

Technology of Inter-cultural Communication

Computer environments can offer new tools for the inter-cultural communication between nations. Use of the Internet especially can act as a powerful way for cultures to interact in novel and surprising ways. The different languages that are spoken and written by different nations will of course present problems for intercultural communication, but even with these difficulties much dialogue is still occurring because of email, instant messenger and chatting communication tools. These technologies allow cultures who may have previously had little interaction to enter into and sustain relationships in an online environment. All cultures are not on a level playing field when it comes to accessing technology, either geographically or when it comes to training and education. Texts and other historic communication mediums have always been strongly linked to the materiality and the prosperity of the specific culture under question. While digital communicative practices and virtual environments may have changed the nature of the relationship to materiality - and indeed to text itself - there is still a strong link between material wealth and the availability of digital communication tools. Humans have always acted through certain mediums as well as directly on the world, and even though the computer and the Internet may act as powerful spatial manipulation tools, they are still dependent on a material medium and thus are still subject to cultural and economic constraints. {mosgoogle center} There are two opposing predictions regarding inter-cultural communication with regard to computing. Firstly, the Internet does in many ways facilitate cross-cultural communication and can in theory reduce the perceived distance between cultures and create the 'global electronic village' you have probably heard about. This may at times seem like nothing more than a cute catch phrase, but the Internet has definitely made the world a smaller place in many regards. The second opposing prediction lies at almost 180 degrees and states that the technology of the Internet could further the dominance of English speaking wealthy nations and actually increase the disparity between cultures. Universal access does not automatically mean universal power and even in a situation where everyone could have access to the Internet, power still depends on who is controlling and generating the content that is online. Since the start of computing there has always been a strong bias towards English and its use as a standard. This is very understandable as computing and the Internet both began in English speaking countries, however in the 21st century we need to make sure that all nations have an equal opportunity to use and develop digital products and culture equally. Questions are also raised as to whether these equal digital opportunities if created will lead to a global monoculture or if a rich cultural pluralism can still be maintained. In general it is western nations and cultures who define the standard of living that many people worldwide aspire to, and this compelling force may be increased if technology is allowed to penetrate even deeper into non western nations. Only time will tell what the effects of technology will have on global inter-cultural communication between nations.