A Virtual Language Museum for Developing English Critical Listening and Creative Writing Skills of Postgraduate Students and their Attitudes towards Cultural Diversity

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Abstract

T he aim of this study was to investigate the impact of using virtual language museum on developing English critical listening and creative writing skills of postgraduate students and their attitudes towards cultural diversity. The study employed a quasi-experimental design. The study's sample comprised a group of thirty (30) of EFL postgraduate students comprising one experimental group. The study employed many instruments, namely a critical listening checklist, pre-post critical listening and creative writing test, and cultural diversity attitude questionnaire. The findings indicated that there were statistically significant differences at a significance level of 0.01 for the overall critical listening and creative writing skill, in the favor of post-test administration. Results were discussed with regard to several aspects that influenced the overall process of learning a language and the virtual language museum framework. The study has made helpful contributions to the implementation of virtual language museums in English listening and writing classes

Keywords : Virtual Language Museum , Critical Listening Skills, Creative Writing Skills, Cultural Diversity, EFL Postgraduate Students

   Recently, virtual reality (VR) has been recognised as a beneficial tool for enhancing language learning process. VR-enhanced digital environments, mostly driven by computer-generated simulation technologies, replicate real or hypothetical worlds with high fidelity in terms of visual, auditory, and tactile sensations(Li & Wong, 2021). Hence,

it provides multiple advantages for the learning process in general and language learners in particular, as follows (Frazier et.al ,2022; Huang et al.,2021; Utami et al., 2021):

- VR provide language learners with in rich environments that trigger their active engagement instead of passive language practices . Moreover, it is characterized by using interactive scenarios that enhance learner's skills, and promote their genuine participation.
- VR can replicate a wide range of social interactions. These role-playing exercises offer language learners a range of authentic settings, allowing them to practice and strengthen their language skills.
- VR language platforms integrate feedback that is provided in real time. Such prompt and continuous feedback process is extremely important in refining language skills.

Not only can language learners benefit from the implementation of VR technologies in the language learning process, but language teachers also can gain a lot, as follows (Ma, 2021; Liu,2021; Klimova,2021)

- VR simulations provide instantaneous evaluation of learners' performance and knowledge. Teachers may readily monitor learners' individual development and pinpoint areas for improvement.
- VR technology empowers teachers with diverse tools and materials to integrate into their instructional sessions. They possess the ability to adjust and alter information, hence enhancing the dynamism and efficacy of the teaching process.
- VR facilitates ongoing evaluation and feedback, enabling teachers to constantly offer prompt guidance and assistance during the whole learning process.

- With VR, teachers can tailor the learning content according to each leraner's needs and learning style, promoting personalised learning experiences that cater to individual strengths and weaknesses.

A Virtual language museum

There is no consensus on the terminology that describes virtual language museums platforms . Multiple terms are employed interchangeably, including digital, electronic, online, hypermedia, web, or cyberspace museums (Daniela, 2020; Gaia,2020). The diverse terminology used stems from the multitude of disciplines involved. The term "virtual museum" gained recognition and popularity due to its frequent usage in various media since the early 1990s, despite other phrases referring to the same concept (Carvajal et al.,2020).

From a pedagogical standpoint, learning via virtual museums can be classified as situated learning. This type of learning allows individuals to access a wide range of knowledge, providing learning opportunities that increase their interest in the knowledge stored in museums. It involves interacting with virtual artefacts and engaging with the tangible and intangible artefacts in museums. Additionally, this type of learning can facilitate culturally responsive knowledge (Taranova, 2020).

Virtual museums possess distinct attributes that make them effective as educational tools, as follows: a) They allow for the enhancement of physical reality with digital information; b) They allow integration to take place in a synchronised and real-time manner; c) They enable the combination of various resources such as text, websites, video, audio, and 3D elements; d) They offer interactive experiences (Atamuratov, 2020)

In addition, Shahab et al. (2023) and Said and Konyushenko (2020) highlight three teaching and learning phases for implementing VR in language education, that apply to virtual language museums, as follows: a) Conceptualization: refers to the process in which learners acquire and interpret various facts, concepts, and theories, information. b) Construction: involves learners critically assess facts and concepts, interactively apply knowledge, solve or analyze problems, test the practical use of terms in new circumstances, and observe real-life experiences by building upon their prior experience. c) Discussion: where learners reflect upon what they have learned and their own learning experiences.

