Multisite Videoconferencing between Developed and Developing Countries to Build and Sustain Educational Research Collaborations.

Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association
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Why International Videoconferencing?

“make the strange familiar,”
AND to better understand the “familiar.”
Case Study:
Multi-site videoconferencing between Mexico and the United States

• Technical and social issues

• Potential for developing meaningful dialog

• Sustainable relationships

*Sustainability: the continuation of joint activity after special research funds have been exhausted (Cole).*
Goal: to investigate the conditions of primary education for Mayan speaking children in rural Yucatan State and to develop educational interventions
• 5 videoconferences over a 15 month period.

  2 “Multi-Point” conferences with 4 different sites
  U.S. (3)   Mexico (1)
  3 “Point-to-Point” videoconferences 2 sites.

• Duration: 60 and 90 minutes

• Technology: Polycom Internet Protocol (IP)
3 Time Zones
2 Nations
2 Languages
Organizing the Conferences: Email and Phone Communications among Researchers, Technicians, Students
Impact of Conferences

- coordination of the research collaboration
  
  - Introduced new contacts for the researchers and students.

  - Facilitated other kinds of exchanges that extended beyond the conferences.

  - Generated considerable enthusiasm among students:
    - Dissertation
    - Foreign study for Mexican students

  - Spawned new cross-cultural cross-national comparative study comparing home literacy in U.S. Latino families and Yucatecan Mayan families.
Videoconference #1 August 2005

Click on image below to view video clip…..

QuickTime™ and a H.263 decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Multipoint Conference
Content Changes over Time

Initial Short Term Visits

4 Site Videoconference #1
August 2005

Fieldwork by Mexican team

4 Site Videoconference #2
February 2006

Question/Advice Format
Novice-Expert Dynamic
Little Disagreement
Jointly expressed

Dialog among researchers
Voicing of Disagreement
Cross Cultural Comparisons
Videoconference # 2 February 2006
Click on image at top left to view video clip.....

Mexican Researcher
What (do) you think about (it) Luis.. because probably you have the same
situation with the Hispanic people in Arizona?

U.S. Researcher
.... It is similar in that the sense that the dominant language ideologies
push English at the expense of Spanish. .... Now What strikes me about the
data is that Maya the language does not seem to be at risk of loss.

Mexican Researcher (translating for a Mexican student)
....probably in one generation (there) could be possible loss of language
because children are not encouraged to speak the Mayan language. ..... 

U.S. Researcher
It strikes me that the usual pathway that we propose in the literature of
development of reading and writing in the first language .... may not be
possible under the circumstances that you describe.....
Videoconference-Mediated International Collaborations

- Great potential but not a substitute for international exchanges.

- Costly Technical and Social infrastructure

- Technical Barriers remain
  (Skype iChat AV, etc. may be less costly alternatives for point-to-point)

- Need for greater commitment of researchers in both developed and developing countries to prioritize international collaboration.
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