

Cases on Globalized and Culturally Appropriate E-Learning: Challenges and Solutions

Andrea Edmundson
eWorld Learning, Inc., USA

Information Science
REFERENCE

INFORMATION SCIENCE REFERENCE

Hershey • New York

Senior Editorial Director: Kristin Klinger
Director of Book Publications: Julia Mosemann
Editorial Director: Lindsay Johnston
Acquisitions Editor: Erika Carter
Development Editor: Christine Bufton
Production Coordinator: Jamie Snavelly
Typesetters: Michael Brehm, Jennifer Romanchak
Cover Design: Nick Newcomer

Published in the United States of America by
Information Science Reference (an imprint of IGI Global)
701 E. Chocolate Avenue
Hershey PA 17033
Tel: 717-533-8845
Fax: 717-533-8661
E-mail: cust@igi-global.com
Web site: <http://www.igi-global.com/reference>

Copyright © 2011 by IGI Global. All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, without written permission from the publisher. Product or company names used in this set are for identification purposes only. Inclusion of the names of the products or companies does not indicate a claim of ownership by IGI Global of the trademark or registered trademark.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Cases on globalized and culturally appropriate e-learning : challenges and solutions / Andrea Edmundson, editor.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Summary: "This book offers a multitude of cases illustrating the different challenges faced when offering e-learning to learners of other cultures and, most importantly, how issues are resolved"--Provided by publisher.

ISBN 978-1-61520-989-7 (hardcover) -- ISBN 978-1-61520-990-3 (ebook) 1. Language and languages--Study and teaching--Technological innovations. 2. Cultural awareness--Study and teaching. 3. Distance education--Computer-assisted instruction--Cross-cultural studies. 4. Computer-assisted instruction. I. Edmundson, Andrea, 1955-

P53.855.C37 2011

371.33'4--dc22

2011001311

British Cataloguing in Publication Data

A Cataloguing in Publication record for this book is available from the British Library.

All work contributed to this book is new, previously-unpublished material. The views expressed in this book are those of the authors, but not necessarily of the publisher.

MINI CASES

CHALLENGING MY LATINOS(AS) STUDENTS' SENSE OF LOYALTY

Sonia Alarcon-Parker
Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

I have three cousins from a South American country attending my class. If one is absent, the other comes to ask me for an extra handout to take it to the cousin. They do not necessarily want to be members of the same group. They actually prefer to make friends with other peers. They had a group assignment to complete, and they played their role quite well. Their efforts paid off as their team earned the maximum points possible for the project.

To my surprise, the three cousins did not show the same enthusiasm when I requested that the class exchange their assignments with their classmates and provide feedback to each other. It was an easy exercise. Each one of them had to rewrite a statement using more specific, low level abstractions. I observed that the cousins were very uncomfortable, playing with their pens, looking at each other, and easily distracted from their assignment.

My first thought about their attitude was, "they do not understand the assignment." As I approached their desk, I overheard one of them asking if the assignment was being graded. Another responded by saying, "No, but I do not like to correct others' papers." I purposefully delayed the revision until I had time to talk with them.

I understood that students support one another by consciously avoiding criticism of one another's work or performance. The cousins came from a collectivist culture where they place value in loyalty toward one another and the group to which they belong. The students had not experienced peer reviews as a strategy to learning in their native country, and I had to be patient with them and assist them in their integrative process to a different educational setting.

VIRTUAL TRAINING AT AN INDIAN CALL CENTER

Florence Martin
University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA

Michele Parker
University of North Carolina Wilmington, USA

I am Florence Pallapu a project manager at TrainUs, a training firm based in Raleigh, North Carolina in the US. TrainUs trains people in various skills. My team consists of Michele Allred, an online training expert, and Josh Smith an Instructional Designer. Recently, we expanded our training to the global market. We signed a contract on a large scale project to train call center representatives from Apex Consulting in India. We will be working with Nikhil Prem, the Technology Lead and Reena Shankar, the Project manager at Apex.

We were asked to train 120 call center representatives at three locations: Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad. Apex management wants their call center representatives to be trained on soft skills, specifi-

cally on how to interact and relate to American customers. Having trained multiple clients on soft skills in the US we assumed this project would be similar.

We were given a month to train since the call center representatives were already handling calls. Due to the limited travel funds in the Apex contract and the immediate need to start training, we didn't have time to conduct a thorough needs assessment. We decided to train the call center representatives virtually using SimSim because it was the cheapest synchronous training tool.

