

A study on the relationship between self-reported loneliness and social skills —analyzing the interaction between players in on-line game—

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Abstract : *The purpose of this study is to 1) examine the relationship between the degree of self-reported loneliness and social skills observed in the interaction between on-line game players, and 2) make clear the features and problems of the internet communication. For the degree of loneliness, we employ the Japanese version of the UCLA Loneliness Scale. We analyze the uncontrolled conversation (words and emotions) between players to define social skills.*

Keywords : *loneliness, social skills, on-line game*

1. Introduction

According to Peplau & Perlman (1982), loneliness is defined as the absence or perceived absence of satisfying social relationships, accompanied by symptoms of psychological distress that are related to actual or perceived absence. Deficient social skills are both causes and consequences of loneliness (e.g., Aikawa, 2007). There are lots of researches about the relationship between loneliness and social skills. However, most of them just used scales to test the self-reported social skills. It is necessary to get one actual scene to analyze the social skills. Social skills with ICT are also becoming important in knowledge society. We thus focus on the on-line game as an example to study the features and problems of internet communication. Our study is useful for the basic education of knowledge society.

2. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to 1) examine the relationship between the degree of self-reported loneliness and social skills observed in the interaction between on-line game players, and 2) make clear the features and problems of the internet communication.

3. Research Method

3.1 Definition of social skills

According to Ochiai (1983), one dimension of loneliness is “understanding and empathy”. Because this study focused on the interpersonal relationship, we select following social skills:

- Self-disclosure is not just telling people about your

information such as age, but also expressing your thinking and feelings sincerely.

- Active listening is not only listening what people are saying, but also sensing how people are feeling.
- Asking means using proper questions to extract people’s information or thinking to keep the communication going on.
- Empathy is a capability to feel and share another person’s emotions.

In this study, these social skills are identified by studying some small set of conversations (units of speeches). Based on these definitions, it is important to pay attention to the meta-communication about how a piece of information is meant to be interpreted.

3.2 Analyzing conversation

For understanding the actual scene, we collect and analyze the turn-takings of uncontrolled conversations. Based on conversation analysis, we firstly distinguish which social skill the conversation (words and emotions) belongs to, and then make a quantitative and qualitative analysis about their type, level and frequency. Because social skills are related to sociological or socio-psychological factors such as the relationship between speakers and social groups, it is necessary to identify them in conversation.

4. Expected result

It is expected to make clear the different pattern of social skills with different degree (high, medium, low) of loneliness, such that players with low loneliness would do more self-disclosure and be good at using emotions compared to those with high loneliness. Some features and problems also could be found out, for example, what can make players become better at social interaction or how the internet communication can be related to real life. It is possible to make some suggestions to improve the environment of internet communication better or to help people with high loneliness to improve their social skills in the internet communication.

References

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