INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN A DISCUSSION ABOUT T-SHIRTS ON THE ONLINE FORUM MYSTCOMMUNITY.COM

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ABSTRACT

As people progress in life, they invariably come into contact with other people. One place where intercultural communication can occur is on the Internet, and in particular on online forums. One of these forums is MYSTcommunity.com, a discussion forum specifically created for fans of the computer game Myst to discuss developments in this series as well as anything related to it. This study shows that intercultural communication does not always result in failure. The identity of the female members perfectly represents how culture can be acted and not just referred to. By making use of their situational discourse system, in particular face systems and strategies, as well as their community of practice, they produced communication that spoke for themselves, their identity, and how they should be perceived. The female members are aware that what they do represents what they are, and so they made use of the cultural tools in their discourse system and communities of practice to show the best way to participate. As a result, they do not come off as being misunderstood; instead, they made themselves understandable; they created communication that bridged their perceptions with the others, making the communication successful.

Keywords: *intercultural communication, online forums, discourse system*

Introduction

As people progress in life, they invariably come into contact with other people. Because people have different characteristics and are brought up in different ways, it would be hard to expect that they would communicate in the same way. This situation presents an issue which concerns how people say what they say in regard to other participants in the communication. This issue is at the center of intercultural communication, which is involved when there are multiple ways and perceptions of communication present. Recognizing these ways and perceptions is the key to make intercultural communication successful.

"Culture" itself is hard to define. One way of approaching the concept is through delineating certain features that culture may have. Hofstede (1997) described a cultural model which includes certain forms (manifestations) and attributes (dimensions). This model stems from the observation that culture is programmed so that people can differentiate one another. From this, culture is manifested as a ring of practices – which can be divided into rituals (activities), heroes (people), and symbols (articles) – that surround a core of values, which regards the perception of people. Within this framework issues do arise, and that is represented by the dimensions of culture, which covers power distance (the level of authority), collectivism versus individualism

(how individuals and groups relate), femininity versus masculinity (gender implications), and uncertainty avoidance (dealing with conflict or emotions). However, this model was developed as part of a research done within the environment of a multinational computing company, and as such the model carries an implication of a bias.

A different way of interpreting culture and one that is more apt for describing intercultural communication is described by Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012). Instead of forms and attributes which are essentially "objects" that label culture, they describe culture as "actions" that allow culture to be "done". The body of objects that are used to do this is called "cultural tools", and when it is used for communication, it is called a "discourse system". Language is a part of discourse systems, but because it is ambiguous, participants in communication have to make inferences based on what they know – their discourse systems. Successful intercultural communication relies on how aware participants are of the differences between the discourse systems of their own and others.

One place where intercultural communication can occur is on the Internet, and in particular on online forums. Using a forum, members can discuss topics related to a subject and receive feedback from other members; discussions are often moderated so that they do not become heated arguments. One of these forums is *MYSTcommunity.com*, a discussion forum specifically created for fans of the computer game *Myst* to discuss developments in this series as well as anything related to it. The members of the forum come from different parts of the world, though many are located in the United States or Europe. As a result, this forum has the potential to harbor intercultural communication. This paper would like to discuss the possibility of this happening in one of the discussion threads, entitled "What's The Difference Between Guys T-Shirts and Girls T-Shirts?"

Literature Review

Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012) outline a discourse system as having four components. One of them is ideology, which covers the underlying ideals of the discourse system.

Another component is socialization, and this includes how members of that discourse system achieve the eligibility to be considered part of the system. There is also the component of forms of discourse, which deals with the ways of communication available in the discourse system. Finally, the component of face systems concerns the relationships between members of the discourse system. In contrast to Hofstede's ring model, the four components of a discourse system can be represented as a pie, with each component having equal status.

Within each component, there are also sub-components that further describe the component. In ideology, the question of whether the discourse system is voluntary (purposive or by choice) or involuntary (natural, no choice) is considered. History and views about the world are also considered, as are beliefs, values, and religion; in the latter three, they regard basic principles such as what is considered "good" and how are people and society supposed to be. In addition, ideology is also considered regarding the placement and relationship with other discourse systems. Thus, within the component of ideology, perceptions and values are underscored.

