Terms of Endearment

Using the right word speeds learning and helps getting help

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Le Mot Juste

Learning le mot juste, the right word for something, aids us in two ways:

- Help Learning ... our brains seem to anchor concepts to words & phrases
- Getting Help ... asking “tech support” for help or using online HELP requires us to describe the problem precisely

Terms

Probably familiar terms ...
- screen saver
- monitor
- pixel
- RGB
- motherboard
- [microprocessor
- [RAM]memory

Software/Hardware

Hardware refers to physical devices;
software refers to programs, the instructions directing a computer

- The main difference is: hardware cannot be changed, while the software can be modified
- The same hardware (computer) runs different software (applications)

Mnemonic

A mnemonic is any memory aid
- In IT we try to avoid remembering or memorizing, but sometimes we must...
mnemonics can help

A mnemonic for periods and epochs in geology

Terms

Definitions for “tangible” parts of IT -- RGB, pixel,... -- are found in glossaries

- A glossary is in the back of FIT
- Online glossaries are handy ... locate one
- A useful study aid is to start a document where you store the definitions of the new words you encounter — later in the term we will show how to set up a DB for them

... the “intangible” words of IT are even more important
To Abstract

abstract = extract or remove something

“Beppo abstracted the statue as Holmes, LeStrade and I watched.”

* In FIT100 abstracting will usually involve removing the core idea or process from a specific situation -- fables
  * The “thing removed” is an abstraction
* Humans abstract core ideas, principles, rules, themes, etc. naturally

Imagine a Story ...

“In Kim’s chem class the professor assigned challenge problems worth extra credit, but each week Kim couldn’t do them and asked for help. The teacher said, ‘Don’t give up, attempt the problem again each day.’ Kim followed the advice and was eventually able to solve the problems.”

Abstractioning from the situation: A good problem-solving technique is to return later to a problem.
  * Some aspects are relevant
  * Some aspects are irrelevant

To Generalize
generalize v. infer a rule

* suppose you notice that faucets
  * turn to the left to turn the water on, and
  * turn to the right to turn the water off

  * to infer that all faucets do so is to generalize

Are there other examples?
  * Other knobs, screws, nuts/bolts, ...

Operationally Attuned

Observing how devices operate simplifies their use

Observation: Computers give feedback when they are working

So, if you think you’re waiting for the computer but there is no feedback, it’s waiting for you

One of the most effective habits new users can adopt is to be operationally attuned.

The Speed of Change

Consider running a mile ...

* How fast can anyone run a mile?
  * In 1999 Hakim El Guerrouj ran it in 3:43.13
  * Compare with Roger Bannister
    * In 1954 Bannister ran a mile in 3:59.4
    * Express speed as a rate: Bannister’s rate = 15.04 mph
      El Guerrouj’s rate = 16.27 mph
  * In 45 years the mile run got 7% faster

A Speed Comparison

* Compared to normal people ...
  * How fast can you run a mile?
    * Healthy people in their twenties … ~7:30
  * That is, El Guerrouj is twice as fast as us
    * As a rate, 7:30 is 8 mph
  * El Guerrouj is about a factor-of-2 faster than normal people ...

A factor-of-2 is a good rule for human strength
One More Factor

How fast do computers run? Measure +

- Univac I ran 100,000 adds/sec in 1954
- My IBM runs about 500,000,000 adds
  - A factor-of-5,000 improvement
- ASCI Red ran 2,100,000,000,000 adds in 1999
  - A factor-of-21 Million improvement

Can we comprehend such speeds or factors of improvement???

Factors Precisely

A factor of improvement is different than a percent improvement …

\[
\text{factor} = \frac{\text{new rate}}{\text{old rate}}
\]

\[
\text{percent} = 100 \times \left(\frac{\text{new rate} - \text{old rate}}{\text{old rate}}\right)
\]

- Expressing an improvement by its factor is easier, esp. for large changes
  - El Guerrouj’s 7% improvement over Bannister is a 1.07 factor of improvement

Analytical Approach

One reason to notice the factors of improvement is to recognize scale

- The time for the mile run has improved
- Maximum adds per second has improved
- But the difference in scale is dramatic
  - A factor-of-1.07 for the mile run
  - A factor-of-21,000,000 for additions

Getting information is easy with IT, but we need analysis to understand the significance

Summarizing

It is essential to learn the vocabulary of a new field

- Words of tangible aspects of IT have definitions in glossaries
- Words for the intangible are key
  - Abstract
  - Generalize
  - Operationally Attuned
- Being analytical is key to understanding