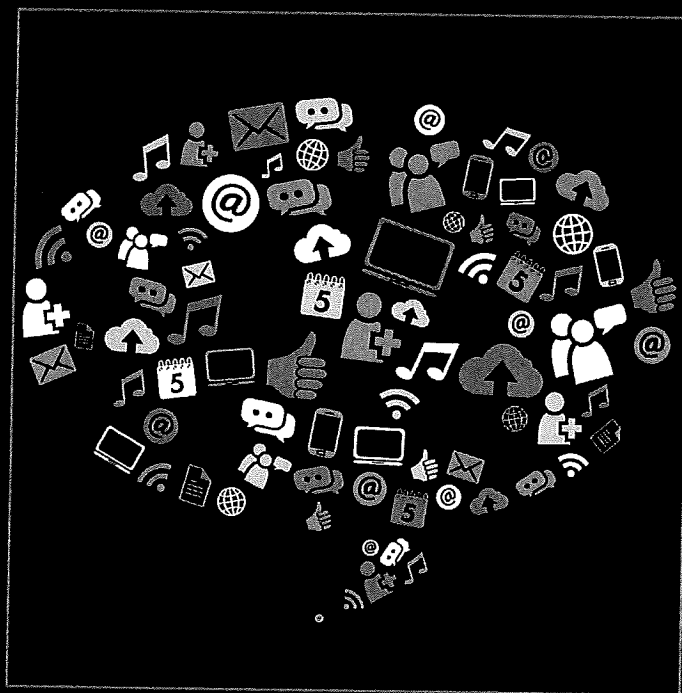


COMMUNICATING USER EXPERIENCE

Applying Local Strategies Research
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SEVEN

Intentional Design

Using Iterative Modification to Enhance Online Learning for Professional Cohorts

Lauren Mackenzie and Megan R. Wallace

INTRODUCTION

The following words, drawn from Flyvbjerg's (2001, 166) *Making Social Science Matter*, speak to those committed to making *course design* matter: "we must take up problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities in which we live, and we must do it in ways that matter . . . [and] we must effectively communicate the results of our research to fellow citizens." This chapter emphasizes the importance of incorporating the lived experiences of professional students into the instructional design process. In an increasingly online educational world, this chapter contributes to the ongoing conversation about intentional design by putting forth a formula for course development. In doing so, the authors examine the diverse cultural practices of military students in an online intercultural communication course offered by the Community College of the Air Force and draw from a cultural community of over 2,000 military students who have written about their cross-cultural experiences in the course wiki.¹

The authors have been documenting the ongoing progress of the "Introduction to Cross-Cultural Communication" (CCC) course since its inception in 2009 and pilot in 2011. When the course first opened in 2011, it was completely self-paced and did not include opportunities for students to contribute to the course content. Now, four years later, there is an active course wiki—which has led to the creation of a variety of Situational Judgment Tests (SJTs) based on students' intercultural experiences. This iterative course modification process is the connection

to instructional design and the main focus of this chapter. Previously, publications have been devoted to the challenges and opportunities associated with the asynchronous nature of the CCC course (Mackenzie and Wallace 2012), the function, utilization, and consequences of the course wiki (Mackenzie and Wallace 2014), as well as the techniques used in the course to increase student retention (Mackenzie, Fogarty, and Khachadoorian 2013).

The current chapter builds on this work by situating it in a Cultural Discourse Analysis (CuDA) framework with a focus on the Situational Judgment Test as a teaching and learning tool that is inherent in the course design. In this particular course, the educational design process requires knowledge of military-specific contexts to meet the needs of the institution as well as the students. Consequently, the SJT is an appropriate teaching and learning tool that makes communication “not only its primary data but moreover, its primary theoretical concern” (Carbaugh 2007, 167). By analyzing the communicative practices associated with constructing SJTs in this particular course, the authors have devised a culture-specific, military-appropriate, and communication skill-centered formula for the online military culture classroom.

An increasingly diverse workforce has led more professions than ever before to address cross-cultural competence in their training, education, and research programs. The disciplines of medicine (for example, Jeffreys 2008; Crosson et al. 2004; Crandall et al. 2003), law (for example, Bryant 2001), social work (for example, Teasley 2005), business (Cox 1994; Miller 2006), and education (for example, Barrera and Corso 2002) have all begun to integrate, to some extent, the idea that competent cross-cultural communication is an essential component of professional competence. The CCC course described in this chapter addresses this concern within the military, a profession in which the outcome of failed cross-cultural communication may have fatal consequences (see Nelson 2007). Because being cross-culturally competent can mean the difference between success and failure in a variety of careers, it is important that the training for these professionals be designed to have the best chance of success. Consequently, this chapter’s focus is on designing programs of instruction for culturally distinct cohorts that are both effective and appropriate—utilizing a course for American Airmen as a case study. The literature regarding effective and appropriate professional instruction will be reviewed forthwith to properly situate the present discussion within extant scholarship.

REVIEWING THE LITERATURE: ONLINE LEARNING (OLL) CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLERS

Instructional Design: Teaching a Professional Cohort

Web-based course systems have been praised due to the ability to ease the delivery of professional development (Artino 2008; Branzburg and Kennedy 2001; Fenton and Watkins 2007; Holzer 2004; Sanders and Langlois 2005; Santovec 2004; Weingardt, Cucciare, Bellotti, and Lai 2009) while maintaining quality and effective instruction (Artino 2008; Moneta and Kekkonen-Moneta 2007). By presenting increased asynchronous, or self-paced options, instructors can offer more convenient opportunities to accommodate professional student schedules (American Society for Training and Development 2005; Artino 2008; Hew, Cheung, and Ng 2010; Hew and Cheung 2012; Kelly 2005; May, Acquaviva, Dorfman, and Posey 2009). Asynchronous courses inherently increase the need for students to be motivated and disciplined to succeed (Lorenzetti 2004; Murphy, Rodriguez-Manzanares, and Barbour 2011; Short 2000); however the ability to reach a greater number of students typically hindered by distance or scheduling more than made up for these minor setbacks. The advantages are even more evident when working with those employed in the armed services who often have challenging schedules and may be working anywhere in the world.