The component of socialization covers the legitimacy of participation that a member would have in a discourse system. One of the sub-components of this component is education, enculturation, and acculturation; this is a determiner of whether certain practices in the discourse system are formally, informally, or forced to be learned. Whether learning is informal or formal is also determined by primary or secondary socialization, respectively. Members can further be evaluated by how far the participation of the member is in the discourse system (expert and novice participation). Within a discourse system, theories of the person and learning, including the consideration of the nature of good or evil, individuals and the collective, and the life cycle or age divisions of people, are also part of socialization. This component is therefore a representation of how well a member participates in a discourse system.

Forms of discourse of a discourse system collectively represent the ways communication is generally accepted in a discourse system. A major part of this component is the concept of

the grammar of context, which itself is made up of seven elements: scene, key, participants, message form, sequence, co-occurrence patterns, and manifestations; these seven elements describe properties of the context. Other parts of this component include rhetorical strategies, functions of language, and production formats, which deal with the role and relationship of discourse. Modes of communication, media, and emplacement are the last part of this component, all of which cover the realization of discourse by the members of the discourse system. Overall, forms of discourse show how communication works within a discourse system.

The last component of a discourse system is the face system. This component describes how members are supposed to be interrelated. Face systems may take the forms of deference, solidarity, and hierarchy, depending on power, distance, and weight of imposition; depending on appeal to positive and negative face aspects, it may be either involvement or independence, respectively. Face systems also involve social organization, reflected in the sub-components of kinship (familial relationships), the concept of the self (what elements make up an individual), and ingroup-outgroup relationships (how others consider individuals belong). The face system within a discourse system accordingly characterizes the links that individuals may have in and out of a discourse system.

Findings

The discussion thread being examined is located in a forum section called "The Blah Place". This area is reserved for discussion topics that do not directly pertain to the main subject matter of the forum, which in this case is the game series *Myst*; most online forums have such an area reserved for that purpose. In this thread, there are 17 postings made by 11 members. Five of the members state that they come from the United States, while there are four members that state that they come from Germany, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and England, and two members whose location are not stated. In terms of gender, two members state that they are female; the rest state that they are male while one does not disclose this information. Most of the members state birth dates in the 1980s, except for three members

who state birth dates in 1961, 1978, and 1991. Additionally, the researcher is a member of the forum, but did not participate in the discussion.

Grammar of Context

The grammar of context here represents that of the situational discourse system, which is the forum of *Mystcommunity.com*. Beginning with the scene, the setting is the virtual space of an online forum situated on the Internet; though the actual discussion is conducted over a period of several days, the discussion remains available in that virtual space. The topic being discussed is the difference between t-shirts for men and t-shirts for women. The purpose of the discussion is to see if there is any difference between the two kinds of shirts. The discussion itself started out with a few questions and answers, but later postings shifted to a more commentary form.

The key of the discourse system is represented by the tone and mood of the discussion; in this discussion, the tone is informal and the mood is rather lighthearted. This is indicated primarily by the use of emoticons as well as the presence of jocular statements in some of the posts (posts 3, 8, and 13). In regard to participants, in this discussion, any member was allowed to participate, including members of the moderation and administration team; although the role of the moderation and administration team (in part) is to keep the discussion from becoming out of hand, they can still participate in discussions, and in fact, two administrations posted within this discussion. However, their capacity in this discussion was purely contributive and they acted as ordinary members.

As this discussion was conducted over the Internet using web pages, the message form is purely written. Further, as each participant is clearly tagged on each post, the attribution of each post is quite clear. As for the sequencing in the discourse system, the thread follows a set schedule in that each new post is appended to the end of the thread, but members could openly contribute to the discussion, and there is always room for the discussion to grow and extend.

An online forum such as this is expected to generate discussions. However, in this particular discussion, jocular statements are

present in several of the posts, one of which in particular (post 13) directly jests about the t-shirt in question, and does not relate directly to the discussion. Thus, these jocular statements constitute marked co-occurrence patterns, unexpected for the discussion. The existence of these co-occurrence patterns also creates tacit manifestations that should be considered, in addition to the rest of the discussion which is mostly explicit, with some exceptions being the comments in posts 16 and 17 which have to be inferred. This and all the other features above make the grammar of context of the situational discourse system significant to the understanding of the intercultural means of the discussion.

