Chapter 6

Visual–Based Character Origination, Design, Development, and Evolution for Learning

ABSTRACT

People can be highly responsive to the so-called "personality frame" through which to learn. Such framing may be achieved through a live human actor, a tutor agent, a non-playable character in a game, a representation of a professional, a digital avatar in a virtual world, an artificial intelligence (AI) robot, or some other representation of an individual being. Various types of characters—real or imaginary, dynamic (animated) or static, humanoid or animal or other—may appear in online teaching and learning. Various dimensions of a character's appearance, sound, communications, behaviors, actions, and other dimensions may communicate something of their designed (scripted) personality and motivations, resulting in learner engagement, learner interactions with the learning. This chapter explores visual-based character origination, design, development, and evolution for learning.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter will explore the following questions:

- If characters are used in a learning experience, how will this character or these characters present in terms of personalities?
- What does the research literature suggest about character-for-learning designs?
- How will various learning characters manifest and at what levels of development and depth?
- What dimensions of communications are used to convey character personalities (ego)?
- If multiple characters are used simultaneously, how would they interrelate (or not)? Will there be designed kinship? How would the interactivity (if any) between characters function and contribute to the learning?
- What are some ways to test for character efficacy in a learning context? Their role in the learning? Their likeability? Their memorability? Their representation?

A core premise in this chapter is that learners may be highly responsive to a "personality frame" through which to learn. The idea here is that people tend to be responsive to each other's personalities and animating enthusiasms. They engage others with a sense of personal coherence and trust. A created persona for learning may harness that dynamic by activating human sociality and imagination. For example, people respond to their teachers in their learning; they engage with their peer co-learners. This work explores the building of a character-for-learning or characters-for-learning using visual design and how these support learning. (Figure 2) A "character-for-learning" is an ego or entity designed as a personality, who supports the learning. These may be represented as a live human actor, a tutor agent, a non-playable character in a game, a representation of a professional, a digital avatar in a virtual world, an artificial intelligence (AI) robot, or some other representation of an individual being (or group of beings). The characters may be real or imaginary, dynamic (animated) or static, humanoid or animal or inanimate other.

This work explores how visuals may be used for the (1) origination, (2) design, (3) development, and (4) evolution of characters-for-learning. It engages the following questions.

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