

Chapter IV

The Culture Based Model: A Framework for Designers and Visual ID Languages

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ABSTRACT

Globalizing the field of instructional design lies in the building and nurturing of innovative models, frameworks, visual languages, and practices that include culture-based considerations. This chapter argues that culture, as a design construct, is integral to educating learners and enhancing the design process. This is supported by a review of theoretical and methodological studies that define culture and an examination of models of culture that are supported by VIDLs. Further, the significance of VIDLs as design tools is offered through the culture based model (CBM) an intercultural instructional design framework that guides designers through the management, design, development and assessment process while taking into account explicit culture-based considerations. The chapter provides a description of the origins of CBM, an overview of relevant research, and an outline of the model and its possible applications with VIDLs. This research suggests that VIDLs can serve a broader scope if culture is considered.

INTRODUCTION

The **globalization** of instructional design is the direction for the 21st century and beyond.

Future designs of instruction, like the emerging VIDL, must consider **culture** as an integral component to the **design process**. Culture is a core construct of all design decisions; however its potential to improve the design process has been mostly ignored in the field of instructional design (Subramony 2004; Young, in press-a). This lack of interest in culture as a design construct

may be prevalent for various reasons. First, **designers** are not sure how to represent culture in the design process, what to look for, nor what to include. Second, there may be conflicts between the culture of the target audience and the technology; and many designers are grappling with how to bridge these communication connections (Chu & Reeves, 2000). Third, a comprehensive framework in which to integrate culture into the analysis, design, development, implementation and evaluation (ADDIE) process has not been available. Finally, the inclusion of “cultural frames

of reference” may not have been seriously considered (Gay, 2000, p. xix).

Instructional design (ID), over the last 20 years, has seen more of a focus on improving and understanding learning and instruction (Jonassen, 1996, 2004; Reigeluth, 1983; Tennyson & Schott, 1997) and less of a focus on how culture influences learning and instruction (Subramony, 2004; Thomas, Mitchell, Joseph, 2002; Young, 1999, 2008). The literature in ID examines culture through the application of theories and methods such as cultural diversity, cultural pluralism, and cultural sensitivity (Scheel & Branch, 1993); thereby aligning itself with educational trends that promote multiculturalism (Banks & Banks, 2003). Culture is broadly conceived in ID; and its importance in the design process has not been fully considered because there has not been a model or framework that is fully driven by a **cultural context** until the **culture based model** (CBM). CBM is an intercultural instructional design framework that guides designers through the management, design, development and assessment process while taking into account explicit culture-based considerations. The model and its relation to visual languages will be further elaborated on in this chapter.

The designer operates in a larger context in the design process (Kelley & Hartfield, 1996; Winoograd, 1996). Therefore, the role of the designer and their tools, such as VIDLs, are part of this context. Botturi, Derntl, Boot and Figl (2006) define a VIDL as a “set of concepts that support structuring a design task and conceiving solutions” (p. 1216). As an example of the designer’s role, the architect must learn about the land, laws, people, property rights and other aspects of a culture before creating a blueprint. Given the data about the target audiences’ culture, the architect may add an alcove for a religious sculpture, adjust the physical layout (e.g., wheelchair accessible pews), or accommodate language inscriptions to be carved in the concrete pavement upon entrance into a building. Similarly, the designer must learn

about the people, learning styles, histories, etc. that will influence the VIDL and the creation of the product.

Taylor (1992) argues that a cultural context does exist between design and designer; therefore the design process must be viewed from the perspective of the culture or society. Visual languages, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), are not “transparent and universally understood; [they are] culturally specific” (p. 4). Given this, designers should be cognizant of their target audience’s culture and how culture influences the design, designing and the designer.

This research positions the designer in that larger context, proposes opportunities in CBM in which to use VIDLs and provides a comprehensive portrait of the designer in the design process. The overall argument proposes that culture is integral to educating learners and to enhancing the design process. Further, CBM aids designers in considering culture, and visual languages provide **support structures** for **models of culture**.

This chapter reviews theory and methods that support research on culture, ID, models of culture, visual languages and CBM as an ID framework. First, multiple perceptions of cultures are offered through a review of traditional definitions, a definition specific to ID, and an alternative perspective on the nature of culture in design. Specific to the goals of this handbook, the remainder of this chapter presents relevant examples of visual languages across disciplines that have developed “models of culture” and the application of these models. The chapter further provides a culture-based framework in which visual languages can operate. The chapter concludes with some final thoughts.

CULTURE AND INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN

Culture means many things. Geertz (1973) interpreted culture as a “historically transmitted pat-

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