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Exploring the potential of VR vs. video conferencing on learning outcomes

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Virtual Reality (VR) has captured the attention of language educators due to its unique features such as immersion and sense of presence, promising enhanced learning experiences. However, existing research on language learning with VR predominantly consists of short-term studies, focusing on specific linguistic facets such as vocabulary, typically with a small number of students. While these studies provide evidence affirming the capability of VR in improving language skills, the need for more robust longitudinal studies involving a larger student population is undeniable to gain clearer insights into the effectiveness of VR in augmenting learning outcomes. To fill this gap, an eight-week quasi-experimental study was designed targeting Japanese students from multiple universities to compare Zoom as a mainstream video conferencing tool with a browser-based VR platform called Frame in the context of learning small talk skills. Following the flipped classroom approach, the students in both groups (N Zoom = 31, N VR = 26) first individually learned about small talk skills by watching two videos from an online course before every lesson. Using breakout rooms for the Zoom group and private voice zones for the VR group, they discussed the content of the videos in groups and practiced small talk in pairs during the one-hour weekly lessons. Learning outcomes were assessed at three intervals using a pre-test, mid-test, and post-test design for the Zoom group, and the same process is currently underway for the VR group. Significant improvement was observed in the Zoom group's performance from the mid-test to the post-test. This presentation delves into analyzing and discussing the learning outcomes of the VR group, currently under analysis, while comparing them against the baseline performance of the Zoom group. The findings hold significant implications for language educators keen on integrating VR into their teaching practices, offering insights into its potential benefits and challenges.

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Keywords

virtual reality (VR), video conferencing, flipped classroom, small talk, learning outcomes

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