

Communication Technology and Deaf Individuals' Literacy Skills

Why was this work done?

- A lack of direct access to language has been historically problematic for deaf individuals, contributing to English literacy achievement gaps.
- Computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies can increase direct access to language and literacy for deaf individuals.
- This study explored the hypothesis that increased access to English through CMC would be related to stronger English literacy skills for deaf individuals.

Deaf individuals of varying backgrounds can capitalize on the benefits of digital communication technology.

How was this work done?

- Researchers conducted a secondary analysis of data from a large-scale longitudinal dataset, the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2).
- Statistical analyses were used to assess the use of computer-mediated communication as a predictor of English literacy skills (measured through a test of reading comprehension) in a sample of 510 deaf youth.
- The relationships between English literacy and household income, age, gender, and race were also assessed.

What did researchers find?

- The use of CMC was related to literacy, in that deaf adolescents who emailed or chatted more frequently exhibited higher reading comprehension skills in following years.
- The relationships between literacy scores and race and income were statistically significant, but not practically meaningful.

What are the implications of this work?

- The universal accessibility of digital communication technologies allows deaf individuals of varying backgrounds to capitalize on the use of CMC.
- It is possible that CMC may support English language and literacy development for deaf individuals despite low English literacy levels.
- Communication technologies should be further explored as a way to support deaf individuals' English language and literacy development.

Reference

Garberoglio, C. L. , Dickson, D., Cawthon, S., & Bond, M. (in press, 2014). Bridging the communication divide: CMC and deaf individuals' literacy skills. *Language and Learning Technology*.



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