Using an E- Program in Culture Based on Multimodality to Develop Faculty of Education English Majors' Critical Thinking

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Abstract:

The present study was conducted to investigate the effectiveness of using an E-Program in culture Based on Multimodality in Developing Faculty of Education English Majors' Critical Thinking. Seventy students were selected from third-year English majors at Faculty of Education, Minia University. They were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control group. The experimental group was taught using the E-Program in Culture Based on Multimodality, while the control group received regular instruction. The experimental group and the control group were submitted to pre-testing and post-testing means of collecting data. The instruments of the study included a needs assessment questionnaire and a Critical Thinking Test. Results of the study revealed that there was a significant statistical difference (favoring the experimental group) between mean scores obtained by the experimental and the control groups on the post-testing of the Critical Thinking Test. The study concluded that the E-Program in Culture had a positive and high effect on improving students' Critical Thinking. Discussion of the findings, recommendations, and suggestions for further research were presented.

Key Words: Multimodality and Critical Thinking

استخدام برنامج الكتروني في الثقافة قائم على نظرية الوسائط المتعددة في تنمية التفكير الناقد لدي طالب الفرقة الثالثة شعبة اللغة الانجليزية بكلية التربية

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مستخلص

حاولت الدراسة الحالية تنمية التفكير الناقد لدي طلاب الفرقة الثالثة كلية التربية شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال استخدام برنامج الكتروني في الثقافة قائم علي نظرية الوسائط المتعددة. تكونت العينة من 70 طالب وتم تقسيمهم الي مجموعتين: مجموعة ضابطة واخري تجريبية. تم استخدام برنامج الكتروني في الثقافة قائم علي نظرية الوسائط المتعددة في تنمية الكفاءة البينثقافية للمجموعة التجريبية بينما المجموعة الضابطة تم تدريس بالطريقة التقليدية. شملت ادوات الدراسة اختبار التفكير الناقد واستبيان تحليل الاحتياجات. من خلال استخدام التحليل الاحصائي المناسب تبين ان المجموعة التجريبية حصلت على درجات اعلي من المجموعة الضابطة في اختبار التفكير الناقد. لذلك، ثبت فعالية استخدام برنامج الكتروني في الثقافة قائم علي نظرية الوسائط المتعددة لطالب كلية التربية شعبة اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الوسائط المتعددة – التفكير الناقد

Introduction

Developments in technology have opened up access to cultural resources from all over the world, and methods of teaching culture using technology have created a movement away from approaches where learners passively listen to the teacher talk about the target culture, and approaches to developing cultural awareness have started to focus on students' active participation in the construction of an understanding of the target culture, as well as reflecting on their own. Rapid globalization has increased the need for cross–cultural communication so that people have access to information all over the world. This growing and extending need leads to growth in the foreign language teaching profession. Many acknowledge that learning a foreign language is a requirement to survive in today's world. The English language plays an important role because it has become the lingua franca of the world, and the default language that one needs to learn in order to keep up with the information age.

Integration of culture into language teaching is, by no doubt, a requirement to pass on general humanistic knowledge. If successful integration takes place, the foreign and/or second language learners of English or any other languages will be able to act flexibly and sensibly along the lines of cultural norms that they encounter within the target language culture.Turkan & Çelik (2007)

In addition, developments in technology have also opened up access to cultural resources from all over the world, and methods of teaching culture using technology have created a movement away from

approaches where learners passively listen to the teacher talk about the target culture, and approaches to developing cultural awareness have started to focus on students' active participation in the construction of an understanding of the target culture, as well as reflecting on their own.