Since learning at traditional museums can be considered as active learning, virtual language museums can offer the same learning experiences. Via virtual language museum, learners can interact with artefacts, engage with the virtual narrator, and deeply investigate linguistic artworks. Virtual museums serve as educational tools that facilitate cooperation with digital materiality, enable the visualization and spatialization of abstract linguistic concepts. They also engage language learners as collaborators and co-invest. Additionally, virtual language museums can serve as a form of situated learning, where the information presented in the is properly contextualized. Virtual language museums incorporate certain characteristics, such as narrators with human-like qualities promote highly contextualized social interactions (Chen & Kent, 2020; Eguz, 2020; Sylaiou & Dafiotis, 2020; Sylaiou et al., 2020).

Virtual language museums can serve as effective instructional tools when the information they provide is

consistent, constructive, and adheres to aesthetic and pedagogical standards. Proper data alignment with the employed visualizations is crucial. The virtual language museum application should possess simplicity, usability, and aesthetic appeal to ensure effective functionality and prevent operational failures during usage (Romanyuk,2021; Huang et al., 2021).

A Virtual language museum can be described as an online platform that makes use of a unique collection of artworks, artefacts, or historical objects, allowing language learners to explore and engage with them digitally. It provides a virtual environment replicating the experience of visiting a physical museum, offering interactive exhibits, educational resources, and immersive storytelling.

Aiming at enhancing varied aspects of English language learning process and instruction, many studies have investigated the effect of VR applications, including virtual museums, which results showed their positive impact, namely, (Alfadil, 2020; Asad et al., 2021; Compagnoni, 2021; Fadda,2020; Ho et al.,202; Lin & Wang, 2021; Tai & Chen,2021; Tai & Chen, & Todd, 2022; Yeh et.al.,2022)

Critical Listening Skills

Developing critical listening skills is essential for language learners to acquire knowledge beyond the literal interpretation of language. Learners in the language classroom need to have critical listening skills to differentiate between facts and opinions, distinguish between imagination and reality, and identify the most accurate information. Nowadays, language learners have convenient access to various communication channels,

such as the internet, social media, radio, and television, which are crucial for developing authentic linguistic knowledge. Thus , they must acquire skills that enable them to analyses any persuasive messages they may encounter (Alzamil, 2021).

According to Vanitha(2022), critical listening is a comprehensive process   that involves several levels of cognitive processes   including discriminative and interpretative listening. It involves actively listening to fully understand, analyze, infer, draw conclusions, and make judgments. However, Critical listening can be also considered as an attentive act of criticizing, judging and reconstructing   a spoken material based on personal experiences and objective insights. (Al-Jarf,2021). Therefore, attentive listening (act) and comprehensive judgment (cognitive processes) of the a spoken material are necessary for critical listening. In other words, listening as an act entail beginning with basic levels of cognitive processes, and progressively advances to more complex ones in an easy and dynamic way, resulting in of knowledge reconstruction.

One basic advantage of developing critical listening is increasing the learners' ability to use knowledge genuinely and relate it to their schemata, which in turn enables them to critique, interpret, and pick up new literacy skills. In this vein , Djabborova(2020) asserts that Enhancing one's ability to critically listen results in a clear enhancement of all other skills. Furthermore, critical listening skills enhances academic achievement by fostering logical thinking, attentiveness, memory retention, and comprehensive understanding. It fosters students' comprehension of others, enhances self-assurance, and

equips students with the ability to engage in constructive discussions and provide unbiased criticism (Jorgensen, 2023).

The assessment of critical listening skills can be done by several techniques and through many forms among which are quizzes, tests, , discussions or interviews. Teachers can use spoken materials or peer discussions to arise students' interest and motivation to interpret and judge the content. On their part, Newton and Nation (2020) confirms that the use of digital platforms fosters the evaluation process of critical listening skills through the use of authentic spoken material and on-going group discussions.

