

Expectations and Endurability - Measuring Fun

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Previous work by Read and MacFarlane (2000) identified two ways of recording children's perceptions of their own fun; comparative and absolute.

Comparative fun was measured by asking the children to order the activities they had done using constructs like 'easier'. This technique was loosely based on the repertory grid technique (Fransella and Bannister 1977). Infant children found it hard to differentiate between the four constructs which were offered to them but for the junior aged children, the technique appeared to work quite well.

Absolute (or event) fun was measured using two different Likert type scales, one discrete and one continuous. These were modelled on Risdén's funometer (1997). Scores using these techniques were generally very high, and this was in part attributed to the 'bewitching' effect of the computer technology that was being used and the tendency for the children to want to please the researcher by rating activities highly.

This paper takes an alternative view, concentrating on the attributes of 'expectation' and 'endurability'. It is hypothesised that fun is related to anticipation. The second attribute of endurability is also of interest. For how long something is remembered, and with what enthusiasm, can be an indicator of how much fun it was (Whiteside et al. 1988).

This paper presents work that has recently been done to test these hypotheses and to suggest some more ways of measuring fun with children. 41 children were taken on an educational trip, completing questionnaires before and after the event which comprised three questions and a discrete smiley face Likert-type scale. This was designed to measure the 'expectations' and then the 'absolute fun' of the children.

On two later occasions, the children were asked about what they had remembered and about how much they would like to repeat each activity. These results gave a measure of endurability and gave an indication of the degradation of the memories of the different activities of the event. A repertory grid was also developed with a group of children and was then used to rate the activities of the day. This gave us a measure of comparative fun.

Results indicate that there is a correlation between expected and absolute fun, and that the children typically remembered the activities which they liked the best. There also appears to be a correlation between the repertory grid scoring and the desire to repeat the activities.

Results from the previous experiment (Read et al. 2001), suggest that the correlation between expected and absolute fun is transferable between situations; this may be a feature of the way children of this age perceive events and fun.

Whilst the event in this experiment was not computer based, the authors believe that the measures of fun can be widely applied, and they intend to use them to assist in the evaluation of the usability of pen computing for children. Further work will establish whether the preferred satisfaction metrics of two Likert scales, a remembrance, and a 'do it again' grid can be effectively used in a more negative experience.

References

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