Instructional design for online learning (OLL) shares similarities with the process of creating face-to-face instruction; however significant differences are noted. In both cases, it’s considered to be an art as well as a science (Bottrri 2006; Kenny, Zhang, Schwier, and Campbell 2005) and should be both an iterative and organic process (Gustafson and Branch 2002). Due to the increased complexity of OLL, a team approach to designing online courses is the best practice (Holsombach-Ebner 2013; Restauri 2004). The most successful OLL courses simulate the features of face-to-face classes that work well (Hew and Cheung 2012; Manning 2007; Rempel and McMillen 2008) incorporating the essential components of interaction: the instructor, fellow students, and the material (Licona and Gurung 2011; Swan 2003). This can be accomplished through the incorporation of video, audio, discussions, wikis, virtual classrooms, depending on the available features of the academic content delivery platform utilized.

Course Management Systems (CMS)

As for many instructional designers, the course or content delivery management system (CMS) was predetermined by the institution (Holsombach-Ebner 2013; Rempel and McMillen 2008). The most commonly

employed CMS platform is Blackboard (Bb) (Bradford, Porciello, Balkon, and Backus 2007; NCDAAE 2006; Snow and Sampson 2010), and this is certainly the case for the Air Force. The enabling features of Blackboard include a "classroom" feel, discussion boards, wikis, widely available tech support both within the university and from Blackboard itself, and its familiarity to many students (Holsombach-Ebner 2013; Licona and Gurung 2011; Rempel and McMillan 2008). The Bb interface offers students a designated shared space in the digital classroom (Brunk-Chavez and Miller 2007) activating explicit group identities (Licona and Gurung 2011). Most importantly, it helps the students engage in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) which the CCC course is attempting to create: Airmen with the ability to employ cross-cultural communication skills professionally.

For OLL designers, it is all about maximizing the features of the CMS platform to improve the effectiveness and appropriateness of the instruction (Allen and Seaman 2013). In OLL, it is inherently more difficult to ensure interaction goals are met; therefore including tools like discussions, virtual classrooms, and wikis to overcome the challenges of interaction in online courses is essential (Clever 2008). For asynchronous courses, the most heavily employed tool is the online asynchronous discussion (OAD) (Beckett, Amaro-Jiménez, and Beckett 2010; Holsombach-Ebner 2013). Levin, He, and Robbins (2006) defined OADs as enacted social construction theories in the virtual environment, and they involve three S's: Self interaction, Subject interaction and Social interaction (Licona and Gurung 2011). OADs have become part of standard accepted OLL design tool (Blackboard 2012). Because OLL offers so many advantages in relation to the disadvantages, overcoming the perceived lack of interaction in virtual classrooms seems a surmountable task.

Meeting Student Interaction Needs

The OADs offer myriad benefits to OLL including increased student engagement to enhance learning (Blankenship 2011; Dringus and Ellis 2009; Lin 2008; Rempel and McMillan 2008; Roberts 2002; Rowley and O'Dea 2009) with improvements in student outcomes (Lin 2008; Larson and Sun 2009; Xia, Fielder, and Siragusa 2013; Zha and Ottendorfer 2011). Additionally, OADs have been found to successfully emulate the community feel of a traditional classroom (Beckett, Amaro-Jiménez, and Beckett 2010; Bryce 2014; Lord and Lomica 2004; Rempel and McMillan 2008; Xia, Fielder, and Siragusa 2013). OADs allow students to share and discuss specific knowledge, such as experiences and terminology (Beckett, Amaro-Jiménez, and Beckett 2010; Lee and Tsai 2011; Rempel and McMillan 2008), proving valuable for professional cohort socialization (Beckett, Amaro-Jiménez, and Beckett 2010).

One alternate format for OADs offered is the wiki. Wiki is defined as loosely-structured, collaboratively edited web-linked content on a particular subject (Beldarrain 2006). Several features that distinguish the wiki in OLL from a traditional discussion board include its nonlinear structure and designation as a collective body of knowledge rather than a threaded conversation (Mackenzie and Wallace 2014). Wikis are particularly suited for institutional learning due to its creation of an enduring product (Lackey 2007; Murphy 2004; Rivait 2014) that can be useful for both students and the organization to define shared professional knowledge (Szabady, Fodrey, and Del Russo 2014). Because synchronous chat just isn't feasible with the schedules of today's online students (Manning 2007), features like wikis allow for aggregated student responses to inform the course outcome in a similar fashion to face-to-face class discussions. This encourages online students to help build the shared body of knowledge instead of remaining static learners (Clever 2008). These student narratives contain copious amounts of rich qualitative data and although the present chapter is not the first to publish about examining student wiki contributions (see Hara, Bonk, and Angeli 2000; and Picciano 2002) this endeavor is novel in its treatment of OAD content as cultural discourse.

