Paper Prototyping – Individual Reflection

1st role – difficulty as an observer

At the time when I was first introduced about the role of observer, I immediately realized that the observer carries out the most important role in the user test of paper prototyping. Facilitator and computer should pay attention to interact with participants, but the observer can solely examine and report all the speeches and behaviors in the third person’s point of view. However, observer as the roll of paper prototyping should give something more than just the observed scene. I wrote down everything examined during the user testing, but I should come up with some of my insights possibly applied to our design based on users’ behaviors and reactions. Observer is the only one who write down, so my report directly becomes the result of the user testing. I should have noticed my responsibility as the observer.

2nd role – difficulty as a facilitator

My second role was the facilitator. I simply thought my role is just to give instructions for the tasks and clues when participants are stuck and don’t know what to do. Unfortunately, after I finished my role in current user testing session, I realized that observer is my vocation for this user testing. Facilitator should provoke users’ reaction while not leading user to inappropriate or designated directions. Which means, I must talk constantly to derive conative answer from users. Unless we are testing on extreme users, it is not easy to expect direct feedback on designs. Therefore, it depends on the capability of facilitator to thrive useful and active feedbacks from users. I was devoid of this sense of affordance with words.

Pros

Paper Prototyping indeed allows designers to collect users’ feedback with low costs. Some feedbacks let us to guarantee the strength of usability of designed interface, while other feedbacks give totally unexpected aspects on the usability of designed interface. Since it is proper direction to reflect - or at least consider about - all feedbacks from users, it seems much effective and efficient to cast paper prototyping rather than impassionedly debate about adding or changing the designs of certain feature in the UI.

Cons

The most critical drawback of paper prototyping would be its limitation of being made up of paper. There need some imaginations to figure out how to carry out the given tasks, since participants are, in fact, looking at the design drawn on paper. There are several affordances on web interfaces based on experiences, especially related with touch screens, but it is not quite apparent to remind common features (such as swipe) with just looking at the paper prototyping. It might be possible to design well with reflecting the characteristics of paper, but the main purpose of paper prototyping is to use minimum resources to get users feedback so that it would be preposterous.

Another weakness of paper prototyping is that the result depends on the facilitator’s capability of provoking reactions and feedbacks from users. In fact, this holds for most of things in our life. Users never give direct feedback on design or features. Facilitator should ask and talk consistently to provoke desired feedbacks, which I don’t have enough ability on.