THEMATIC SYMPOSIUM: Technical and Professional Communication for Users in Intercultural and Multilingual Contexts

Research on the use of immersive technologies to foster intercultural communication and improve translation performance

Ann DUIN
University of Minnesota (USA)

Giuseppe PALUMBO
University of Trieste (ITALY)

Isabel PEDERSEN
Ontario Tech University (CANADA)

Translators and technical communicators must be prepared to use immersive technologies as they work. Visualization has been shown to help translators improve their performance as it provides a more concrete understanding of topic and content (Kußmaul, 2005). In addition, use of augmented and/or virtual reality (AR, VR) has been shown to help technical communicators develop intercultural communication competence (Tham et al., 2018). However, understanding of immersive technologies has not kept pace with the full potential of their benefits and perils (Craig & Georgieva, 2018).

Here we ask: How might students examine and/or use immersive technologies as a means to foster intercultural communication and improve translation performance? How might we be mindful of the new ethical challenges that come as a result of such use?

In this presentation we share two research projects on the design, deployment, and study of student use of immersive technologies as a means to foster intercultural communication and improve translation performance. Project one focuses on five years of TAPP collaborations in which U.S. students collaborated with translation teams at the U. of Trieste in Italy. Students used immersive technologies including Google Cardboard and marker-based AR, and most recently, developed visualizations of translation journeys. We share results from analyses of online student discussions, reflections, post mortem documentation, and translated materials. Project two details two years of U.S.-Canada collaboration in which U.S. students from multiple institutions curated collections on emerging technologies and translation for the digital repository The Fabric of Digital Life housed at Ontario Tech University in Canada. Here we share results from students who curated collections of artifacts on immersive technologies, both emergent and commercialized, with specific focus on translation.
Together, these projects provide a framework for advancing intercultural communication and translation performance through use and examination of immersive technologies.

REFERENCES


21st Century Relational Backgrounding for Technical and Professional Communication

Greta GOETZ
Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade (SERBIA)

An approach to technical and professional learning that recognizes and makes use of the social and material contexts of participants as well as the contexts of technical and professional content in the learning environment (Dewey, 1916) can be seen to cater to the ‘21st century skills’ that are ‘needed most’, according to the World Economic Forum (Soffel, 2016). Such an approach will be presented here: drawing primarily on epistemic fluency (Markauskaite and Goodyear 2017), but also scientific autobiography (Goetz, 2019), ethics (Gardner, 2019), critical pedagogy (Freire, 2005), hermeneutics (Ricoeur, 1991), and a work of conceptual art (Micu, 2014). The approach is connected to technical and professional communication by its focus on the relational skills that facilitate and enrich work conducted in multiple contexts. It will be presented through epistemic tasks and tools that attendees will be able to apply as backgrounding in the context of their own learning environments. The tasks and tools include comparing actionable epistemic mind maps, prompts for professional and cognitive distanciation, brainstorming as empowerment, dialogic inquiry modeled after scientific autobiography, and modeling reflective questions for conscientious correlationalism. The application of this approach is then illustrated through three brief examples of recent TAPP collaborations.

Key words: epistemic fluency, relational skills, collaborative learning, conscientious professionalism, dialogic curiosity, creative coordination
The History of Technical and Professional Communication for Users in Intercultural and Multilingual Contexts

Bruce MAYLATH
North Dakota State University (USA)

To set the stage for the symposium’s presentations, this address looks back across the centuries to remind audience members of technical and professional communication’s beginnings and its rapid development during the Industrial Revolution and the Computer Revolution of the 19th, 20th, and now 21st centuries, with a view to users of differing languages and cultures. This review of history begins with technical documents from the Roman Empire, moves forward to the spread of science emanating from the medieval Arabic world (Montgomery 2013), and continues into the development of documents by the Chancery in London (Fisher 1992, Richardson 1980), and women writing technical documents in the 17th century (Tebeaux 1997, 1998). It then examines the explosion of technical documentation triggered by the Industrial Revolution (Kynell 1996, Brockmann 1998, Longo 2000), followed by high-tech developments in the latter part of the 20th century (Gresham 1978, 1981; Tebeaux & Killingsworth 1992; Miller 1998; Kynell & Moran 1999; Kimball 2017) and the weaving of tech comm with translation as nations in the 21st century bound themselves together in a global economy (Weiss 1997, Stärke-Meyerring 2005, G necchi et al. 2011, Matsuda & Matsuda 2011, Gunnarsson 2013, Verzella 2016). The address concludes by asking what a high-tech future will bring in an era of rising nationalism.

REFERENCES


A Perspective on the Future of Technical and Professional Communication for Users in Intercultural and Multilingual Contexts

Kirk ST.AMANT
Louisiana Tech University (USA) and University of Limerick (IRELAND)

The interconnected nature of modern society means almost all organizations engage in some form of international interaction. At the same time, immigration and demographic trends have made local setting far more multicultural and multilingual than ever before. As a result, cross-cultural communication is increasingly part of one’s everyday life. These factors have important implications for individuals working in content management (CM).

Not all cultures use content in the same way, nor do they have common expectations of what constitutes effective or needed content. These factors can create challenges for content management practices on a variety of levels. Addressing such situations involves raising awareness of these factors and understanding how culture affects content consumption. Technical communicators can benefit from strategies that help them navigate international and cross-cultural situations more effectively. As both professional practices and the field of technical communication become more international and intercultural in nature, these factors will both be of importance to and shape practices across organizations. This presentation overviews how cultural aspects can affect perceptions and uses of content. It also provides strategies for applying ideas to engage in more effective content development and content management practices in global contexts.
Designing for Global Use: A Comparison of Behavioral Design Patterns in the Netherlands and the United States

Gustav VERHULSDONCK
Business Information Systems, Central Michigan University (USA)

As GPS systems reroute our driving route and smart devices prompt us to exercise, ubiquitous technologies alter human behavior in new ways. Yet, technical communication has yet to address how behavioral design techniques engage users in new ways. Based on behavioral economics, behavioral designers focus on how cognitive habits, needs, emotions, and feelings influence/alter user behavior (cf. Fogg, 2012; Wendell, 2014). The behavioral model of Cue–Action–Reward (CUE) states that when our smartphone buzzes, it cues us to check while rewarding us with messages (Combs & Brown, 2018). This behavioral design technique is so effective that some people form a habit of checking their smartphone multiple times daily even without such cues.

Since technical communicators need to engage multitasking or distracted users across varying everyday contexts, it is evident that behavioral design is an important component to develop global user experience (UX). Cross-cultural design looks at either translating from one particular culture to another or designing with a global context in mind from the outset (e.g. **transcreation/glocalization**) as a means to prevent usability issues (Pedersen, 2014; St.Amant 2019). Since behavioral design uses common human cognitive biases irrespective of culture, it is an important technique for technical communicators to address global contexts while designing for specific user behavior.

This presentation seeks to 1) introduce a critical conceptual framework for recognizing seven common behavioral design principles (e.g. Context, Habit, Other People, Incentives, Congruence, Emotion and Salience); and 2) to investigate how behavioral design is used in the Netherlands and the United States specifically. These elements are presented with an eye toward the audience identifying these principles and their applied use in multilingual contexts in order to address users and their behavior.