While facing representatives of foreign cultures human beings often tend to appeal to stereotypes, prejudices, and overgeneralizations, which yields a range of misunderstandings and impedes intercultural interactions. The critical thinking(CT) tradition recommends instructing individuals to use their mental abilities and entails self-improvement in thinking through introducing standards that help assess thinking so that eventually errors or blunders of thought are limited. Such an approach results from the assumption that humans possess the capacity for good reasoning which can be nurtured and developed. According to Paul (1992) cited in Sobkowiak (2016), "to think well is to impose discipline and restraint on our thinking – by means of intellectual standards – in order to raise our thinking to a level of 'perfection' or quality that is not natural or likely in undisciplined, spontaneous thought" (p. 2).

Context of the Problem

In order to deeply investigate the problem of the present study,

- The researcher developed a test administered to the third-year English majors, Faculty of Education, Minia University. The scores of the test were beyond average. On analyzing the results of the test that was related to critical thinking skills , the researcher found that the

majority of students' scores were low. This means that pupils have problems with their critical thinking skills and these skills need to be improved.

From what was mentioned above, it was obvious that third-year English majors, Faculty of Education, Minia University need to improve their critical thinking. After reviewing the literature it was found that using a program based on multimodality theory might provide a helpful solution to this problem.

Statement of the problem

The results obtained from administering the test revealed that third year English majors' critical thinking skills need to be improved. The researcher assumed that critical thinking could be developed by introducing students an E-program based on multimodality. Thus, the present research attempted to investigate:

"The use of an E-program in culture based on multimodality to develop Faculty of Education English majors' critical thinking skills".

Aim of the Study

This study aimed to identify the effect of using an E-Program in Culture Based on Multimodality in Developing Faculty of Education English Majors' critical thinking.

Hypotheses of the study

The following hypothesis was tested

- There would be a statistically significant difference, favoring the experimental group, between mean scores obtained by the

experimental and the control groups in the post-performance on the critical thinking test.

Delimitations of the Study

The current study was delimited to the following:

1- Participants of the study were chosen from third-year English majors, Faculty of Education. Seventy students participated in this study (35 for the experimental group & 35 for the control group).

2- The experiment lasted for one semester in the academic year 2021/2022, four hours a week.

Significance of the study:

The significance of this study stems from the following considerations:

1. Using online intercultural contact with students who never leave home to help them improve their critical thinking is seldom part of research and it is examined here. This could be a kind of motivation for English use and self-awareness of personal identity. Online intercultural interaction could help students think critically and raise their awareness of the world beyond their own when communicating with peers in totally different circumstances and when conveying Egyptian realities and stereotypes about Egypt.

2. It enables us to examine what multimodality has to offer as a pedagogic resource and how it can be used to improve learning and critical thinking.

3. The study offers a test of critical thinking.

4. The findings of the present study can be both theoretically and practically significant for EFL teachers, curriculum designers, and researchers. Such a study provides information to be taken into consideration by language planners, curriculum designers, textbook developers, language instructors, teachers as well as learners.

Definition of terms

Culture

Kamal (2004) defines culture as "a complex whole or a system including a network of factors: beliefs, customs, values, assumptions about life, language, material articrafts, law, art, and morals".

Abisamra (2009) defines it as "Culture is a broad concept that embraces all aspects of human life. It includes everything people learn to do. It is everything humans have learned."

Burchum (2002) states that Culture is a learned worldview or paradigm shared by a population or group and transmitted socially that influences values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors, and is reflected in the language, dress, food, materials, and social institutions of a group. **This definition is adopted in this study as it is more comprehensive.**

● **Multimodality**

Jewitt (2009) states that Multimodality is an inter-disciplinary approach that understands communication and representation to be more than about language. It allows an integrated use of various forms of interaction simultaneously.

Murray (2013) defines multimodality as a theory of communication. It describes communication practices in terms of the textual, aural, linguistic, spatial, and visual resources – or modes – used to compose messages. **This definition is adopted in this study as it is more comprehensive**.

Critical Thinking:

Critical thinking is self-guided, self-disciplined thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. (Elder, 2009).

