Abstract

In this paper the authors have analyzed the three-year videoconferences in order to research how well students' presentation skills have improved. It was analyzed that each ICT tool created a different benefit for the students and assisted the teacher as a teaching aid.

Furthermore, the authors assessed communication tools concentrating on their benefits and manner for making arrangements. From this analysis it follows that all of the teachers think videoconference is the most useful tool for study exchanges.

1. Introduction

The authors have linked with classes in foreign countries, using the network for the purpose of cultivating student's intercultural understandings and ICT skills. They especially have organized educational activities, using information communication tools with several high schools in Northern Ireland (N.I.), U.K. for the last 10 years in order to research effective educational plans. It was analyzed that each ICT tool created a different benefit for the students and assisted the teacher as a teaching aid. They have also engaged in discussions to decide which ICT tools enhance the students learning experience.

In this paper, the authors analyzed how students have developed their presentation skills using these communication tools. Furthermore using the AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process), they assessed communication tools concentrating on their benefits and manner for making arrangements.

2. Presentation Skills’ Development

Some researchers assert that the videoconference is one of the most effective tools in cultivating students’ interest in positively communicating with others, motivating to learn and have positive attitudes, and developing international perspectives and understanding. They regard the videoconference as a stimulating tool for learning. However, in reality, some teachers have some problems in using such communication tools. The primary problem is that students have difficulty in communicating with partners in a foreign country due to their lack of knowledge of the English language.

Therefore, since the focus of the videoconference is developing visuals as part of their presentation skills, teachers can overcome difficulties which students experience due to their poor speaking ability of English, without destroying their motivation for communicating positively [2]. The authors have had such videoconferences for three years. In this paper the authors have analyzed the three-year videoconferences in order to research how well students’ presentation skills have improved.

Let us classify their presentation skills into three stages. The first stage should be named ‘the period of paper boards’. Paper boards with students’ names on them, or where sightseeing spots are drawn using pictures, were used to help students’ poor explanations in English and were spread out in front of the TV screen so that students in N.I. could see them clearly. The students however, strongly felt that their lack of ability in English was detrimental and were thus motivated to learn English. This means that verbal communication was perceived as being valuable for the videoconference and also without a native-speaker's help they were unable to communicate well with students in N.I.

The second stage might be called ‘showing authentic material’ period. The topic of this period was based around the question ‘what is this?’; Japanese students showed students in N.I. things necessary for their daily school life such as a cellular phone, socks, a notebook and a school badge. Pointing to a cellular phone, Japanese students asked them in Japanese what they thought this was. The students in N.I. answered in Japanese ‘it is a mobile phone’. Japanese students seemed surprised to discover that a cellular phone is called a mobile phone in the U.K. At the conference a student stood on a chair to show her long loose socks, which
was quite common in Japan but quite new to students in N.I., and she turned back and forth to clarify, and tried to demonstrate how to put them on and take them off. Through this demonstration she was learning an effective way of presentation and communication. This type of demonstration activated students’ motivation but still they had to rely on oral explanations to have better communication.

The third stage might be called ‘let’s do it’ period. Let us think of singing a song together during the videoconference. First a student in N.I. played the bagpipes, which was a first experience for the Japanese students, and the melody was ‘Auld Lang Syne’, a song often sung at graduation ceremonies in Japan. Although Japanese students were surprised to know from the N.I. students that the original meaning has nothing to do with a graduation ceremony, they could enjoy this song, singing in Japanese together with the bagpipes and the students in N.I. singing simultaneously in English. This enjoyable experience enforced their sense of closeness and created a sense of fulfillment. However the duration of the videoconference is not long enough to develop these new ideas and thus other web tools are required for better understanding.

From these demonstrations it can be concluded that students’ presentation skills developed significantly from simply showing paper signs or posters to explain a point, to devising a way of showing objects which could be mutually discussed, and finally having what they wanted to say, being understood by their partners.

3 Research on Teachers’ Consciousness

Several methods have been developed to evaluate multiattribute decision alternatives for various decision-making settings. The AHP is one of decision making methods for giving priority to alternatives developed by L. Saaty. The AHP has been effectively applied in a variety of decision-making contexts because it is useful for complex decisions when traditional measurements are difficult to use. Furthermore it is very useful for educational issues where decision makings are necessary in addition to economical issues and some studies on teacher’s/student’s decision makings used the AHP [1].

In this paper the AHP was used for clarification of the effectiveness of information communication technology tools. The purpose of this research is to analyze what impressions teachers have about communication tools such as e-mail, web and videoconferencing in order to develop better exchanges between students in their schools.

There are 5 Decision Makers (P1-P5) who have linked with classes in foreign countries using the information communication tools. The authors estimated their importance by adopting the AHP. For the purpose of researching the effects of communication tools, the authors extracted 3 factors that would enable students to develop their presentation skills, to cultivate their motivation and apply cooperative attitudes for learning. Three factors are ‘to cultivate presentation skills’, ‘to raise motivation’ and ‘to cultivate attitudes of collaborative study between teachers and students in both countries’.

When teachers have a plan for study exchanges with other schools, using communication tools, they are expected to consider several factors including the actual issues for exchange. It takes them a long time and requires professional ICT skills. The authors extracted 2 factors that would enable teachers to use information communication tools easily. Two factors are ‘to make a plan easily’ and ‘easy technology’.

A comparative analysis was made among all of the factors and alternative values are extracted from the comparison matrices. From this analysis it follows that all of the Ps think videoconference is the most useful tool for study exchanges. Further, P1, P2, P4 and P5 think that e-mail is the easiest for teachers to use in the class and to setup. It means that e-mail is recognized as one of the important tools for exchange by teachers.

4 Conclusions

In April 2002, in Japan the National New Curriculum Standards were introduced at the k-12 level. The area of study entitled ‘The Integrated Study’ was newly developed and added to this curriculum. Each school/teacher is now required to think about how to develop their students’ problem-solving ability. The area of Integrated Study is concerned with the following key contexts; environmental issues, welfare and health, information communication technology, intercultural understandings and regional community.

It follows that educational activities, which involve collaborative work with classes in foreign countries, have become important for k-12 classes and knowledge of how to use ICT effectively is also necessary. It is also shown that teachers who tend to use videoconferencing and e-mail find them beneficial for developing a better intercultural understanding of their students.

References