Situational Discourse System

Other important characteristics lie in the situational discourse system. The discourse system itself is purposive or voluntary, as it is up to individuals whether they want to be members and participate, or not. The history of the forum itself goes back to 2001, when it was opened to facilitate another place where fans of the computer game *Myst* to discuss what is happening with the game series. Any fan that is willing to talk and contribute to the forum is welcome to join with the forum. While there are many other similar discussion forums, this forum does not preclude its members from joining others, nor does it preclude those that are already in others to join the forum. This is generally the case for many online forums.

Aside from technical requirements governing new members (Capella 2011) there is nothing that hinders the identity of a member, though the member is expected to abide by the rules, which provides some enculturation. There is no primary or secondary socialization, and the forum does not consider anyone to be an expert above others, except those in administration or moderation positions. Any member is only expected to "…be an active, valuable member, with interesting, insightful threads and replies." From this statement it can also be seen that it is better to contribute well than not (considering good and evil) and to participate (considering the individual and the collective). As for life cycle, though by technicality there is a point when a member is considered a "veteran" and there is a titular rank system which is

decorative, it is only expected that each member contribute as equals.

In addition to the grammar of context, there are other elements included within forms of discourse. In this informal space, any form of cohesion and rhetoric is applicable for discussion so long as they are within the rules, but regarding cohesion, there is an extra element that enhances the aspect: the quote tag, which is standard for an online forum and allows references to be clearly indicated. As far as other elements go, here language functions to inform and ratify relationships, not so much to create and negotiate them, and individualism is more evident; due to the members being clearly tagged on each post (and when the quote tag is used) animator, author, and principal are often one and the same, except in cases where they are dubiously vague or clearly differentiated. Due to the use of virtual space, all mode of communication is disembodied and verbal and non-verbal may overlap when images are used. The forum is located on the Internet and thus utilizes it as well as computers as the media. Finally, as this forum is accessible from anywhere with an Internet connection, the potential for emplacement is high, and even the "general discussion" forum can be thought of as an emplacement in a forum that regards a specific subject such as this one.

Because of the preferred participation, the face system in this discourse system prefers a solidarity relationship, and the face strategy demands involvement. A hierarchy system and an independence strategy may be involved only when dealing with the administration and moderation in their capacities as such. Kinship is not expected to be present, unless it happens that relatives of a member also join as members. Regarding the concept of the self, as a result of the preferred participation, members of the discourse system are aware of some of the things that have been done in the past and try to make explicit how it should be regarded as a group in the rules; in doing so they are trying to weaken the collectivist ingroup aspect of the relationship in favor of a more individualist outgroup appearance.

Background Discourse System

Considering the above descriptions, it appears that the discourse system of the

discussion forum mirrors portions of the Utilitarian discourse system, a point well-described by Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012). Per the Utilitarian ideology, technology can be used to advance individual freedom, increase happiness, and express creativity, in this case through discussions. The ingroup aspect of a discussion forum illustrates the liberty, equality, and fraternity aspect and how it reflects an asymmetrical and hierarchical face system to those in the outgroup. The form of discourse in the form of posts is considered equal for all and has to be acceptable to the forum. Even though there is no "education", there is still some form of "socialization" in the form of listed rules. Despite only representing a part of the Utilitarian discourse system, it is nonetheless a small reflection of that system.

For any particular discussion, there are many possible discourse systems available for members to interact within and across. This is due to the information that members have publicly disclosed as above. Due to the varied origins of the members, they may be able to communicate to reflect the discourse system typical of their origin, or may be forced to accommodate for the discourse system of others. Due to the various ages of the members, they may be able to speak among those of their own generation, or alternatively have to transcend generational understanding. Also, as both genders are represented, it is possible that members have to reach outwards to the other gender. This last set of systems for this particular discussion is key, as it touches upon gender issues.

Discussion

Among the many functions of a discourse system, Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012) mention that one of them is to enable participants to gain an understanding of their identity. With that in mind, the many background discourse systems present in this discussion present many ways for the participants to assume identities. However, there is one particular discourse system that is invoked because it is pertinent to the discussion. This discourse system is the set of gender discourse system; this discourse system is related to the discussion, which concerns clothing of both genders, and it is here that the participants in this discourse disclose their perceptions, thus attempting to cross the gender systems and recognize their identity.

