

Impact of Online Instruction on EFL Students’ Cultural Awareness

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Abstract

The present study reports results of an experiment with two groups of sophomore students majoring in translation. The control group was taught British culture using in-class instruction only, and the experimental group was taught using a combination of online and in-class instruction. Experimental students used the online course from home as the internet was inaccessible from campus. Both groups were pre and post-tested. The impact of online instruction on cultural awareness, the relationship between the online course frequency usage and cultural awareness, and the impact of online instruction on students’ attitudes are reported.

1. Introduction:

Teaching target culture knowledge is essential in the second/foreign language classroom in general and translation pedagogy in particular because language, as Willems (1998) pointed out, maintains culture and culture produces language. Researchers such as Liddicoat (2000), Willems (1998), Kugler-Euerle (1997), Wilss (1995) and Kiyitsioglou-Vlachou (1988) strongly support the integration of language and culture and the development of a culture-based conception of translation. Approaches for integrating language and culture and ways for enhancing culture-oriented communicative language teaching were proposed by researchers like Liddicoat (2000), Soto, Smrekar and Nekkcovel (1999), Kiyitsioglou-Vlachou (1998), Simpson (1997) and others.

Latest developments in information technology have resulted in a significant increase in the utilization of a variety of technologies in teaching the target culture to second/foreign language (L2) students. A review of the L2 literature has shown that the

most common technology used in developing L2 students' cultural awareness was e-mail. It was used in cross-cultural collaboration between L2 students and L1 students or pre-service teachers. For example, e-mail exchanges between four American and Canadian college preparatory ESL students were found to be effective in teaching intercultural awareness, in creating a positive affective climate, and in making the English-for-Academic-Purposes (EAP) curriculum more relevant to the students (Ruhe, 1998). In another study by Schoorman and Camarillo (2000), 56 pairs of university-school partners participated in an e-mail-based project. Pre-service teachers and middle school students corresponded with each other for ten weeks. Analysis of the letters written during the ten-week period, end-of-semester pre-service teacher project reports, weekly instructor field notes, faculty/pre-service student dialogue journals, and a questionnaire completed by middle school students at the end of the project revealed positive outcomes including a broadening of multicultural awareness and improvement in skills development. In a similar project conducted by Cifuentes and Shih (2001), forty pairs of American pre-service teachers and Taiwanese university students corresponded by e-mail. Findings of pre- and post-connection surveys, midterm surveys, reflective journals, final reports, and interview transcripts indicated that the Taiwanese participants were positive about online ESL acquisition and cultural learning both before and after the connection. They preferred the one-on-one e-mail exchange to the web-board environment.

Many other studies combined e-mail with other forms of technology. For instance, Singhal (1998) reviewed several studies and projects on computer-mediated communication used for enhancing second language learning and culture education, and examined their impact on elementary, secondary, and college students. She found that e-mail and teleconferencing provided authentic communication and fostered awareness of languages and cultures. In addition to the studies reviewed by Singhal, 45 French and American middle school students corresponded via electronic mail on a daily basis and participated in several teleconferences (Shelley, 1996). In the second year of the project, both groups produced a bilingual play, describing various sociolinguistic and cultural elements of the respective cultures. Shelley found that target language usage and interest increased over the duration of the project. Electronic exchange between French and

American students was found to be an effective networking activity that enhanced the language learning skills of all students involved in the project.

Moreover, two studies by Lee (1997) and Osuna and Meskill (1998) reported that use of Internet resources was a meaningful way to integrate language and culture and to provide opportunities for students to learn about the target culture while using e-mail to discuss cultural aspects with native speakers. Internet resources were used as a means of gaining a deeper sense of the culture of the Spanish-speaking world by college students. Findings of those two studies demonstrated that the web was a suitable tool for increasing linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as a means of increasing motivation.

Furthermore, e-mail, web page design, and audio and video conferencing were effectively used in an intercultural communication project that allowed French and American foreign-language students to learn language as a part of culture. Students in a U.S. undergraduate French class and a French post-graduate engineering course pursued an intercultural stance via electronic interactions concerning cultural differences, focusing on childhood socialization (Kinginger, Gourves-Hayward and Simson, 1999).

