THE USE OF 2ND LIFE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

Approaches and methods are often based on the assumptions that the process of language learning is complex in nature, non linear, and active. Learners are getting more in need of communication with a second/foreign language both inside and outside the classroom while instructions are witnessing a major paradigm shift within language teaching in our century. Virtual worlds have the potential to dramatically change the traditional nature of language teaching through 3D spaces, information and communication technologies, etc... Second Life (SL) Virtual World, as supplementing language instruction, has begun to shape both teachers and learners’ interaction with language. Learners are facilitated with 3D spaces in their own reality and environment, allowing them to interpret and apply a variety of experiences and tasks. SL offers rich sources and dimensions, facilitating the changing nature of learning experience.

Keywords: English Language Teaching, Second Life, 3D Virtual World, Virtual Class

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, teachers and researchers in various educational institutions, and classes have begun to use information and communication technologies (ICT). ICT has a potential to make learning environments and resources interesting, accessible, and richer in source by allowing various spaces for the use of individuals, their creativity to make the learning process active and interactional. Learning in 3D empowers forward-thinking administrators, teachers, researchers and trainers to design, develop, and collaborate in the rapidly emerging field of 3D environments. Whether such environments can replace/situate learning to a greater degree than traditional settings, and will be able to facilitate individuals’ meaning making learning capacity through ICT is still a negotiable issue.

Virtual Learning environment has created an enormous attention and attraction as well as its ambiguity and dynamic nature. Second Life (SL), as a “3D online persistent space totally created and evolved by its users” (Hayes, 200 6 p. 154), individuals create objects, simulations, do business, build relationships, and can explore other virtual environments for many purposes. Besides, SL offers many perspectives in its potential on the virtual world as well as attributing insight in the arena of research. Mennecte et al, (2008) states that

"Virtual worlds like World of Warcraft, Second Life, Kaneva, and similar environments have the potential to dramatically change how people interact, navigate Web sites, and conduct business."
As these environments become more pervasive, research examining this phenomenon will be needed to better understand these 3D spaces. Information systems (IS) researchers are uniquely positioned to offer valuable insights about designing, building, managing, and using complex multi-user environments and, because virtual worlds have been and will continue to merge with existing corporate and consumer-focused applications, there is an imperative for IS scholars to engage in research in this domain “(p. 372).

Inman et al, (2010), about the virtual world, propose that;
“3D virtual worlds do support constructivist learning because users interact with each other and the environment. In applying Rogers’ (1969) experiential learning theory, Mason and Moutahir (2006) successfully used a virtual environment (Second Life) to create a project-based multidisciplinary program. Hew and Cheung (2008) also found that educators use virtual worlds as experiential spaces” (p. 45).

From the theoretical point of view, social constructivist learning theory, supporting experiential and meaningful learning environment by encouraging learners’ authentic use of material and allowing learners’ negotiation and collaboration as to create a discussion rather than transmitting knowledge, supports such a world.

SL can help learners build their own learning environment in their perception and efficacy, engaging in their own learning environment. Such a virtual space can allow learners to build social interaction with their peers and teachers. Users are encouraged to travel in their virtual world, live a second life in an environment where all the characters, parties, tools, relations are built upon associated with their dreams and creativity allowing accessibility and collaboration.

**SL in TEACHING**

SL allows learners and groups to communicate, collaborate, and interact in a socially negotiable environment (Rappa et al. 2009, Gillen, 2009). It also provides a student centered environment based on constructivist learning principles (Yaman, 2008). Problem based learning and project based learning are two strong learning models of the principles as well as collaborative/ experiential learning and reflective learning models proposed by the theory. Activities, exercises and tasks can be negotiated and organised taking learners’ preferences and learning styles into consideration. Intended learning outcomes and achievements can be constructed socially and achieved in a responsive-active manner.

SL is different from the games in general use, as it does not employ any task to complete or nobody can compete with each other in any sense. Instead, it is a learning space, a virtual world socially constructed space where individuals can share experiences, messages, events, and so on. Besides, it allows learners to test their technological 21st century skills within a 3D virtual environment where social interactive learning opportunities are available.

SL allows learners to visit places where many virtually constructed places are available, locations created. Learners may be invited to visit, leave their comments or to explore the settings and applications. Social networks, learner analytics, virtual worlds, and learning management systems operating in teaching and learning environment are ready to use by the frontiers, ready for experimentation and constructed for application.
SL in Language Teaching Environment

Two of the language teaching approaches—Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task based Language Teaching (TBLT)—principles and the learning theories support autonomous learning.

The idea is based on a teaching methodology where the roles of the language teacher and the language learner change dramatically. Learners are prepared to cope with the changing nature of life, practice language, and be “language users” both practically and academically.

So, learning activities are built upon interactively where learners are engaged in the process actively in a cooperative manner rather than individualistic approach to learning. Learners are allowed to be “free thinkers”, active participants with their peers in groups or pair work tasks rather than relying on teacher-centered model of teaching. They were expected to take a greater degree of responsibility for their own learning.