For the CCC course, the familiar "wiki" moniker and format are used to emphasize the shared ownership of their collaboratively generated knowledge. Students are not asked to respond to or discuss with each other as each student's individual narrative will become part of the group narrative for each topic. Bb discussion boards are complex and layered (Kuhlenschmidt 2009), but the wiki is designed to only be one subject deep (Center for Instructional & Learning Technologies 2010) and thus can search for a unified description of the students' lived experience. Each wiki prompt acts as an open-ended interview question. The group collectively determines the content of the wiki (Kuhlenschmidt 2009), which then can evolve into a shared story as often occurs in focus groups. However, there are two significant shortcomings of the wiki design within the Blackboard CMS. The first is that students are locked out and unable to add to or edit the wikis for 2 minutes if another student is editing (Blackboard, Inc. 2013) which may create serious conflicts due to the large class size and demanding schedules (for example, deployments, twenty-four-hour shifts). It is essential to professional student cohorts that the entire course be available to them when they need it. Another shortcoming of the Blackboard wiki set-up is that grades are not individually assigned (Blackboard, Inc. 2013). If credit is given to wiki participation, instructors need to be certain of a student's contribution to assign credit, and this process is time consuming within the CMS because it requires the instructor to manually edit individual grades. Due to these considerations, the course designers elected to set up the wiki to record additions by student name, which within the Blackboard CMS can be quite similar in appearance

to a traditional discussion board when organized in this manner. Because Blackboard wiki functionality has evolved so much over the four years of this course, students and staff may not be familiar with using the technology, and increased support needs should be taken into account when deciding to employ a wiki, especially for courses with large enrollment numbers.

Situational Judgment Tests

Given that CCC enrolls hundreds of students each semester, it became necessary to find creative ways to bring course content to life while assessing student learning. The use of SJTs has proven to be an effective assessment tool and means for applying communication-centered concepts and skills via culture-specific, military-appropriate scenarios. Before sample, validated SJTs are discussed; however, it is important to provide a brief overview of the SJT literature.

SJTs are often described as selection procedures involving job-related situations that are presented with multiple-choice response options (Krumm, Lievens, Hüffmeier, Lipnevich, Bendels, and Hertel 2014). SJTs assess the "ability to perceive and interpret social dynamics in such a way that facilitates judgments regarding the timing and appropriateness of contextual behaviors" (Christian, Edwards, and Bradley 2010, 92). Dozens of empirical studies devoted to SJTs have been published since 1990 (Campion, Ployhart, and Mackenzie 2014), most of which found SJTs to be effective measures of leadership competencies. Of particular interest to the current project is the research devoted to intercultural SJTs since intercultural interactions are not only complex and challenging, but also prone to misjudgment (Ang and Van Dyne 2008; Earley and Ang 2003). This is due, in part, to the fact that others don't often explicitly communicate their expectations of appropriate behavior (Molinsky 2013). The authors' research devoted to the CCC course is one means of addressing this complexity and offers culture-general concepts and skills followed by culture-specific SJTs for application practice and assessment.

Although there are a variety of ways to measure intercultural competence, the SJT offers a more context-specific means for capturing the complexity of intercultural interaction than the self-report instruments that are most commonly used to measure intercultural competence (Lewng, Ang, and Tan 2014). As noted by Rockstuhl, Ang, Ng, Lievens, and VanDyne (2014, 14), the intercultural SJT provides "an alternative performance-based assessment tool that has good predictive validity" for measuring intercultural competence. A study supporting this claim was conducted by Rockstuhl, Ng, and Ang (2013) demonstrating that

performance on intercultural SJTs has predicted supervisor-rated task performance of Filipino professionals.

Regardless of the professional cohort or culture participating in the SJT, after reading a job-related scenario, the user is typically asked a question such as (McDaniel, Whetzel, and Nguyen 2006):

1. "What would you do next?"
2. "What would you be most likely and least likely to do?"
3. "What is the best response among all options?"
4. "What would most likely occur next in this situation as a result of your decision?"

The SJTs found in the authors' cross-cultural communication course utilize variations of all four of these questions to assess student learning. In line with traditional competency measures which suggest a grounded theory approach to understanding specific skills required in particular jobs (Spencer and Spencer 1993), the authors created the SJTs by utilizing students' wiki contributions to align military experiences with the course content. Analysis after three iterations of the course provided construct validity for the SJTs—which positively correlated them with the overall course average as well as post-course intercultural knowledge and flexibility measures.²

Working with the assumption that SJTs are a valid and effective means for assessing cross-cultural knowledge and skills, the current chapter aims to contribute to the existing work by offering an intentional design formula for cross-cultural communication SJTs in military distance education. Campion et al.'s (2014) *The State of Research on Situational Judgment Tests: A Content Analysis and Directions for Future Research* suggests that future research should "more strongly incorporate theory into the design and development of SJTs" (303). Further, the authors posit that an "interactionist" perspective might advance SJT research by reminding test-makers that "to study the person in the situation, one needs to study how the person *interprets* the situation" (304).

This is where the current chapter contributes to that call—investigating how military students (as "users" of a large CCC course) bring to life the communication skills introduced in the course by contributing reflections about their military cross-cultural experiences. These initial reflections are then converted into culture-specific scenarios used to illustrate the course concepts and assess students' ability to apply them in military-appropriate situations.³ After the pilot of the CCC course was complete and the authors read the end-of-course student evaluations, it became necessary to include an opportunity for students to contribute to the course content. In fact, the very nature of drawing from the lived experiences of the students

is what makes the course complete. Although the authors sought to bring CCC to life on students' screens with a variety of media and interactive software, it was ultimately the students' intercultural experiences that brought the content to life for their colleagues by giving the communication concepts and skills military relevancy.

Cultural Organizations and Engaged Scholarship

Organizational culture cannot be overlooked when considering how to communicate appropriately with a professional cohort. An organization's culture consists of "webs of meaning" created through communication (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo 1983) and defined by interaction (Bormann 1983). This is extremely evident in the evolution of modern military culture (Katzenstein and Reppy 1999). Each new member comes to the service with their own cultural behaviors, beliefs, and identities (Varvel 2000); however, interaction between diverse Airmen along with Air Force doctrine serves to help define the culture (Poyner 2007). The military relies on this collective identity and promotes intensive enculturation during basic training (Katzenstein and Reppy 1999). Practicums and internships serve a similar purpose in many civilian careers.

