**Affordances in the Eyes of the Observer**

This theme is recurring in this week’s readings. I liked Song and Fox’s (2007) examples about how each of the students perceived the affordances of the handheld devices depending on their majors and needs. Wijekumar et al (2006) discuss the affordances of a computer as perceived by K-12, undergraduate, and graduate students. They explain that students see the computer as a gaming tool rather than a learning tool. A computer that has entertainment affordances may not be perceived by the learner as a learning tool. Novices and experts identify affordances of a computer differently; while novices focus on one task (understanding how the technology works in order to solve the task), experts multitask when they are in a familiar environment (and so their learning is not as effective as that of the novices). They also explain that good design of a technology supported learning environment moves the learner from a game mood to a learning mood. I am not sure how Wijekumar et al’s culminating statement, “Addressing the affordance issue can make the difference between a future society that can innovate and produce versus people who cannot think without a game” (p. 207) fits into a growing world of gaming in education. I believe that a game that is designed in a constructive way and addresses cognitive affordances (such as CATS descriptors) should definitely support the learning. After all, if gaming is this generation’s interest, then learning should be made more fun.

**Affordances of Today’s Technologies**

An interesting theme that has come up as I read three articles is how affordances of technology develop and change overtime which highlights the need of continuous research in this field. Even the CATS scale that we are working on should be modified periodically to include the affordances of the technologies being evaluated at a certain point in the future. Song and Fox (2007) present handheld devices’ affordances as presented in a 2002 study and the finding from their 2007 study:

*Handheld devices affordances:*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Klopfer, Squire, & Jenkins (2002)** | **Song & Fox (2007)** |
| Portability  **Social interactivity**  Context sensitivity  **Connectivity**  Individuality | Revision  Reference  Multimedia collection  Multimedia access  **Social interaction**  Managing  Data processing  **Connectivity**  Representation |

Common affordances between Klopfer et al and Song and Fox are highlighted. It is obvious that the technology advances in handheld devices developed further affordances for these tools that were not evident in the existing 2002 handheld devices. Even the social interactivity tools such as MSN, emails, SMS, that Song and Fox mention seem outdated with the emerging technologies such as iPhones and iPads that we are using nowadays. Other affordances such as maps, learning applications, and social interaction Web 2.0 tools represent affordances of current handheld devices.

**Social Affordances and Digital Affordances**

I liked Allaire et al’s (2011) definition of social affordances and digital affordances. It was a well articulated elaboration on Gibson’s definition of affordances. Social affordances are defined as “human-human interactions mediated by technology,” whereas digital affordances “refer to human-machine interactions that support the reflective and knowledge building process” (p.3). Their study showed that social affordances appealed more to pre-service teachers in the beginning of the study. Song and Fox (2007) also highlight Social interaction as a handheld device affordance. Even participants in this research noted the importance and practicality of social interaction when using handheld devices. The articles yield interesting findings for our CATS; I think that including “Interaction” as a main category should be emphasized since social interaction plays an important role in knowledge building as both studies suggest.