Cahir (1997) defines critical thinking as a mental activity that is clear, precise, and purposeful. It is typically associated with solving complex real-world problems, generating multiple (or creative) solutions to a problem, drawing inferences, synthesizing and integrating information, distinguishing between fact and opinion, or estimating potential outcomes, but it can also refer to the process of evaluating the quality of one's own thinking. The present study adopted Cahir's definition.

Review of literature

Critical Thinking

The inclusion of critical thinking skills in the EFL classroom can help further develop students' communicative abilities and analytical thinking and allows students to practice communicating in a variety of situations on global issues. For Scriven and Paul (2004) thinking critically entails: that mode of thinking –about any subject, content, or problem— in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully taking charge of the structures inherent in thinking

and imposing intellectual standards upon them . . . in short, [critical thinking is] self−directed, self−disciplined, self−monitored, and self−corrective thinking. Similarly, Hopper (2003:37) considers a critical thinker as one who "… is constantly asking questions, trying to distinguish between fact and opinion. Not about memorizing, but analyzing all sides of an issue to find more in the situation than the obvious and makes assertions built on sound logic and solid evidence." Stroupe, (2006:3) introduced critical thinking as a process incorporating cited definitions view critical thinking in terms of the way information is processed and applied, and equally emphasize the consciousness or awareness of this process taking place. This emphasis or awareness is necessary for the facilitation of critical thinking in the classroom. It is this kind of thinking that sharpens learners' focus on environmental matters and urges them to react accordingly. More specifically, Halvorsen (2005) says that when we think critically about a given topic, we are forced to consider our own relationship to it and how we personally fit into the context of the issue. Tsui (2008) defines critical thinking as "a way of reasoning that examines the inherent structure and logic of one's intellectual functioning," and Tang (2009) says that critical thinking is one of the crucial aims of education as a whole, and is shaped by language. Therefore students learning a second/foreign language will need to learn and apply critical thinking skills within the context of the second language in order to think, evaluate and express their ideas in that language.

Cultural and critical thinking

Jianying & Puyu (2015) The cultivation of critical thinking skills and intercultural communication competence have been put on the list of top priorities in the current English teaching and education reform. The 2,000 version of the Higher Education Teaching Syllabus for English Majors stresses the importance of cultivating independent thinking and innovative skills and also emphasizes the significance of incorporating students' cultural sensitivity, and flexibility to meet the demands of increasingly widespread international communication. Moreover, fostering intercultural communication competence is an important part of developing critical thinking skills, and these two are correlated in the process of language teaching.

He also added that the fostering of critical thinking skills and intercultural communication competence overlap to a certain extent. Affective dispositions like open-mindedness regarding divergent world views, flexibility in considering alternatives and opinions, understanding of the opinions of other people, fair-mindedness in appraising reasoning, honesty in facing one's own biases, prejudices, stereotypes, egocentric or sociocentric tendencies are important components of Facione's definition of critical thinking skills.

Multimodality

The ultimate goal of English learning should be to help students communicate with other countries to meet the requirements of globalization. Multimodality brings image, video, audio, and so on for students to understand the meaning of words and know more customs

of foreign cultures as if being personally on the scene, which the traditional teaching mode can't compare. Only through this method, can students really be interested in English class and really attain the goal of improving their intercultural competence. The theory of multimodality sees language as a cultural activity and makes us see culture in its actual form and not merely one that creates individual differences (Hinkel 2005). Careful consideration should be given to explicit and implicit meanings of cultural information in the visual content which can be interpreted in many ways. Illustrations and images show but also say something to an individual learner, being able to speak their own language. (Hurst, 2014, p. 25). The ELT(English Language Teaching) materials about culture could be multimodal texts as they could combine written language, illustrations, pictures, music, spoken language, and sounds. They may also include films and online materials with audio-visual elements and become both multimodal and multimedia ones (Perez-Gonzales, 2014, p. 187).

