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**Pen Pal Mysteries: Improving German Writing through Peer
Communication**

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Abstract

This study investigated the observed behaviors and reported experiences of eighth grade German level I students when implementing peer pen pal communication in the target language on the students' writing fluency. First, a Student Information Survey was completed to gain insight into their experience and their overall confidence with the German language. Following the survey, students completed a Baseline Writing Prompt with a Reflection Slip and a 5-Minute Word Write to provide evidence of their beginning vocabulary and writing fluency in the target language. Once these assessments were completed, students began writing a series of three pen pal letters to another German language learner within their grade known only to them by use of a pseudonym. Throughout the pen pal writing, students also completed quizzes from the German curriculum, a Mid-Research Survey, and a Post-Research Interview. Once all of the data had been collected and analyzed, four main themes emerged. Research indicated that students improved in vocabulary usage and length-based fluency. Secondly, pen pal communication provided positive social interactions, which established and increased confidence. Additionally, authentic and student-centered strategies engaged students, which also increased writing fluency. Although pen pals did not improve subject verb agreement as errors showed little to no change during and after implementation, students enjoyed writing to their pen pal and found the overall experience helpful for their writing. Best practices and experience indicate using a student-centered, authentic approach for improved fluency.