Chapter 26
The Inclusion and Design of Cultural Differences in Interactive Multimedia Environments

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ABSTRACT

A concern for social justice and the inclusion of cultural differences as a requirement of social justice in all learning materials, whether they are in the form of conventional materials or Interactive Multimedia Environments (IMEs), is the moral responsibility of all educators who want to contribute to humanity as well as long-lasting peace in our world. Such a responsibility requires a wide range of philosophical, political, and sociological discourses, informing multiple debates and their implications in the field of education. As a requirement of this, in this chapter, the inclusion and design of cultural differences in IMEs are focused on. The design and development stages of IMEs are categorized into six separate stages: (1) feasibility, (2) setting up a team of experts, (3) designing, (4) programming, (5) testing, and (6) evaluating (Turel & McKenna, 2013, pp. 188-190). Each stage is vital to the design and development process for cost effective and socially just IMEs. To be able to achieve cost effective and genuinely socially inclusive IMEs, a wide range of principles and guidelines need to be borne in mind at each stage. Here, the inclusion and design in IMEs of the cultural differences that need to be considered while designing and developing such environments (i.e. at stage 3 as well as 4) are focused on. Some examples of thought out and customized computerised cultural differences from an IME as well as some concrete examples from the Turkish context are given.

INTRODUCTION

In interactive multimedia environments (IMEs), a wide range of diverse digital elements (i.e. text, video, audio, visuals, animations, graphics, captions, links, feedback, glossary and so on) can be combined and delivered on the same digital computer platform (Turel & McKenna, 2013, pp. 188-209; Türel, 2012, pp. 35-49; Turel, 2011a, pp. 57-83; Turel, 2011b, pp. 766-76; Turel, 2010, pp. 396-401; Soboleva & Tronenko, 2002, p. 498; Herron et al., 2002, p. 37; Nicholson & Ngai, 1996, p. 35; Hart, 1992, p. 5; TDM, 1997, p. 151; CCED, 1987; Stenton, 1998, p. 11). This enables materials writers to pedagogically and epistemologically design and create learning materials in a wide range of different subjects such as maths, language, science, history, foreign language in more efficient ways, which meets not only the requirement of different teaching and learning theories, but also the needs of learners who vary in their learning-style preferences as well as coming from a wide range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds (Robinson, 1991, p. 156; Peter, 1994, pp. 157-8). This study aims to bring out the pedagogical and design principles that might help us to more effectively design and customise the inclusion and design of cultural differences as a requirement of social justice in IMEs. While so doing, some examples of thought out and customized computerised cultural differences from an IME, which was designed and created by the first author of this study and was also used for language learning purposes, and from two different conventional learning materials, which were designed and created by the first author of this study and were also used for learning/teaching Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel as well as some concrete examples from the Turkish context will be shown. The copyright on the figures or screenshots in this chapter, therefore, belongs to the author.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN LEARNING

Learning materials, whether they are in the form of conventional materials or IMEs, need to feature cultural differences pedagogically, psychologically and in terms of epistemology. This is a requirement of social justice in education; such an inclusion not only helps, but also enables learners of a wide range of social, economic and cultural backgrounds to achieve fair educational outcomes. It is also the responsibility of all educators who cherish humanity, democracy and social justice, and also feel responsibility towards bringing long-lasting peace in our world. Not only does the inclusion of different cultures in learning materials motivate and encourage learners, who might be from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds, to learn and gain confidence, as controversial cultures and topics are included, but it also helps learners to become familiar with the existing different customs, traditions and beliefs, which is more likely to (a) help them to question their own previously formed points of view, (b) enable them to be more tolerant towards others and (c) help them to be open for dialogue, mutual respect and solidarity. We will, for instance, never forget this example. In the 2009-10 academic year, we, the lecturers, used a reading passage about Kurds for a Word Processing (i.e. Microsoft Word) exam with a group of Higher National Diploma / HND (i.e. a two year degree which enables students to become technicians in the subject of their speciality) students at one of the state universities in the eastern part of Turkey. 95% of the students were Kurds. We were shocked to see how happy and attentive the students were. It was first time ever in their whole formal education life they encountered such a reading text about themselves. Some of the students approached us privately and expressed how happy they were. One of the students even said that his exam had gone very well, as the reading text was about them. Not only

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