Assessing assessment: the potential of chat

Summary: Although I learned primarily what not to do in a chat session, I believe that chat could be an effective tool to evaluate some aspects of online game play. Its chief advantages are recordability (transcript attached) and immediacy, although this immediacy can also interfere with the flow of the game.

Goal: To evaluate a brief (20 minute) chat session for its potential as an assessment tool for online games.

The set up: My daughter, her friend, and I logged onto NeoPets (neopets.com), an online shopping program, where you earn neopoints (the currency used to purchase stuff) in games and puzzles. I had never played before, and the kids took me through selecting my avatar. Our plan was to meet in a chat room and chat while we played.

But oops! Chat is not available to people who just signed up. Not to worry! Both kids have multiple accounts, which is how I became matthewfoxisawesome!

We were physically separate from each other, and we were all on Macintosh computers. The kids talked me through buying things (although I did not have enough $ to buy anything so I had to go earn NeoPoints). They recommended some games, although with the huge number of games that were available, I suspect I could not have found the games they recommended.

What I learned.

• Be prepared. I am not accustomed to chat rooms, and I should have been more proficient with the tool. For example, I expected the screen to scroll, but instead, at the end of a page, users have to move to another screen. Because I did not know this, I was waiting for a response to a comment I posted, while my daughter in the chat room tried in vain to get a response form me.

• Know the game. There was just too much to focus on, as I was learning the game and navigating the site, chat, game screens, etc. I recommend having at least cursory familiarity with this material before reviewing it with kids. Also, our communication broke down after we had chatted for a while because I did not notice that there was a second page of chat. My daughter signed off temporarily (“Back in a sec.”), but that was at the end of the page. I did not realize it was the end of the page, and the rest of my daughter’s entries consist of her trying to get a response out of somebody. “HELLO??!!?!” “Anyone?”

• Use an external chat function. We used the chat function in NeoPets, but going back and forth between full-size browser windows was awkward. A smaller window like IM would have been more convenient and probably would have fostered better communication.

• Avoid playing the game. I might have realized that I needed to switch screens on the chat if I had not been playing a game.
kitty_cat_dog_45
Asparagus Eater
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:15 am
[Report this message]
hi!
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http://www.neopets.com/guilds/guild.phtml?id=295532

kitty_cat_dog_45
Asparagus Eater
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:16 am
[Report this message]
this is allie
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http://www.neopets.com/guilds/guild.phtml?id=295532

matthewfoxisawsome
Status: 9 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:17 am
[Report this message]
Quin -- are you here?

kitty_cat_dog_45
Asparagus Eater
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:20 am
[Report this message]
hi
-------------------------
http://www.neopets.com/guilds/guild.phtml?id=295532

song_breeze
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:20 am
[Report this message]
J-E-L-L-O, It's ALIVE (Scream)

matthewfoxisawsome
Status: 9 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:21 am
[Report this message]
What is Quin's user name?

song_breeze
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:21 am
[Report this message]
Song_breeze

**matthewfoxisawsome**
Status: 9 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:21 am
J-E-L-L-O??

**Report this message**

**matthewfoxisawsome**
Status: 9 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:22 am
Do i want Flash or HTLM?

**Report this message**

**kitty_cat_dog_45**
*Asparagus Eater*
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:22 am
wha are you doing right now? i am just to lazy to come over!!!LOL!

**Report this message**

**kitty_cat_dog_45**
*Asparagus Eater*
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:23 am
NO!!!!

**Report this message**

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:23 am
Neither. J-E-L-L-O-

**Report this message**

**matthewfoxisawsome**
Status: 9 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:23 am
How do I spend money?

**Report this message**

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:23 am
So what are we chatting 'bout

**Report this message**

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:24 am
[Report this message]
Um, first you have to have money
to spend np go to a shop and click on an item that you want

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:27 am

What's up with J-E-L-L-O?  
And what game is cool?

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:30 am

J-E-L-L-O is AWSOME  
Lots of games are good. Depends upon your mood

**kitty_cat_dog_45**
*Asparagus Eater*
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:30 am

well, merca chase is cool, it is under action and so is dubloon disaster

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:31 am

Back in a sec.

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:33 am

I'm back

**kitty_cat_dog_45**
*Asparagus Eater*
Status: 10 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:34 am

did you send the neomail matthewfoxisawsome?

**song_breeze**
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

**Posted:** 3 Dec 2005 - 8:35 am
WHAT??????????????

song_breeze
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:36 am
HELLO?!?!?!?!

song_breeze
Status: 5 Months
Gender: Female

Posted: 3 Dec 2005 - 8:44 am
Anyone?

[Report this message]