

BEYOND LINGUISTIC COMPETENCE: SITUATING EFL TEXTBOOK LEARNING IN THE “REAL WORLD” – VIRTUALLY!

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ABSTRACT

Foreign language classrooms in secondary schools necessarily provide a systematic and structured program of learning for the development of linguistic competence often supported by a prescribed textbook. Much of this learning is decontextualised from real world communication and the development of spoken discourse competence is often neglected in favour of reading, writing and listening skills development with a focus on form. Immersive exposure to the foreign language beyond the classroom is not possible in such EFL contexts and classroom learning is constrained by large class sizes and limited time for learning. Immersive Virtual Reality (i-VR) enables an immersive situated experience beyond the classroom and allows multimodal language learning resources to be embedded as supports to the environment. I-VR has the capability to extend and enhance textbook learning into a “real world” circumstance in which authentic communication is used and learning scaffolded using language-rich multimodal resources towards a communicative task-based outcome. Our team designed such an environment for a small-scale pilot study funded by the Australia-Korea Foundation and implemented the project with two different classes of year 10 English language students in Seoul, South Korea. Presence and Affordance within the environment were regarded as important for successful learning outcomes. Our project found that students enjoyed the experience of snorkelling with sealions in South Australia and found it motivating and fun. This paper will report what the team learned from the study and how it intends to address some of the shortcomings.



Dr. Restall is a Lecturer in Education Futures at UniSA in Adelaide, South Australia. Dr Restall qualified as a secondary school teacher of foreign languages and ESL. He taught English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to adult international students for 14 years before lecturing in TESOL at UniSA. He has extensive experience in using technologies to support language learning and has supervised many masters projects and doctoral candidates to completion in the field. He also has extensive experience in teaching and managing study tours in the Asian region.



Miss. Belle Niu is a current PhD student of Dr Greg Restall. She has completed education degrees in both Australia and China from which she has developed experience and expertise at ESL teaching and learning. She also has expertise in dance and performance arts which were applied to this project.

Ms. Ada Yao has recently completed a M Ed (TESOL) at UniSA from which she has developed interest, experience and expertise at developing virtual reality learning environments to support foreign language learning. She has applied her expertise to the current AKF VR project.

