Chapter 10
The Potentiality of First-Person Views:
Analyzing Narratives During Art Appreciation

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this chapter is to suggest the possible use of first-person views to evaluate and improve museum facilities. The authors attempt to explain possible ways to analyze this type of data by conducting an experiment as an example. First, the authors introduce their experiment to determine the influence of story creation on the appreciation of abstract artwork. Previous research has shown that novice viewers tend to dislike abstract artworks more than representative artworks because abstract artworks lacks forms that can be easily understood. The authors tried to mitigate this difficulty by asking participants to create story about the works of art while they viewed them. Second, the authors explain the possible use of first-person narratives in evaluation of art museums themselves. Finally, some important issues needing further discussion are listed.

INTRODUCTION

When we visit exhibitions at art museums, we enjoy appreciating the works on display. In typical art museums, the artwork is displayed with captions including a short explanation and description of the various pieces. Most museums try to provide the necessary information for each piece of art and expect visitors to enjoy their encounters with these works. However, this appreciation is not equally easy (or difficult) for different works of work. The ease (or difficulty) depends on many elements such as museums' educational facilities (e.g. captions, worksheets, workshops, guided tours), visitor backgrounds

(e.g. novices, professionals, art-lovers, students, adults, elderly people) and the artwork itself (e.g. representational, abstract, colour, lines, style, artist, tittle). Although museum visitors in Japan usually read captions (Arenas, 2001; McManus, 1989), sometimes there is insufficient information about these works on the captions. Also, it is known that novice viewers tend to feel it is more difficult to appreciate abstract artwork than representational artwork (Schmidt, McLaughlin, & Leighten, 1989).

The authors have conducted continuous research on the relationship between viewer behaviour and the language used in museum literature, such as captions on displays, from the perspective of cognitive science. For the past three years, we have focused on art museums. The surrounding research fields are visitor research in museology, language sense processing engineering (LSE) (Abe, 2004), Shikakeology (Matsumura, Fruchter, & Leifer, 2015), and educational psychology.

In this chapter, the authors detail our past experiments; specifically we discuss the results and the important issues raised concerning use of viewer narratives (or first-person view) in art appreciation and education settings.

The original research aim was to reveal the difference between abstract and representational art in terms of novices' appreciation and to suggest an effective paradigm for novice viewers. However, in this chapter, our aim is to suggest the possible use of viewer narratives in developing educational tools and activities in museums.

The contents are as follows:

1. Detailed explanations of the experimental setting and results. The experiment aimed to further understand the effect of narrative creation of novice viewers when they are trying to appreciate abstract paintings.
2. Examples of analyses of narratives and stories created by novice visitors for abstract paintings during the experiment. Since these analyses are not based on the original experimental aim, this is addressed in a separate section.
3. List of important issues involving the discussion or assessment of narratives about artwork. The contents of this section focus on possibilities for using studies with/on first-person's view in art museums, the aim of art education in different types of art education paradigms, and the "pleasure" of art appreciation. In addition, the authors discuss the relationship between viewer knowledge and appreciation in association with studies with/on a first-person view.

The long-term aim of this research is to improve the understanding of the processes involved in art appreciation and to suggest an overview of an effective and 'enjoyable' art museum setup paradigm by clarifying the advantages and disadvantages of existing paradigms. Since we have conducted research on captions, which act as professionally written narratives, two years ago, we will also include results from this previous research.

BACKGROUND: EXPERIMENT

The present experiment has a research background incorporating the fields of educational psychology and visitor studies. Tucker (as cited in Osgood and Tannenbaum (1957)) used a semantic differential method (SD) and factor analysis to show there was a gap between artists and non-artists' aesthetic impressions. SD is a method introduced by Osgood and Tannenbaum (1957) designed to obtain a person's impressions

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