**DESIGNER’S COMMUNICATION REFELCTION**

Personally, I believe designer’s communication is about learning to become a more effective communicator as an engineer/designer. It’s about being able to identify, understanding, and taking into consideration the nuances in the information you receive through a variety of media as a designer. My preferred media for communication depends on the situation. When interacting with stakeholders and trying to understand them, I prefer being involved in whatever idea needs to be communicated in order to exercise empathy and to “put myself in their shoes”. When communicating with team members, visual methods of communicating are effective too. I also find in-person verbal communication extremely informative in certain cases, as I am able to use cues from the other person’s body language, tone of voice, and the overall ambience to understand nuances in their perspective on ideas being discussed – something that is impossible to replicate online.

For our team’s design specifically, while I am aware that my perspective is limited and biased, I believe that its UI and functionality is very simple and intuitive. In that respect, there are minimal challenges in communicating our design in global contexts. However, the language of the UI is currently only in English, which should be fine in Ghana (our intended location of use) but may encounter language barrier issues in other areas of the world. Regardless, this is easily fixable. However, I am aware that there may be other areas for potential miscommunication on our design that I am oblivious to. There may be mismatches in the intention and interpretation of our design due to lack of information or understanding of the situation/conditions in Ghana, given our team’s current worldview. With lack of or incorrect information, there may be situations that we have not considered when developing our design which ultimately may end up being misinterpreted by the stakeholders.

As discussed in the previous reflection, the Curse of Knowledge also has significant impact on design work. As I understand it, the Curse of Knowledge is the idea that when communicating, one assumes that others have the same background or amount of knowledge. This can cause a lack of necessary communication or misunderstandings since those who are not as experienced are not receiving the same information. I believe it has the greatest effect on the communication between our team and the stakeholders. Since the systems and culture in Ghana have been thoroughly developed, to those in Ghana, many of these systems have become engrained common knowledge. But to our design team, these systems and culture are foreign and require information on them to fully understand our stakeholders. To some degree, I believe the Curse of Knowledge will always be unavoidable. In the context of understanding stakeholders, it is nearly impossible to fully understand and experience the nuances and peculiarities of their environment unless the designer is a member of the community themselves. Regardless, our team has attempted to minimize the Curse by trying to communicate very clearly between group members and stakeholders. We consciously try to keep an objective mindset and avoid assumptions.

Besides the Curse of Knowledge, our team encountered other challenges in designer’s communication as well. In particular, the media for communication was often a very big obstacle for communicating visual ideas. For example, when trying to communicate details about structural components online, our structural lead would send screenshots of the CAD design asking for confirmations or advice. Our team would attempt to specify our ideas through messages, but without visually showing them what was in our minds, our ideas were often misinterpreted leading to incorrectly designed structural components on Fusion360. This (difficulties in clearly communicating our ideas on structural aspects of the design) was by far the biggest source of misunderstandings. After many unsuccessful attempts at communicating these ideas through messages, we realized that in order to avoid these miscommunications, it was much more efficient to draw out our ideas, even though drawing was slightly more inconvenient and less accessible. However, sometimes communicating ideas through drawing also failed, as drawing moving parts or complex 3-dimensional structures and concepts was also extremely difficult.

Ultimately, I believe the most effective way to communicate a design is through involvement by the stakeholders and users. This was persistently supported throughout my experience in Praxis. Verbal communication of designs always proved to be insufficient and unclear (as demonstrated in the example discussed earlier). A visual representation or drawing is much better, as it is able to immediately show the structure of the design and different components. But without actually seeing or actually using it, it is difficult for one to see how the structure/components come together to function. Connecting back to my empathy reflection, empathy supports this idea as well. In order for one to fully understand another’s experiences and eliminate biases, one must experience it for themselves. I understand that it is often difficult to involve the users potentially due to geographic location, so a video of a demonstration of the design is also often an excellent method of communication. In future iterations, more of these methods of communication discussed would be used in all aspects of communication, with stakeholders and team members alike.