



Deaf Communications Institute

COMPUTER ASSISTED COMMUNICATIONS

EXTRACT FROM SECOND YEAR REPORT TO HEW: April 1980

Educational Benefits to Users

Computer-Aided Instruction for the Handicapped

There is a special need for English language instruction for deaf children and adults. School instruction is important but other forms of language tutorials should be available to make the deaf person a fluent writer and capable reader. Plans are underway to present through Deafnet a specially designed tutorial for both the production and comprehension of written

English. The project, entitled ILIAD (Interactive Language Instruction Assistance for the Deaf), which is being developed under a special HEW/BEH (Bureau of Education for the Handicapped) grant to the Boston University School of Education will be tested and evaluated by present Deafnet users with an eventual goal for final implementation in a desk top micro-computer with a TV terminal. Most of the system components would be directly usable by any students (deaf or hearing) who wish to test or exercise their command of English.

There are many Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) programs available, but none written with such a significant impact for the deaf community as the two described here. Both the ILIAD program and the LAN (Language-Adjusted News) are available in the demonstration Deafnet.

Language-Adjusted News

The news service is another educational resource for adults and young people. For each regular news story that is entered into the system by the staff at the Caption Center at WGBH (Boston), a linguistically controlled version is prepared with careful attention given to control of vocabulary, syntax and inferential content of original materials. Deaf people, whose reading level hinders and often prevents them from understanding newspapers and other print materials, have had no easily understood source of news until this experiment with Language-Adjusted News (LAN). They have been able to gather only bits of information or misinformation, depending on friends or relatives for explanations, or else have lived unaware of world events. Some deaf people do not have sufficient language needed to peruse daily news in newspapers

and over the years have lost the motivation and desire to read. LAN may be a tool to increase reading skills and at the same time to provide daily news and information. A sample of Language-Adjusted News is included in Appendix VI. One deaf person brought the LAN to his deaf club one week end and members were so enthusiastic they asked him to bring copies every week end.

Teachers of the deaf at all six of the schools have used the LAN in different ways, depending on the abilities and needs of their students. Some use it for independent reading material, or as lessons for Social Studies, English, or reading classes. One teacher makes special arrangements to transcribe the LAN into Braille for her deaf/blind students and informs us that this is the first time these students have ever had national or international news available to them. One teacher has his student take the LAN into the mainstreamed classroom where both hearing and deaf students can discuss current events on an equal basis. Another teacher supplements the LAN with pictures from newspapers and magazines, thereby creating a more concrete frame of reference for a low-verbal, limited learning-level student.

This service demonstrates the Deafnet's capability of providing useful information to this population.