Regarding this study, critical listening can be described as the act of listening attentively in order to formulate comprehensive interpretation of a spoken material including the identification of a speaker's tone , the recognition of bias, and drawing assumptions ,and making inferences.

Creative writing

Creative writing involves expressing oneself in a creative and imaginative written form. It fosters learners to delve into their thoughts, feelings, and ideas distinctively and artistically. Creative writing is essential for language learners since it inspires them to explore new linguistic items and reuse their own linguistic repertoire (i.e vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure…etc) , thus improving their language retention and use (Gillespie, 2022,Gilbert, 2021).

According to Qurbonovna (2021), engaging in creative writing practices has other advantages. Initially, it aids in

enhancing learners' communication abilities by motivating them to articulate their thoughts in a captivating way. Furthermore, it improves their vocabulary growth by encouraging them to actively seek out new words and phrases to express their ideas more effectively. Moreover, creative writing enables language learners to fully engage with the target language and culture(Kaverkina,2021). Therefore ,creative writing is crucial for enhancing linguistic skills, and fostering creativity and self-expression.

Teachers can assist students in acquiring the skills necessary to create well-crafted and linguistically accurate written work , by offering examples and demonstrating successful writing models. Wang (2021) adds that encouraging peer cooperation and group discussion can stimulate learners to think creatively and share ideas, which can help them overcome mental barriers in their writing process. Other writing practices have been introduces to foster creative writing skills, for instance; storytelling ,role-play scenarios , free writing practices, writing journals, and verbal and non-verbal prompts (Djiwando et.al.,2021)

Evaluating creative writing can be difficult. However, teachers can use rubrics to assess both the creative and technical elements of learners' writings , and offer helpful comments .Peer review and self-reflection are also useful techniques for examining creative writing, enabling learners to obtain ideas from various viewpoints, and pinpoint areas for improvement (Macleroy & Gilbert, 2021; Qurbonovna, 2021).

To sum up, creative writing is an essential language productive skill that allows for deep self-expression, thus aiding learners in becoming more confident and skilled in

their target written language. Creative writing involves the ability to produce a well-organized written production in terms of fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration.

Cultural diversity and language learning

Traditionally, English language instruction has focused on the culture of English-speaking countries. Nowrasteh international position of English has brought about significant shifts in English language teaching. Mathur (2020) assumes that English language teaching recently priorities cultivating learners as intercultural speakers in a globalized setting instead of emphasizing native speaker competence and target culture.

Cultural diversity refers to variations in beliefs, values, traditions and customs that enhance learning community's richness and depth. Promoting positive attitudes toward cultural diversity in EFL teaching can offer chances for genuine communication and exposure to various linguistic and cultural complexities. Encouraging cultural diversity in the EFL classroom can help students develop a global perspective and value the richness of learning about diverse cultures (Van 2022). It can also foster tolerance, comprehension, and communication among learners, and facilitates a diverse interchange of ideas, viewpoints, and personal encounters providing a more welcoming language learning environment (Schwarzenthal et al., 2020).

Negative attitudes towards cultural diversity may hinder language learning and limit opportunities for meaningful communication. As a result of their negative attitude toward cultural diversity, learners may be exposed to fewer diverse viewpoints and experiences which may hinder their ability to form a comprehensive understanding

of the global community (Sue et al.,2022; Nurhikmah et al.,2022).

On the contrary, learners with positive attitudes towards cultural diversity can examine diverse perspectives, customs, and life encounters. Accordingly, they can effectively communicate with others without misunderstandings and communication breakdowns. Embracing a positive attitude towards cultural diversity enhances learners to build deeper learner relationships among peers, resulting in a risk-taking learning environment. It is noteworthy that , learners who explore more different customs and perspective usually develop critical thinking skills in general , and critical listening skills in particular , especially, the ability to recognize cultural bias in a speech, (Al-thresher,2020; Rosenberg, 2022)

In addition, learners with positive attitudes towards cultural diversity develop a deeper understanding of variety of viewpoints and cultural aspects ,which may may be reflected in their writing through questioning prejudices , advocating for inclusiveness, exploring opposing perspectives, representing same ideas via different angles or symbolizing realties in innovative identities. (Naga & McGill,2018; Coetzee,2022). Hence, positive attitude towards cultural diversity plays a vital role in the creative writing process. It enhances the depth and richness of creative writing by offering new viewpoints and ideas that can expand readers' awareness of different cultural backgrounds(Jawas,2020; Young, 2022).

