

INF 5261 – COMMENTS ON MID TERM REPORTS

Congratulations; 9 mid-term reports were handed in with a total of 35 participants in the INF5261 course in October 2015.

We have enjoyed reading all the reports. There are wonderful ideas described in the mid-term reports.

The intention behind these comments is to encourage you to make the report even “better”.

Below there are some general comments that Jo and Hani want to give after reading all of the reports. Comments to specific reports may also be given face-to-face, if required.

We all know a bit about general “usability” of computers – and the focus on the relationship between the computer/machine/thing and the human user. For a written report, we are concerned with readability (Norwegian: lesbarhet).

There are many ways to improve readability, and hopefully some of the general comments here will resonate with your project:

a) Question/problem/hypothesis

The reader looks for what your report is about, and what question or problem you are addressing. Perhaps you also look for this when reading an article or a report?

If this is so, it is very helpful to state in the introduction what question or problem that you are handling in the report. When meeting a question – the reader will look for an investigation of the question, a discussion – and then a conclusion (*question - answer pair*).

When a reader meets a problem description – she will then look for the investigation of the problem, discussion and then some solution (*problem-solution pair*).

Research (and learning new things) is often “messy” and following a non-linear process. However, when writing a report, you want the reader to clearly understand your question or problem, how you investigated it (theoretically and practically), a discussion of the question or problem, and then some conclusion.

b) Universal design/are you excluding anyone/ethics?

A section about your project and universal design should be included. Even if you have done nothing about it, please just state this.

c) Illustrations/drawings/pictures.

Many of the reports could benefit from having illustrations that make visible the relationship between the combined elements in your project. Please label your figures and tables clearly, so that they appear “self-explanatory”. See an example of an illustration in figure 1.

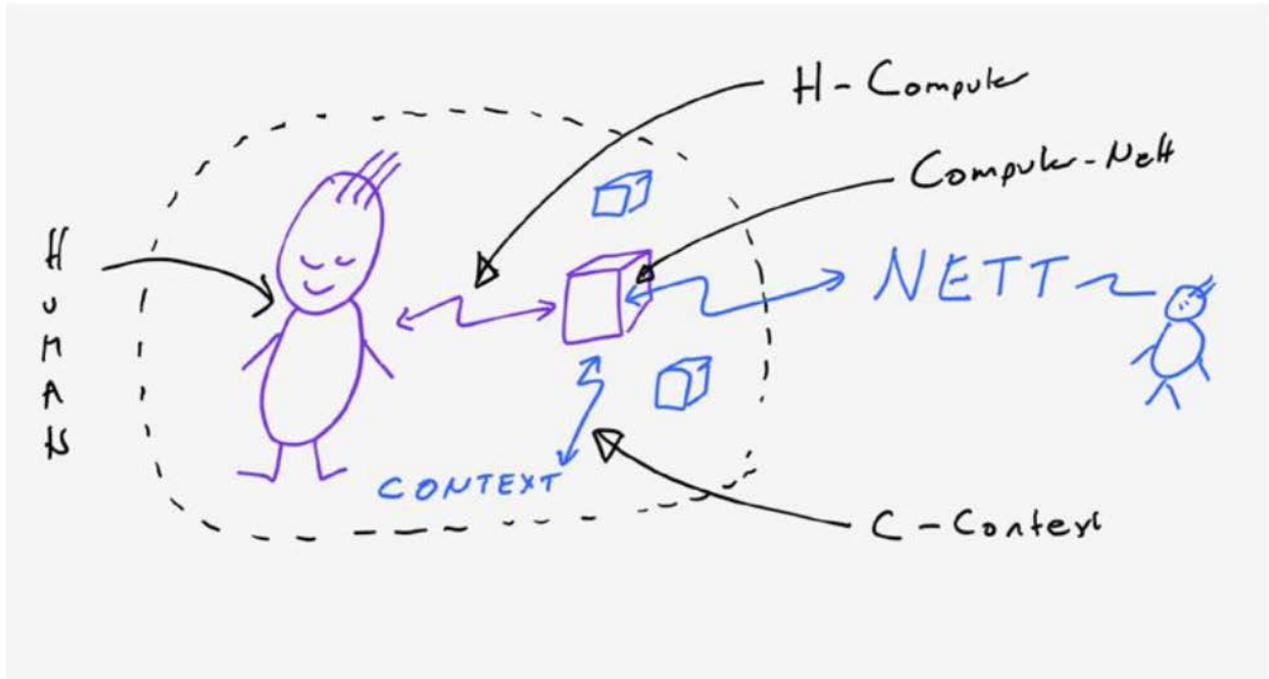


Figure 1: general model of human – computer relation

d) Structure

Given that a report is to describe information about a question or problem, there are some structures that are suitable for communicating this:

Title: (most of you have this clearly stated, followed by group members and date).

1 Introduction

- Motivation
- Some background information, inspiration for the reader.
- Question/problem/hypothesis – and an explanation of the question/problem/hypothesis.

2 Theory

- This section is about the research field that your project is within. What is found in the literature?
- In this section there will be a review of what has been done before, empirically/practically and conceptually within your field.
- In the theory section, please make some of the articles from the course curriculum relevant. We suggest all groups include one or more references to papers dealing with the concept “context”. *It is your job to make the literature relevant;*) If you do not find any of the course articles relevant to your study, you need to make reference to at least 3 of them, and state in what way they are irrelevant;)

3 Case – and Method

- What are the “real world” users, use situations and technologies that you are looking at?
- And what methods do you use in order to address the question or get solutions to your problem?
- Simply, describe the different methods you use to collect your empirical data.

4 Findings

- What did you find by doing your investigation? By building the system? By interviewing users? By reading literature?
- If you use any quantitative methods, display your findings in tables, whenever possible.

5 Discussion

- In this section, you “copy and paste” your questions from the introduction, and discuss them. First the first, then the next;)
- In your discussion, try to make a connection between your own findings and the findings of similar studies (from the theory section).

6 Conclusion

- In this section, you briefly repeat the questions, and conclude.
- In the conclusion you can also include limitations and scope for further work/study, in addition to any further ideas about future research.
- Here you mention limitations relating to your study, for example, choice of methods, participant selection, technology platform adopted, type of data collected, time, budgets (if any). You also provide a stepping stone for other researchers to build onto your findings in developing other similar studies in the future (a scientific scaffold).

References:

The list should include only references you use in your report.

Remember (do not forget) the following requirements for the main document:

HISTORY: Wonder doc; max 1 page, no references.

HISTORY: Mid term report: max 10 pages (+ appendix), minimum 5 references.

FUTURE: Final report: max 20 pages (+ appendix), minimum 10 references.

The reason for this maximum page constraint is:

1. It is a device for focusing on the important issues that you are working with.

The reason for the minimum reference requirement is:

2. By making references to what others have done, you make your text more solid; and you “stand on the shoulders of giants”.