

IDEA GROUP PUBLISHING 701 E. Chocolate Avenue, Suite 200, Hershey PA 17033-1240, USA Tel: 717/533-8845; Fax 717/533-8661; URL-http://www.idea-group.com

This paper appears in the publication, Contemporary Issues in End User Computing edited by Mo Adam Mahmood © 2006, Idea Group Inc.

Chapter IV

The Effectiveness of Online Task Support vs. Instructor-Led Training

Ji-Ye Mao, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong

Bradley R. Brown, University of Waterloo, Canada

Abstract

This study investigates the effectiveness of online task support (the wizard type in particular) relative to instructor-led training, and explores the underlying cognitive process in terms of the development of mental models. Ninety-two novice users of Microsoft Access were either trained by an experienced instructor or performed exercises with online task support, and then completed a variety of performance-based tests. Analysis shows that users of online task support tended to outperform instructor-trained individuals on high-level tasks, whereas the performance difference on low-level tasks was not significant. The cognitive processes underlying the difference are also noteworthy. Task support users were more likely to develop conceptual mental models as opposed to procedural ones, which accounted for their better high-level performance. Mental model completeness was also found to be closely associated with performance on both low and high-level tasks. These findings offer support for increased use of online task support.

Introduction

End-user training is a multi-billion dollar business, critical to the successful implementation of systems and the productive use of technology (Compeau, Olfman, Sein, & Webster, 1995). However, spending is no guarantee for success. Traditional training approaches tend to remove trainees from the context of work, provide them with a loaded training program, and then send them back to their jobs. They run the risk of teaching material that would never be transferred to the actual job context. By providing all training in massed sessions, the knowledge acquired might deteriorate over time.

After an initial training, users tend to practice only those procedures that they need to accomplish their most urgent tasks. "As a result, much of what they were initially trained to do but did not continue to do regularly was forgotten" (Bullen & Bennett, 1996, p. 371). Occasional users in particular are not interested in regular training sessions, nor would they benefit from such training (Eason, 1988). According to Eason, what they really need is the "point of need support," which provides specific answers when questions arise from real work. A variety of mechanisms could be used to provide such types of support, including online help facilities.

Advances in information technologies have created both challenges and opportunities for end-user training. On one hand, learning everything in advance has become impossible, and it is difficult to be proficient with many applications or many functions of a single application. End-users must develop the ability of selflearning and support. On the other hand, online task support has become increasingly sophisticated and increased in variety including help and references, examples, wizards, cue cards, and custom-designed job aids. More importantly, online task support has emerged as a potential viable alternative to the conventional training, allowing training to be integrated into working.

The central idea of online task support is embedding training and support functions within an operational system, to enhance knowledge workers' performance by providing access to knowledge, information, advice, and learning experiences in the context of work (e.g., Gery, 1995; Marion, 2002; Masumian, 2000). In other words, online task support is provided to users within the context

22 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: <u>www.igi-</u> <u>global.com/chapter/effectiveness-online-task-support-</u> instructor/7032

Related Content

Schools of Thought in Research into End-User Computing Success

Roger W. Harris (2000). *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing (pp. 24-34).*

www.irma-international.org/article/schools-thought-research-into-end/3717

The Changing Environment of Software Copyright: The Case of Apple Computer v. Microsoft Corp.

Cherie Sherman Werbeland Phillip Werbel (1989). *Journal of Microcomputer Systems Management (pp. 24-32).*

www.irma-international.org/article/changing-environment-software-copyright/55652

The Agglomeration Mechanism of Network Emerging E-Eommerce Industry Based on Social Science

Jiali Wangand Yixin Dai (2022). *Journal of Organizational and End User Computing* (pp. 1-16).

www.irma-international.org/article/the-agglomeration-mechanism-of-network-emerging-eeommerce-industry-based-on-social-science/291561

Interactive Rendering of Indoor and Urban Environments on Handheld Devices by Combining Visibility Algorithms with Spatial Data Structures

Wendel B. Silvaand Maria Andréia F. Rodrigues (2013). *Mobile and Handheld Computing Solutions for Organizations and End-Users (pp. 341-358).* www.irma-international.org/chapter/interactive-rendering-indoor-urban-environments/73221

The Relationship Between User Satisfaction and Systems Usage: Empirical Evidence from Egypt

Omar E.M. Khaliland Manal M. Elkordy (1999). *Journal of End User Computing (pp. 21-28).*

www.irma-international.org/article/relationship-between-user-satisfaction-systems/55769