lecture

Culture Matters

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Recap: Design Concepts

- Previously, we focus more on factors common to (most of) people.
  - Visibility, affordance, proximity etc.
Culture Matters

• Besides common factors, people might differ in their *cultures*. It is important to ask how cultures differ and whether it matters to design.
Is Culture Real?

• Intuitively, Kyoto and NYC *seem* to have different cultures. What exactly is “culture”?

• Discuss with your group members about your definition of culture for 3 minutes.
Culture: Society and Individuals

- Culture can be found both in the world (external) and in the head (internalized).

- For example, in a farming society, individuals may need to be mentally more cooperative and interdependent to maintain their way of living.

- Culture in the head: Shared knowledge, belief, values that influence social behaviors and cognition.
Cultural Differences as an Onion

• Multi-layers
• Individuals’ cultural differences may be visible and invisible, shallower and deeper.
Layers of Cultural Differences

- Language
- Customs
- Social Orientation
- Thinking
- Value

Visible, shallower
Invisible, deeper
Visible: Language

• Different cultures often use different languages for communication.

• Some linguistic differences are quite apparent: scripts, text direction.

- Hangul (Korean)
  모든 인간은 태어날 때부터 자유로우며

- Chinese
  人人生而自由，在尊嚴和權利上一律

- Greek
  'Ολοι οι ἄνθρωποι γεννιούνται

- Arabic
  يولد جميع الناس أحراراً متساوين في الكرامة

Beyond Scripts: Less Apparent Differences

*Language use*: The way language is used to communicate in the real world context.

- “Football”
- “Do you want this book?”
  “You want this book?”
  “The book you want or not?”
UI for International Populations

In software design, known as internationalization (i18n) & localization (l10n)

• i18n: making UI texts replaceable
• l10n: the actual work of translating texts
More On Translation

• Literal (word-to-word) versus non-literal (idiomatic, natural) translation
  – In UI design, go for natural translation.

• No need to translate “Dock”, “Spaces”, and “Spotlight”. As these are like idioms for Mac users.
Less Visible: Social Orientation (Triandis)

• East Asians: Collectivism, focusing on relationship and group harmony.

• Westerns: Individualism, focusing on tasks and personal goal.
Cultural perception of interpersonal relations
Nisbett (2003)

In-group: family, friends
Out-group: strangers
Design Case: Kaixin (FB equivalent in China)
Some Observations

• People seem to be less willing to disclose personal information to *strangers*.
Design for Social Orientations

• Applying individualism-collectivism to design may be non-trivial.
  – What does it mean to make an interface “collectivism-friendly”?

• Thinking in terms of distributions not stereotypes
  – Not all Chinese are collectivistic; not all Americans are individualistic.

• Always learn from the users
Invisible: Thinking & Perception

• Invisibility of mind: You’re not the fish, so how do you know that the fish is happy or not?
• Modern cognitive psychology: If you cannot see, you infer.
Cultural Thinking (1)

Which two go together?

Chicken

Cow

Grass
Cultural Thinking (1)

Which two go together?

Chicken  Grass

Cow

Americans: Chicken-Cow (Both are animals)
East Asians: Cow-Grass (the cow eats the grass)
Cultural Thinking (2)

Which group does the target object belong to?
Cultural Thinking (2)

Which group does the target object belong to?

Americans: Group 2 (By rule, the stem is straight)
East Asians: Group 1 (By family resemblance)
Cultural Attention

What have you seen?
Cultural Attention

What have you seen?

Americans: Starting with the biggest fish (focal objects)
East Asians: Starting with the water color, frog (background)
Cultural Cognitive Styles (Nisbett)

- East Asians: Holistic cognition. Relational thinker. Distribute attention to field information.

Possible Use: Improving Image Search through Tagging
Designing for Cultures

The design motto “You’re not the user” is especially true.

Learn from users, but be aware of methods. Cultural differences may become invisible.
– East Asians tend to be moderate about their responses to questions.

Keep the cultural onion (layers of cultural differences) in mind. Use theories to guide. Use multiple methods to study.
Color Perception