Speech Events and Acts

Each individual post in the discussion can be considered a single speech act, since the particular member that made the post is identifiable. In the sequence of posts, two patterns can be identified. The first eight posts represent a question-and-answer sequence as the initial post started with a question, and successive posts in that range either answer the question (post 2) or clarify it (post 5); the remaining nine posts are comments that complement the discussion as they provide additional answers and no questions. These two patterns can be construed as two speech events. These speech events can, in turn, be construed as a single speech situation.

There are certain patterns that can be identified from the discussion. Within the question-and-answer sequence, four posts (1, 4, 6, and 8) are made by the member who originally started the discussion, and these posts correlate in sequence with each other. Posts 2 and 3 attempt to answer the questions posed at the start of the discussion and are only linked to post 1. However, post 4, which attempts to clarify post 1, is answered by post 5, which is in turn answered by post 6, which also clarifies post 4. Similarly, post 6 is answered by post 7, and post 8 both answers post 7 and clarifies post 6. The remainder of the posts attempt to add to this core part of the discussion, but are not directly tied to the sequence of posts.

Faces

Although the discourse system prefers a solidarity face system and an involvement face strategy, this does not preclude certain members from creating posts that appeal to a deference face system and an independence face strategy. In fact, within this discussion, posts 4, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, and 17 were created with independence and deference in mind. Posts 4 and 7 were made with a pessimistic tone, while posts 9, 13, and 15 were made with the intent of minimizing threat to the original poster, and post 11 was made with the intent of minimizing assumptions of the hearer. The remaining deference-independence post, post

17, was made by utilizing a taciturn strategy. Notably, all of these posts were made by male speakers that participated in this discussion, and posts 4 and 7 are part of the main question-and-answer sequence.

The remaining posts were made to appeal to solidarity and involvement, but for different reasons. In posts 1, 5, and 10, the member tried to notice or attend to the original poster, while in posts 3 and 6, exaggeration of interests were made. Posts 8 and 12 used the strategy of trying to assert common ground. The rest of the posts used three different involvement strategies. For post 2, the member tried to indicate the recognition of the wants of the original poster; for post 14, the member attempted to be voluble or explicit; and for post 16, the member went for an assumption of reciprocity. The female members that posted in this discussion did so at posts 2, 10, and 16, using three different involvement strategies.

Problems

In this discussion, only two female members were present. One of them contributed with two posts, while the other contributed with only a single post. However, this was still enough to facilitate an inter-gender discussion. Regardless, this instance of intercultural communication is considered successful. The reason for this is due to the interactions between their posts; these posts relate to the original member that posted this thread as well as to the posts of other members. This interaction is additionally made possible by the fact that this discourse system can be considered a "community of practice" in regard to gender-based discourse system interaction.

In their discussion of gender-based discourse systems, Scollon, Scollon, and Jones (2012) describe two common approaches for those discourse systems. One approach is called the "difference" approach, wherein the two gender discourse systems are treated as having separate ways of communication. The other approach is the "dominance" approach, wherein the masculine gender system is taken as prevailing to the feminine one. The problem with these two approaches is that they do not apply universally and they represent a critical viewpoint. Thus, where these two approaches

do not generally apply, a different concept to multiple discourse systems is needed. This concept is called the "community of practice" or "nexus of practice". The concept is based on the observation that people can and do participate in multiple discourse systems, and that they can affect each other to create different identities. As the background discourse system in this discussion does accommodate for this to happen, this concept is appropriate to describe the situation.

Post 2 was made within the scope of the central question-and-answer sequence in relation to the first post, by using the involvement strategy of indicating the recognition of the wants of the member who made the first post. Post 10 was made by the other participating female member, this time by noticing the member who made the first post, and the same member who made post 2 posted again in post 16, with an assumption of reciprocity; these were done in the outer section of additional posts. Considering the topic of the discussion and the fact that the original member that started the discussion was actually male in gender, it can be seen that the female members here tried to step out of their discussion boundaries to help the male member. They recognized that the egalitarian nature of the situational discourse system as well as its high visibility demands that they contribute in a manner that is helpful to another member, while affirming their identity as belonging to their own gender discourse system. In effect, they recognized the situational discourse system as a community of practice that puts value on not only the original member that posted as a member of the other gender discourse system, but also puts value on themselves representing their own gender discourse system. Doing so allowed their communication to succeed, evidenced by the fact that no negative reactions to their contributions appeared.

