A New Way Forward for Online Education: Experimenting with Learning in Second Life

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Abstract:
This project aims to test which form of interaction specific groups of users prefer when undertaking a learning task in the Second Life collaborative virtual environment.

Second Life:
In recent years, Web3D and Virtual Reality (VR) technologies have been rapidly developed and adopted to allow the development of a range of online virtual education environments.

Second Life (SL) is a very popular three-dimensional virtual environment that has been applied for online education by a number of educational institutions, to increase social interactions to deepen learning among users. It was developed and launched by Linden Lab in 2003. Second Life supports virtual learning with three dimensional learning spaces and a unique Human-Computer Interaction (HCI) style. The interaction features the potential to promote a sense of “presence” to engage users to the learning activities (De Lucia et al., 2008; Jarmon et al., 2009).

This study presents four different types of virtual lecture rooms created in Second Life, which are each designed to support a short lecture note presentation on the impact of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

An experiment is to be conducted to compare and evaluate four different types of lecture note presentations. The participants are being selected among university students of SUNY Oswego. The users will explore and experience each of the four types of virtual lecture rooms and then complete a questionnaire reporting on their experiences.

The experiment is designed to discover the participants’ preferences (viewing mechanism, level of interaction etc.) with regard to these virtual lecture room types and yield the reasons for the preferences. These preferences address HCI issues associated with this 3D virtual environment and allows a comparison between 2D and 3D virtual environments. Based on these results, the researchers hope to report on generic advantages and disadvantages of virtual learning in Second Life.

References

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Interacting with Information in Second Life

http://slurl.com/secondlife/SUNY Oswego/180/52/29/

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