse coherently and engagingly with humans on popular topics for 20 minutes.”
Purpose of Conversation:

- Practical: naming, actions, requests, commands
- Social connection
- Sharing information
- Negotiation and trade, collaboration
- Entertainment and education
- To Inspire and persuade
- Make someone feel good or bad
Social Conversations

Interpersonal Relationships

- Relaxing, fun, bonding
- Commonality and rapport
- Exchanging ideas
- Getting to know you
- Listening, understanding
- Gossip, establishing social norms
- Building community
- Resolving social issues
- Telling stories

Building community
Example: Hello Barbie doll

- **Business purpose:**
  - General: Increase income, market share
  - Specific: Introduce innovative product to established market
    - Encourage sales through marketing: ‘best friend’

- **User purpose (child):**
  - Have fun, have a friend

- **Consumer purpose (parent for child):**
  - Safe fun interactive play, games and talk
  - Practice social conversation
  - Boost self-esteem, provide companion
“I know what we can talk about!”

“Hey! Do you ever get in a curious mood?”

“I was reading about [elephants]… The most interesting thing I learned is that elephants can get sunburned. … Isn’t that wild?”

“Yay! You’re here!”

“You see, there's something I wanted to share with you..."
Positive:

“Her conversational abilities are fairly strong, … and she is SUPER positive. Example: "Barbie, am I pretty?" "Of course I think you're pretty. But you're also smart, talented, and funny, and that's way more important!" <--that. I want my daughter to hear that.”

“The adventures and general knowledge is incredible…. This is a great toy that sparks imagination….”

“…her phrases, prompts, and responses … improve over time.”

“My sister really loves it it's so good she has lots of fun with it”
Room for Improvement:

- Battery charger and wifi connection issues
- Security, privacy, and ethics concerns
- Continue improving conversation abilities
  - Listen better and understand more

“...she told some interesting stories. but the interaction was minimal and felt stilted”

“...she tends to interrupt my daughter...”

Customer Reviews

- 5 star: 18%
- 4 star: 8%
- 3 star: 6%
- 2 star: 9%
- 1 star: 59%

-More verified purchase Amazon reviewers
When a conversational product or service fails to meet the needs of the consumer or user, that may hinder the business purpose and even the use of the bot.

“We have been without an interpreter since our master got angry with our last protocol droid and disintegrated him.”

- Star Wars HR droid EV9D9 while interviewing C3PO

“Disintegrated?!!”
Review feedback and unexpected responses
Listen more, understand intent
Update and improve over time
Remember context that has been discussed
Smoother and deeper interaction with other apps
Align product features and technology
Personalize interactions without being creepy
Design conversation style and persona
  E.g. Aim less, meander and delight more
  But keep it effective and appropriate!
Whether a customer service IVR or chat bot, an intelligent assistant, artificial intelligence, friend, companion, or demonic robotic nemesis,

**Design bots with purpose in mind!**

Business, User, and Consumer Purpose

Purpose of Conversation

“Dave, this conversation can serve no purpose anymore. Goodbye.” -Hal9000, 2001: A Space Odyssey
Let’s Keep Talking

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