

Providing Authentic and Situated Learning Context in Immersive Learning Environments with Metaphor Design

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Abstract: The paper introduces a 3D online role playing simulation and game targeted at people who learn Chinese as their second language. In order to ease the cultural barriers while learning language, the simulation and game is implemented in an immersive learning environment featuring on an ancient China village. The village is designed with metaphorical perspectives in mind with the hope of enhancing learning performance and community of practice.

Keywords: Metaphors Design, Chinese Learning, Online Game, Community of Practice

1. Introduction

In order to explore new paradigms on teaching Chinese language, an online game is created based on the history of Chinese Civil Service Exam system. The game is entitled “Nine Classes Club---Endeavor after Power and Wealth: Role Playing Simulation and Game for Studying Chinese Classics” (referred as NCC thereafter).

The game utilizes online multiplayer role playing simulation and game genres to simulate the scenario of learning and living of gentries in Civil Service Exam system in Ming-Qing Dynasties. The goal of the game is to provide overseas learners to study Chinese as their second language in more dynamic, appealing, motivating, and authentic ways than conventional instructional approaches such as lecturing and conversation practice. This new paradigm of offering opportunity in Chinese learning holds the

advantages with its simulation-based and immersive capacities that are affordable on the advanced application of learning approaches such as game, role playing, and community of practice.

2. The 3D Immersive Learning Worlds and Metaphors Design

For most of the people who learn Chinese as their second language are usually difficult to fit in the learning context. It would be great if there is a situated and authentic learning environment for them and which is able to immerse them into the learning context. This is the right place for Information and Communication Technology to come to play its role.

Results of researches already indicated that the virtual learning environment has to have the impact of being real and concrete. In other words, the more realistic look and feel of the virtual learning environment would produce a feeling of relevance, resulting in sustained involvement in the online activities (Barab, Makinster, & Scheckler, 2004). In order to create a concrete and authentic learning environment for learners to learn Classic Chinese, the project decided to implement the immersive learning worlds of the game play with the metaphor of an ancient China village.

The village is composed of several residential areas, a temple, a school, a memorial house, business districts with a variety of stores, and a park. The project also provides avatars in mimic of ancient Chinese kids.

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