Chapter VI
Achieving Cultural Acquiescence Through Foreign Language E–Learning

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ABSTRACT
Within a globalized society, foreign language acquisition is essential to promote intercultural global communication. For many, the use of information communication technologies (ICTs) to teach a foreign language is the easiest way to accomplish this task. However, it is important to consider the cultural implications of foreign language e-learning, and to answer the question: Can culture effectively be transmitted through ICT? To investigate the transmission of culture through ICT, this chapter examines language codes, culture and cross-cultural challenges to communication. Afterward, two commonly used and easily accessible ICTs, the Rosetta Stone and MyLanguageExchange.com, are evaluated for their cognitive development and cultural sensitivity. The chapter will conclude with implications and recommendations to enhance cultural awareness for teachers and students utilizing ICT for foreign language learning.

INTRODUCTION
Globalization, a multidimensional phenomenon primarily viewed through its economic component (Castells, 2001), “has redefined communities, changes boundaries, fused cultures and altered social relations” (Dominelli, 2007). As a result of these challenges, a global economy composed
of world-wide interconnected capital markets presents challenges that greatly impact multiple disciplines, including business, science, education and technology. In regard to technology, the global community can be characterized in respect to two distinct phenomena: (1) the revolution of mass media and (2), the subsequent creation of transnational social spaces (Sklair, 2005).

The emergence of a globalized world, comprised of a diverse multiethnic and multilingual membership, creates unique considerations to communication (Pai, Adler, & Shadiow, 2006). Therefore, to address these challenges, many individuals, businesses, educational institutions and governments have turned to informational communication technologies (ICTs) as a cost effective way to enhance cross-cultural communication and, in particular, foreign language learning. However, although these technologies are easily accessible, they do not adequately address the cultural aspects associated with second language development. Cultural sensitivity training and instruction must be integrated into foreign language instruction so that learners can effectively utilize second language skills to the goal of adapting to the beliefs and values of the new culture.

Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to examine the cultural requirements of ICT program implementation and to provide a guide for evaluating foreign language e-learning programs in regard to language development, competency and cultural sensitivity. The chapter begins with an examination of language codes, culture, and challenges to cross-cultural communication. Next, Bloom’s Taxonomy of cognitive development and Foronda’s (2008) framework of cultural sensitivity are used to examine two commonly used and easily accessible ICTs, the Rosetta Stone and MyLanguageExchange.com. The chapter concludes with a discussion of cultural sensitivity and practical methods that instructors, and students alike, can utilize to enhance cultural sensitivity within ICT foreign/second language learning.

BACKGROUND

Language Codes: The Basis of Effective Communication

When discussing language development, it is important to understand that interpersonal communication is composed of digital and analogical language codes (Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). The components of digital codes are “arbitrary elements, e.g. rules of grammar, morphophonemic rules, or rules of addition, subtraction and multiplication” (Berger & Bradac, 1982). Another “important property of digital systems is the potential transformation of elements without loss of meaning” (Berger & Bradac, 1982). For this reason, digital codes are designed to express propositional meanings, and it is these propositional meanings that communicate a foundational understanding of the language as a whole. In other words, digital codes are the explicit information foundational to a student’s understanding of a foreign language (Berger & Bradac, 1982).

Analogic codes, on the other hand, “are continuous signals which vary exclusively in terms of intensity and duration” (Berger & Bradac, 1982). These “analogic signals convey information about strength of affect and nature of the relationship between the sender and the receiver of the signal” (Berger & Bradac, 1982; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Additionally, analogic and digital aspects of speech divulge information about communicators which is then used to assess the attitudes, values and background of the speaker (Berger & Bradac, 1982). In other words, it is the analogic signals that are contained within grammatical patterns of the language that communicate the functional meaning and cultural assumptions between speakers.

Culture

In 1972, Geert Hofstede’s (1980) research found that variations in culture can be separated into