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UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

BEFORE THE PATENT TRIAL AND APPEAL BOARD

Ex parte ALEXANDRE LEBRUN

Appeal 2019-004072
Application 14/686,770
Technology Center 2600

Before JAMES R. HUGHES, NORMAN H. BEAMER, and
STEPHEN E. BELISLE, *Administrative Patent Judges*.

HUGHES, *Administrative Patent Judge*.

DECISION ON APPEAL

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Claims 1–5, 7–13, 15, and 16 are pending, stand rejected, are appealed by Appellant, and are the subject of our decision under 35 U.S.C. § 134(a).¹

¹ We use the word Appellant to refer to “applicant” as defined in 37 C.F.R. § 1.42(a). Appellant identifies the real party in interest as Facebook, Inc. *See* Appeal Br. 1.

See Non-Final Act. 1; Appeal Br. 17, 19.^{2, 3} We have jurisdiction under 35 U.S.C. § 6(b).

We REVERSE.

CLAIMED SUBJECT MATTER

The invention, according to Appellant, “relates in general to the field of natural language processing, and in particular to an email-like user interface and a crowd-source based network for configuring and training a natural language system interfaced with a runtime system or application.” Spec. ¶ 2. More specifically, Appellant’s invention relates to computer program products and methods for training a natural language configuration system based on responses provided by a developer in a user interface (graphical user interface (GUI)) by: accessing natural language queries from user devices in a natural language configuration system, predicting an intent of a natural language expression associated with the natural language query, generating user logs based on the natural language queries, presenting a plurality of action panels to a developer in an inbox view of a user interface, where each action panel is associated with a user log and includes the associated natural language expression as well as the intent of the associated user log, presenting the developer an option to validate or dismiss the

² We refer to Appellant’s Specification (“Spec.”), filed Apr. 14, 2015 (claiming benefit of multiple applications including US 61/980,355, filed Apr. 16, 2014); Appeal Brief (“Appeal Br.”), filed June 6, 2018; and Reply Brief (“Reply Br.”), filed Apr. 30, 2019. We also refer to the Examiner’s Non-Final Office Action (“Non-Final Act.”), mailed Aug. 7, 2017; and Answer (“Ans.”) mailed Mar. 1, 2019.

³ Appellant’s Appeal Brief does not include page numbers. We reference the Appeal Brief as if numbered consecutively, beginning at page 1, from the page including the heading: “**I. Real Party in Interest.**”

associated user log, and configuring and training the natural language configuration system based on a selection of the option (whether to validate the user log) received through the user interface using the natural language expression and the intent of the validated user log. *See Spec.* ¶¶ 2–8; Abstract. Claims 1 (directed to a computer-implemented method) and 9 (directed to a computer program product) are independent. Claim 1, reproduced below, is illustrative of the claimed subject matter:

1. A computer-implemented method comprising:

accessing, at a natural language configuration system, a plurality of natural language queries from one or more user devices, each natural language query of the plurality of natural language queries comprising a natural language expression, the natural language expression comprising text corresponding to natural language of a user;

predicting, for each natural language query of the plurality of natural language queries, an intent of the natural language expression associated with the natural language query;

generating a plurality of user logs based on the plurality of natural language queries, each user log comprising the natural language expression associated with a natural language query of the plurality of natural language queries and the predicted intent of the natural language expression;

presenting a plurality of action panels to a developer of the natural language configuration system in an inbox view of a user interface, each action panel being associated with one or more different user logs of the plurality of user logs and comprising the natural language expression and the intent of the associated user log;

presenting, to the developer for each action panel, an option to validate or dismiss the associated user log; and

in response to receiving from the developer a selection of the option to validate the user log through the user interface, configuring and training the natural language configuration

system based on the natural language expression and the intent of the validated user log.

Appeal Br. 16–17 (Claims App.).

REFERENCES

The prior art relied upon by the Examiner is:

Name	Reference	Date
Liu et al. (“Liu”)	US 2004/0215663 A1	Oct. 28, 2004
Lundberg et al. (“Lundberg ”)	US 2013/0268260 A1	Oct. 10, 2013

REJECTION^{4, 5}

The Examiner rejects claims 1–5, 7–13, 15, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103 as being unpatentable over Liu and Lundberg. *See* Non-Final Act. 4–9.

ANALYSIS

The Examiner rejects independent claim 1 (as well as independent claim 9, and dependent claims 2–5, 7, 8, 10–13, 15, and 16) as being obvious over Liu and Lundberg. *See* Non-Final Act. 4–9; Ans. 8–9. Appellant contends that Liu and Lundberg do not teach the disputed limitations of claim 1. *See* Appeal Br. 12–15; Reply Br. 2–3. Specifically, Appellant contends, *inter alia*, that “Liu and Lundberg do not disclose” or

⁴ The Leahy-Smith America Invents Act (“AIA”), Pub. L. No. 112–29, 125 Stat. 284 (2011), amended 35 U.S.C. § 103. Because the present application has an effective filing date (Apr. 16, 2014) after the AIA’s effective date for applications (March 16, 2013), this decision refers 35 U.S.C. § 103.

