Part 1. Raw Field Notes (handwriting, not included here)

Part 2. Amended Field Notes

**Research Question:** what is the first-time users’ experience of using TeamSpot to do group work?

Seek to discover and understand the experience the users have when they are using TeamSpot to do a group work for the first time. Data are collected through observations.

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**Participant Observation**

**Subjects:** three students from ldt program at the School of Education. They are all first-time users of TeamSpot

**Task:** using TeamSpot to design a plan to promote the usage and popularity of TeamSpot at Stanford

**Location:** TeamSpot collaborative learning space, the first floor at Meyer Library at Stanford University

**Time:** 9:00 – 10:30 am, Feb. 10th, 2006.

**Environments:** TeamSpot is a collaborative learning space which offers increased productivity and collaboration with easy filesharing and shared control of a public desktop display. It is located in one of the 1st floor’s corners at Meyer library. It is near to two doors and the space is not closed (the observer’s comment: the passing people may interfere or distract the group work). Three tables form a triangle. Five chairs are around the longest side (actually curve) of the triangle. Two displays (public) are mounted in the front of the tables (the observer’s comment: the arrangement of tables and chairs is good for people to collaborate – they can face to each other).

**Activity:**

The session began roughly at 9:10 am. Before that, one staff from Residential Computing checked the hardware and software to make sure the space was ready for use. He also helped one of users (hereafter refers to User 1) to connect his laptop to the TeamSpot and initiated a session.

The group leader (hereafter refers to Leader) briefly announced the agenda for the group work. Then Leader and the third user (hereafter refers to User 2) began to download the client software to their private laptop and tried to connect and join the session initiated by User 1. After having downloaded the software, he had to add the Meyer TeamSpot into his list, but with a problem. Leader left his seat and offered help. User 2 also tried to look for the tutorial on the Web but interrupted by leader’s offer of help. After several tries, it
still did not work. Then Leader went back to his seat. They also noticed there were manuals of how to use TeamSpot on the table. User 2 even picked up one but did not use it (the observer’s comment: the manual was written purely in words, no graphics at all. This might be the reason why he did not use it). Then he went to the TeamSpot website and followed the instruction and tried again and again. Finally, he added the Meyer TeamSpot into his list; the time had passed 13 minutes.

Meanwhile, User 1 was pretty silent and tried some features offered by TeamSpot such as moving the mouse across his private display and two public displays and drawing graphs on public displays. But, he ran into mouse control problem quickly. The mouse motion was either strange or totally cannot be controlled.

After User 2 successfully finished the configuration, he met another problem. He needed a code automatically generated by the public desktop (server side) to join the ongoing session. However, the server failed in generating one. Leader left his seat, went to the server, and then unplugged and re-plugged in something there. Then the session code appeared. By entering the code, User 2 joined the session.

User 1 was still struggling with the mouse control problem. Leader suggested User 1 disconnect his laptop from the ongoing session and then reconnect to it to solve the problem. User 1 did so and the problem was fixed. Then Leader joined his laptop to the session. Eventually, all three users joined the session. It was almost 9:26 am. They used approximately 16 minutes to successfully connect their private laptops to the TeamSpot – the public server (the observer’s comment: it is the first step for users to use TeamSpot to collaborate on their team work. Leader seemed good at computer technology. It would have taken more time to join the session if none of them was good at computer technology.)

At 9:26, Leader took the control of the right public display. He opened a blank Word document. Each user tried to control the mouse for a while and got the experience of PointRight function. Then they shared the Word document on the right public display and each tried to type some ideas into documents (the observer’s comment: sharing and working on one single document simultaneously is one of main features offered by TeamSpot. It seemed that as long as all users joined the session, this feature was easy for them to use). Then they discussed and reached a framework on which they could design their plan to promote the usage and popularity of TeamSpot at Stanford. They decided that each of them first spend 15 minutes to generate some ideas individually on their private laptop and then to collaborate on the public display.

At 9:32, they began to do the work individually. Most of time, they were just typing and there was no talking. User 2 was working on a PowerPoint document and occasionally distracted by the passing people. Leader was drawing some graphics and distracted several times by passing people (the observer’s comment: if the space had been closed, there should not have had these interference or distraction). He left his seat twice and took some pictures (the observer’s comment: Why? To use the pictures for the ongoing team work? To ask him why?). He also reported the time left for individual work. User 1
tried to control the public display, but failed (the observer’s comment: it seemed he met the same mouse control problem he had before). They occasionally talked to each other, but just a few words. They especially talked about the feature of multi-browse offered by TeamSpot and tried it for a couple of time.

