Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking

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Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking

Lisa Spitz (LA+D) & Liv Cummins (CLAS)
March 2018
Presentation Goals

- Discuss connections between empathy and perspective taking

- Present two approaches to use in your classroom, across disciplines and formats:
  1. Visualization of written text - for analyzing/connecting with content
  2. Empathy mapping - for connecting with people
Audience Self-Reflection

Reflect on a moment in your teaching when...

- you’ve witnessed a lack of understanding or empathy between students;
- you wished for more understanding of, or empathy for a student yourself; OR
- you desired deeper analysis of, or connection to course content from students.

Describe that moment on your index card, including the specific course.
Empathy & Perspective Taking
What is perspective taking?

Perspective-taking—viewing the world from something other than one’s vantage point—covers a broad range from the literal to metaphorical.

- “Stand here and you can see the tower between the hills”
- “These steps must look very tall to someone as short as a toddler”
- “Let’s see ... facing east, I can see the house, so if I were to face west, I would see the street”
- “Imagine what the rabbi must have thought when the caterers brought out all those trays of ham!”
To take another’s perspective...

- Understand your own perspective
- Recognize reaction of “other”
- Describe “other” perspective
- Imagine world from “other” point of view
- Understand how self/other overlap and not
- Make connections and link to productive actions
Classroom connections: Empathy through visualization

Visualization of written text: for analyzing/connecting with content
Liv’s Class
CLITR 3250.80 World Drama II
8-Week, Online Course

Empathy mapping: for connecting with people
Lisa’s Class
IAHIS 1190 Design Thinking & Research
15-Week, In-Person Course
Visual Sensemaking is...

“Visual SenseMaking is the activity of making sense of ambiguous complex situation, through visual methods and tools including words, images drawings, diagrams, charts, and graphs.”

HUMANTIFIC I SenseMaking for Changemaking

We make complex situations visual, clear and actionable.
http://www.humantific.com
Case Study: Liv’s Class

CLITR 3250.80 World Drama II
8-Week, Online Course
Visual Project & Presentation

Create a visual project which reflects your close analysis of a character, scene, or moment within a play we read this term. By approaching the world of an author or work from a visual perspective, one comes to “see” a written work in a new way.

Present your project to the class in a 1.5 – 4-minute narrated Voicethread presentation of at least 2-4 panels in which you describe your project, the choices you made, and, most importantly, what your project says about the play’s theme, style(s), period, and/or playwright, using course concepts and terms.

This project has two primary goals:

1. to closely analyze a work from a visual perspective, yielding new insight into the work;
2. to coherently explain each visual design choice made in terms of what it says about the play’s theme, style(s), period, etc., referring to course texts and terms.
Assignment Fulfills These Course Goals:

- Enhanced critical thinking
- Ability to “see” characters, conflicts, or scenes *through* a visual
- Connecting written texts a) with each other, and b) *through* and *to* a visual
- Oral presentation skills
Examples of Student Visual Projects

- **PLAY**: Georg Buchner’s *Woyzeck* (1836)
- A lower-class barber, who begins to hear voices, eventually kills his wife.
- Other characters, including a Doctor and a Captain, exploit and/or harm *Woyzeck*, raising questions about the influence of class and other aspects of society on one’s actions and agency (or lack thereof).
Audience Q&A

- Is there a course you teach in which most course content is written text, and students are mostly reading and then writing or discussing written text?

- How might a Visual Project & Presentation (like this one) enhance students’ empathy toward people or characters they read about OR their analysis of / connection to course content?
Case Study: Lisa’s Class

IAHIS 1190 Design Thinking & Research
15-Week, In-Person Course
“Design a new product or service that enhances social activity (e.g. travel, mobility, wayfinding, social networking, or neighborliness) on a day-to-day basis for people over the age of 65.”
User Experts

A user/expert is a person who has developed expertise by means of their lived experience in dealing with the challenges of the environment due to a physical, sensory or cognitive functional limitation.

Steve
Jeffrey
Joan
Phase 1 Outcomes

- **See and Relate**: Evidence of relating to multiple individuals, their lives, and contexts.

- **Making Distinctions**: Numerous distinctions being made regarding individuals' attitudes and beliefs. Distinctions are defining, have explanatory powers, and clarify our understanding of people.

- **Communicating**: Phase 1 presentation clearly articulates your research process and uses stories to capture the problems and opportunities surrounding day-to-day life for individuals over the age of 65.
Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking

What is an Empathy Map?

Empathy maps
Imagine/document the world from someone else’s perspective, including what is observed and inferred through research and connections.

Source
Empathizing with “the other”: Visualization and perspective taking
### Think & Feel?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings</th>
<th>Mixed feelings about being older</th>
<th>Doesn't want to rely on his son too much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unique satisfactions</td>
<td>Not very excited about getting a hearing aid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment of activities</td>
<td>Feels happy</td>
<td>Can still drive with them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoys going for walks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing goes in and out sometimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can hear if people speak a little louder than normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Hear?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Observations</th>
<th>Prescription has gotten worse over the years</th>
<th>Needs glasses now for very tiny font</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Son drives him around for great distances</td>
<td>Can still drive with them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of his hearing problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing goes in and out sometimes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can hear if people speak a little louder than normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Starting to become a driving hazard though</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son drives him around for great distances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of his hearing problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can hear if people speak a little louder than normal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Say & Do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Say he doesn't need it</th>
<th>Says he doesn't need it</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goes out to eat with family or friends every other week</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complains about getting a hearing aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasses needed for distance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walks with a cane</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son drives him around for great distances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>because of his hearing problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can see</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can't hear very well</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wishes he could still drive like when he was younger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasses needed for very tiny font</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>See?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JANE

young people are too fast
wishes she exercised more
(feels) behind, left out
(feels) pain

be careful!
speed up!
move faster!
keep up
do you need help?

THINK & FEEL
not many people
strangers
lots of TV news

HEAR
I miss the old times
back in my day...
let's make America great again!

SEE

SAY AND DO

PAIN
arthritus
feels tricked by the media
behind in using technology

GAIN
technology easier to use
reconnect with old friends
Why use an Empathy Map?

Empathy maps are useful for...

- Immersing yourself into your user’s environment
- Discovering the underlying motives behind people's’ actions, choices and decisions so we can proactively design for their real needs.
- Identifying gaps in your research/knowledge
- Synthesizing research and drawing out insights across a variety of user groups.
“I soon realized that to empathize is absolutely paramount in the design process. One has to know so much about a person; understand them; to be able to fully empathize with them.”

– Joe DeSouza
Audience Q&A

- Is there a course you teach in which students are required to conduct interviews and/or share their understanding of a people group?

- How might an empathy map (like this one) enhance students’ capacity for perspective taking?
Followup
Audience Self-Reflection

Return to your index cards:

- Would one of these visual sensemaking tools help with your original challenge?
- If not, what might be some remaining questions or concerns?

Share your thoughts on your index cards.
References


