Thunderwire: A Field Study of an Audio-Only Media Space: Writeup

Alexae Stone

The use of audio in spaces has always amused me. I think the article made interesting finds on what people think about having the audio vs visual. They found that people didn’t like having just audio, only 10% said they were fine with just the audio. However, they found that the audio was just as effective as the video. This makes me think that the reason people feel like they needed the video was just as a sort of we must have everything kind of attitude. I think in America that’s sort of the feeling, we want everything to be big and large and this kind of reflects that viewpoint. Some studies found that only audio, as long as it was a good feed, was better than video and audio. This leads me to believe that people may become distracted when it comes to viewing the video, maybe on how they might be looking in the camera, or how somebody else may look to them.

Thunderwire seems to promote communication from the two buildings studied. Just by using a simple interface I think this is amazing. One thing that stood out to me was how the users didn’t talk as much if one person was missing. I have noticed this in groups where we have a tight knit connection but then when one person is gone, the whole connection is gone. It’s interesting that this translates to the audio though, when you can’t even visually see that the person isn’t there. It makes me think the audio is one of the more important factors when in a regular conversation, not in the virtual world.

I think something I would like to see with Thunderwire is the ability to tell when a person is there. This was one of the issues the users had when they were using the device. One solution I could see being very useful is the project that Tony presented to us in class. The table that allows you to see all of the text said would be a great start. If the users could tell who said each word, like they were represented as a particular color, for example. I think it would be cool to group the words, like was done in Tony’s project, to give people the idea of what was occurring in the screen. You could still see who said what through the particular color. The only problem here is still understanding who is who. Maybe you have a little color indicator in the corner, and when a person speaks it gets more vibrant. As the person quits talking, it goes to a dimmer color and then once you know a person is gone, they disappear from the screen. Somehow the user would have to let the system know, which doesn’t seem like it would be too difficult.
**In-Situ Speech Visualization in Real-Time Interactive Installation and Performance – Write up**  
Alexae Stone

Seeing words seems like something that couldn’t be pinned down, but when you think about it we all visualize words. One thing I have heard about over the past few months is the ability for some people to see sounds. It is some kind of gift where they see colors representing the sounds that they hear from everyday objects. I think it would be really cool to have them draw images of what they see and then use those drawings to help with the project talked about in the article, to visualize text.

Hidden words seems like a cool piece. I think people always like to learn about themselves and this is a great opportunity through seeing your voice displayed and see how your pitching comes out and the amount of text that you are portraying. I realize that you can see your shadow for your talk coming from your direction, but I think that if you had the shadows colored, maybe even just a tint, to show that it represents separate people. It would be easier to compare your shadow to that of others. I think you could include some sort of history too, to go back and see your conversation. This could be used as art possibly; some of these kinds of images are very nice to look at, and from what they are showing in the pictures, this could look very nice too.

The Re-mark version of this project seems a little useless. It seems like a waste to only see when someone says oh or ah. It doesn’t really add to the conversation. If they made the word recognition more advanced, I would like to see more advanced word recognition to show users more of the test of what is being said and not just some random sounds.

The Messi di Voce is a way to visualize a person/persons sounds on a screen as designs. The interesting thing about this visualization is that it is a big screen behind the two users and this is the visualization. The images form around where the person is standing. I think the image of the water rippling from the sound of their voice is a great metaphor for the visualization. A ripple represents time and strength of whatever may have touched it. If the words could somehow be incorporated to the image I think it could make the images that much more interesting. I like when the words that are used the most are presented, that would be the most interesting. Maybe representing each user’s words so that you can see where each person is focused in the conversation. The audience could get a feeling for the conversation as well as what the context being discussed was.
Seeing More: Visualizing Audio Cues – Write up

Alexae Stone

This paper is about a visualization that can be seen by users sitting around a table. It is called the Conversation Clock, used to show a conversation between different users. Each user’s volume level is displayed around the circle and the user can see how often they talked in a conversation and how loud they were.

What I like most about these types of visualizations is the chance for users to learn about their social habits, and how some of their skills when conversing with others are poor, while some may be very good at letting others speak and add only as much as necessary to a conversation. If your color is overtaking another person’s color, you obviously are voicing your opinion too much, or if your lines are too tall, you know you’ve been talking too loud and others may think this to be obnoxious.

The one thing I worry about is the intensity of the light that you can get from the table. If you were to use a projection, it may be too light in the room and then you get colors that do not look as appealing as what it did on your own correctly lit monitor. I think the best way to fix this would be to use something like the Microsoft flat screen like table top computer. I can’t remember the name. This would be perfect for this kind of project. You could even use it for going back in time and searching through the visual data that you have created.

When reading the reviews of the users, it seems like they were unsure if the tool helped them or not. However, I think anytime you use a new technology for the first time, it is somewhat distracting and you are learning to use it, thus it may be distracting. I would be interested to see a group use this clock visualization for several meetings, once people are less just looking at how pretty it is and instead seeing what it actually represents. I can definitely see users being only most interested in what they were doing. I talk on Skype regularly, but I have realized I don’t always look at the other user. I always end up making faces at myself and entertaining myself. I think that this is a common problem, for some people. It’s like standing in front of a mirror and saying that you can’t look into it. It’s like human nature (or girl nature) to look in the mirror and see what’s wrong with your face that day.