However, a constructivist computer-assisted language learning (CALL) environment, consisting of web-based activities and a U.S. e-pal activity used in teaching English writing to 29 freshman Taiwanese students was not helpful in enhancing students' attitudes towards American culture (Chen, 2001). Results of the two surveys, quantitative observations, and phenomenological interviews indicated that Taiwanese students' attitudes towards cultural learning and the learning styles did not undergo much significant change.

Other technologies that proved to be successful in helping college students bring insider's views of other cultures into the foreign language classroom were Internet-based culture portfolios. Abrams (2002) divided 68 intermediate students learning German at a Midwestern university into a traditional and experimental groups. Students in the experimental group carried out online interviews with native informants in order to explore the stereotypical views of the cultures of Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Responses to a post-project questionnaire indicated that most of the students in the experimental group were better able to view culture with an insider's perspective, reflected a developing sensitivity to diversity within the cultures of the German-

speaking countries, and demonstrated an awareness of the idea that political boundaries are not adequate for determining cultural boundaries.

To develop students' cultural knowledge and language skills, Lee (1998) used online newspapers and online chat rooms with college-level advanced Spanish students' learning. Pre- and post-program student surveys indicated that the program successfully enhanced students' cultural knowledge, reading and oral skills. Likewise, Aspaas (1998) found that use of a research/writing project to evaluate the media's coverage of selected African events helped students to become more inclusive in their own awareness of other cultures and to develop writing skills and electronic network research skills.

Finally, Herron, Cole, Corrie and Dubreil (1999) used a video-based second-language program to teach culture to beginning-level French students. In this program, the students watched ten videos as part of the curriculum over the whole semester. Pre- to posttest results indicated significant gains in overall cultural knowledge.

It can be concluded that the integration of different forms of technology such as e-mail only, e-mail and teleconferencing, audio and video conferencing, web-page design, internet-based resources and culture portfolios, online newspapers and online chat rooms, and web-based video in the teaching of target culture to middle, high school and college students learning English, French, German and Spanish as a second or foreign language resulted in significant gains in student cultural knowledge. However, integration of online courses in the teaching of the target culture and their effect on the cultural awareness of L2 students, in general and EFL and translation students in particular, was not investigated. In the studies reported above, culture was fused in the teaching of L2 courses not as a separate course. Most of the studies reported above focused on inter-cultural collaboration between L2 students and L1 students or pre-service teachers. E-mail was the most common technology used even when combined with teleconferences or internet culture portfolios. Reports on student progress and cultural knowledge acquisition in the aforementioned studies were based on project reports, field notes, student journals, and questionnaires. None of the studies used an achievement test to measure cultural awareness.

Unlike prior studies, the present study attempted to find out whether the integration of an online course in the teaching of target culture from home to EFL students in classroom instruction would affect their cultural knowledge. The students'

role in the online course was individual and interactive rather than collaborative. The primary focus of this study was to find out whether use of the online course as a supplement to in-class instruction significantly improves the cultural awareness of EFL female college students enrolled in a translation program in Saudi Arabia and whether it would enhance their attitude towards British culture and online learning. The current study tried to answer the following questions: (1) Is there a statistically significant difference between EFL female sophomore students exposed to a combination of online and in-class instruction; and those exposed to in-class instruction only in their cultural awareness as measured by the posttest? (2) Does the online course frequency usage correlate with experimental students' degree of cultural awareness as measured by the posttest? (3) Does online instruction have a positive effect on experimental students' attitudes towards British culture and towards online learning? To answer these questions, two groups of EFL sophomore students were used: One taught using in-class instruction only (control group) and the other a combination of in-class instruction and a supplementary online course from home (experimental group). The impact of the online course on EFL female sophomore students' cultural awareness was based on quantitative analyses of the pre and posttest scores. The effect of online instruction on students' attitudes towards the target culture and towards online learning was based on qualitative analyses of students' responses to the post-treatment questionnaire.

Through web-based instruction, experimental students in the present study would be using several technologies: E-mail, WWW links and resources related to the cultural themes taught in class. They would practice searching, reading and writing skills and would develop culture terminology knowledge and cultural awareness. The type and amount of web-based tasks and activities would encourage the students to acquire information about the target culture individually as well as interactively (See the Treatment section below).

