

Jin Young Jeon

Info C262

Reading Response 1 Activity Theory and TUI

My recent favorite UI and experience is Pokémon Go. It may sound trivial or even obsolete considering the Pokémon fever that swept the world last year, but I want to highlight its new raid system and the user experience that came along with it.

I was never a great Pokémon Go (PoGo) fan and hardly found interest in its augmented reality feature. However, with its new updated system, I just started playing it, and now it has become my new favorite app. Besides the existing features of PoGo, the raid system allows users to catch legendary Pokémon. The creatures randomly spawn in different locations, and users need to gather in the area to fight together.

This raid system has converted the online experience to face-to-face offline experience as tens of users gather in different areas. It is fascinating to see how users from various background, age, and ethnicity gather in a specific location just to catch a Pokémon. While I always thought games are for young people, I have encountered various user populations from college students, mother and daughter to 40 years-old worker excusing himself out of work to quickly join the raid.

It is the social and cultural context of PoGo's unique interaction that I became interested in. PoGo is special as there are not many apps that allow such spontaneous gathering offline. Moreover, in order to form a raid group, chat groups using third party chat apps are created. After constant collaboration, friendship is built among users, forming a small, yet cohesive community as a whole.

Applying the activity theory, the interaction can be first identified as my motive or psychological need to attain a strong legendary Pokémon. My action to actually walk to a certain location and participate in the raid are all part of the experience. Thus, the purpose of raid experience is not to simply catch a Pokémon, but rather the whole experience of exercising and walking all the way to interact with other like-minded users offline, and then working collaboratively to achieve the goal of catching the legendary creature. As the activity theory suggests, as I am now used to the experience, the process has become somewhat internalized as all the walking, gathering, and game play are spontaneous.