Designing Online Synchronous Communication to Strengthen Second-Language Communication Skills

E. Murphy, C. Stoodley, P. Thomas, & K. Scarth
Objectives: 2006-07

1. Identify and examine the types of teacher practices and student activities most effective for and best suited to contexts of online synchronous communication for promoting negotiation of meaning.

2. Identify benefits, challenges, and solutions.
Negotiation of meaning

- notice their errors
- clarify their intentions or thoughts
- modify & restructure output
- produce comprehensible output

learners

external & internal feedback

positive corrective

which can be

is supported by

occurs when

a catalyst for reconstruction

implicit explicit
Participants:

- 4 elementary Intensive Core French teachers
- 91 Grade Six, Intensive Core French students from 4 Newfoundland schools
2.5 days of **face-to-face** collaboration, reflection, & planning

+  

½ day individual teacher reflection

+  

WebCT
Report on ELive Training Oct 30

Report on ELive Training with Students
Kimberly Butt

Monday, October 30 (9:00am-12:00pm) and Tuesday, October 31 (8:55-9:25am)
Lindy’s Class - 29 Students

Technological Glitches/Problems

The first of our technological problems occurred when I was trying to log on to my computer in Tony's lab in the Education Building. I was unable to login after four attempts, and Tony determined that there was a problem with the network. Luckily, the network was functioning by 9:15, and after I quickly logged in and got myself set up in ELive, I called Lindy on his cell phone (who was waiting patiently with his students), and we were able to begin.
Activité 1:
Je sais tout sur toi!

Activité 2:
L’Objet mystère.
Interviews

- 4 teachers

- 91 students
Teacher practices

“...there’s no sense for a teacher to be there because we don’t need any extraordinary amount of help...”

“...you get to have your own ideas instead of one being picked out for you by your teacher..”

“It’s just like you’re your own teacher.”
Student activities

“...What I liked best about the project is finding more about your partner and their life and you get to make friends.”

“In class, they know if you’re good at French or not but online they don’t. If you fool up it doesn’t really matter.”

“...My favourite part [was]... when we played the 2\textsuperscript{nd} time and it was like a contest between the two classes and they put the score on the whiteboard...you would try harder...”
“…it’s easier to speak online because they don’t know you as well. In class, they know if you are good at French or not but online they don’t. If you fool up it doesn’t really matter.”

“…The improvement for my class was more along the lines of taking risks versus improvement in oral communication in the French language.”

Benefits

“…the students are optimistic, motivated, and eager to participate and when online they are engaged in a French conversation. That alone is great.”
Challenges

Pedagogical
- Grouping
- Pacing
- Privileges
- Vocabulary

Logistical
- Scheduling of activities
- Disorientation

Technical
- Audio quality
- Supply of equipment
- Computer breakdowns
**Solutions**

**Pedagogical**
- Flexible grouping
- Vocabulary scaffolds
- Use of DM & WBoard
- Slide show of activity

**Logistical**
- Avoid use of breakout rooms
- Open scheduling
- Within school scheduling

**Technical**
- Audio slideshow
- Local capacity building
Project objectives: 2007-08

Sustainability
(Maintenance of activities without research support)

&

Scalability
(Grade 6 Intensive Core French, Grade 7 French Immersion, & Grade 10 regular Core French classes)
Study Summary Pamphlet

STRENGTHENING STUDENTS' SECOND-LANGUAGE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

GOALS
2006-07
Identify and examine the types of student activities and teacher practices most effective for and best suited to contexts of online synchronous communication for promoting negotiation of meaning.

2007-08
Evaluate whether online synchronous activities are a means of strengthening students' second-language communication skills when it is used in this context.

Sustainability (whether teachers can administer the program alone without technical and research support), and
Scalability (whether the project can be successfully expanded from Grade 4 Core French to Grades 5, 7, and 10 Core French Immersion).

"...most of the technologies second-language educators believe have the potential to significantly improve second language learning were not necessarily invented for this purpose and thus there are no explicit straightforward directions about how each technology should be used (ZHANG, 2005)."

SCHOOLS & TEACHERS
2006-2007
Fourschools
Four teachers
Grade 4 Interactive Core French
2007-2008
Eight schools
Ten teachers
224 students
Grade 4 Interact Core French
Grade 4 Interactive Core French
Grade 5 Interact Core French

TEACHER PARTICIPANTS

COLLABORATORS
Gondola/Plastic Core French Program Specialist, Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland & Labrador 2006-2008

PARTNERS

(Images of logos and names of institutions and partners)
References:


