School of Philosophy, Psychology & Language Sciences

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This dissertation reports on the development of a game to help teach the regular past tense construction to children with autism. Development of the game was based on a literature survey, workshops with typically developing children and expert feedback. In general, this report describes a lot of good work towards the final goal, even though the game was found to be too difficult for many of the workshop participants and could not be evaluated with the target audience.

The author shows a good understanding of the issues to do with game development for children.   The report is generally well written and easy to understand. The work gives good support to the idea that visual novels are viable as educational games. However, it was a bit unclear at times what aspects of the game were specifically for autistic children. The literature reviewed in section 2.2. suggests regular past tense could be a good thing for autistic children to practice. Presumably this game would also be good for children who were experiencing language development issues for other reasons. It would be good to know what the variance is you'd expect in the Typically Developing population? Are there other groups for who could use this game but who would need a different set up or be engaged in different ways?

While it is understandable that workshops could not be held with autistic children, it still would have been useful to focus the reporting of the workshops/interviews around their potential needs, linking to relevant literature if possible. Some more discussion of how the comments from the children's workshop relate to what is engaging specifically for autistic children would be helpful here. For example, does the game being "school-like" have the same connotations for autistic children? This would make it clearer what recommendations are specifically useful for game development for autistic children.

The dissertation could also be stronger with some more integration and analysis between the expert evaluation and children's workshops.   In particular, in chapter 6 there were many statements made by the experts about what children would like, but it wasn't clear if this was borne out by the workshop.   It may have been advantageous to get the expert evaluation first and use this to develop hypotheses to guide the workshops. For example, did the position of the dialogue boxes actually appear to bother the kids as suggested by E5? Some more discussion about "how regular past tense can be taught progressively" (as suggested by E5, pg 51) would also be helpful.

I would have also liked to see some details about the sample population used in the workshops. For example, did any of them have other learning issues? How were the children recruited? Are they mostly drawn from families related to the University? How generalizable do you think these workshops are?

It would have been good to see some discussion/reflection on the usefulness of the CARSS framework for this project.   It was a bit unclear why the experts, teachers, parents etc were not treated as stakeholders. They don't participate in the specific workshops for children but their participation could be important for the design process (as experts definitely were). Wouldn't broad consultation with teachers and parents be

beneficial before the workshops? The CARSS paper seems to suggest that they should be included.

Overall, this is a good dissertation that provides some interesting insights into educational game design for children. The report itself could be improved by focusing more on determining the aspects of game design that will be important for autistic children and how this might differ from typically developing children.   Structuring the design process to use workshops to evaluate suggestions of expert evaluations would also help make recommendations more concrete.

- *How well is knowledge and understanding demonstrated?*

Does the dissertation demonstrate a breadth of knowledge and deep understanding of the subject matter? Does it show creative, subtle, and/or original independent thinking?

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Does the dissertation present a compelling case by means of clear logically structured argument or debate, well supported with evidence?

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- *Has the student made their original contribution of their dissertation clear?*

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- *Background & Literature Review*

Does this section give an appropriate background to the study? Is it critically argued, presenting important information about methodology and implications of previous studies, supported by citations? How compelling is the rationale for the present study: do the research questions and/or hypotheses follow logically from the literature reviewed?

- *Discussion*

Is the section more than just a re-statement of the results section? Is it clear that the implications of the findings are understood? Are the results discussed with reference to other studies in the field? Are the present study's strengths and weaknesses insightfully discussed? Are the conclusions justified, and any recommendations for future research sensible?

If the topic of the dissertation requires Methods and Results sections:

- *Methods*

Is the methodology reasonable given the constraints on student projects? Are the methods similar to other research in the field, or are deviations from the norm clearly justified? (Or indeed, are the methods original and/or an improvement on the norm?) Is the section clearly laid out? Does it describe the selection and recruitment of subjects, the procedures and measures of the investigation, and the strategy for analysis (if the analysis strategy is not here, is it explained in the results section)? Are the analyses appropriate to the topic (do they test the chosen hypotheses/research questions)?

- *Results*

Does the presentation of results follow the analysis strategy? Are the results relevant to the hypotheses/research questions? Are the analyses conducted and presented competently, and are the results clearly and logically presented? Do the results strike a good balance between explaining and showing all the necessary and important findings (qualitative or quantitative) with the help of clear tables or figures, without including excess text, unnecessary analyses, or redundant tables or figures?