Using Classroom Management Software in Teaching Deaf People Computing Skills

Introduction

The Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies (CSLDS) of the Chinese University of Hong Kong has received a major grant from the Nippon Foundation of Japan to develop the Asia Pacific Sign Linguistics Research and Training Program (APSL). The program represents an unprecedent attempt in the region to support deaf and hearing individuals intending to take on sign linguistics research and deaf development projects as their career.

Students Background and Medium of Instruction:

- 12 deaf students:
  - 3 students from Hong Kong
  - 4 students from Indonesia
  - 5 students from Sri-Lanka
- All students are novice in English and Hong Kong Sign Language is the medium of instruction.

12 deaf students from Hong Kong, Indonesia and Sri-Lanka

SynchronEyes™ Classroom Management Software

The classroom management software used to facilitate classroom teaching and management is "SynchronEyes 7.0".

Below are some special features on the software that benefits APSL program the most:

Share Screens
Demonstrate a concept or example by sharing screen of teacher or any student with the rest of the class.

Monitor All Screens
Observe the screens of all students in class directly from teacher's computer

Lock Computer
Prevent distraction by locking down indiviaual computers.

Transfer Files
Send documents to students or collect students' assignment directly from teacher's computer.

Launch Applications
Remotely launch and close applications on each student's desktop to keep class time structured.

SynchronEyes™ classroom management software is a product of SMART Technology. For more information, please visit http://smarttech.com/.

SMART Technologies

Applying the Software in the APSL Training

With the software, all the screens of the students' computer can be shown on the screen of the instructor's computer, thus allowing the instructor to closely monitor the learning progress and performance of individual students.

Example: Course - Desktop Publishing Skills

To design and produce sign language dictionaries and education materials using Adobe Photoshop CS2 and Adobe Premiere Pro 2.0.

Students need to apply appropriate modifications on the original picture accroding to effects shown on the edited picture.

After all done, the students submit the processed picture to the instructor for grading.
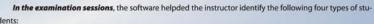
Classroom Layout:

Software Evaluation - Cheng Ka Yiu (Instructor)

In a classroom setting, the software helped the instructor to differentiate students who had learnt the technique from those who hadn't. To enhance peer learning and interaction, the instructor could ask a student who could perform the task to demonstrate the procedure on his own computer, the screen of which was broadcast simultaneously in other student's computer screens.

In the examination sessions, the software helpded the instructor identify the following four types of students:

(1) Students who completed the task by following the steps suggested by the instructor.
(2) Students who completed the task via steps other than those suggested by the instructor.
(3) Students who did not know which steps to take but were still able to complete the task by trial-and-error.
(4) Students who cheated by submitting the demonostration picture given by the instructor with a few changes as a cover-up.

However, the software is best for students who have basic English skills, thus most function (such as dialogue box) was unusable for our students.

Software Evaluation
- Kenny (Hong Kong Student)

Although the software provides a textual-interface for students to raise questions, I would prefer asking the instructor directly. I think deaf people would like direct communication instead of typing.

Software Evaluation
- Wahyu (Indonesian Student)

With the software, we could learn from other students directly without the need to crowd ourselves closely together in front of one computer to see the live demonstration.

Software Evaluation
- Rasak (Sri-Lankan Student)

The software benefits the instructor a lot, but I found it difficult to use. For example, if I want to ask a question, I need to type in English. It would be much better if this software supports Web-cam for "face-to-face" communication.