

JamesTeng - Assignment 01

Question #1

The latest personal experience I have when I was deeply engaged in an activity was when I was doing my homework for the Pattern Recognition (PR) class for this week. In order to refresh my memory of probability class I had back to my undergrad years, I went through several chapters of my probability textbook without taking any rest. I even missed my lunch and dinner time (my stomach and the hungry feeling device of my mind were kind of like not functioning at all). I went through several problems of the assignment, and every time I successfully solved one, the happiness I got drove me to solve the next one. During the process of more than eight hours, I was not responding to any IM messages I got from my friends, I was not checking if I have new emails. This phenomenon, for me, means I was absolutely deeply engaged in solving the problem set, because I am the kind of person who will be easily interrupted by those IM messages and incoming emails.

Question #2

Another experience I had when I am sort of engaged was my watching a DVD movie using my laptop. The movie was fun, but I always stopped to check my incoming IM messages, and I stopped playing the movie whenever I am chatting with my friends on IM. (So it took me more than 3 hours to finish the 90 min long movie.)

The difference level of engagement (comparing with the one about writing homework), is that the flow of the movie can be easily caught up every time I come back from my chatting window (and the technology allows me to do so). For writing PR assignments, I have to be very concentrate on the problems and equations I am manipulating. I know I have to re-do the whole problem once I stop thinking about the problem and do something else. The other reason why I was not so deeply engaged was because the movie is a typical YA romantic comedy - it talks about a senior high school kid falling in love with a porn star living next to his door. I watched it for fun, not for training my logic thinking or something. The script and lines are easy to understand, and you know the result of the whole story after you watch it for 10 minutes.

One other interesting experience I had was yesterday, I was listening to a radio program. I was also doing some cleaning of my room and the kitchen while listening to the radio. All of a sudden, the DJ played a song named "Chi-Nian (in Mandarin)," which was the "theme song" of a group of my best friends back to my undergrad years. We hung out together all the time, and this song was our favorite and we had to sing it several times every time we went to KTV. So when the DJ was playing the song, I stopped my cleaning activities, and sang with the radio. Lots of memories came out of my mind. I was very engaged in the activity of "re-visiting" my past days with my best friends. It was a short engagement, I resume to do my cleaning like right after the song stopped. But I felt I was deeply engaged in the process of re-visiting my past and wondering wether my friends are doing great right now.

This experience is interesting in that I found engagement is also related to my memory and past experiences. Also, it matters if the memory that is being invoked plays an important role of my life (about my best friends and happy days of my undergrad). In contrast to the experience of doing PR homework, I didn't get the feeling of conquering difficult problems or getting to learn some math techniques.

Question #3

Some of the attributes I come up with are:

- *Length of a experience:* for some cases, the longer you are engaged in a certain activity, the deeper the engagement would be.
- *The sense of accomplishment (reward):* for my homework writing case, I was deeply engaged because I felt great whenever I successfully solve a problem. The sense of accomplishing something drives me to work on the next problem and makes me feel not to stop with excitement.

- *Being challenged:* being challenged is part of getting a sense of accomplishment. An activity can be challenging because it's beyond one's current knowledge level, or because it has no solutions or it's open-ended problem, or because it takes excessive level of concentration.
- *Relection on past experience:* I feel I am deeply engaged in reflection on my past experience. It happens like when I browse the photo (no matter who I was with in those photos) files in my computer. If the movie I am watching reminds me some past happy/sad times, I also feel I am more engaged in the activity of watching the movie.

Focus: When you are deeply engaged in something, you are very focused on the specific activity.