

MIT 511: Holidays Around the World Website

Context

The instructional site, Holidays Around the World, was created for the MIT 511 course, Multimedia Design and Development. This project was completed during the Fall 2005 semester under the supervision of Dr. Arnold Murdock. This course provided the opportunity to learn the basics of the Macromedia Suite and apply this knowledge during production of a website to be used for instructional purposes. The design for this site was based on Mayer's Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning, which we discussed in depth within the course. This theory emphasizes using titles and visuals to highlight important information for learners and aid in their ability to process the information. To complete this project I was required to:

- Demonstrate an understanding of accepted standards for website design, including style and accessibility.
- Demonstrate skills in web site development through the use of effective site design and utilization of multimedia assets.
- Apply contemporary theories of multimedia learning to the development of multimedia products.

Conditions

To design and develop this website, I used prior knowledge about the content, research from educational websites, and information gathered from human resources about traditions within their family and/or culture. Based on the fact that the site was being designed for elementary school aged learners, I broke the content into very small chunks of information that would not overwhelm the students when they visited the site. Each chunk represented one concept so that they would not be subject to cognitive overload when viewing information. Likewise, if the site were used as a supplement to teacher-led instruction, the small chunks of information would prevent students from moving ahead of the instruction.

Within the design of the site, I used graphics to highlight information and provide learners with a visual representation of the content. This provides younger learners a way of incorporating new information into their prior schema. For example, visuals illustrating the various representations of Santa Claus allow them to incorporate these images with their own interpretation of the traditional Santa.

This website is also designed with two purposes in mind. Younger students may use the site as a supplement to instruction or as a group, navigating the site on a projected screen under the direction of their teacher. On the other hand, older students may navigate the site alone as part of a larger project or curriculum.

Scope

This site was designed and developed during the Fall 2005 semester and was used in five classrooms that same December as part of the Holidays Around the World research project. Kindergarten and fourth grade students use the site in various capacities as part of their project. The site is scheduled to be used again during the 2006 study of the holidays.

Role

This site was designed and developed independently allowing me to have control over the content and presentation style in relation to Mayer's Theory of Multimedia Learning. However, others were involved in developing the content as resources for information. In addition, colleagues were consulted regarding the appropriateness of the content and navigation. Formative evaluation processes were conducted using the Kindergarten classes at the elementary school where I worked and feedback from other classes was used to revise the site for final production.

Reflection

In looking at the current site, I feel that it would benefit from a more interactive interface possibly incorporating interactive quizzes and activities. Possibly links to contacts in other countries for more personal information about holiday celebrations would expand the scope of the site. I would also like to add rollover images showing changes in traditions and have Flash animations sequences showing timelines of tradition changes over time. Finally, the addition of video highlighting celebrations from around the world could benefit students.