Studies related to developing Critical Thinking

Liaw (2007) conducted a study to examine the effectiveness of promoting learners' critical thinking skills and EFL skills with a content-based approach. Two groups of junior high school students participated in the study. Data were collected via class assignments, a critical thinking assessment instrument, a questionnaire, and a teacher-constructed language proficiency test. A five-unit syllabus, including the subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, was designed and implemented. The findings revealed

significant gains in the students' English language proficiency test scores. Critical thinking skills and content area knowledge mastery were also found. The questionnaire results showed positive responses toward the content-based EFL learning and teaching from the participating students. Based on these findings, instructional suggestions and caveats were provided.

Khalaf (2009) conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of an E-learning program in study skills in Developing English majors' use of these skills and their critical thinking. Sixty students of second-year English majors– at Minia University were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group and a control one. Experimental group students were trained in an E-learning program in study skills, whereas control group students were taught the same content in a reading course through the conventional method of teaching. Tools of the study included two questionnaires to determine the main and sub-skills needed most by second-year English major, an E-learning training program in study skills, a pre-post test in the acquisition of study skills, a pre-post-test in the use of study skills, a pre-post-test in critical thinking and the English Proficiency Exam for Egypt (EPEE). Results showed that the experimental group significantly surpassed the control group in the post-test of the use of study skills and in the post-test of critical thinking.

Experimental Design

The study was a quasi-experimental one that adopts a pre-post control group design. The experimental and the control groups were exposed

to pre-post testing. The experimental group was taught using the E-program whereas the control group was taught conventionally.

The two groups were exposed to pre-post means of collecting data.

Participants

Participants were seventy students. They were divided into two intact groups from among third-year English majors at the Faculty of Education, Minia University. They were randomly assigned to the experimental group and the control one.

Duration of the Experimentation:

The experiment lasted for one semester in the academic year 2021/2022, four hours a week.

Variables

1. **The Independent Variable**

   Using the E- Program in Culture based on Multimodality in teaching the experimental group.

2. **The Dependent Variables**

   Critical Thinking

The Instructor

The researcher herself taught the experimental group as well as the control group. The researcher preferred to teach the program herself to ensure better application of it.

Instruments of the study

To achieve the objectives of the program, the following Instruments were designed and used:

1. Needs assessment questionnaire.
2. Critical Thinking

A. **Needs assessment questionnaire**

1- **Objectives of the questionnaire:**

The researcher developed a questionnaire that was administered to eight TEFL staff members to find out how far third-year English majors – Faculty of Education, Minia University– need an E-program in Culture based on multimodality to develop their Critical Thinking

2- **Construction of the Questionnaire:**

a. The researcher reviewed the related literature.

b. The questionnaire was evaluated by a panel of EFL/TEFL staff members

c. The questionnaire was administered to eight EFL/TEFL staff members.

B. **The Critical Thinking Test**

The Critical Thinking Test

Objectives of the Test

The Critical Thinking Test assigned for third-year English majors, Faculty of Education has achieved the following objectives:

1- To assess students' Critical Thinking Skills.

2- To ensure equality of the experimental and the control groups before teaching the program.

3- To assess the degree of improvement of participants in " the experimental and the control groups' critical thinking skills".

Construction of the Critical Thinking Test

- It consists of 76 items. It is divided into four parts having different instructions.

- The test consisted of four sections. Each section consisted of ten MCQ Items. The first section was induction skills, the second was the credibility of sources or observation skills, the third was deduction and the fourth was assumption identification or classification skills.

- The test was examined by eight EFL/TEFL staff members to establish its content validity.

Scoring

A score is simply the total number of correctly marked answers. The total score of the test is 76 points.

Time Duration

Time of the test was counted during the pilot study by the average time taken by the first student finishing the test and the last one. Three hours were assigned for the Critical Thinking Test

Validity of the Test

A. Content Validity

The test was validated by a panel of jury members (Faculty of Education staff members) to determine its content validity.