When the uniqueness of organizational cultures and the necessity for enculturation are taken into account, the usefulness of engaged scholarship is evident. Engaged scholarship is defined by Van De Ven (2007) as a variety of participative academia in which scholars perform research while fully immersed within an organization or discipline. This *in situ* perspective allows for contact with the full gamut of stakeholders within the cultural context and exposure to the most relevant issues facing these professionals. The advantage is such that "by involving others and leveraging their different kinds of knowledge, engaged scholarship can produce knowledge that is more *penetrating* and *insightful* than when scholars work on the problems alone" (Van De Ven 2007, 9; emphasis added).

Contextualizing academic material within relevant practical applications can help professional students engage in critical thinking (Chandler 2005). To be entirely appropriate to the target professional group, culture must be taken into account as "a workplace requires practitioners to seek fundamentally different ways of responding to their contexts and exigencies" (Alred 2006, 81). So, how does an instructional designer ensure that a particular groups' "contexts and exigencies" are addressed appropriately and in their vocabulary? Ethnography of communication is a prominent way to study culture and communication, and student discourse is the essential human data.

Methodological Considerations

The CCC course itself—as well as the methodology used to inform its iterative modification—is indebted to the ethnography of communication (EC). This section of the chapter will review how EC has informed the CCC course and include the content and context of CCC itself. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to an intentional design formula for constructing military culture SFTs, and conclude by connecting intentional design with engaged scholarship.

The course (and the research devoted to it) uses an EC orientation toward the study of cross-cultural communication, viewing communication generally as "the primary social process" (Carbaugh 1990, 18) and specifically as: "a sociocultural system of coordinated action and meaning, that is, an interactional system that is individually applied, socially negotiated, symbolically constituted and culturally distinct" (Carbaugh and Hastings 1992, 159). This approach to studying cross-cultural communication makes the presumptive claim that language *use* cannot be separated or even understood apart from the scenes in which it occurs, and that specific emphasis must be placed on the study of communication practice itself. In particular, EC has built knowledge about communication by presuming the following: that "everywhere there is communication, a system is at work; that everywhere there is a communication system, there is cultural meaning and social organizations and thus, that the communication system is at least partly constitutive of socio-cultural life" (Philipsen 1992, 7-16). To maximize the effectiveness and appropriateness, instructional material for professional cohorts must emphasize the context of communication and be situated within the organization's socio-cultural environment. Thus, EC is conceived of not only as a research tool, but also as a means for students to understand culture and for educators to provide culturally appropriate ways to teach.

In addition to its focus on locally distinctive practices of communication, EC also has informed the CuDA methodology which offers procedures for analysis of communication practices as formative of social life (Carbaugh 2008). This approach to communication and culture is particularly useful for military personnel who need to understand culture in both general and specific ways and who will be experiencing communication in a particular context, but in a wide variety of cultural settings. Although culture is researched and taught by military scholars in a variety of disciplines (mainly political science, international relations, sociology, and anthropology), as noted by Carbaugh (1988b, 40):

The culture concept is used best in our empirical studies when it describes communication patterns of action and meaning that are deeply felt, commonly intelligible, and widely accessible, and when it explores situated

contexts of use through conceptual frames, treats cultural terms as focal concerns, and exploits the benefits of comparative study.

The authors aimed to answer Carbaugh's call, particularly the focus on situated contexts in a professional setting. Further, this study is situated within an ongoing program of CuDA work—which systematically explores language “in use” and treats communication as cultural discourse. The authors drew from studies that have featured prominently both the “context” and the participants’ membership and identities as shaped through dialogue. For example, Carbaugh, Nuciforo, Saito, and Shin’s (2011) analysis of the distinctive features of “dialogue” in Japanese, Korean, and Russian discourse; Witteborn’s (2011) examination of intercultural dialogue in a virtual forum via the use of “identity terms” and “truth talk,” among others; Milburn’s (2009) cultural discourse analysis of “membership” and “community context” in non-profit organizations; as well as Miller and Rudnick’s (2008) work devoted to the *Security Needs Assessment Protocol* for the United Nations in which they research local cultural discourses in order to develop effective and appropriate strategies for working within a community.

A summary of the course’s objectives, concepts, and skills will now be provided to illustrate how this EC approach to culture was infused into the design and development of the CCC course.

COMMUNICATION CONTENT IN A MILITARY CONTEXT: AN OVERVIEW OF THE CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

To best serve its student population, the CCC course is situated squarely where professional development meets academic instruction. Built on a solid base of quality scholarship from the discipline of communication, the course focuses on applying the field to the military profession. CCC is offered at no cost and available to all enlisted Airmen by the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) via Blackboard.⁴ Under the accreditation purview of both Air University and the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) since 2011, the course fulfills three general elective or social science credits and contains twelve lessons. Beyond the course credit assignment, the course’s focus on communication as part of relationship-building also fulfills professional development needs that align with the twenty-first-century Air Force readiness goals. As has been stated in a variety of military publications, military power is no longer just about firepower, it about the power to build relationships (Ben-Yoav Nobel, Wortinger, and Hannah 2007). The military recognizes that cross-culturally competent communication is one of the keys to building

successful relationships, and the authors of this chapter and of the CCC course are committed to ensuring that communication remains at the center of this effort.

As such, there are three objectives of CCC which collectively facilitate the development of student service members’ cross-cultural communication competence and can be categorized into knowledge, skills, and abilities. First, the course familiarizes students with the leading concepts, theories, and scholars of cross-cultural communication and seeks to instill in students a sense of the importance of competent cross-cultural communication in both personal and professional settings. Second, it introduces students to the skills that comprise cross-cultural competence (3C). Lastly, and most importantly, it enables students to apply cross-cultural communication skills in a variety of Air Force contexts. It is the field-specific SJT applications that transform this course from a cross-cultural communication course taken by students in the military to a cross-cultural communication course for military students.

