

Who Are You Now?

Expanding the Capability of Chatbots via Multiple Personas

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Summary

A recent feature in chatbots is that they store past interactions, i.e., they remember past conversations and thereby learn about the user. Widely varying prompts reduce the capability of the chatbot by providing little context to answers of interest. It may be much better to use multiple personas to steer responses based on niche interactions. This takes advantage of the chatbots memory capability and keeps prompts and responses in context. Multiple personas can bring added clarity and context to interactions with chatbots. This results in better use of the chatbot and increased efficiency in a specific profession.

Chatbots Remember Me

Chatbots (chattering bots or generative AI chatbots) have many uses. A common one is interacting with a user via prompts and answers. Several examples are ChatGPT from OpenAI and Gemini from Google. Many more are listed in (Gillham, 2024).

A recent feature in these chatbots is that they store past interactions, i.e., they remember past conversations and thereby learn about the user. Does the user always prompt about art, literature, religion, engineering, etc.? These past interactions color the next response to the next prompt. The response to, “describe grace” differs greatly if the user is a theologian (unmerited favor) or a ballet master (the appearance of seamless movement).

Is this remembering a privacy issue? The chatbot is learning too much about the user for comfort. What do the employees of the company that built the chatbot do with all this information about the user? Are the user’s prompts putting the user “on a list” of persons who are disliked by some group of persons? What might that group of persons do to the

user? And of course, is this privacy issue reading too much into this and being afraid of shadows?

The Persona

A persona is a strategic mask of identity in public, the public image of one's personality, the social role that one adopts, or simply a fictional character. (Wikipedia, 2025, March 31)

By remembering the user, the chatbot builds a persona of the user. Consider a user where one chatbot used describes their persona as a renaissance man. The user prompts about a wide range of topics like religion, AI, technology, philosophy, writing, art, etc. It's understandable if the meaning of "etc." to a renaissance man feels unpredictable as the list can seem open-ended.

One takeaway is the chatbot is confused. The renaissance man may be described as “scatter brained” as there is no telling what the next question will be. Does the chatbot describe grace as unmerited favor or the appearance of seamless movement. How would a smart person respond?

The “confusion” in the chatbot is natural. The smart person would also be confused. This confusion brings loss of capability. Not prompting the chatbot from a narrow field or niche disregards the capability of the system to remember and learn about my perspective.

Multiple Personas: Taking Advantage of the Mnemonist

mnemonist refers to an individual with the ability to remember and recall unusually long lists of data, such as unfamiliar names, lists of numbers, entries in books, etc. (Wikipedia, 2025, March 20)

The recent chatbots are akin to the mnemonist in their capability to store prior prompts and responses. Instead of being a renaissance man, it may be much better to use multiple personas to steer responses based on niche interactions. The user can take the persona of a theologian to discuss grace or the persona of a ballet master to discuss grace. The chatbot would then respond in context and not need further prompts to develop the desired context.

Multiple personas can be accomplished in different ways depending on the chatbot. Some chatbots may switch their context given an opening prompt such as, “For the sake of the following prompts, I am a theologian with advanced degrees in my field and 30 years’ experience. Provide all responses in this context.”

Other chatbots may not be able to switch contexts. With these, an approach is to create different accounts from different email addresses etc. The user only asks questions appropriate to the persons and account chosen. This may incur additional expense as the chatbot requires a monthly fee for each account and persona.

There is a question of ethics with multiple personas. Is the user lying to the chatbot? Is, however, the user lying to the chatbot so that the chatbot company cannot misuse the user's private information? Is this a moral inconsistency that has several layers?

Multiple personas have been used by creatives and others for centuries. A recent example is that of author Lawrence Block (<https://lawrenceblock.com/>). He wrote many novels using different personas. This is an extension of the pen name used by authors and others for thousands of years. Be a different person; write as that person would write.

Consider writing yet another novel that uses the “beauty and the beast” plot. A theologian's novel would differ from a ballet master's novel. Same plot; different persona, and a different novel.

Multiple personas can range across professions such as engineer and medical doctor. Multiple personas can range across niche areas of one profession such a writer of mystery novels and writer of western novels.

Regardless of range or particular method of use, multiple personas can bring added clarity and context to interactions with chatbots. This results in better use of the chatbot and increased efficiency in a specific profession.

References

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