Accessible Media Development Reflection

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Introduction

Overview

With almost 20 percent of the U.S. population identifying themselves as having a disability, the case for universal design for learning cannot be ignored (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2012). We, as aspiring instructional technology professionals, must make sure we design educational environments for all learners. And so with this assignment, I will reflect on my accessible media development project. The reader can expect the following types of discussions in my reflection: a description of the media and its accessible features, my experience designing and developing the accessible media, and how that experience will influence my future practice as an ethical leader in my field. I will use class readings and discussions and my own personal experiences and research to explain my experience designing and developing the accessible media and how that experience will influence my future practice.

Purpose

The purpose of my accessible media development reflection is for me to think about what it means to design accessible media. It is important for me to think about universal design for learning (UDL) and how it affects my current practice as a classroom teacher and my future practice as an instructional technology professional. As a special educator, I have taught students with learning disabilities, hearing impairments, low vision, autism, and emotional disabilities, and I have been responsible for accommodating those students in my classroom according to their Individualized Education Program (IEP). In the future, I may be in a position where I am in charge of ensuring other designers at my workplace are implementing accessible design principles. Regardless, I must be aware of the benefits and methods of incorporating UDL as well as the design dilemmas it may bring to light.

Description of the Media

After much consideration, I decided to repurpose the final project I did for IT 573: Introduction to Multimedia for Instruction from spring semester 2013. For that project we had to teach someone something. I made a video to review how to identify subjects and verbs of a sentence with the intended audience being secondary students. I originally produced my video using Pinnacle Studio 16 software.

As I was reviewing my project on YouTube and looking around the edit menu, I noticed the closed caption feature and decided to explore that option. Otherwise, I thought I might need to use the free Media Access Generator referred to in the Coombs text to make the closed captions for my video (Coombs, 2010, p. 106). Once I made my video closed captioned the audience for my video expanded to include people with hearing impairments. Also, by making my video closed captioned, a transcript was generated thereby making the text of my video able to be read thus benefiting those with learning disabilities and others who may not have a disability but may be helped by seeing the printed word in addition to hearing the words spoken. The benefits of including a transcript with a video are numerous. People are able to quickly read it, underline and annotate it, and share it with others (Coombs, 2010, p. 105).

Reflections

My experience designing and developing accessible media was enlightening to say the least. I was not aware of YouTube's closed captioned feature until I happened to stumble upon it. YouTube makes it relatively easy to add closed captions to video, and they also provide in-depth help pages covering such topics as caption files, transcript files, and formatting tips. I also found another resource for caption best practices at the Described and Captioned Media Program

website (www.dcmp.org). All in all, the process of including closed captions for my video was not as hard as I thought it was going to be.

While I was able to go back and include closed captions for my video fairly easily, the process was not without design dilemmas. The way the captions were presented throughout my video did not consistently follow the best practices as described on the Described and Captioned Media Program website. For example, some of my captions ran over on-screen graphics (text) and music references did not sync perfectly either. In the future, I will need to develop my expertise regarding timed caption files so that I can be more precise with controlling which captions are displayed on screen at a particular time.

Another area that I had a bit of frustration with was the script itself. When I made the video in the spring I had to submit a preliminary script to my instructor, but that, of course, changed as I was working on my project. For this semester's project, I had to go back and listen to my video to make an accurate transcript of the words that I had spoken. That was not too big of a deal because my video was only two and a half minutes long, but if my video had been longer, then the transcription process could have gotten to be tedious. In the future that bit of difficulty could be avoided by keeping an up-date-to date script so that when it comes time to caption a video it will not be as time consuming.

Also related to the transcript issue was my ignorance about the transcript feature in YouTube. Since I had made my video with closed captions, there was now a transcript icon underneath my video for people to click on and read the transcript. I did not realize this at first, so I also included my transcript underneath my video's "About" section.

In the end, UDL is about creating an equitable learning space for every person regardless if he or she has a disability, and we as ethical instructional technology professionals should not

think twice about making it our own best practice. Making online learning accessible for all is

not something that has to be labor intensive. With a little planning ahead and training, we can all

implement universal design principles in our work. It may take an extra 5-10 minutes to make a

PDF accessible, as one classmate estimated, or, in my experience, half an hour or so to include

basic closed captions for a YouTube video; however, the millions of people potentially served

make the extra time spent all worthwhile.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper I intended to accomplish a reflection upon what it means to design

accessible media. I included a description of the media I repurposed and its accessible features

that I designed. I also examined my experience designing and developing that accessible media

and how that experience will influence my future practice as an ethical leader in my field. I

accomplished this by using class readings and discussions and my own personal experiences and

research to provide context for the reader. The impact on my current and future practice is that I

will follow the seven principles of universal design when developing media for any learning

environment whether that be my current classroom or at some point in my career where I may be

involved in the design of accessible media or in a position where I am in charge of ensuring that

other designers at my workplace are implementing accessible design principles.

References

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