Cross-cultural communication is a new discipline in military scholarship, as it was once in the fields of education, counseling, and medicine. Intentional design was essential due to the necessity to make the case for communication as an indispensable professional competency in matters of national defense (see Mackenzie 2014, and Greene-Sands and Greene-Sands 2014, for arguments devoted to institutionalizing intercultural communication into Professional Military Education). The success of the classes’ instructional design methods highlights its potential to inform cross-cultural communication training and education in a wide variety of disciplines. Although created for Air Force members, the structure and profession-specific SJT formula are applicable to cross-cultural competence training and development for any professional cohort.

The first course objective relating to knowledge is achieved through eleven lessons of cross-cultural communication content (also described in Mackenzie and Wallace 2012) focused on the most up-to-date scholarship and military applicability. The ability to situate communication within the context of the military community, as well as within greater academia, is a consequence of the position of engaged scholarship afforded by the Air Force Culture and Language Center. The course content never loses focus of the applicability of every concept to the military profession, its singular purpose being to build a comprehensive toolkit for members’ intercultural interaction. The essential concepts are divided into eleven content lessons devoted to:

- Culture-General vs. Culture-Specific
- Cross-Cultural Communication is about Interpreting Cultural Messages

- Narrative Functions to Communicate Identities Across Cultures
- Communication Approaches to Culture
- Cross-Cultural Communication Competence
- Managing Paralinguistic Use and Perception
- Decoding Nonverbal Messages
- Active Listening
- Identifying and Adapting to Different Communication Styles
- Employing Effective Interaction Skills
- Building Relationships and Managing Conflict

The second course objective (“introduces students to the skills that comprise cross-cultural competence”) is achieved by a variety of visual enhancements. As previously described, OLL brings unique challenges and opportunities to the communication classroom. To address the interactive shortcomings, each lesson includes an introductory video by the professor lasting approximately five minutes, followed by a movie clip application, twenty pages (on average) of course content per lesson, an average of two readings (one to two hours), interactive knowledge checks, and scenario-based exercises (SJT(s)). The readings are selected intentionally to be both military-relevant and academically-based to balance academic rigor with professional applications. Instruction is typically followed by video illustrations and case studies of communication successes and failures. The course is filled with examples of successful cross-cultural communication as well as failed attempts and the ways in which they can impact both personal and professional relationships. An emphasis on the skills associated with competent cross-cultural communication reinforces the importance of mission-effective *and* culturally appropriate communication for military students.

The final course objective, (“enabling students to apply cross-cultural communication skills in a variety of Air Force contexts”) is achieved through the instructional design strategy. Given the objectives of the course and the online delivery of the content, the instructional strategy must include methods of engaging students in the content, and with each other, in a way that meaningfully contributes to the acquisition and retention of communication skills. The study of communication is inherently contextual, and is about language *use* (not language production). Consequently, through scenarios, case studies, and video illustrations students are exposed to successes and failures in cultural message interpretation. They are also provided opportunities to engage in active listening, perspective-taking, and interpreting cultural messages in context through the use of scenario-based learning followed by Situational Judgment Tests. The majority of the Situational Judgment Tests have a military operations focus and serve to remind students of the connection between the quality

of their communication and the quality of their relationships. The profession-specific SJTs naturally follow this confluence of academic knowledge and practical skills. Finally, the twelfth lesson provides students with an opportunity to apply what they’ve learned via a live-actor, film-based, cross-cultural immersion scenario.

INTENTIONAL DESIGN: AN SJT FORMULA FOR PROFESSIONAL ONLINE CULTURE COURSES

The CCC pilot in 2011 included several non-military, non-communication-centered SJTs borrowed from international business articles. By 2014, however, all lessons in the course include original SJTs informed by students’ intercultural experiences and written by the authors. Communication in skills practice is the theoretical concern and focus of inquiry for the SJTs and drove the authors to develop an intentional design formula for each lesson of the course. This process is discussed in the section to follow.

The CCC SJTs have been gleaned from previous student wiki contributions about their deployments and overseas assignments to introduce cross-cultural communication skills and assess student understanding. Military students’ experiences have become teaching tools for themselves and their peers, utilizing an intentionally diverse sample of locations for the culture-specific scenarios (examples of countries included are: Singapore, Italy, the Bahamas, S. Korea, and Canada, among others). Generally speaking, these scenarios assess a student’s ability to apply communication concepts and theories in culturally complex circumstances, and thus require higher-order thinking and decision-making on the part of the student. Scenarios are designed to (1) be consistent with the types of situations military students have faced while deployed or stationed abroad, (2) utilize the language and code of the military culture, and (3) provide immediate feedback to the student about how optimal each choice is compared to the other options presented. Thus, the testing experience itself is a formative learning tool, allowing students to experience simulated consequences of their cultural choices.

The question then remains: how does an instructor move from reviewing wiki contributions to SJT construction? This question can be answered by drawing from grounded theory and CuDA. The wiki “experience” by the authors and CCC professors is inherently ethnographic—that is, the professors are *in situ* with our students in the only way you can be in an online, self-paced course. The Blackboard wiki format assisted in aggregating student responses by overarchiving themes within the context of each lesson. The designers utilized a process of idiographic coding with a

focus on individual units of meaning and nomothetic coding with a broad focus on looking for overarching and more abstract themes (Grbich 2007).

One means for turning an online, self-paced course (created initially to introduce CCC academic concepts and skills) into a professional student-centered learning experience is to solicit students' contributions that connect to the course content. It was the researcher-instructors' way of reminding military students that this isn't just any online course—but instead a course infused with previous students' intercultural experiences to bring the content to life and ensure relevance to the military cohort.

A variety of wiki prompts are used in all eleven content-based lessons of the course and ask questions such as:

Lesson 5: Provide an example you've witnessed of effective but not appropriate or appropriate but not effective communication.