⁵ The Examiner has withdrawn a rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 101. *See* Ans. 8; Non-Final Act. 2–4. We do not address Appellant’s arguments to the withdrawn rejection. *See* Appeal Br. 3–11.

teach the disputed “limitations of claim 1,” including “presenting a plurality of action panels to a developer . . . in an inbox view of a user interface . . . comprising the natural language expression and the intent of the associated user log” and “presenting, to the developer for each action panel, an option to validate or dismiss the associated user log.” Appeal Br. 12 (quoting claim 1) (quotations omitted). Appellant further contends that

Liu . . . does not disclose “presenting, to the developer for each action panel, an option to validate or dismiss the associated user log” and . . . “configuring and training the natural language configuration system based on the natural language expression and the intent of the validated user log,” as recited in claim 1.

Appeal Br. 14 (quoting claim 1). Appellant also contends that although “Lundberg describes a method for the ‘semi-automatic generation and tuning of natural language interaction applications,’” “Lundberg is silent with respect to any details and/or functionality of a user interface for training a natural language system.” Appeal Br. 14 (quoting Lundberg ¶ 12) (citation omitted). *See* Appeal Br. 12–15; Reply Br. 2–3.

We agree with Appellant that the Examiner-cited portions of Liu and Lundberg do not teach or suggest the disputed limitations of claim 1— “presenting a plurality of action panels to a developer . . . in an inbox view of a user interface . . . comprising the natural language expression and the intent of the associated user log” and “presenting, to the developer for each action panel, an option to validate or dismiss the associated user log” (Appeal Br. 16 (Claims App.) (claim 1)). *See* Appeal Br. 12–15; Reply Br. 2–3.

The limitations of Appellant’s claim 1 are directed to a natural language system (i.e., voice-operated system) and, in particular, configuring and training a natural language system—“configuring and training the

natural language configuration system” (Appeal Br. 17 (Claims App.) (claim 1)). *See* Spec. ¶¶ 2–8. The configuring and training requires presenting information to a system developer in a user interface (graphical user interface (GUI)) of a developer’s system (development platform). *See* Spec. ¶¶ 2–8, 16–18, 25–35. Although the Examiner-cited portions of Liu (*see* Non-Final Act. 4–6) teach user generated search queries having a textual description input and extracting semantic information (*see* Liu ¶¶ 63–67), user logs and a learned user intention model (*see* Liu ¶¶ 75–91), as well as displaying the information to a user for selecting and editing of the semantic text (i.e., validation) (*see* Liu ¶¶ 76, 78), Liu does not teach or suggest displaying the semantic text query information (i.e., the natural language expression) or the “intent” (i.e., intent of the associated user log) to a developer, rather than a user. At most, Liu describes displaying text (textual semantic information) suggestions (the output of the intention model) to a user for review and selection. Liu does not mention natural language (voice) systems, developers, or a graphical user interface that displays “action panels” to a developer.

The Examiner-cited portions of Lundberg (*see* Non-Final Act. 6–7; Ans. 8–9) teach tuning (training) natural language interaction applications, a developer user interface, providing recommendations to a developer via the interface, and analysis of user logs. *See* Lundberg ¶¶ 12, 110, 159.

Although Lundberg at least suggests presenting textual natural language expressions and suggestions to a developer in a user interface (Lundberg ¶¶ 12, 159), Lundberg does not teach or suggest displaying the natural language expression in an “action panel” (*see* Spec. ¶¶ 5, 49–51; Fig. 4). Further, Lundberg does not mention displaying the “intent” (i.e., intent of

the associated user log (*see* Spec. ¶¶ 4, 5, 8, 21, 22, 24, 26–28, 32, 50–53; Fig. 4)) to the developer.

The Examiner-cited portions of Liu and Lundberg, at best, vaguely describe natural language expressions and suggestions to a developer in a user interface. Neither Liu, nor Lundberg, describes a user interface with specificity or displaying “action panels” (i.e., user interface elements (windows)) containing both a natural language expression and an intent of an associated user log. The Examiner does not explain sufficiently how the cited portions of Liu and Lundberg at least suggest the disputed features of “presenting a plurality of action panels to a developer . . . in an inbox view of a user interface . . . comprising the natural language expression and the intent of the associated user log” (Appeal Br. 16 (Claims App.) (claim 1)).

Consequently, we are constrained by the record before us to find that the Examiner erred in concluding that the combination of Liu and Lundberg renders obvious Appellant’s claim 1. Independent claim 9 includes limitations of commensurate scope. Claims 2–5, 7, 8, 10–13, 15, and 16 depend from and stand with their respective base claims.

CONCLUSION

Appellant has shown that the Examiner erred in rejecting claims 1–5, 7–13, 15, and 16 under 35 U.S.C. § 103. We, therefore, do not sustain the Examiner’s rejection of claims 1–5, 7–13, 15, and 16.

DECISION SUMMARY

In summary:

Claims Rejected	35 U.S.C. §	Reference(s)/Basis	Affirmed	Reversed
1-5, 7-13, 15, 16	103	Liu, Lundberg		1-5, 7-13, 15, 16

REVERSED