The positive attitude towards cultural diversity refers to the willingness of EFL learners to respect different cultural

aspects within the language learning process. This involves maintaining an open-minded, curious, and polite approach to various cultural ideas and perspectives.

Context of the Problem:

The current study aimed to investigate the virtual language museum for enhancing English critical listening skills and creative writing of EFL postgraduate students in the general diploma. Since 2012, the researcher has worked as a TEFL lecturer at the Faculty of Graduate Studies for Education, Cairo University. During this time, the researcher observed EFL students' poor mastery of critical listening and creative writing skills. This observation has been supported by the findings of some studies ((Bedaiwy, 2021; Ebrahim, 2023 ;El-Sayed ,2022; Helmy,2020 ; Zayed ,2022).

The researcher administered a critical listening and creative writing test to a group of(20) postgraduate students enrolled in the general Diploma of Education (Appendix A). Results indicated that EFL postgraduate students need better mastery of critical listening and creative writing skills. It also sheds light on the need to implement new practices rather than the traditional way of teaching.

In addition, the researcher administered a survey to assess students' attitudes towards cultural diversity; the survey results indicated that 78% of the students have a negative attitude toward cultural diversity (See Appendix A).

Statement of the Problem:

EFL postgraduate students enrolled in the general Diploma in Education, Faculty of Graduate Studies for

Education, need to improve in critical listening and creative writing, which can be ascribed to the traditional way of teaching. Hence, the researcher investigates the use of a virtual language museum to develop these skills.

The current study attempts to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of using a virtual language museum on developing EFL postgraduate students' overall critical listening and creative writing skills and their attitude towards cultural diversity?

A set of subsidiary questions branches from this main question as follows:

- What is the effect of using a virtual language museum on developing the critical listening skills of EFL postgraduate students?
- What is the effect of using a virtual language museum on developing the creative writing of EFL postgraduate students?
- What is the effect of using a virtual language museum on developing the attitude towards cultural diversity of EFL postgraduate students?

The hypothesis of the study
- There are statistically significant differences between the experimental group's mean scores in the pre-and post-administration of the critical listening and creative writing tests in favour of the post-administration in relation to critical listening.
- There are statistically significant differences between the experimental group's mean scores in the pre-and post-administration of the critical listening and creative

writing tests in favour of the post-administration in relation to creative writing.

▪ There are statistically significant differences between the mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-post administration of the cultural diversity attitude survey in favour of the post-administration.

Method

Participants

The study participants were thirty(N=30) EFL postgraduate students enrolled in the General Diploma in Education, Faculty of Graduate Studies for Education, Cairo University. Participants' ages ranged from 24 to 28 years old.

Instruments

The researcher developed a critical listening and creative writing checklist for the study. The checklist aimed to determine the most important EFL postgraduate students' critical listening and creative writing skills. The initial version of the checklist was judged by a panel of three jury members of TEFL specialists (see Appendix B for the final version)

In order to determine the attitude of the EFL postgraduate students towards cultural diversity, the researcher developed a cultural diversity attitude scale. It consisted of ten sentences (see AppendixB).

Procedures

The implementation occurred over the first semester of the scholastic year 2022-2023. It started on October 4, 2022, and ended on December 15, 2022. The researcher

conducted an initial session with the participants, lasting one hour, during which the virtual language museum was introduced and demonstrated. Teaching via the virtual language museum has been done through three main procedures: conceptualization, construction and discussion (for instructional framework, teaching procedures and content description, see Appendix C). The researcher met students once per week, particularly an online session (3 hours) for eight (8) sessions. Notably, semi-structured online interviews were undertaken by the end of the semester to collect experimental group students' feedback (Appendix C).