In relation to posts made by other members, the three posts that were made by female members attempted to stand out among the contributions made by the other male members that posted in the discussion. Post 2 can be seen as trying to be both descriptive and concise in its provision of answers to the original post, in comparison to post 3, which

used exaggeration to hint better interests for the original member that posted. Post 10 appears as an encouraging answer, in comparison to post 11, which, while minimizing assumptions, also appears discouraging. Both post 15 and 16 try to provide the answer to the member who originally started the discussion, but post 16 does so in an illustrative way while post 15 includes an opinionated view. Using different face strategies, what the female members tried to do was to set examples. In the former two cases, the two posts gave a definitive way of answering within the question-and-answer and commentary patterns; the latter case can be thought of as trying to rectify the previous opinionated view. By trying to stand out from the other posts, they were once again able to recognize the situational discourse system as a community of practice, this time by setting straight their own identity as belonging to the female gender discourse system, while at the same time outlining a way for the male gender discourse system to act, though this is not readily followed. Still, by the absence of negative reactions, this way of communication ultimately succeeded.

Conclusion

Intercultural communication does not always result in failure. In some cases, intercultural communication can succeed, as it did in this discussion. Even though only two female members participated in the discussion and only for three posts, this was enough to spur good interaction between them and other members of the male gender discourse system. The female members knew that the situational discourse system of the forum demands them to make good contributions, and as a result, they did so by appealing to the original member that started the discussion. This allowed them to create an identity for their gender discourse system, by transgressing their own discourse system. This identity was further enhanced by the fact that their contributions were different from the others. Essentially, the female members were able to see the situational discourse system as a community of practice, and they crafted their own gender identity using their posts to suit the discourse system and the community of practice. As other members did not react negatively to the posts, the female

members accomplished their identity creation and thus intercultural communication within this community of practice.

The identity of the female members perfectly represents how culture can be acted and not just referred to. By making use of their situational discourse system, in particular face systems and strategies, as well as their community of practice, they produced communication that spoke for themselves, their identity, and how they should be perceived. The female members are aware that what they do represents what they are, and so they made use of the cultural tools in their discourse system and communities of practice to show the best way to participate. As a result, they do not come off as being misunderstood; instead, they made themselves understandable; they created communication that bridged their perceptions with the others, making the communication successful.

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Appendix: Discussion Thread - What's The Difference Between Guys T-Shirts And Girls T-Shirts?

What's The Difference Between Guys T-Shirts And Girls T-Shirts?
Seriously, I Am Confuddled. Hewp pweeze?

#1 User is offline   moiety

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Member
    * Posts: 6,696
    * Joined: 13-May 01
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:Sol.3.USA.MA.Boston

    Posted 11 April 2007 - 12:44 PM
    So I've been trying to get this shirt for my brother for, like, half a year now,
    essentially.
    At first Threadless mixed up my order with that of some guy from Belgium, and by the time
    they figured out things were wrong and charged the cashmoney back on my card, the shirt
    was out of stock. Of course, even though I asked Threadless to notify me when it was back
    in stock, I wasn't, even though it was reprinted.
    Except now the reprinted ones are almost gone, too! My brother would need a Medium, and
    that is sold out.
    However, the "Girly Tee" version of Medium isn't sold out.
    So I'm wondering. What's the difference between Guys and Girly, really? Is a Girly Medium
    smaller than a Guys Medium? Essentially, is there any Girly version I can get that would
    fit and look good on a guy?
    The division seems arbitrary to me. Can someone explain this to me?
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#2 User is offline   Tay

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Admin
    * Posts: 2,675
    * Joined: 07-January 01
    * Gender:Female
    * Location:King of Prussia, PA