The majority of the panel commented that:

1- The test items are well stated, clear, and valid.

2- Questions are suitable for the participants' academic level.

3– The test is considered a valuable contribution to literature.

4– The test items were well stated.

5– It was well organized.

B. Statistically Computed Validity of the test

The validity of the test was determined by internal consistency. The Internal consistency between each dimension compared to the total score of the test is calculated in table (1).

After testing the pilot group, the data collected was used to calculate the statistical validity of the Critical Thinking Test. To establish the statistical validity of the test, Correlation Coefficients between Each dimension and the Total Score of the test are calculated.

Table 1

Correlation Coefficients between Each dimension and the Total Score of the test

Test Dimensions	Induction 1	Credibility of Sources 2	Deduction 3	Assumption Identification 4
Correlation coefficients compared to the total score of the measure	.833	.861	.902	.783

*Significant at (0.05) level.   ** Significant at (0.05) level.

The Total Score of the test is 76 marks.

It is obvious from the above table that the Correlation coefficient between the scores of each dimension and the Total Score of the test are significant at (0.01). This indicates the validity of the test's dimensions.

Reliability of the Critical Thinking Test

After piloting the Critical Thinking Test, the data collected were used to calculate the reliability test, using mean scores of test-retest with an interval of two weeks. Correlations between pupils' scores in the two applications of the test were calculated using Pearson formula.

The reliability coefficient was **(0.91)** and this value had a statistical significance that showed the reliability of the test.

Table 2

Reliability of the Critical Thinking Test

Variables	Test		Re-Test		r-value	Sig
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Critical Thinking	35.00	7.53	36.93	5.91	0.91**	0.000

    Significant at (0.05) level.   ** Significant at (0.05) level.

To establish the reliability of the test the researcher used Alfa-Cronbach formula. The reliability coefficient is (0.66) and this value had a statistical significance that showed the reliability of the test.

Table 3

Alfa-Cronbach's Reliability Value of the Critical Thinking Test

Cronbachs Alpha	N of Items
0.66	76

Significant at (0.05) level.   ** Significant at (0.05) level.

Results:

Hypothesis 1:

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a statistical significant difference (favoring the experimental group) between mean scores obtained by the experimental and control groups on the post-test of the Critical Thinking Test.

Statistical analysis showed that this hypothesis was accepted, as t-value (19.82) was significant at (0.05) favoring the experimental group.

Table (4) below shows the data obtained to test this hypothesis.

Table 4

Means, Standard Deviations, t- value, and Eta-Squared Value obtained by the Experimental and the Control groups on the Post-testing of the Critical Thinking test

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	DF	Sig
Critical Thinking	Experimental	35	30.40	8.87	0.90	68	0.372
	Control	35	28.86	4.93			

*Significant at (0.05) level and beyond

The total score = (76).

Table (4) showed the analysis of the data obtained by the experimental and control groups on the Post-testing of the Critical Thinking test.
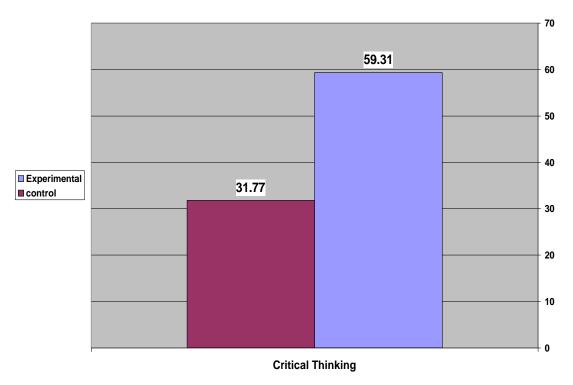
Analysis of the obtained data using t-test showed that the experimental group achieved a higher degree of improvement than the control one on the post-test of Critical Thinking as t-value reached 19.82 and this value was significant at **0.05 level** and beyond.