2. Participants:

A total of 80 EFL female sophomore students in two intact classes participated in the study. All the subjects were enrolled in the "Readings in the Target Culture I" course that the author taught in the Spring of 2003. They were in their fourth semester of the translation program (last semester of the intensive language program) at the

College of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. They had all completed 3 semesters of language courses, i.e., 3 listening courses, 3 speaking courses, 3 reading courses, 3 writing courses, 2 vocabulary building courses, 3 grammar courses, and a dictionary skills course. They were concurrently taking listening IV (2 hours), speaking IV (2 hours), reading IV (2 hours), writing IV (3 hours), and introduction to translation (2 hours). In semesters 5-10, students at COLT take 6 linguistics, 18 translation and 6 interpreting courses, in addition to a Comparative Culture course in semester 5 (2 hours), and a Readings in the Target Culture II course in semester 7 (2 hours). Preparing students to handle differences between the Arabic/Islamic cultures and cultures of English-speaking communities is one of the principal objectives of the translation program at the college of Languages and Translation (COLT), King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The aim of the translation program at COLT is to develop cultural awareness and to enable the student-translator to understand and transfer cultural concepts from English into Arabic and vice versa.

All the participants were studying English in a segregated environment where all the students and instructors are females. Therefore, findings of the present study may not be generalized to sophomore male students at COLT taking the same course.

All the participants were Saudi and they were all native speakers of Arabic. They shared the same Arabic and Islamic cultures. Their median age was 20 years, and the range was 19-21.

An online course with Nicenet was used from home as a supplement to in-class instruction. All the participants were given the Nicenet Class key and 50% registered in the online course as they had internet access from home. Students registered in the online course constituted the experimental group (40 students) and those who did not constituted the control group (40 students). The experimental group was exposed to a combination of in-class and online instruction, whereas the control group was exposed to in-class instruction only. All the subjects in the experimental group had experience using the internet, e-mail, and had experience using an online course with Blackboard as part of writing instruction when they were freshmen. None of the subjects had any contact with British or American people or students. 10% of the students in both groups had travel experience in the USA and UK or lived in the USA for few years. However,

their travel experience had no significant effect on the students' prior cultural knowledge as measured by the pretest (See the Results Section below).

3. In-class Instruction:

The experimental and control groups were exposed to the same in-class instruction (2 hours). Both groups were taught by the author. The culture course consisted of two cultural modules: a British culture module and an American culture module. The former was taught by the author, the latter by another instructor. The British culture module was taught in weeks 1-6 and the American culture module was taught in weeks 7-12.

The printed material used for in-class instruction about British culture was taken from "World Book Encyclopedia" on CD-ROM, supplemented by 200 pictures scanned from magazines, and from the author's collection of postcards and pictures of Britain. The aim of the course was to develop the students' awareness of and knowledge about the British culture and mastery of related culture terminology. The in-class material covered the following topics: *Definition of culture, difference between culture and civilization, the process of enculturation, characteristics of culture, cultural patterns, cultural traits, multiculturalism, cultural anthropology, cross-cultural, ethnography. Location of the UK, different names, political divisions of the UK, general characteristics, British colonies, British history, Industrial Revolution, British government (National government, regional governments and local governments), the constitution, parliament, prime minister and cabinet, politics in the UK, political parties, population, ancestry, language, city life, rural life, food and drink, recreation, religion, educational system, health care system, museums and libraries, the arts, land regions, rivers and lakes, climate, economy, service industries, manufacturing, agriculture, mining, fishing, energy resources, international trade, imports and exports transportation, communication (post office, newspapers, radio and T.V.).*

Each class session consisted of a large-group in-class LCD-enhanced lecture supplemented by pictures illustrating the different aspects of the British culture. In addition, new terminology was explained in context. The British culture module was completed over 6 weeks (12 class sessions). Each week, students in both groups were

required to look up the Arabic equivalents of the culture terminology encountered in the in-class lecture. No assignments were given for the in-class sessions.

In the first week of the semester, both groups received some training in study skills including text macro- and micro-structure, locating main ideas, underlining key concepts and key terms, figuring out meanings and definitions of key terms from context, and outlining.

