

Findings Abstract

A Graphic Online Chat Environment to Improve the Written Language of Students Who Are Deaf

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Analysis of the interviews has not yet been completed. Preliminary analysis indicates that for attitude, both the deaf and hearing students considered the topic to be fun and interesting, The Palace to be a “neat” way to communicate, and the activity to be a nice change from usual classroom activities. However, the deaf students found it difficult to find information on the Internet that they could share with their team partner online. For self-awareness of strategies, the deaf students realized that the online teacher’s role was to encourage discussion about the topic and to provide assistance in explaining vocabulary and concepts used by the hearing students. They also understood that their role was to share ideas with their partner and their partner was supposed to share ideas with them. Several problems plagued the study. The first was setting up a mutually convenient time for the students at two sites to be online. Conflicts between schedules allowed only a 30-minute window for the three teams to be online daily for just three weeks. The second problem was getting and staying connected online. The Ohio Department of Education had placed a firewall on all Internet sites except specifically acceptable ones and given that The Palace was an unknown site, the first scheduled day of the study, the school for the deaf was unable to connect to the site. (The students from Ravenna High School were connected via the Ameritech classroom at Kent State University, which had no such firewall.) Due to the intercession of the school superintendent, the firewall was taken down two days later. In the interim, and during one day when the school’s server was down, the onsite facilitator brought in her personal laptop computer and connected via modem to her Internet provider. One day was lost due to this problem. The third problem was student absence. If one member of a team was absent, one day was lost out of fifteen. Team A-X and C-Z lost seven and eight days respectively to absences.