At 9:52, they began to use public display to share their individual work and to discuss and explain. Leader first “pushed” his work into the public display and explained how it would work by using the whiteboard drawing feature to highlight his points (the observer’s comment: they were more comfortable about TeamSpot and more concentrated on the work). Then User 1 “pushed” his Word document into the right public display and began to present his ideas. But soon, User 1 lost the mouse control, after a while, regained the control, and made some complaints. Leader emphasized they could not change the features provided by the TeamSpot. Then at 10:02, User 1 ran into the same mouse control problem. Leader tried to help fix the problem, but failed. To save the time, while User 1 was presenting his ideas Leader manipulated the public display from his laptop to help User 1 go through his key points (the observer’s comment: it was a creative use of TeamSpot - collaboration). At 10:05, User 1 regained the mouse control automatically or by doing something.

At 10:06, User 1 finished his presentation. Then, Leader “pushed” the URL of the software vendor’s website into both public displays to see the vendor’s demo about how TeamSpot works: one screen for the website, one for the demo (the observer’s comment: it seemed that they were really using these collaboration features built in TeamSpot).

At 10:08, User 2 “pushed” his work into the right public display and explained his ideas.

At 10:11, they moved, sit closer to each other, and began to discuss (the observer’s comment: the arrangement of tables and chairs is good for people to collaborate – they can face to each other). Leader gave a summary and his opinion on how to do the next step to finish the job (the observer’s comment: it seemed that, from now on until the end session, they would not use the TeamSpot, just use the physical place to finish their session).

At 10:19, Leader made some drawings on his notebooks for sharing (the observer’s comment: why not use the whiteboard drawing feature provided by TeamSpot).

At 10:21, User 1 began to clean the documents on the public desktops and he ran into mouse control problem again (the observer’s comment: among three users, only he had the mouse control problem. It was very likely that the TeamSpot was fine but User 1’s laptop had the mouse control problem).

At 10:24, users saved file on their laptops and disconnected from TeamSpot.

At 10:25, Session done.
Part 3. Reflection Memo

It is very useful to experience the real participation observation so that we can apply what we have learned in class into the real life situation. I have learned a lot from this field experience. They are summarized as follows.

**Strengths:**

We made a good preparation for the observation. Based on the research question, we developed a list of questions we would like to find out or focus on during the observation. Findings on these questions would contribute to our understanding of the central research question. We visited the site for a couple of times before the observation and tried to make sure that we could get to know the setting and field. From these visits, we found the best position to observe and the best angle to mount our camera. Since we would be trying to find the users’ experience of using TeamSpot to do team work and there might be some technical terms associated with TeamSpot, we did some research on TeamSpot and also collaborative learning. Knowing these terms really helped us understand the users’ experience. Therefore, we had a clear idea about what we would look for and how to look for before we conducted the observation.

Another strength is using video camera to record the observation. Three of observers were not native English-speaker. Recording the observation gave us opportunities to check out what we missed or could not understand because of language barrier. Since we
would be observing what they would talk, type, look, and maybe their facial emotions, in short, their experience when using TeamSpot. We had to pay close attention to each of subjects. It was really a challenge even for native English-speakers. It was definitely a wise decision to use camera so that we could check back.

**Weaknesses:**

We did not ask subjects any question. It means that we lost some chances to find out what they were really thinking when some special things happened that might be very related to our research question but could not be fully understood by solely observation. The reason why this happened was that we were just struggling to write down filed notes and did not even have time to ask any question. Since each of us was required to make a full observation, we could not distribute labors among team members in terms of observation. For the future real life qualitative research, we may assign a specific observer to ask questions, while others concentrate on observation and making notes. (Good or not? I am not sure)

**Difficulties:**

One difficulty for me is how to make the notes fast. I had trouble to pace my notes keeping with the ongoing observation. So I actually missed some of what happened. If I had developed some special symbols to represent some common words and/or a
convenient form for notes-keeping before the observation, it might have made the notes-keeping less struggling.

Another difficulty for me is how to distribute my attention among subjects. It seemed to me that I could only concentrate on one subject. While observation on one subject doesn’t allow me to get a full picture, distributing attention among all subjects would produce superficial observation. It is hard for me to solve this contradiction. One solution might be using camera to record the observation. However, if you have 10 subjects, the reviewing process would be very time-consuming.