4. Treatment:

In addition to in-class instruction, the experimental group used an online course with Nicenet, as it did not require any special license or registration fees. The Nicenet online system is easy to use. It contained most of the course components needed and the author did not have to spend any time designing or adding new course components. The experimental group used their own PC's and the internet from home as it was inaccessible from campus due to wiring difficulties. This author provided the online instruction herself as none of her female colleagues at COLT was trained nor had any prior experience in online instruction.

Prior to the online instruction, the Nicenet online course components such as "*Link Sharing*", "*Conferencing*", "*Course Materials*" were explained and instructions on how to use certain course components were also posted in the "*Conferencing*" area.

Some sites (hyperlinks) about British culture were added in the "*Link Sharing*" area. Each week, a question or a discussion topic about that aspect of British culture under study in class was posted in the "*Conferencing*" area. The following discussion topics were posted in the "*Conferencing*" area: *British ancestry, UK memories and experiences, famous British people, British educational system, British population, Sports in the UK, ancient civilizations, cities in the UK, well-known places in the UK, Windsor Castle, conflict in Northern Ireland, British Ministries, culture terms and their Arabic equivalents, and examples of multicultural societies and civilizations*. The questions and topics provided additional information about cultural topics covered in the classroom. Throughout the six weeks, the students checked the links posted in the "*Link Sharing*" area. Some added their own links. They posted answers to and information about the cultural topics posted in the "*Conferencing*" area. They read the information posted under each topic.

Throughout the six weeks, the author served as a facilitator. She provided technical support on how to use the online course components, and responded to individual students' needs and requests for certain sites. Through e-mail and "Conferencing", she sent public and private messages to encourage students to interact and communicate. The author did not correct anything that the students posted. Sometimes she just asked some students to re-format their paragraphs or to summarize long ones. The online course was assigned 10% of the total course grade.

5. Procedures:

Before instruction, the experimental and control groups were pre-tested. They took the same pretest that consisted of questions about the United Kingdom. At the end of the module (week 6), both groups took the same posttest that consisted of 4 culture terminology questions and 10 questions about British culture: (1) *Translate the following terms into Arabic: Duchess, hereditary peer, ministerial offices, cross-cultural, metropolitan areas, High Court of Judiciary, trade unions, enterprise zones, archbishop, English public schools, medical insurance, notable, ethnography, lawmaking body.* (2) *Give the English equivalent to the following 12 Arabic terms related to British culture.* (3) *For each of the following cultural terms, give as many derivatives: legislative, education, invasion, unitary, commuters.* (4) *Break each of the following cultural terms into its component parts (prefixes, suffixes and roots) by using dashes: Enculturation, inheritance, industrialization, nationalist, descendants, consumption.* (5) *Do you think the UK is a democracy? Give at least 3 reasons to support your answer* (6) *Give at least 3 examples of changes that took place in the UK after World War II.* (7) *London is a culturally rich environment. Give at least 5 examples that show that.* (8) *Write a short definition for the following: Jutes, NHS, Tory, Nationalistic Parties, Assembly of Wales, Gaelic, Prime Minister* (9) *What is the role of the House of Lords in the British legal system?* (10) *Give at least 3 aspects of British culture that you have seen in the POWERPOINT pictures displayed in class?* (11) *Draw a diagram that shows the structure (components) of the British health care system and the governmental units in charge of it.* (12) *Read the following paragraph about Britain then answer the questions: What cultural traits of the Scotland are shown? 13 What cultural patterns are shown in the paragraph?* (14) *Read the following*

paragraph about Ireland then answer the questions: What elements of Irish culture are illustrated by the paragraph?

Culture knowledge questions were mostly short-answer questions in which the number of points to be included in the answer was specified. Students in both groups took the test at the same time. The test was answered in 60-90 minutes.

The pre and posttests of both groups were blindly graded by the author. The students wrote their ID numbers instead of their names. The questions were graded one at a time, that is, one question was graded for all the students before moving on to the next question. An answer key was used. It was not possible to have another instructor grade the posttests instead of the author, as she would not know what topics about British culture were taught in class and how they were taught.

In addition, the experimental group answered a post-treatment questionnaire that consisted of several open-ended questions. The questionnaire aimed at finding out how experimental students felt about their experience with online learning and whether they found it helpful in learning about British culture.

