# CULTURAL EXCHANGE THROUGH 2D ANIMATION PRODUCTION, LUANG PRABANG DIGITAL CONTENT: A CASE STUDY OF MAE FAH LUANG UNIVERSITY

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## Abstract

Since Luang Prabang was represented as one of the World Heritage by UNESCO, tourists from all over the world come to visit. However, the different background, tradition, and language between local people and tourists became a barrier of communication and leaded to misbehave of tourists in the preserve area of Luang Prabang. With the concerning of preserving the tradition and custom, the School of Information Technology, Mae Fah Luang University and Souphanouvong University working together creates the Luang Prabang Digital Content: Do & Don't project. Three steps of the production process (pre-production, production and post-production) and cultural exchange had been involved to create the 2D animation content. Five students from Mae Fah Luang University were working on this project with ten students from Souphanouvong University exchanging information occurred during the production process especially on cultural differences. Point of view, attitude and techniques were the points of exchanging culture for creating a 2 dimensional animation. Launching the project by Souphanouvong University, this 2D animation has been contributed in the tourist places in Luang Prabang. This digital content assists visitors to behave appropriately. Tourists learn not only what to do and what not to do, but also they could learn Lao traditional culture through the Luang Prabang Digital Content: Do & Don't project as well.

**Keywords:** Cultural exchange, pre-production, production, post-production, digital content and 2 Dimensional animation

## Introduction

Luang Prabang is a small town in Lao country, and it was the old capital of Laos before the UNESCO represented Luang Prabang city to the world heritage in 1995. It becomes the famous city due to its peaceful environment, distinctive tradition, friendliness of the local people, and the fusion of traditional architecture among Laos' urban structures. Different people come from the different places around the world; they do not realize what manner they should perform when they are in. Moreover, Laos people are not familiar with outsider culture which different from the Buddhists culture. This would be a small problem at first, but it becomes a big issue later on because of this unaware manner. Additionally, local people and the tourists do not communicate in the same language which makes the situation more complicated for them. Mae Fah Luang University (MFU) realized how important of this issue and came up with the solution for this problem with the expectation to preserve Lao traditional culture. The solution for this miscommunication is to create a learning tool to educate tourist to behave appropriately in the preserve traditional places. Hence, the School

of Information Technology (IT), Mae Fah Luang University came up with the project- Luang Prabang digital content: "Do & Don't project"- with Souphanouvong University to assist visitors to understand Lao tradition of attending the temple in Luang Prabang city. School of IT began the project with a group of 5 Multimedia Technology and Animation (MTA) students using knowledge of 2 Dimensional Animation working with a group of 10 Souphanouvong University students presenting information of Lao tradition. The two teams worked together across the social network, got into the real field to gather information and worked on the project by exchanging both Thai and Lao information on culture. Working on the digital content, it was separated into three steps including pre-production, production and post-production. During the pre-production and the production step, the cultural differences were discovered by interchanging experience, techniques, attitude and point of view of Thai and Lao students. MTA students having first-hand experienced on unaware manner of foreigners shared theirs' experiences from visiting Thai temple in Bangkok. This information assisted Laos's students to understand the situation more clearly. MTA students were also necessary to learn and understand Laos' culture, point of view, personality, emotional expression of Lao people, and learn to speak Lao language in order to create the story boarding for this project effectively. In doing this, MTA students gained experiences and gathered information through watching Lao television program and talking to Lao people. Dedicating on gathering and exchanging information from Souphanouvong students assisted MTA students to interexchange culture and to get the project done successfully.

**Methodology**

Luang Prabang digital content: "Do & Don't project" was the way of presenting what to do and what not to do in 2 Dimensional Animation by working on the production process which is separated into 3 steps: pre-production, production and post-production step. The first step is the pre-production which is divided into two parts: gathering information across the board and gathering information on the location. For the first part (gathering information across the board), the MFU instructors and the five students in charge of the project started working on researching the information about the typical mistakes that the foreign visitors had done in temples in Luang Prabang. In this step, significant and useful information were provided by Souphanouvong students through social network as well as the book from the library about Lao culture. After gathering enough information, the second part (gathering information on the location) was set up. The MTA instructors, MTA's students and Souphanouvong students gathered information on the location by visiting temples in Luang Prabang to get into the real environment and the real situations. Both groups of students had a chance to discuss about the story, how story would kindly advice Lao culture to foreigners. Experiencing these two steps is necessary for the two groups of students to broaden their vision by learning across culture through social network and discussion which provided them a clear picture of the issue. As Henry Jenkins(2007) mentions "youth need skills for working within social networks, for pooling knowledge within a collective intelligence, for negotiating across cultural differences that shape the governing assumptions in different communities, and for reconciling conflicting bits of data to form a coherent picture of the world around them."(p.98). Both teams exchanged the cultural experiences in order to reach an agreement on the story