Lesson 10: Think about the most difficult conversation you've had with a person from a different culture. Now that you've learned about the importance of impression management (that is, self-monitoring, emotion regulation, and perception checking), describe what you could have done differently to improve the outcome of the conversation.

Thus, as the authors began to review the hundreds of wiki contributions at the end of the course, the following questions were asked in order to set apart the contributions that would be transformed into an SJT for the next iteration of the course.

1. Is there a new culture or Air Base that many CCAF students have been assigned to that has not yet been mentioned? Many culture-specific stories and examples found in the course are Middle-Eastern (since that is where the majority of military operations have occurred since the course began), and several students requested more diversity in the cultures represented.
2. Is there a specific communication practice related to the lesson that has not yet been elaborated on in the course? Although the course introduces a wide range of communication practices and speech acts, some resonate with military students more than others. The wiki contributions give the professors an opportunity to find patterns that should be represented in the course.
3. Is there a different relationship written about that could put the communication concept/skill into a new context? For instance, the majority of the scenarios described in the anecdotes/examples throughout the course were adapted from general academic or business literature and were devoted to roommates, significant others, and supervisors/Commanders. The students' wiki contributions

gave the authors an opportunity to learn about other relationships that are of significance and/or problematic to military students.

4. Is there a military symbol, ritual, or object that could lend the lesson content more military legitimacy? Since the CCC Professors are/have been married to military personnel and lived on many military installations but not served themselves, this question helps ensure that the course examples and SJTs are up-to-date and consistent with the lived experience of an enlisted Airman. Using military symbols, rituals, and objects in the SJTs that are gleaned from previous students' wiki contributions ensures military appropriateness in the culture-specific examples provided throughout the course.

These questions reflect the authors' intent to heed Carbaugh's call to "explore situated contexts of use through conceptual frames" (1988b, 40). The answers to these questions have led the authors to devise a culture-specific, military-appropriate, and communication skill-centered formula for the online military culture SJTs. Four samples from the CCC course will now illustrate the design alterations that were made as a result.

SAMPLE SJTs PRODUCED FROM THE INTENTIONAL DESIGN FORMULA

The following SJTs answer one of the four questions posed by the CCC professors as they read through the course wiki. The first represents an object familiar to all Airmen, the standard issue pocket knife. Although the skill of "perception-checking" was already included in lesson 10, the CCC student's experience in Singapore brought the skill to life in a military scenario.

1. MILITARY-APPROPRIATE OBJECT/SYMBOL = *Singapore / knife*

Lesson 10: Employing Effective Interaction Skills

Cuts like a Knife

While working with foreign military equivalents in Singapore for several months at Paya Lebar Air Base, Tech Sergeant Hurston's team noticed that a few of the local Airmen were really interested in the one-handed opening knives that were standard issue for American Airmen. Since the knife is relatively inexpensive to replace and the Singaporean Airmen expressed such genuine interest in them, TSgt Hurston and several other members of the team decided to offer their knives as gifts to their Singaporean counterparts. Just before they left the country to head home, the American Airmen gave the gifts in a polite ceremonial way with both

hands as they had seen Singaporeans do over the past four months. None of the Singaporean military members would accept the gifts, even after the American Airmen adamantly insisted they take the knives.

What should TSgt Hurston say or do next to demonstrate the cross-cultural communication skill of perception-checking?

- a) Present the gift again with a bow, as is expected in some South East Asian cultures to convey respect. Wait to see if the bows are returned and, if they are deeper, that is a sign that the gift is appreciated.
- b) Explain that he gave the gift as a token of friendship. Tell the Singaporean military members that you sensed that the gift may have offended them, and ask how they interpreted the gift.
- c) Explain the importance of gift-giving in American culture and that it demonstrates the amount of value that is placed on friendship.⁵

The next SIT illustrates haphtics in a way that resonate with many Airmen who have been stationed in Europe. In the first few iterations of the CCC course, the majority of the relationships referred to in the lessons represented romantic or superior/subordinate relationships. However, after many students discussed the difficulty of effective communication with landlords overseas in the course wiki, the professors realized that this relationship was one that also needed attention in an intercultural context.

II. RELATIONSHIP = Italian landlord

Lesson 7: Nonverbal Communication Skills

L'APPARTAMENTO ITALIANO

After being assigned to Aviano AB in northern Italy, Senior Airman Daniels and his wife arranged to rent an apartment owned by a friendly older Italian couple near the town of Venezia. When they dropped off their rent and deposit, the landlord's wife, who spoke English fairly well, mentioned that the American couple reminded her of them at a young age. A few days after they moved in, the landlord, who did not speak much English, brought over a bottle of wine for the new tenants. SrA Daniels took the wine bottle from the landlord and attempted to thank him in what little Italian he had picked up. The landlord, who was standing quite close to the couple, responded excitedly in Italian while waving his hands in the air. He then reached over and slapped SrA Daniels on the cheek quickly.

Which statement offers the best nonverbal communication explanation for this behavior?

- a) The landlord was offended by SrA Daniels limited Italian speaking skills and was frustrated by their inability to communicate effectively. Most

Italians expect Airmen to have a functional knowledge of Italian before conducting business.

- b) The landlord was displaying affection. In Italy, slapping someone on the cheek is often seen as an act of friendship.
- c) The landlord was taken aback by the rudeness of the Americans who did not have a gift to give in return. This lack of preparedness for the initial interaction by the American is considered a sign of poor upbringing by many Italians.⁶

The third SIT acknowledges a pattern of miscommunication found in a variety of wiki contributions by Airmen who has been stationed in S. Korea. The use of silence as a form of communication was not given much attention in the CCC pilot, and after reading about students' experiences with Koreans in the course wiki, the professors felt it would be of added value to address this common American/Korean misunderstanding about the use of silence.

