

Employing Computer Mediated Communication into a College EFL Culture  
Awareness Course: A Case Study

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Abstract

Now in the 21st century, computer technology has been ubiquitous in people's daily lives. EFL/ESL education is no exception. Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) applications in EFL/ESL education have become a much-followed trend for the worldwide English teaching professionals. The author's attempts of conducting E-learning courses (Tai 2006, 2007) have also brought about students' positive responses. However, the impacts of computer technology on the fifth language skill, target culture awareness, have been much less explored. As an attempt to fill the gap, this project aims to investigate the efficacy of combining computer mediated communication into traditional classroom teaching in a college EFL culture awareness course. CMC applications include online discussion board, email exchanges and instant messaging tools.

The subject students of this research are 20 undergraduate students registered in a course about the American culture in Chung Hua University, located in Hsinchu, Taiwan. None of them have never personally known American people, or been to the United States. The course is designed to build up their cultural familiarity with the American culture. Two components make up the course: the lecture part and the online sessions, with the latter focusing on the students online chatting with native American English speakers.

This paper initially introduces the processes of integrating computer mediated communication into the culture awareness course and then categorizes some advantages and disadvantages of this innovative teaching method. The results are hoped to provide ESL/EFL teachers an alternative way to expose students to the American culture.

Keyword : CMC, the American Culture, ESL/EFL education, SNS