6. Test Validity and Reliability

The posttest is believed to have content validity as it aimed at assessing the students' comprehension and awareness of British culture. The content covered in the test was comparable to that covered in the course materials and in class. The test instructions were phrased clearly and the examinees' task was defined. Most of the students in the experimental and control groups comprehended the questions and responded to them as instructed.

In addition, content validity was also determined by obtaining specialists' opinions. Before the test was administered to the students, four colleagues were given the test and the printed material which was covered in class. They were asked to judge whether the questions on the test represent the themes covered in class. Few test items were modified in the light of the feedback and comments received.

Concurrent validity of the posttest was determined by correlating the students' scores on the culture terminology and the culture knowledge subtests. For the purposes of the present study, the culture terminology score consisted of the composite score of the first four terminology questions, and the culture knowledge score consisted of the

composite score of all of the ten culture knowledge questions. The validity coefficient was .62 for the experimental group and .74 for the control group. Both were significant at the .01 level.

Since the author was the instructor of both groups and the scorer of the pretest and posttests for both groups, estimates of inter-rater reliability were necessary. A 30% random sample of the pretest and posttest answer sheets was selected and double-scored. A colleague who holds a Ph.D. degree scored the pre and posttest answer sheets using the same answer key. She had experience teaching the Culture I course. The scoring procedures were explained and she practiced scoring few answer sheets before scoring the whole sample. In scoring the sample answer sheets, she used the same answer key and followed the same scoring procedures utilized by the author and outlined in the “Procedures” section above. The marks given by both raters for each subtest in the sample were correlated. Inter-rater correlation was 96% for each group.

In addition to inter-rater reliability, examinee reliability was computed as it indicates how consistently examinees perform on the same set of tasks. Examinee reliability was calculated by correlating the students’ scores on the even items with their scores on the odd items. Split halves reliability was calculated by correlating scores for the odd and even items. The split halves reliability coefficient was .83 for the experimental group and .89 for the control group. Examinee reliability was also calculated by using the Kuder-Richardson 21’ formula as it estimates the internal-consistency of the culture test items. The reliability coefficient of the posttest was .87 for each group.

7. Data Analysis:

All of the pre and posttest raw scores were converted into percentages, then the mean, median, standard deviation, standard error and range were computed. To find out whether there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in their background knowledge about British culture prior to instruction, an independent T-test was run using the pretest scores. To find out whether each group made any progress (gain) as a result of instruction, a within group paired T-test was computed for each group using the pre and posttest scores. Another independent T-test was run using the

posttest scores of the experimental and control groups to find out which group made higher gains as a result of the mode of instruction that they received.

To find out whether the frequency of using the online course is related to the student's cultural awareness level, the online course usage frequency was obtained for each student. The usage frequency represented the total number of paragraphs posted by each student in response to all the conferencing topics and questions over the six weeks. For each student, the usage score was correlated with her posttest score.

Finally, the impact of online instruction on experimental students' attitudes towards the target culture and towards online learning was based on qualitative analyses of the students' comments on and responses to the open-ended questions in the post-treatment questionnaire. Percentages of students who responded positively and negatively to the questionnaire were also calculated.

8. Results:

i. Pretest Results:

Results of the independent sample T-test showed no significant differences between the pretest mean scores of the experimental and control groups, indicating no significant differences in background knowledge of British culture between the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the semester before online and in-class instruction began ($T = 1.10$, $Df = 79$, $P < .27$).

ii. Posttest Results:

Results of the analysis of the posttest scores of the experimental and control groups reported in Table (1) show that the typical EFL female sophomore student in the experimental group scored higher on the posttest than the typical student in the control group (medians = 60.5% and 43.5% respectively). The experimental group's posttest mean score was also higher than that for the control group (means = 62.90 and 47.93 respectively) with large variations among students within each groups in their achievement score and hence cultural awareness (Experimental SD = 20.65 and control SD = 24.53).