III. COMMUNICATION-CENTERED ACT/PRACTICE = S. Korea /

Use of silence

Lesson 10: Interaction Skills

Meet in the Middle

Lee Ga-yun, a female Staff Sergeant in the ROK Air Force scheduled a meeting with SSGT Grange, a new arrival from the US Air Force, to work on a plan to complete a review of the shop's training records. When SSGT Grange arrived, SSGT Lee greeted him and they sat down.

SSgt Lee: "Good morning. I just wanted to meet with you to come up with a plan to ensure that everyone completes their training on time and that our records reflect that." She paused for a few seconds before continuing, "as we begin, do you have any questions?"

SSgt Grange: "Actually, my last shop operated very similarly so I think I should be good." He paused for a few seconds but SSGT Lee did not respond, so he then went on.

SSgt Grange: "I was the training manager there, too." A few more seconds of silence passed. "We had a great system to make sure everyone was up-to-date." A few more seconds of uncomfortable silence passed. "My supervisor there can back me up on this." SSGT Grange let another few seconds pass without a response from SSGT Lee so he decided to launch into a full explanation of his understanding of training and record-keeping procedures for almost 10 minutes, suggesting that they try the way his old shop did it first and see how that goes. He finished by asking "Does that plan sound okay to you?"

SSgt Lee paused for several moments, then responded, "It seems like your suggestion will work and we can try it out. Please let me know if I can help you in any way."

SSgt Grange left immediately feeling very frustrated with the meeting and with SSgt Lee's lack of assistance.

Based on your knowledge of interaction skills, what could SSgt Grange have done to demonstrate better impression management?

a) Engage in self-monitoring. Acknowledge that he has talked a lot and allow more time for SSgt Lee to respond to his statements. Consider that he could be misreading her interaction cues and misinterpreting her silence in this conversation since it would be unlikely SSgt Lee would schedule a meeting without anything to say.

b) Manage his paralinguistic skills by using falling intonation to communicate his displeasure with SSgt Lee's silence and more forcefully end his sentences to encourage her to answer. Consider whether or not using a loud or soft volume is a more appropriate way to encourage participation in a conversation.

c) Ask more indirect questions about SSgt Lee's background to help her save face and accommodate Korea's high-context communication preferences. Consider that she might not want to contribute anything until they know each other better.⁷

Finally, after reading post-course evaluations from CCC students that requested greater variety in cultural examples throughout the course (up to that point, the majority of cultures referred to were Middle Eastern) the professors used the wiki to search out other parts of the world where students were living and working. This SFT also acknowledges that there are very few Airmen (out of the Total Force) who are pilots, and the professors wanted students to know they recognize the wide variety of Air Force professions.

IV. CULTURE-SPECIFIC LOCATION = Bahamas (Functional Area Manager)

Lesson 9: Identifying Communication Styles *The Communication of Respect*

SMSgt Cameron Thayer is currently serving as an education and training Functional Area Manager (FAM) with the Reserves and was tasked to help run an exercise site survey and planning symposium in Freeport, Bahamas. The exercise is a joint endeavor utilizing U.S. DoD and Bahamian government agencies at multiple locations within the city of Freeport.

At each site, the facilitator, Captain Francis with the U.S. Coast Guard, calls for everyone's attention to begin introductions. He then goes around the room casually introducing participants starting first with DoD personnel and continuing with the participants from the Bahamian government. Business is addressed immediately after introductions.

SMSgt Thayer begins to notice that the head of the Bahamas' National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) is becoming more and more

agitated, impatient, and ultimately uncooperative throughout the day and brings this to the attention of the facilitator.

Which of the following recommendations would best accommodate Bahamian communication preferences in initial interactions in order to improve the outcome of the exercise?

a) Explain that the facilitator should make formal introductions in rank order using only titles and surnames. He should introduce the Bahamian members of the team first in order of importance to communicate respect.

b) Advise the facilitator to get directly down to business; the Bahamians are becoming impatient because they feel like Captain Francis is not respecting their valuable time.

c) Suggest the possibility that Captain Francis' loud voice is being perceived as disrespectful. Recommend that the facilitator speak more softly when addressing everyone during the introductions to fit the relaxed Caribbean culture of the Bahamian archipelago.⁸

Using student wiki contributions to inform the locations, communication practices, relationships, and military-specific items of the SFTs provides an answer to the general question raised by CuDA: "How is communication shaped as a cultural practice?" (Carbaugh 2007, 168). That is, the "hubs of cultural meaning" found in the student wiki contributions (and transformed into SFTs) enhance our understanding of military students' cross-cultural experiences and can be used as both teaching and learning tools in the online classroom.

CONCLUSION

As noted by Aakhus (2007), design enterprise reveals assumptions about how communication can and should work. Including SFTs in the design process in order to privilege military students' lived experiences and subsequently updating them as the course progresses—is an example of communication best practices in distance education (Mackenzie, Fogarty, and Khachadorian 2013). Accordingly, the work described here perpetuates the practicality of communication as an applied discipline by informing both theory and application of online intercultural communication course design. The "users" and inspiration for this project are military students whose educational journey and professional development will be enriched by the outcome of this effort.

It has been argued in this chapter that if the "practitioners" of cross-cultural competence (in this case, the military students) are to benefit from their professors' scholarly efforts, it is of the utmost importance that they be included in the instructional design process. Airmen will be unable

to adopt the findings of the teaching practices intended to educate them if they do not have a say on what is being studied or understand how it impacts mission success. In the same sense, educators and researchers cannot hope to solve practical problems with their work if they don't have a clear idea of what those problems are. This is where the importance of engaged scholarship comes into play. The aim of this chapter has been to explain how student wiki contributions have informed the design of the CCC course and, in turn, how the online course design lends itself to more active student engagement. This was done by discussing the constraints and enablers of online learning, using the CuDA methodology as engaged scholars to frame the questions guiding the transformation from student wiki contribution to SJI, and suggesting a formula for intentional course design that is culture-specific, communication skill-centered, and profession-appropriate. Four military SJI examples were provided, but this formula could certainly be applied in educating any professional cohort.