    Posted 11 April 2007 - 12:48 PM

     moiety, on Apr 11 2007, 01:44 PM, said:
    The division seems arbitrary to me. Can someone explain this to me?
    Perhaps they've already answered your question. :)
    Generally, "girl" versions of shirts have more room to accommodate *ahem* certain body
    parts, fit snugger around the shape of the torso to be more "flattering," as well as
    usually being a bit smaller.
    Tay :P
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#3 User is offline   chucker

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Admin
    * Posts: 5,329
    * Joined: 04-January 01
    * Gender:Male
    * KI number:196082

Posted 11 April 2007 - 01:00 PM
I vaguely seem to recall a certain physical feature that, starting with puberty, tends to
separate women's upper bodies from men's in a rather significant manner.
But then, I'm not an expert on clothing. :P
Possibly of help:
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#4 User is offline   moiety

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Member
    * Posts: 6,696
    * Joined: 13-May 01
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:Sol.3.USA.MA.Boston

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 04:25 PM
  Clothing is confusing. :P
  So I guess the answer is "Yes, a Girly Tee would look wrong on your brother"?
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#5 User is offline   chucker

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Admin
    * Posts: 5,329
    * Joined: 04-January 01
    * Gender:Male
    * KI number:196082

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 04:29 PM
  Well, the answer certainly is "girly tees tend to be noticeably smaller (despite the same
  size label), and tend to slightly account for the chest". As to whether the particular
  shirt would "look wrong on him", that's really something he'd have to decide for himself
  by trying it out... the actual differences between girl and boy cuts of clothing vary in a
  completely random manner. :P
  ...but yes, most of the time, the answer is "you'd rather want to wait for a man's
  version". (Perhaps this is why Threadless didn't notify you? Maybe they only had women's
  sizes and figured your case wouldn't apply?)
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#6 User is offline   moiety

    *
    * oglahnth (ancient one)

    * Group: Member
    * Posts: 6,696
    * Joined: 13-May 01
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:Sol.3.USA.MA.Boston

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 04:36 PM

   chucker, on Apr 11 2007, 06:29 PM, said:
  Perhaps this is why Threadless didn't notify you? Maybe they only had women's sizes and

figured your case wouldn't apply?
No, I'm certain they reprinted all of them at the same time, because they didn't even have
small, and it would make no sense for them to only reprint small men's shirts. The reason
for lack of notification is their a) crappy service and b) terrible web store software. :P
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#7 User is offline   chucker

    *
  * oglahnth (ancient one)

  * Group: Admin
  * Posts: 5,329
  * Joined: 04-January 01
  * Gender:Male
  * KI number:196082

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 04:38 PM

   moiety, on Apr 12 2007, 12:36 AM, said:
  No, I'm certain they reprinted all of them at the same time, because they didn't even have
  small, and it would make no sense for them to only reprint small men's shirts. The reason
  for lack of notification is their a) crappy service and b) terrible web store software. :)
  Fair 'nuff. Just playing devil's advocate. :P
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#8 User is offline   moiety

    *
  * oglahnth (ancient one)

  * Group: Member
  * Posts: 6,696
  * Joined: 13-May 01
  * Gender:Male
  * Location:Sol.3.USA.MA.Boston

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 04:41 PM

   chucker, on Apr 11 2007, 06:38 PM, said:
  Fair 'nuff. Just playing devil's advocate. :P
  I like playing. :)
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#9 User is offline   MystRivenExile

    *
  * Admiral of the White

  * Group: Member
  * Posts: 1,702
  * Joined: 07-July 03
  * Gender:Male
  * Location:New Delta (NYC)

  Posted 11 April 2007 - 08:26 PM
  MACGYVER!
  I've ordered a lot of t-shirts for my team, and I'm surprised they bothered to break up
  the sizing between girls and guys. I guess in that case they'd be smaller (already
  answered), but I really don't see the point, especially since they aren't numbered sizes.
  You see, I pretty much just wanted to shout MACGYVER! I want that shirt... :P
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#10 User is offline   Mystress

    *
    * "Crazy" is a relative term...

