

Abstract

Microsoft Office ASL Project: An Interactive Resource for Teaching Deaf Students Technical Information

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Instructors of deaf and hard-of-hearing students often have the expertise and knowledge required to teach technical content, but lack the sign language skill needed to select and use signs for teaching highly specialized technical information. In order to provide effective instruction for their deaf and hard of hearing students, instructors therefore should have access to a variety of resources designed to support their development of sign language skills for communicating technical information. This poster session describes a project designed to provide a computerized interactive display of American Sign Language (ASL) signs and sentences appropriate for teaching technical concepts in the National Technical Institute for the Deaf course "Applications Software" offered in the Applied Computer Technology major. Terminology was collected from instructors in the major and signs selected for appropriateness in consultation with native signers in this technical field. A CD ROM that presents the target signs in isolation and in a variety of context appropriate sentences was produced. The ASL sentences explain concepts important to "Applications Software". Copies of the Applications Software CD were distributed to instructors of the course and put in a lab for use by students. This format allows students and their teachers to have easy and random access to sign language for technical terminology and the use of this terminology in teaching contexts. Use of this instructional CD can improve students and instructors skills in effectively communicating technical information via sign language, thus improving accessibility of technical information for deaf / HH students. The procedures used in this project are applicable to developing sign language instructional materials for technical information in all natural signed languages.