CLT deriving from a multidisciplinary perspective— including linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology, educational research, and task based language teaching—referring to an approach based on the use of tasks as the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching, propose learning through interaction purposefully and communicatively, which is consistent with social constructivist idea. (CLT) refers to “both processes and goals in classroom learning. The central theoretical concept in communicative language teaching is “communicative competence,” a term introduced into discussions of language use and second or foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Habermas 1970; Hymes 1971; Jakobovits 1970; Savignon 1971). Competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation, and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) research to account for its development (Savignon 1972, 1997). Identification of learners’ communicative needs provides a basis for curriculum design (Van Ek 1975)” (in Savignon, 2002, p. 1).

Foreign language learning should provide an opportunity for learners to focus on meaning rather than merely focus on form. Task based Language Teaching (TBLT) proposes the use of tasks and task complexity is linked with language complexity. Language learning can result from creating the right kinds of interactional process by creating the best ways/organisation of tasks. Rather than using conventional syllabus and learning techniques, TBLT proposes that linguistic competence can be developed by engaging learners in interactive process through pedagogical and real world tasks.

“In a task-based approach, specific language forms should never be the primary focus, because it is important that students be allowed to make meaning in whichever way they see fit, at least at first. Teachers may assist or even correct students when asked, of course, but may not restrict the students’ choice of which forms to use by explicitly teaching, say, the present continuous before the task is attempted. A post-task phase, on the other hand, is generally recognized by TBLT practitioners as useful. During this segment of the lesson, after the students have attempted the task, the teacher may choose to go over the language used, correcting specific errors and/or highlighting particularly well-suited forms that students may have attempted to use.
When considering TBLT, it is crucial to focus on the fundamental notion of authenticity, as tasks attempt to simulate, in a way that is as authentic as possible, what happens when students attempt real-world activities.” (Nunan, 2008, p. 2)

USE OF 3D VIRTUAL WORLD and SL in LANGUAGE TEACHING

While planning a language course in interactive way, the basic principle for language teaching is on the idea that language should be taught as a tool for communication, rather than seeing it as a set of phonological, grammatical and lexical items to be memorised. So, decisions are made about the content of the course, with limitations about what vocabulary and grammar to teach at different levels – beginning, intermediate and advanced – and which skills should be taken into consideration, how to use skills integratively, and in what sequence.

Decisions about the syllabus, and design should be on how best to teach the contents of a syllabus belong to English language teaching methodology. Lessons can be organised form ay purposes; either for introducing the subject matter in context, or practicing the content in its context, or both. Lessons can be prepared in a context, situated by the user or in collaboration with the learners, then teacher can introduce the subject matter in real context by using 4 language skills. Key vocabulary can be integrated as well as practicing vocabulary for ex. in a reading passage (see Figure: 1)

![Figure: 1](image)

Learners get intrisically motivated as long as they are provided with interesting and real life activities. Real world tasks and activities, series of connected tasks with a suitable length and complexity allow learners to simulate a real life context and perform grammar points as well as using integrated skills.
SL allows language learners to use virtual world in order to situate role plays for practicing grammar units, vocabulary in all skills (see Figure: 2).

Figure: 2

So, learners can find chance to explore both inside and outside of the classroom. By using real life materials as source, extra material, they apply both content and structure in practice. Learning becomes realistic and activities support the realism. Real life materials offer student-exploration of language in different settings. SL can provide such an environment by offering different locations (see Figure: 3)

Figure: 3
Learners in virtual world can use many language learning techniques, such as conversation practice, backward build-up drill, repetition drills, chain drills, single/multiple slot substitution drills, question and answer exercises, fill in the blank exercises, dictation, working with language corpuses, picture-strip story, role plays, information sharing, etc...

A variety of games, role plays, simulations, and task based communication activities can be used/created for the use of learners. So, learners may not be dictated with the activities; instead they are supported with the activities and resources based on their perception, allowing both space and time free environment/s. The core units and instruction in language teaching can be prepared based on activities/tasks which can propose useful, practical, and systematic vehicles for applying the rules within a communicative framework. Both form and function of the language can be put into context, providing better opportunities for language learning and practicing it. Tasks may provide both input and output where central focus is on the use of language through different environments. Learning in 3D world, certainly improving learning, can facilitate the process of negotiation, modification, and reframing through experimentation that are very much at the heart of second/foreign language learning.

SL offers private and public spaces, locations, create authentic environment, allowing learners greater control over what has been constructed in virtual world; they can control activities, events, sequences, change the direction, modify locations depending on the activities in content and design. In terms of environment created, SL is practical. SL is both practical and a suitable social platform for presentations and meetings as well. Learners can prepare, produce, interpret materials, and facilitate meetings within a 3D virtual world, including text-chatting communication, can deliver their presentations. They can also meet with each other in a real world setting, less stress-free environment.

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