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The Multimodal Metaverse: Real-life Language Practice in Feigned Virtual Horizon

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Language education has undergone rapid evolution following the shift from a print-based paradigm to a digital milieu. The application of the metaverse directs language learning toward more robust concepts of digital, interpersonal, and multimodal communication. The metaverse refers to a space that integrates virtual reality, including augmented reality and various immersive technologies (Tyagi et al., 2023). With the transformation of language learning, the incorporation of multimodal technologies becomes central. These multimodal technologies integrate the use of haptics, which activate the touch and motion senses in replicating the real direct interactions through operations or activities remotely. This approach also nurtures multimodality among learners, which Garcia (2026) defines as the ability to convey meaning through diverse modes, such as words and gestures, that underpin information exchange. The adoption of the multimodal metaverse is gaining traction in ASEAN, especially in Malaysia. These seamless technologies not only provide more convenient platforms for learning languages in higher institutions but also offer ideas for delivering effective lessons, such as two-way simulations and collaborative tasks that reinforce understanding and participation among learners.

Learning Journey with Gusto

Integrating education with metaverse technology enables learners to immerse themselves in an exciting and memorable learning environment. Imagine having to choose among various themes and settings, with a touch of gamification, in a language class; for example, exploring a virtual sphere where learners practice vocabulary in the Shakespearean era or take part in a negotiation with the characters to reach a ceasefire agreement.



Learners, especially the young ones, will find it thrilling every time a lesson is taught. As a result, students eagerly anticipate each class, making learning something they look forward to rather than miss. Not only does it create a stimulating learning environment for students, but it also accommodates learners' individual learning paces, which is crucial for instilling interactive and positive learning. Pujari et al. (2024) support the idea that metaverse users benefit from greater flexibility and independence in intercommunication. In addition, instructors need not worry, as the metaverse creates new opportunities for creativity by allowing users to design, experiment with, and share original virtual experiences (Riedl, 2019). This interactive environment encourages innovative thinking and creative expression, enabling individuals to explore ideas in ways that are not possible in physical settings.

New Dimension of Vocabulary and Communication Escapade

Learners often thirst for genuine, immediate practice in interaction and obtaining this experience is challenging in a physical language-learning environment. However, the use of the metaverse in language education bridges the existing gap. The metaverse creates simulated environments for lessons, where practicing target languages is possible in lifelike settings. As Çelik and Baturay (2024)

describe, it is possible for an L2 instructor to teach students vocabulary related to sea creatures, but the metaverse can bring the ocean world into the classroom, allowing students to explore. This unique academic dimension paves the way for research on the processes involved in language development. For instance, studies prove that incorporating the metaverse into language teaching substantially enhances second language (L2) vocabulary acquisition, long-term retention, and students' sense of community (Çelik & Baturay, 2024). The 3D environments and virtual spaces via avatars become platforms on which learners can place abstract language forms in meaningful contexts. This interactive approach helps learners process vocabulary more effectively and keep it longer than traditional text-based memorisation. Moreover, applying the metaverse to learning integrates both direct and delayed forms of social communication, despite the geographical setting (Li & Yu, 2023). This method involves learners engaging in activities such as role-plays and collaborative searches with little or no consequence; they are inspired by trial and error and experience less pressure. Thus, this virtual exercise helps not only in building vocabulary competence but also in developing speaking ability for real-life communication.

Cultivating Positive Mental Well-being

In learning languages, learners often face strains in achieving certain levels of proficiency. This phenomenon is due to the fear of making mistakes and of facing embarrassment in front of others. Engaging in the metaverse allows students to explore topics that spark fascination, interest, and amusement, motivating them to learn the intended language (Pujasari et al., 2024). Hwang et al. (2023) highlight that learners' motivation coexists with active participation and effects from using the metaverse in learning. By employing the metaverse, learners have the opportunity to choose their personalised avatar. This mask of anonymity provides space for learners to adjust themselves in conversing and applying the language on the virtual platform. It lessens the anxiety of being evaluated and having performance fright. Not only that, but since the contexts in the metaverse follow learners' preferences and levels of proficiency, instructors can develop specific learning environments to support emotional stability and neutralise fear stemming from real-life hurdles. Pradana and Elisa (2023) believe that these circumstances in metaverse learning should be observed to fathom the long-term effects and scrutinise the correlations among performance, motivation, and participation in learning.

Conclusion

The use of the metaverse in tertiary-level classrooms has been shown to have positive impacts on learners (Pujasari et al., 2024). The implementation of a multimodal metaverse in language education opens opportunities for educators to broaden effective approaches in virtual classrooms. Besides, it provides platforms for learners to experience a more interactive and engaging learning environment. However, such an initiative requires proper planning and consideration from all academic stakeholders to ensure a more productive outcome.

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