

Decide mapping type before thinking about software.

There are a many map types and mapping softwares. The most common types are mind maps, concept maps and argument maps. Along with task design considerations about map types, The designer must decide about software issues: the practical concerns of platform, web-readiness, cost and usability. This presents the course designer with a complex set of considerations.

Here is a heuristic tool for task-design-related decision making, focusing on the primary issues of (1) map type, (2) content genre and (3) information-related structure.

- (1) **EMBODIMENT**: hard or soft copy? This relates to the requirements of **LEARNER-TASK-INSTRUCTOR INTERFACE**: the way in which the map will be used as an artefact of information or communication. Cognitive weight indicates the change in cognitive load imposed by the introduction of a mapping device in the task/communication scenario. If cognitive weight is a negative value, the use of mapping has reduced cognitive load.
- (2) **TRAINING**: will it be necessary to train the learners in map construction/design?
- (3) **TASK DOMAIN**: what will be mapped by the learners? Will this be a language task or an information task?
- (4) **CONTENT DOMAIN**: at what level of abstraction will the content be mapped? This will determine the instructor's choice of MAP TYPE (recommended types are Novakian maps and Hunter's ISmaps. For the mapping of text, will all of the text be mapped, or will background information and persuasive/poetic rhetoric be filtered out, leaving only 'essential content' to be mapped?
- (5) **CONSTRAINT**: will it be necessary or useful to somehow constrain the mapping? The more constraint, the more specific the task, and the more specific the language genre required.

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Hunter's infostructure maps (ISmaps)

