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Immersive VR Campus for Novice Chinese Learners: Blending Technology and Language Learning

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This study aims to develop, employ, and evaluate an immersive virtual-reality (VR) campus tailored for novice students learning Chinese as a Foreign Language (CFL) at a Taiwanese university. The primary goal is to equip incoming international students with essential Chinese language skills critical for successfully adapting to the academic environment. Incorporating an inventive blend of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT), the curriculum emphasizes immersive exposure to the Chinese language within task-oriented scenarios, complemented by instructional guidance in English. Utilizing VR technology, this platform, crafted using Gather Town, seamlessly merges physical and digital elements to augment comprehension and motivation among early-stage language learners. The active tracking feature allows for personalized learning paces, aligning with the principles of Education 4.0.

The study documents the development, implementation, and evaluation of the VR campus, founded on a detailed needs analysis involving 18 CFL students. This comprehensive curriculum integrates survival skills, language proficiency, cultural insights, and communication competencies across eight units. Each unit encompasses introductions to school buildings, essential vocabulary, daily conversation and sentence structures, practical tasks, and conclusive assessments. Furthermore, user feedback from a trial involving six CFL students highlights the interactive nature of the learning environment while addressing concerns about task complexity, platform guidance, and future improvements.

Feedback derived from six CFL students, exhibiting varying levels of Mandarin proficiency, underscores the interactive and enjoyable nature of the learning environment. While acknowledging the platform's ease of use for self-study, students expressed concerns about task difficulty, platform instructions, and future updates. By integrating user and expert feedback, this study aims to present a comprehensive review of the VR application, potentially revolutionizing CFL teaching methods while adhering to Education 4.0 principles.

Keywords

Virtual reality (VR), Chinese as Foreign Language (CFL), Immersive technology, Education 4.0

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