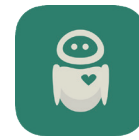


BEST PRACTICES FROM EDUBOTS



EDUBOTS



- **Target group:**
University teachers and students
- **Type of program:**
Undergraduate level of study
- **Discipline:**
IT education
- **Language availability:**
English
- **Solution:**
Buddy Bot and BO

Use case:

Comparison of Buddy Bot and chatbot BO.

Short description:

A chat group with students and their teacher/s for a specific course. The nature of the chat group is limited to the course and interaction is required for administrative tasks (e.g. creating student groups or attendance), practical information (e.g. deadlines for assignments), automatically answering FAQs, self assessment (e.g. as a student, knowing my progress in the course).

Need/ added value:

In the summer semester of 2020, COVID-19 pandemic, unfortunately, started spreading to the world. Because of this, most of the classes have become fully online. New circumstances forced educators to redesign their courses and adjust channels for communication with students. Chat application Differ proved to be a good choice for connecting course teachers and students within communities, but as chatbot functionalities developed later provided new opportunities both for teachers and students.



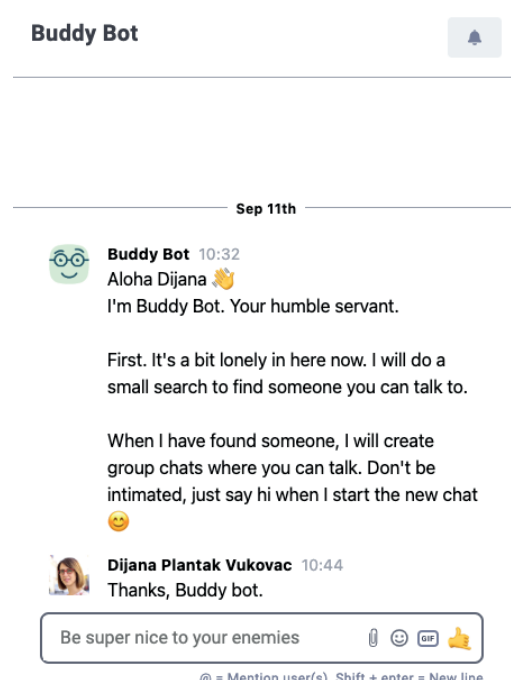


Educator Preparation:

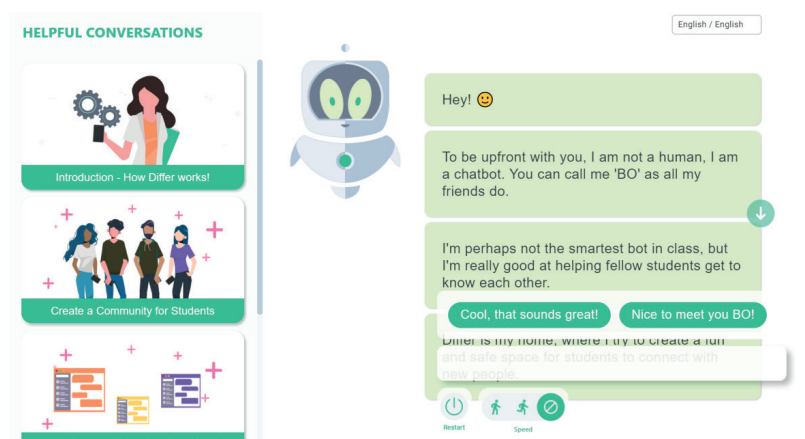
The use of the chatbots Buddy Bot and BO use case scenario does not require any background knowledge in chatbots and relevant domains, nor extensive technical skills more than basic computer skills and familiarity with technology. Educators just have to know how to install Differ and explain it to the students. Additional materials/ brief instructions for students are desirable.

How to get started:

In the first Pilot chat application Differ was used at the Faculty of Organization and Informatics, University of Zagreb. On courses where Differ was used, it showed to be flexible to be implemented in various scenarios with a large group of students. Some of those scenarios in project-based courses included the important role of student mentor and more frequent use of virtual hours/consultations (Announcements functionality) and discussions (Topic functionality) by the teachers. Besides mentioned functionalities, the initial version of the chatbot – Buddy Bot was introduced. Buddy Bot's role was to connect the students from communities by break-the-ice activity. In the first version of Differ, Buddy Bot did not have a strong virtual identity (*Picture 1*).



Picture 1: Buddy Bot



Picture 2: Chatbot BO



What happens next:

When comparing it to Pilot 3, where chatbot BO was introduced, serious upgrades were visible in the means of the virtual identity of a chatbot. BO became interactive and more approachable for students and teachers in starting community conversations (**Picture 2**). In pilot round 3, chatbot BO helped teachers in process of creating communities, preparing frequently asked questions (FAQ), and dividing students into small groups. BO's first role – to connect students in course-based virtual communities proved to be very successful since the majority of students were first-year undergraduate level and didn't know each other. BO's new virtual identity (**Picture 2.**) surely helped students to ease the communication via chatbot and later to connect with peers and teachers. Also, for teachers who used Differ for the first time, it was easier to create the community and use special functionalities like FAQ which were very useful to communicate with students in hybrid or completely online environments due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

Tips

- *Educators – FAQ can save your time and help your students to have all the information and can freely ask questions in Topics you have created.*
- *Use chatbots like BO when you have a large group of students – break the ice activity will connect and get to know each other in the beginning, especially if classes are online.*

Pros

- *Easy way for connecting and communicating students and teachers*
- *Safe environment for introducing new students in large groups – making everyone included in virtual community as well in real life (outside academic topics).*

Further Possibilities

- *Other use cases can be applied with the use of chatbot BO, for example, for bonding students within different communities.*
- *Chatbot solutions have to be part of the larger educational system to fulfil their potential.*

