Chapter 11
A Place for Culture in Instructional Design

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ABSTRACT
The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the macro and micro challenges instructional designers face when designing Web-based instruction for adult learners. Macro level challenges like institutional and infrastructural requirements are those outside the design process that directly affect teaching and learning outcomes. Micro level challenges, on the other hand, are those inside the design process that directly impact teaching and learning outcomes (e.g. cultural biases of the designers and instructors). The authors discuss the effects of these challenges for instructional designers in higher education. Since the population of focus is adult learners, a brief overview of adult learning and characteristics of adult learners is provided. A variety of models and frameworks have been developed within the field, with only a handful that are constructed to explore diverse learners and learning. The chapter also includes introspection of the authors’ experiences as instructors, instructional design professionals, and students in the field. It concludes with strategies instructional designers can use to overcome the challenges discussed.

INTRODUCTION
Over the last several decades, the field of instructional technology has been heavily concentrated on refining and understanding student learning and instruction (Jonassen, 1996). Although, culture and design are often discussed in the field of instructional technology, much of the research and focus have been on theories and models. In the few instances where culture is recognized as a valuable construct in the design process, it is often segregated, occurring at the beginning and/or end stages. For example, in the ASSURE model, cultural considerations are made at the first stage (analysis of learners) and
at the fifth stage where learner participation is required. Culture is fluid and cannot be constrained to one or two points of consideration, but at every level of the instructional design process (Young, 2008a).

Within instructional design models, social and cultural considerations are often only lightly attended to during the analysis phase, where examination is generally on learner analysis and content analysis in textbooks and models (Dick, Carey, & Carey, 2008; Morrison, Ross, & Kemp, 2006; Smith & Ragan, 2005). With only a handful of culture based models specific to our field (Edmundson, 2007a; Henderson, 2007; Young, 2008a), there is a need to provide professionals and students in the field with a framework of reference for designing culturally sensitive online courses (Gunawardena, Wilson, & Nolla, 2003).

We should be clear that, for the purposes of our discussion, we see the concept of culture as fluid, elusive, and without a single, all-encompassing definition. Also, culture constantly changes and individuals belong to more than one culture (Gunawardena, et al., 2003). In general, culture is historically viewed as transmitted patterns of meanings passed from one generation to another via symbolic forms from which we create and develop our knowledge and attitudes toward life (Carter, 2000; Geertz, 2000, pg.89).

Views on culture have always been a constant. Recent changes in global demographic, economics, and politics have generated new conversations about social issues such as cultural change, diversity, and equity (Cooper & Denner, 1998). A few years ago, it would have been an unlikely prospect that globalization would increase global awareness of the differences and similarities across cultures. Perhaps in a quest to blur the boundaries across cultures, the field of instructional design will understand the need for culture to be represented as a core construct through the instructional design process.

Cultural diversity in educational settings continues to grow, be it in primary, secondary, or higher education. This has precipitated a need for educators who are effectively prepared to be culturally responsive facilitators of the academic success to their diverse learners. We argue that race, gender, ethnicity, culture, and social class are all linked to instructional contexts, whether in an online or face-to-face environment. Ladson-Billings makes the important point that educators need to understand their responsibilities in order to understand these changing contexts (Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

We also note an increase in the amount and nature in which information and communication technology is being infused in instructional settings. A growing body of research studies shows increasing dependence on technology integration in instruction (Branch, 1997). This has the potential to become a prominent factor in preparing educators who cater to their multicultural students (Gay, 2010; McNeal, 2005). It is the integral application of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) and the competence to determine if these ICTs are the best fit in educational systems that are situated within these culturally diverse contexts (Branch, 1997; Collis, 1999). We hold that instructor preparation significantly influences what and how students learn. Therefore, an examination of what occurs in their preparations is necessary to evaluate and address the necessary steps for diverse learners achieving academic success (McNeal, 2005). It should be expected that when an instructor walks into a classroom, he or she will have a lesson plan, and at the end of the class session be able to decipher whether or not the goals for the lesson were achieved.

The goal for any course, online or face-to-face, should be academic success for all students. Here, academic success does not refer to high scores, but rather students’ ability to know what they know and how to use it (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Subsequently, failure to understand how culture impacts the teaching and learning process can lead to negative student and learning outcomes. These outcomes include confrontation among students,
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