Table (4) reveals also that there is a statistical significant difference (favoring the experimental group) between mean scores obtained by the experimental and control groups on the post-test of Critical Thinking Test. Thus, the first hypothesis is accepted.

Figure (1) showed that the experimental group surpassed the control group on the post-performance of each part of the Critical Thinking Test.

Figure 1

The Experimental group Vs. the Control One on the post-performance of each part of the Critical Thinking Test

Critical Thinking

Discussion

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a statistical significant difference (favoring the experimental group) between mean scores obtained by the experimental and control groups on the post-performance of the Critical Thinking Test. Statistical analysis showed that this hypothesis was accepted. The effect size of the program was calculated by the Eta-squared formula to guarantee that the effectiveness of the E –Program in culture Based on Multimodality in Developing students' Critical Thinking was not due to chance.

Results obtained on the post-tests of the Critical Thinking revealed that there were significant differences favoring the experimental group. The degree of improvement reflected that students' Critical Thinking has been developed. Students in the experimental group showed remarkable improvement due to the use of multiple activities and technological and online aids based on Multimodality which seemed to be a remarkable tool in maintaining the interest of the students and improving their Critical Thinking.

Using critical incidents with a real-life ambiguous conflict provoked differences in cultural values and behaviors, and encouraged students to use critical thinking skills to analyze the situations, reflect on it, form hypotheses, find cause and effect, clarify meanings, and explain the reasons for miscommunication. Critical incidents were useful in probing the cultural assumptions people made in interactions with foreigners and allowed for providing alternative interpretations. They also contributed to fostering critical thinking skills.

The learning techniques, activities, educational resources, and evaluation procedures were in line with the technologies and up-to-date teaching and learning online programs and met the needs of almost all students. Thus all students had the opportunity of learning the content. Multimodal teaching breaks the mold of traditional teaching. It takes advantage of the Internet resources, pictures, audio, and videos, etc., to involve the students in the language learning. The teacher chooses different modes according to the content, using modern teaching media. The purpose was to present the material in a variety of ways

and to encourage students to demonstrate their own understanding also in a variety of ways.

The program activities helped students to recognize universal structures of thought. Whenever they thought (and whatever they were thinking about), they thought for a purpose, within a point of view, based on assumptions leading to implications and consequences. They used data, facts, and experiences to make inferences and judgments based on concepts and theories in attempting to answer a question, solve a problem..etc.

It can be concluded that the E –Program in culture Based on Multimodality helped in developing students' critical thinking. These results coincided with the results of other studies done by **Davidson (1996), Khalaf (2009)**, **Yagcioglu (2009), Hashemi and Ghanizadehn (2012), and Fahim, Barjesteh and Vaseghi (2012).**

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the E-Program in culture Based on Multimodality helped in Developing students' critical thinking.

Recommendations

In the light of the results obtained in the present study, the researcher recommends the following:

1. Teaching the target culture should be taken into consideration while designing English as a foreign language (EFL) courses.
2. Experiencing the target culture will encourage students be willing to ponder what might, could, or would happen differently if the facts

of a claim were considered under different conditions or from a different perspective.

3. Using multimodality, varied technologies, and online resources as part of our teaching and learning process can contribute to more student-centered approaches, especially while teaching and learning about the target culture.

4. Using technology-based and online-based evaluation procedures.

Suggestions for Further Research

The researcher suggests conducting the following studies:

1- A replication of this study to be administered to a wide number of students.

2- Investigating the effect of using the E –Program in culture Based on Multimodality in developing speaking skills and communication skills.

3- Investigating the effect of using an E –Program in culture Based on Multimodality in reducing oral communication apprehension.

4- Investigating the effect of using a blended learning program in culture on developing cultural awareness and oral communicative competence.

5- Investigate the effect of using an E– program based on the British culture to develop intercultural competence and critical thinking.

6- Integrating the effect of using critical thinking skills with writing skills of secondary school students.

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