The authors maintain that iterative modification adds value to intentional course design. As the quality of online courses becomes increasingly scrutinized, such efforts take on added importance by emphasizing the ways in which teaching and research as well as theory and practice are inextricably tied—for it is the nature of this connection that makes research *relevant* and teaching *transformative*. As stated by Flyvbjerg (2001, 166):

If we want to re-enchant and empower social science . . . we must take up problems that matter to the local, national, and global communities in which we live, and we must do it in ways that matter . . . [and] we must effectively communicate the results of our research to fellow citizens. If we do this, we may successfully transform social science from what is fast becoming a sterile academic activity, which is undertaken mostly for its own sake and in increasing isolation from a society on which it has little effect and from which it gets little appreciation. We may transform social science to an activity done in times to generate new perspectives, and always to serve as eyes and ears in the future. We may, in short, arrive at a social science that matters.

The current chapter is one step taken in the direction of making social science research matter to the students it aims to serve.

NOTES

1. The interviews used as supplemental research in this chapter are based on contributions to the wiki used in the Introduction to Cross-Cultural Communication (CCC) course at the Community College of the Air Force, but no real names or direct quotations are used in order to protect the privacy of each participant.
2. SJI scores (sum of the correct responses to eight items) were positively correlated with the overall course grade which included lesson quizzes, a midterm exam, and a final exam ($r = .18, p < .05, n = 147$). The results provide construct

validity for the SJTs in that they were not only positively correlated with course grades, but also with wiki contributions ($r = .18, p < .01$), the knowledge post-test score ($r = .26, p < .01$), and the pre-flexibility score ($r = -.15, p < .05$). The effects of wiki participation on the Situational Judgment Test also were analyzed in a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). The results demonstrated significant positive main effects for participation in the wiki on the SJI scores, $F(1, 227) = 7.65, p < .01$. Thus, students who contributed to the wiki had significantly higher SJI scores ($M = 5.39, SD = 3.29$) than students who did not contribute to the wiki ($M = 4.04, SD = 3.21$). These results emphasize the importance of continuing to use the wiki and SJTs to improve student learning outcomes.

3. It should be noted here that students contribute to the course wiki one lesson at a time. At the end of each iteration of the course, wikis are reviewed for potential conversion into a SJI. Thus, wiki contributions in the current iteration of the course would not be (potentially) transformed into SJTs until the next iteration of the course.

4. See <http://culture.af.mil/enrollment/window.aspx> for more information.

5. "p" is the best choice. Giving a knife as a gift in Singaporean culture implies you are "severing" the friendship. In Singapore and other indirect, high-context cultures they often rely on subtle hints to convey messages that may threaten another person's "face" or cause conflict. The primary functions of communication in these cultures are to act as a social lubricant, preserve harmony, and protect face rather than simply convey information. In direct, low-context cultures gifts are just gifts and relational messages are conveyed verbally, even if it may hurt some feelings. High-context cultures often have strong gifting customs and place meaning behind every gift. TSgt Hurston displayed perception-checking by first stating why he gave the gift, then describing what he perceived was their perception, and then checking if his perception was correct.

6. "p" is the best choice. The Italian culture is a very high-contact culture in which many individuals use haptic behavior like pinching cheeks, punching shoulders, and slapping as a friendly gesture. Many older Italians do this with younger people, especially family members like children, grandchildren, nieces, and nephews. These exuberant nonverbal behaviors may be rough or invasive by American standards but they are quite common among Italians. The other choices reflected cultural approaches to linguistic competence and gifting rather than nonverbal communication.

7. "a" is the best choice. Successfully interpreting turn-taking cues in Korea often requires accepting a moment of silence lasting between five and ten seconds between speaking turns, which can feel very awkward to Americans who may continue to speak before their Korean counterpart perceives it is their turn. Koreans wait for this length of silence to indicate that it is their turn to speak and may not be comfortable interrupting a speaking partner to share their ideas. Ssgt Grange is practicing Impression management here by acknowledging that he has talked a lot (self-monitoring) and correctly associating Ssgt Lee's silence with cultural preferences rather than inability to contribute (perceptual acuity).

8. "a" is the best choice. The best accommodation of Bahamian introduction preferences is to make formal introductions using only titles and surnames and address the Bahamian members of the team first in order of importance to communicate respect. The Bahamian culture is very hierarchical and first names are typically used only by very close friends and family. Once the facilitator began to

introduce the Bahamians first, the NEMA Minister's body language and attitude changed and he became more engaged in the plan.

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Epilogue

Implications for Improving UX Practice

Trudy Milburn and James L. Leighter

This book explored several representative local strategies studies about user experiences with digital media. Our aim has been to illustrate the ways in which this set of methods has been fruitfully employed to enhance design work. The progression from micro-interaction analysis to more macro-interpretations about relationships and culture have demonstrated several moments within the design process where cultural context is used to gain a more refined understanding about digital interaction through everyday situations.

In these concluding remarks, we focus on some themes that several chapters have touched upon, raising further questions about the use of local strategies research (LSR) and the implications for practice in design settings. We will also reflect upon the ways LSR is being articulated and make some suggestions for further refinement as we continue this applied work. Finally, we will offer some next steps that can be taken by practitioners who want to embed these suggestions into their own work.

THEMATIC REVIEW: LSR TOOLKIT

Each chapter provides a general orientation to methods that we are grouping together as "local strategies research." Using previously defined labels of ethnography of communication, cultural discourse theory, and cultural codes theory, we have compiled what can be considered a toolbox of analytic methods researchers employ to help interpret the actions and patterned practices witnessed through participant observation and supplemented by interviews. Digital media allow researchers to record