Reflective Essay

Over the last twelve weeks, my team and I worked on a project to assist in importing third-party chatbots from Google (DialogFlow) and Amazon (Lex) to Genesys’ Dialog Engine. Being a team member was something I had experience in, but not to this degree.

As a team member, it was my responsibility to translate the chatbots into a format usable for Dialog Engine. My first task was to translate the slots and slot types from DialogFlow (where they were called ‘entities’, which gave rise to confusion) to Dialog Engine. I had spent a short while trying to figure out how to go about this, until deciding to finally create a few functions to organise the data within them. I created the base Python file used throughout the rest of this section of the project. Later, I was in charge of translating the ‘actions’ from both DialogFlow and Lex bots (at different times) to Dialog Engine. I was working on the DialogFlow bot for longer, so I had to take over the code from someone else who was working on the Lex bot. As a result, I had to try to understand code that wasn’t written by me, which is something typically deemed rather difficult, as it requires trying to understand how someone else was thinking. In my case, there weren’t many comments, which made it even harder for me to understand their code. Nevertheless, I persisted and eventually managed to figure out what their code did and how it functioned and added my functions to it.

I have worked with Python before, but I hadn’t in a while before this, so I had to remember how to do basic functions like creating functions, and the indent-heavy workflow that came with it.

I have worked on several different group projects before, but in this case, we were working with a client, which I hadn’t ever done before. I was given a set of goals to accomplish every week, as was everyone else. Every time I made major progress, I would save, commit and announce my changes to GitHub, where someone else would check and/or add to it. If there was an error on someone’s part, someone else would notice and send a message to the group chat we had about the issue. I feel like the weekly sprints helped to keep me on track for which parts of the project I was meant to do, as I would have been rather disorganized otherwise.

A contribution to the project I am proud of is the initial file I created as my first commit to the repository. It was used as a base for this file, but also as the basis for another teammate to use in the Lex chatbot. I also made contributions towards that bot, as we had already completed most of the DialogFlow bot, and we needed the Lex bot to catch up.

In terms of my personal working style, I believe that I may work better in a group. I tend to be rather forgetful, and working in a team lets people remind me when I need to do work. Additionally, working in a team helps split the workload, and individuals no longer need to bear all the work on their own. My learning style hasn’t changed, but I have learned a great deal about how to work together more efficiently and effectively, especially in the field of computer science.