SimSim's features include text/audio chat with the instructor and other participants. Our training team created PowerPoints, which will be used to facilitate discussion on communicating with accents, slang, and grammatically sound conversations. We plan to use the interactive whiteboard to clarify difficult concepts. During training, participants can raise their hands, use emoticons, and respond to polls.

May 25th 2009

Today is the first day of our training session.

- **6AM:** I wake up at 6 AM and have my morning cup of coffee and grab breakfast from McDonalds on my way to work. We will begin our synchronous training at 7:30 AM, which will be 5 PM in Chennai.
- **7 AM:** I reach my desk and do the final planning for our first training session. I am of Indian origin and familiar with the culture. However this is going to be a different experience for me.
- **7:30 AM:** We are logged into SimSim. Michele has uploaded training material on the e-board. We are waiting to meet the first group of 30 trainees from Chennai. Fourteen participants login and Nikhil tells us that the rest of the participants are having difficulty logging in to SimSim.
- **8 AM:** We are still dealing with technology issues. We are unsure if we should wait or proceed with training. The trainees seem motivated, but can't hear us clearly. A trainee asked "Can you keep the language simple to help us follow along"?
- **8:30 AM:** More trainees have logged into the virtual room, but some randomly get kicked out by the system and some disappear. Nikhil tells us that the internet is unstable at Apex in Chennai. Upon receiving multiple questions about SimSim's interface we realize that the participants were not trained on how to use SimSim. Two weeks ago we had emailed Reena and Nikhil about training participants to use SimSim, prior to our first session.
- **9 AM:** Suddenly all the participants disappeared from the classroom. We receive a phone call from Reena that there is a power outage in Chennai. She explains that the state government stops power to sections of the city to reduce power consumption during the summer. Additionally, the generator which was supposed to turn on as soon as the power went out is being repaired. We wait without knowing when the trainees will return.
- **9:30 AM:** Finally most of the trainees reappear. We have 19 trainees now and an hour left for training. The trainees slowly become familiar with the SimSim interface, but there is minimal interaction between trainers and participants. Based on the text responses, we realize that participants prefer text based chatting instead of communicating their responses verbally. A trainee sent a message "I got disconnected thrice." It took us a while to understand what she meant. We finally realized that she was telling us that she got disconnected three times.
- **10 AM:** It dawned on us that there may be cultural differences that make it hard for the trainees to interact virtually. Nikhil tells us that using webcams may have made the participants feel more comfortable. To liven the training, Michele, Josh and I take the trainees to different breakout

rooms to rehearse slang. I hear faint giggling when I ask participants to repeat common phrases. I think the participants are shy about practicing a foreign accent.

- **10:30 AM:** In Chennai it is 8PM, and the trainees start to log off. I receive a private text chat saying that it is time for them to leave and they did not plan to stay late after a full day's work. Reena tells us that the female employees usually don't stay late at work because of family obligations.
- **11 AM:** We have 7 participants left in the class when we finally wrap up. I am not sure how much any of the participants learned with the delay, power outage, and lack of interaction. One of the trainees says "I am old, I am terrible with technology, and I am unsure how much I am going to learn from this."
- **11:30 AM:** The TrainUs team breaks for lunch
- **1:00 PM:** Upon return, we reviewed the training session that we just completed. I ask my team what were the major lessons we learned from the training session today.

Some of the lessons that we learned as a team were discussed,

1. Do not compromise on the needs assessment even if you do not have much time or resources for it.
2. Do not make any assumptions on technology infrastructure at the clients' end, especially when your client is based in a different country. Do a brief trial run with the technology team at the clients end before going live.
3. While developing training, keep in mind the cultural factors that are involved especially if the client is based in a different part of the world.
 - a. Use simple language for the training
 - b. Keep the time zone in mind
 - c. There are different expectations for women in different countries.
 - d. Direct questions to the group rather than an individual. In some cultures, people are less likely to indicate that they don't know the answer and they tend to refrain from asking questions in fear of embarrassment.

Finally, make sure that you have chosen the right training method depending on the client's need and technology availability.

THE DOCTOR DOESN'T KNOW MY NAME

*Solomon Negash
Kennesaw State University, USA*

Six-week videoconference based training for physicians was detracted by cultural differences when addressing participants by name. Five locations, four in the United States and one in Ethiopia were connected via videoconferencing to deliver HIV/AIDS training to Ethiopian health professionals. Participants from Johns Hopkins, MAYO Clinic, Detroit Medical Center, and Kennesaw State University were connected with 25 health professionals in Ethiopia. The US participants alternated in delivering content over a six-week period.