Table (1)

Pretest and Posttest Mean, Median, Standard Deviation, Standard Error and Range
Scores for the Experimental and Control Groups

Test	Group	N	Mean	Median	SD	Std. Error Mean	Range
Pretest	Experimental	40	20.00	21	1.19	.19	0-40
	Control	40	18.48	19	1.25	.14	0-40
Posttest	Experimental	40	62.90	63	20.56	3.25	27-100
	Control	40	47.93	46	23.56	3.71	11-100

iii. Effect of Instruction on Cultural Awareness:

Results of the paired T-test revealed a significant difference between the pre and posttest mean scores of the experimental group at the .01 level, suggesting that experimental students' achievement significantly improved as a result of exposure to a combination of in-class and online instruction from home ($T = 13.17$, $Df = 39$). Similarly, a significant difference between the pre and posttest mean scores of the control group was found at the .01 level ($T = 9.60$, $Df = 39$), suggesting that achievement in the control group significantly improved as a result of in-class instruction which depended on the handout and LCD-presentations and pictures only.

However, the paired T-test results do not show which group made higher gains. Therefore, an independent sample t-test was run. The independent sample T-test results indicated significant differences between the experimental and control group posttest means scores in cultural awareness ($T = 3.38$, $Df = 78$, $P < .002$), suggesting that achievement (cultural awareness) in the experimental group was higher than that in the control group as a result of online instruction.

iv. Correlation between Posttest Scores and Frequency Usage:

Findings of the present study indicated that there is a significant positive correlation between the posttest scores of the experimental group and the frequency of using the online course ($r = .37$, $P < .01$). This suggests that a student's achievement in the culture course correlates with the number of contributions she made to the discussion topics and questions posted in the "Conferencing" area of the online course. This means

that high and low usage frequencies of the online course were found to correlate with high and low cultural awareness as measured by the posttest. It can be concluded that using the online course did contribute to the students' overall cultural awareness level.

v. Effect of Online Instruction on Attitudes:

Findings of the post-treatment questionnaire revealed that 85% of the subjects in the experimental group found the online course very important and very useful. Experimental students reported that the online course kept them interested. They found it a new way of learning and doing homework. It made the British culture material easy to grasp, as it provided illustrative examples and explained the meaning of new culture terms. The students had the opportunity to read and learn new information about cultural topics related to British history, major cities, ministries, important sports, ancient buildings, palaces, places of interest to tourists, the British educational system, famous British artists, novelists, historians, scientists, inventors, and personal experiences of how British people treat tourists. The material posted in the online course served as reference material readily available whenever they had a question in mind. It gave the subjects an opportunity to exchange and share information with each other. They could discuss information with each other and express their opinion regarding the topics under study. They developed the ability to search for information in online and conventional hard copy resources to answer the questions posted by the instructor.

On the other hand, few students (15%) did not benefit from the online course because they did not have time to browse the site and they did not have internet access all the time. They felt it should be used for fun not for credit or as a proper course. As a result, they did not take the online course seriously. They were passive rather than active learners reading and posting answers and topics. They noted that some of the material the students posted was repetitive, which means that those students did not even read what their classmates have already posted. They added that some students just cut and pasted the material they posted from online resources without summarizing, editing or commenting on it.

Other shortcomings of the Nicenet online course were: The students could not format their posted material, could neither insert nor upload pictures, digital pictures or

video clips to support the material that they posted. They could not have audio or video conferencing with each other .

9. Discussion:

The present study found that students in the experimental group who were exposed to a combination of online and in-class instruction scored significantly higher on the culture test than control students who received in-class instruction only. Use of the Nicenet online course as a supplement to in-class instruction was significantly more effective in enhancing students' cultural awareness (knowledge) than using in-class instruction alone. Furthermore, experimental students' responses to the post-treatment questionnaire indicated that using the online course had a positive effect on their attitude towards the course and towards British culture. It enhanced their motivation to learn the material and to locate extra information about British Culture. They enjoyed using the online course and it encouraged reading, writing and exchange of ideas about the different aspects of British culture outside the classroom. The amount of student participation in the online course increased in a favorable innovative context. According to the usage statistics provided by Nicenet, the students made a total of 2558 hits over a period of six weeks. The online course provided the students with extension activities that they enjoyed. The links provided more information about the specific aspects of the British way of life and thus, topics studies in class were practiced outside the classroom, and consolidated. Finally, online instruction provided a student-centered learning environment by encouraging students to explore autonomously different aspects of British culture.