Results

All data were statistically treated using a statistical package for social science (SPSS), particularly the t-test and Eta square effect size formula.

For verifying the first hypothesis , the scores of the experimental group participants on the pre-and post-administrations of the critical listening and creative writing test, were compared using a t-test in relation to overall critical listening skills. Results indicated statistically significant changes at a significance level 0.01 in favour of the post-administration, as presented in Table 1.

Table (1): Results of the oral reading critical listening and creative writing test comparing the experiments group students' scores regarding critical listening .

Admin.	Mean	N	Std.	DF	T value	Effect size
pre	9.633	30	1.362	29	12.852	0.805
post	18.995		1.421			

The results from Table (1) indicated statistically significant differences in mean scores between the

experimental group students   before and after the implementation of the critical listening and creative writing test. The post-administration scores were significantly greater than the pre-administration scores, with a t-value of (12.852) and an effect size of (0.805)

To verify the second hypothesis, the scores of the experimental group students on the pre-post administrations of the critical listening and creative writing test were compared using a t-test in relation to overall creative writing skill. Results indicated statistically significant differences at the 0.01 level in favor of the post-administration, as displayed in Table 2.

Table (2): Results of the critical listening and creative writing test comparing the experiments group students' scores regarding creative writing.

Admin.	Mean	N	Std.	DF	T value	Effect size
pre	10.126	30	1.052	29	13.652	0.816
post	19.504		1.122			

The results from Table (2) indicate statistically significant differences in mean scores between the experimental group students before and after the administrations of the critical listening and creative writing test. The post-administration showed higher scores for creative writing. The t-value was (13.652) and the effect size was (0.816)

The experimental group scores in the pre-and post-administrations of critical listening and creative writing test were compared using a t-test to analyze differences in critical listening and creative writing sub-skills. Statistical analysis revealed significant differences at the 0.01 level in favor of the post-administration , as presented in Table 3.

Table (3): Results of pre-post administrations of the critical listening and creative writing test comparing the experimental group students' scores in relation to critical listening and creative writing sub-skills.

overall	Sub-skills	Pre		Post		T value	Effect size
		Mean	St.D	Mean	St.D		
Critical listening skills	Determining the tone	2.069	0.265	4.958	0.195	4.325	0.706
	Making inferences	2.332	0.355	4.166	0.208	4.195	0.688
	Recognizing bias	2.623	0.329	4.545	0.139	5.092	0.712
	Drawing conclusion	2.265	0.312	4.862	0.421	4.988	0.697
Creative writing	Originality	2.112	0.325	4.855	0.198	5.013	0.688
	Fluency	2.655	0.545	4.689	0.151	6.001	0.695
	Flexibility	1.326	0.336	4.065	0.174	5.165	0.706
	Elaboration	1.956	0.525	4.845	0.165	4.988	0.765

The mean scores of the experimental group students in the pre-post administration of the cultural diversity attitude survey were compared to verify the third hypothesis, as presented in Table (4).

Table (4): Results of pre-post administrations of the cultural diversity attitude survey comparing the experimental group students' mean scores

Survey Items	Pre – administration		Post-administration	
	Mean	St.D	Mean	St.D
Sentence 1	2.326	0.395	4.554	0.221
Sentence 2	2.545	0.362	4.596	0.115
Sentence 3	2.154	0.421	4.425	0.132
Sentence 4	2.165	0.401	4.745	0.108
Sentence 5	2.548	0.432	4.364	0.144
Sentence 6	2.164	0.362	4.012	0.127
Sentence 7	2.113	0.462	4.642	0.185
Sentence 8	2.641	0.410	4.665	0.148
Sentence 9	2.262	0.411	4.435	0.154
Sentence 10	1.251	0.429	4.652	0.209
Sentence 11	1.655	0.401	4.685	0.198
Sentence 12	2.484	0.505	4.065	0.187
Sentence 13	2.665	0.584	4.166	0.193
Sentence 14	2.608	0.754	4.572	0.187
Sentence 15	2.745	0.652	4.352	0.168

Results indicated statistically significant differences in students' mean scores in favour of the post-administration.