development, script writing and storyboarding. The second step is the production step. The 5 MTA students came back to Mae Fah Luang campus worked on the 2D animation process. Explaining by Tschang and Goldstein in "Production and Political Economy in the Animation Industry: Why Insourcing and Outsourcing Occur", an animation production requires the special tasks to complete including visual effects, background paint, and color skill in order to create multiple images from the storyboard. In this step, once in every two weeks, MTA students must progress the project to crosscheck their workflows including reaction, appropriate manner, body language of the characters in each scene of the animation with MTA instructors and Souphanouvong students (through social network). The third step is the post- production. In this step, MTA students finished the editing image and sound of the 2D animation and delivered the final project to Souphanouvong University. After delivering this 2D animation, Luang Prabang digital content: "Do & Don't project" was contributed to the tourist attraction around Luang Prabang city.
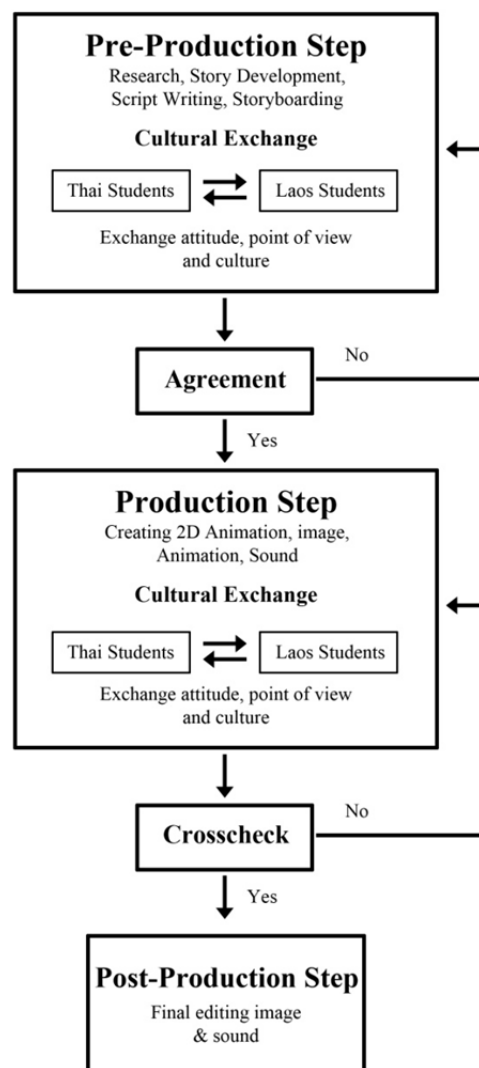


**Figure 1** Production Process including Cultural Exchange Diagram

## Results

Luang Prabang Digital Content: "Do & Don't project" is successfully finished on the right perspective transferring necessary information to the foreign visitor. From this method (pre-production, production and post-production), the interexchange between Thai and Lao culture effectively support and push forward the 2D animation to be completed as the goal of the project. Both universities satisfied with the content that we had created together. After Souphanouvong University had given out the project to the tourist attraction around the city, this 2D animation content helps the foreign visitors to understand more in Lao tradition and culture, and the unaware manner from the foreign visitors are decreasing.

## Conclusion

From this method, the goal of creating Do & Don't content, MTA students and Souphanouvong students achieved the goal of the cultural exchange in the production process. By dedicating all the information, techniques, and cultural experience, both teams satisfied with the content, quality of the 2D animation, appropriate transferring information to create the Luang Prabang Digital Content: Do & Don't project successfully. This 2D animation content transfers necessary information and assists appropriate behave to the foreign visitors who come to visit Luang Prabang city in order to provide them the understanding of Lao traditional culture. The foreign visitors become more aware of their manner when they visit the temple around the city. The barrier of different background, tradition and language between local people and the visitors are decreased since the 2D animation presents, in the respectful way, significant information for the tourist what to do and not to do in the area of Luang Prabang temple. This project becomes the way of information presenting with the enjoyable story of 2D animation and is able to grab attention from the tourists in Luang Prabang city. With the production of both cooperative universities, Mae Fah Luang University and Souphanouvong University, this project are finished in the right perspectives. Luang Prabang Digital Content: "Do & Don't project" successfully introduces itself as a language tool for assisting the visitors in Luang Prabang.

## Acknowledgements

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