The positive effect of online instruction on the cultural awareness as well as attitudes of EFL female sophomore students obtained in the present study is consistent with findings of other studies in the literature that used other forms of technology like e-mail in inter-cultural collaborative exchanges between L1 and L2 students and/or pre-service teachers, web-resources, online newspaper and online chat. For instance, Ruhe (1998) reported that e-mail was effective in teaching intercultural awareness, created a positive affective climate, and made the English-for-Academic-Purposes curriculum more relevant to students. In addition, Schoorman and Camarillo (2000) noted that e-mail exchanges (correspondences) between university pre-service teachers and middle

school students who corresponded by e-mail broadened their multicultural awareness and improved their skills. Target language usage and interest increased over the duration of the project (Shelly, 1996). Web resources proved to be a suitable tool for increasing language and cultural knowledge, as well as a means to increase motivation (Osuna and Meskill (1998) and Lee (1997). They were a meaningful way to integrate language and culture and to provided opportunities for students to learn about the target culture while using e-mail to discuss cultural aspects with native speakers. E-mail increased students' interest and motivation. Likewise, Lee (1998) reported that online newspapers and online chat rooms enhanced college-level advanced Spanish students' learning, improved their language and reading skills, and increased their cultural knowledge.

By contrast, findings of the present study are inconsistent with findings of Chen's study (2001) who found that the attitudes of Taiwanese freshman students exposed to American culture in a constructivist CALL (computer-assisted language learning) environment did not undergo much significant change. The more the subjects participated in the CALL environment, the less strongly they felt that information on the Internet helped them better understand American culture, and the less they liked to explore American culture via the Internet.

10. Recommendations:

In the present study, online instruction was found to be a powerful learning tool for improving EFL female sophomore students' awareness of British culture. Results also showed that in learning environments where the internet is unavailable to students and instructors in the classroom, use of online courses from home and even as a supplement to in-class techniques helps motivate and enhance EFL students' knowledge. To improve EFL students' awareness of the target culture, use of online courses in instruction is strongly recommended. Target culture instructors may be trained to develop and use online courses in teaching target culture courses to sophomore students from home as it requires no scheduling, no equipment and no connectivity from campus.

Being the only instructor to use online instruction made some students less enthusiastic to use the online course. They felt it should be used for fun not for credit or

as a proper course. Therefore, administrative support is required for making online instruction an integral part of the target culture courses. For online instruction to be successful in promoting cultural knowledge, the minimum requirements of students' contributions in the online course, minimum number of topics posted by each student may be specified. The instructor can always prompt the students to use the course site by sending public and private messages and by responding to and commenting on students' ideas. The students can be encouraged to select and post their own cultural topics individually or in small groups. Class discussions about the material to be posted in the online course may be held before and after the material is posted. Students may give oral presentations of particular aspects of British culture. Individual and small group student cultural portfolios may be part of the online activities. Online newspapers may be used to locate topics and articles about British culture. To discourage students from just copying and pasting information from hard copy and online resources, and repeating posted information, criteria for posted material may be set at the beginning of the course. To enable students to upload pictures and video clips and have teleconferences, other online courses such as Blackboard or OWCP may be used instead of Nicenet.

In addition, online courses used for teaching the target culture may become more effective if online activities are executed not only independently and interactively but also collaboratively. Students in the 'Readings in the Target Culture I' course may collaborate with students taking the more advanced culture courses at the same college, may collaborate with other students in other colleges and universities, or may collaborate with British and American college students. E-mail, online chat, and the webCT, Blackboard or OWCP online course may be used for collaborative projects and activities. Similarly, instructors teaching the different culture courses at the same college may collaborate with each other in selecting the cultural themes and online activities. They may collaborate with instructors teaching culture courses at other colleges at home, or in the UK and USA and may share cultural themes and online resources and activities.

Furthermore, experimental studies like this could be improved and become even more successful in promoting translation students' awareness of the target culture by using the online course for a whole semester instead of six weeks and by using several

experimental and control groups of equal sizes and comparable pre-treatment test scores. Subjects in those groups may be randomly selected or may be assigned to the experimental and control groups by matching. When Internet access is available to students and instructors on campus, the online culture courses can be accessed from the classroom or computer lab under direct supervision and feedback from the instructor.

Finally, the impact of integrating online courses in in-class instruction on the achievement of male sophomore students majoring in translation needs to be further investigated. Courses that are fully delivered online may be extended to students taking more advanced culture courses. The effect of fully delivered online culture courses on the achievement of groups of EFL male and female students in general is still open for further investigation.

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