Discussion

Based on the statistical analysis presented, it is evident that using a virtual language museum significantly improved the critical listening and creative writing of the experimental group students. The effect size was (0.805) for overall critical listening and (0.816) for overall creative writing. It ranged from (0.688) to (0.712) for the targeted critical listening sub-skills and from (0.688) to (0.765) for the targeted creative writing sub-skills. The effect size values exceeded (0.8). The experimental group students' tangible improvement in their critical listening, creative writing sub-skills can primarily be attributed to use of the virtual language museum.

These findings fit with previous research studies that have demonstrated the efficacy of VR practices, especially virtual language museums, in improving language skills for students learning English as a foreign language (Carvajal et al.,2020;   Daniela,2020;   Fraizier&Bonner,2021; Lin&Wang,2021; Ma,2021; Romanyuk, 2021; Pinto, et.al.,2021Sylaiou et.al.,2020; Taiet.al.,2022). As revealed in the semi-structured interviews with the participants, the development of the targeted skills can be attributed to two main aspects, namely; the content of the virtual language museum, and the suggested teaching procedures of the instructional   sessions   (including   conceptualization, construction, and discussion).

Firstly, the content of the virtual language museum was very beneficial for the students' development of the targeted skills. In terms of critical listening skills, the

museum provided audio recordings of native speakers conversing in various dialects, allowing students to practice their listening comprehension and understanding of different accents and dialects. Additionally, the inclusion of the recorded interviews of the linguists and language experts, provided valuable insights into the nuances of pronunciation and intonation, resulting in a remarkable enhancement in students' understanding of oral production. Furthermore, these interviews with linguists shed light on the significance of recognizing distinct features of each dialect, which not only enhanced students' listening skills but also deepened their appreciation for the complexities of language. Such immersive experiences broadened their understanding of varied speech patterns. In addition, the authentic audiovisual material tackled diverse backgrounds of English-speaking countries; hence, students became familiar with cultural nuances and were able to recognize aspects of speech (i.e. tone etc.) easier.

In respect to creative writing, the exposure to different forms of literature enhanced students' ability to identify aspects of voice and style in relation to a wide range of genres and authors. Moreover, through virtual tours and interactive exhibits students were able to analyze English-speaking countries' backgrounds (Historical places, events'.), contributing to a more comprehensive and immersive learning experience for them, which , in turn , fostered their imagination and engagement . Furthermore, visual elements (images, posters, infographics, charts, etc.) provided valuable contexts and insights into the language and meanings. In this way, the diversity and richness of visual details serve as a powerful factor in promoting students to think and write creatively about the content.

Secondly, the suggested teaching procedures of the instructional sessions were cognitively and logically sequenced; it started with students' exposure and conceptualization of language (input & processing), then turned to language construction (output), and ends with reflective discussion (feedback and consolidation). In conceptualization, students were exposed to a wide range of oral interactions with a direct reinforcement or explanation or clarification. The instructor also provided students with guided navigation allowing them to interpret, comprehend, identify or recognize new linguistic items, aspects or ideas. Within the construction procedure, students were engaged in interactive audio analysis and reflective listening journals, and collaborative story building activities. Reflective discussions were held at the end of the session to promote self- and peer correction and consolidation.

Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the impact of utilizing a virtual language museum on enhancing critical listening and creative writing skills and developing the attitudes towards cultural diversity among EFL postgraduate students. A virtual language museum was utilized to instruct postgraduate students in the General Diploma in Education program at the Faculty of Graduate Studies for Education, Cairo University. The study results suggested that utilizing the virtual language museum can improve the target skills of postgraduate students. The study's findings showed that a virtual language museum offered postgraduate students the opportunity to comprehend spoken language and display creative language output in diverse contextualized digital learning settings.

Recommendation

Based on the current study findings, a future study should investigate the allocated classroom time for critical listening and creative writing about the participants' age and language performance level in more detail. Additionally, it is necessary to evaluate the long-lasting impacts of implementing a virtual language museum in various educational environments. Further research could explore utilizing a virtual language museum to enhance the professional development of in-service EFL teachers.

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