International User Interfaces

1 What is cross-cultural design?

Designing technology for different cultures, languages and economic standings to ensure usability and user experience across cultural boundaries

We use western design patterns and mostly use English as the mean language. But to make sure our designs are effective we must know that everything is interpreted by users based on their cultural backgrounds and values

2 Some issues

Factors that effect an individual's response to a system

- Age, gender, race, sexuality, class, religion and political persuasion

Exported software frequently required modifications to suit local customs; laws or conventions

Most experiences have previously concentrated on the technical issues such as the spelling dictionary and translation

However some applications blend technical and social facilities such as groupware - this increases the complexity of the design issues

The development of multiple interfaces is costly so it is important to make generic, and easily modifiable, as much of the interface as possible

3 Three levels of interface specialisation

Globalisation

- A fully globalized app or website is fully available and functional in multiple languages
- Globalisation is the end goal and to achieve this have to consider the other two processes within globalisation

Internationalisation

- Internationalisation is a task that has to be completed in order for the end goal to be achieved. Internationalisation is not the easiest change to make to a website and it takes a lot more effort than just translating the website's language. It is the process of designing and building an application to facilitate localisation

Localisation

- Refers to the adaptation of a product, application or document content to meet the language, cultural requirements of a specific target market (a locale) developing specific interfaces to meet a particular market

4 Effective design

Effective design involves recognising the cultural elements in a given application

Cultural diversity makes it even more unrealistic for designers to rely in intuition or personal experience for interface design

Adaptation of shared interfaces requires identification of user factors, including:

- Objective factors: gender, age, ethnic background, mother-tongue
- Subjective factors: which cannot be directly measured or identified such as cognitive style

5 Iceberg model

Surface: visible, obvious rules such as number, currency, time and date formats

Unspoken rules: Obscured, need context of situation to understand the rules

Unconscious rules: Rules out of conscious awareness and difficult to study

6 Multi-cultural interface design

Some practical advice on factors that are affected by culture, language and local conventions

- Character sets and collating sequences
- Format conventions for numbers, dates, times and currency
- Layout conventions e.g. for names, addresses and telephone numbers
- Icons, symbols, graphics and colours; screen text

Definition: Collating sequences

These define the value and position of each character with respect to other characters. Alphabetic and alphanumeric lists are sorted according to these sequences. However, different cultures have different sequences and rules for sorting these characters

6.1 Icons, fonts and symbols

Not all icons translate across cultures, in Japan tick means incorrect and a circle means correct

7 Cultural issues

Issues that impact the user interface from locale to locale include:

- **Nationalism** - What is considered an inherent part of a nation or culture and what is considered a threat to it
- **Language** - People are insulted by ”low status” dialect
- **Social context** - Who made a statement is just as important as what the statement is in some parts of the world

8 User customisation

- Keep sentences as short and simple as possible
- Allow users to select the date and time format
- Allow users to select calendar format
- Allow users to select paper size
- Allow users to select numeric and monetary formats