The Effects of Cross-Cultural Distance Learning Model on the Linguistic and Affective Domain of EFL Learners in Korea

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) model between university students in Korea and Japan during the 1st semester of 2016 and this lesson model consists of synchronous and asynchronous CMC activities focusing on the interactions between non-native speakers of English. This article shows that EFL learners in Korea can develop English language proficiency through this lesson model. The learners’ development of English language proficiency was evaluated by using the TOEIC test as a proficiency test form. Also, this article proves that these kinds of CMC activities can motivate EFL learners to enhance cultural awareness for foreign countries and practice English inside and outside of the classroom. The questionnaire was used to survey the students’ cultural awareness and attitude for this model at the final session of the semester.

KEYWORDS

Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) Lesson Model, Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), English Language Proficiency, Non-Native Speakers of English (NNS)

1. INTRODUCTION

Based on the significant characteristics of the 21st century—highly advanced information technology and globalization—it is necessary to design the educational environment for equipping the young with the necessary talents for the 21st century. Nowadays, much research has been conducted to join the information & communication technology (ICT) with English language teaching (henceforth, ELT). Especially in the area of ELT, we can find many studies to prove that using ICT including computer-mediated communication (CMC) is effective in English language learning. Based on the recent needs to adjust the environment of English education to the globalized world, there have been new trials to adopt innovative approaches in the ELT context of Korea and many results have been gained to give important implications to utilizing ICT in ELT.

This research pursues the following aims. The first aim is to show that Cross-Cultural Distance Learning (CCDL) model can promote the English language proficiency of university students who participated in this lesson. The gains of English language proficiency were measured by the TOEIC test. The second aim is to prove that this lesson model can enhance the cultural awareness among Korean and Japanese through focusing on the cultural themes in the process of chatting and BBS activities. The third aim is to prove that this lesson model is very appropriate for enhancing the motivation and interest of EFL learners in acquiring English in Asian contexts. The results of the questionnaire can suggest that most of the participants were satisfied with this lesson model and wished to join in
this lesson again. These results show that this lesson model can cultivate the students’ motivation in practicing English as an International Language.

The article tries to achieve the purposes of the study through answering the following research questions:

1. To show that this model can promote the English language proficiency of university students in Korea
2. To prove that this model is very appropriate for enhancing positive attitudes for learning English as an International Language
3. To prove that this model can enhance cultural awareness among university students in Korea and Japan

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. CCDL Model and CMC Activities

The main purpose of this CCDL model is to provide EFL learners with real-life communication in a non-threatening atmosphere using CMC, so that this lesson model can enhance the students’ intercultural awareness toward being a globalized citizen (Nakano, 2006). The significant characteristics of this project are CMC activities and interactions between non-native speakers of English. Computer-Mediated Communication (henceforth, CMC) can be defined as any type of human-to-human communication mediated by a computer (Murray, 2000). CMC can be categorized based on two parameters: time (synchronous or asynchronous) and medium (text or voice): Synchronous text (e.g., chat and instant messaging), Asynchronous text (e.g., e-mail and discussion boards), Synchronous voice (e.g., Internet telephony and audio or videoconferencing), Asynchronous voice (e.g., voicemail and voice discussion boards) (Hubbard, 2004). There has been much research on CMC in English language learning; CMC can develop language skills (Pennington, 2004; Fotos, 2004), raise learners’ motivation and lower their anxiety (Huh, 2011, 2012). CMC can provide language learners with the chance for practicing the English language with native and non-native speakers of English (Fotos, 2004). CMC can offer text specific types of feedback for the individual learner (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). CMC enhances students’ motivation by providing them with a less threatening means by which to communicate (Hanson-Smith, 2000; Meskill & Ranglova, 2000). Especially Huh (2011, 2012) emphasized the importance of CMC in the affective domain of EFL learners in Korea, and also pointed out the good aspects and bad aspects of CMC activities in EFL classrooms.

2.2. CCDL Model Focusing on NNS-NNS Interactions

Recent studies suggested some benefits in communicating between non-native speakers of English (henceforth, NNS) in Asian contexts. Nakano (2006) pointed out that one of the advantages of NNS-NNS interactions in the Asian context is that non-native speakers of English speak more slowly rather than native speakers of English. The other advantage is that English varieties of Asia have common idiosyncratic features. The third one is that Asian people share common cultural understandings based on Confucius tradition (Yano, 2006). The interactions between NNS-NNS are important in terms of input modification, feedback phenomena and output modifications (Doughty & Pica, 1986; Pica et al, 1996). Negotiations of meaning can also be beneficial because it increases input (Young & Doughty, 1987). So, the communicative interactions between NNS are beneficial to language learning and acquisition whether they occur between NS and NNS or between NNS and NNS and if they are successfully employed by NNS.

On the basis of the academic research development, many studies have been conducted on the effects of CCDL in the ELT context of Korea. This CCDL model emphasizes the interaction between
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