    * Group: Veteran Member
    * Posts: 3,487
    * Joined: 02-August 06
    * Gender:Female
    * Location:Another world...
    * KI number:01792588

    Posted 12 April 2007 - 06:28 AM
    I have several girls and guys t-shirts. Most of my girls tees are indeed smaller and wider
    in the chest. Some are even smaller and supposed to... well... But none of mine are belly
    shirts.
    The guys shirts are just wider. I suppose that if he's really conscious about it, you
    could get the biggest Girl's Tee size they have and try it on him. It just depends on how
    broad shouldered and big around your brother is. They do have Extra Larges in stock, so
    you could try that.
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#11 User is offline   M@

    *
    * The Lord of the Squees

    * Group: Team Member
    * Posts: 1,193
    * Joined: 09-March 02
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:In body, Utah. In spirit, D'ni.

    Posted 12 April 2007 - 10:07 AM
    Even if you just got a bigger girl's shirt to make up the difference, I think it'd still
    be noticeable. I've noticed that girl's shirts' sleeves are different from those of guy's
    shirts. Not only are they more form-fitting, but they're not as long....and it comes
    across to me as a distinctly feminine style :) So I really wouldn't think you'd want to
    get a girl's shirt.
    </2cents>
    :P
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#12 User is offline   Fireymarbles

    *
    * Who says you're free?

    * Group: Veteran Member
    * Posts: 5,579
    * Joined: 28-October 03
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:Auckland, New Zealand

    Posted 12 April 2007 - 11:30 PM
    Yeah, I got given a women's T-shirt last year... the idiots who ordered the team T-shirts
    for a production my school did last year forgot that not all the dancers were female, and
    also that the backstage and lighting crew were over half male, so they only bought women's
    shirts, almost all of which were medium. I'm only just comfortable in a large men's size.
    So yeah, this shirt pretty much wouldn't fit me at all, except that it's made of stretchy
    fabric, in order to be more... erm... accomodating around the chest region, so I can

```
squeeze into it. Just.
Put  shortly,  if  you  do  get  it,  get one a good couple of sizes larger than you would
otherwise, and still don't expect it to look quite right.
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#13 User is offline   Free Bird

```
  *
  * oglahnth (ancient one)

  * Group: Admin
  * Posts: 4,874
  * Joined: 21-August 01
  * Gender:Male
  * Location:Voorschoten, The Netherlands
  * KI number:343012

  Posted 13 April 2007 - 04:21 AM
  I  bet  MacGyver  would  know  how to turn a girly t-shirt into a guys t-shirt with only a
  Philishave... :P
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#14 User is offline   U

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  *
  * shokhootahn (instructor)

  * Group: Member
  * Posts: 922
  * Joined: 12-June 06
  * Gender:Male
  * Location:here

  Posted 13 April 2007 - 06:02 AM
  the shoulder seams are higher.
  0
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#15 User is offline   Dark Sky

```
  *
  * oglahnth (ancient one)

  * Group: Veteran Member
  * Posts: 4,410
  * Joined: 05-January 01
  * Location:Nottingham, England

  Posted 13 April 2007 - 11:20 AM
  And the whole shape of the t-shirt is different
  Far be it from me to laugh at anyone who dares to go against the norms of society in terms
  of not adhering to gender fashion stereotypes, but generally I would say that if you tried
  to give a guy a girl's t-shirt, he will not be Best Pleased.
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#16 User is offline   Tay

```
  *
  * oglahnth (ancient one)
```

```
    * Group: Admin
    * Posts: 2,675
    * Joined: 07-January 01
    * Gender:Female
    * Location:King of Prussia, PA
```

Posted 13 April 2007 - 11:35 AM
Actually, I just found this which has a few sizes of their shirts on top of each other so
you can see the difference/comparison.
Tay :P
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#17 User is offline   River

```
    *
    * River

    * Group: Member
    * Posts: 2,607
    * Joined: 22-March 04
    * Gender:Male
    * Location:Oshkosh WI
```

Posted 15 April 2007 - 09:51 PM
As I fold both my shirts and my WIFE's shirts (which she forever drops into the laundry
inside-out which redoubles my efforts in folding) I can honestly point out that, women's
shirts DO tend to be a tad wider in the chest region whilst tapering much more
significantly downward thereof. I would venture to guess that, this indeed DOES have
something of significance when ordering a 'final' size.
Women = Wider-higher (and more labor intensive to fold)
Men = more straight from arm-holes downward.
You must make from this what you will moimoi - but more info is seldom a problem than
LESS.
River (who hardly ever pops in here anymore)
0
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