I worked with a 45 year old woman from India. She was making eggs for her kids for dinner and I thought it would be interesting to see if there were any cultural differences that came across when she cooked. She was a stay at home mom who just recently started going back to school to get an accounting degree. This activity took place at 6 pm which I thought was a strange time to be cooking eggs.

Saturday, 13 September 2014

Start. I explained to the participant that I wanted her to perform her normal activities and talk me through what she was doing. I wanted details about how she performed this activity and that there was no way to perform this activity incorrectly. We are starting in the kitchen at her home. P: Ok, so I guess I’ll start by getting out the eggs, butter, and the cooking pan. Where is that butter? I never can seem to find it. Always somewhere different in the fridge. (NOTE: I found it interesting that she had trouble finding the butter for someone who cooked so often. Her kids must move it around as well) Gah! Oh, ok there it is. [Without much difficulty she gets together the rest of the ingredients to fry 2 eggs]. P: I also like to get out the plate to put it on so I have everything here I need. Oh, and the spatula. NOTE(I found it interesting that she laid out everything she needed before starting. Very organized.)[She turns on the stove to high and puts the butter in the pan]Ok, I melt the butter in the pan and then wash the outside of the eggs I’m going to use. [Why do you do that?] It’s cleaner that way, NOTE(emphasis on cleanliness) you never know if there’s something on the outside of the eggs. Plus it’s a nice excuse to wash my hands before I cook. Oh! And it’s the perfect amount of time for the butter to melt! NOTE(storing information in the world)[she goes back over to the stove] Ok, now that the butter is melted I’m going to break one egg into the pan and be VERY careful not to break the yoke. When that happens I just start over. NOTE(costly mistake to avoid) No point in even cooking it. [She precedes to crack one of the eggs on the pan, then clean out the inside of the eggshell with her thumb and put that into the pan too] [Why do you do that?] Oh? Clean out the eggshell? I guess I was just raised not to me wasteful you know? NOTE(this was an interesting cultural difference. Don’t be wasteful! But also don’t break the egg yokes?) There’s still some egg white in there! I’m not wasting that! And now we wait till the egg starts to get crispy on the outside edge. [you’re not going to put in the other egg?] No, I like to cook them one at a time. Otherwise the yokes break and you just wasted two eggs! And there it is, crispy. I’ll flip it over with the spatula here, then almost immediately take it out and start the process over on the second egg.

“Design Implications”

This activity could be much more automated. If there was some sort of egg cracking device she wouldn’t have to worry about breaking an egg and having to start over. This could also speed up the egg cooking process as this did seem to take up a lot of time. Having some place that she teaches her kids to always put the butter would save her the trouble of looking for it in the future.