Virtual Learning in Second Life: A Case Study of Pre-service Teachers

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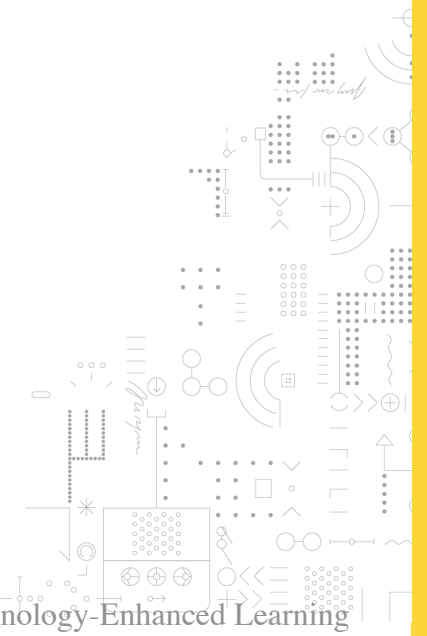INF5790-TEL, Lecture 11, Apr 29th, 2011

Article

- Teoh, J. (2009). Pre-Service Teachers in Second Life: The Dichotomy with the Net Generation. In Tettegah, S. and Calogne, C. (Eds). *Identity, Learning and Support in Virtual Environments*. Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, pp. 65-84.

- Describes a case study of using Second Life for pre-service teachers in a North-American University

- *Pre-service teacher*: the education and training provided to student teachers before they have undertaken any teaching

Themes

- Formal vs. informal learning

- Net generation

- Second Life

- Conceptual framework
  - Learning by doing
  - Prosumer

- Research question

- Methods

- Data and analysis

Formal vs. informal learning

- We talked about the difference during Lecture 8

- Briefly stated formal learning takes place in schools based on curricula, whereas informal learning takes place outside schools and on students own initiative

- The paper claims the "Net generation" favors the second approach, whereas most teachers follows the first

- This dilemma is apparent in the data analysis

Net generation

- Article argues by convincing examples from US literature for the rise of the "Net Gen," who are youths experienced with using computers from early age

- Net gens are not compatible with "older" teachers' using computers in schools

- Somewhat biased in being overly op-timstic with regards to TEL applications

Second Life

- A simulation world where thousand of users engage in activities like
  - Interaction, production, investment, asset accumulation
- Models the real world in many respects
- Differs from real world in important ways as well
- Advanced users are *producer-consumers*, similar to people who are mixing their own music, making their own movies, publishing their own art on Internet, etc.

Second Life: Interaction

Conceptual framework

- Learning by doing
  - Origination
    - John Dewey (Experiential learning)
  - Later developments
    - Donald Schön (reflection in action
    - Lave & Wenger (situated learning)

- Prosumers
  - Net gens are consumers and producers

Research questions

- Can simulations such as Second Life be used to harness educational goals?

- To what extent do pre-service teachers see potential for integrating SL in their own content area of teaching?
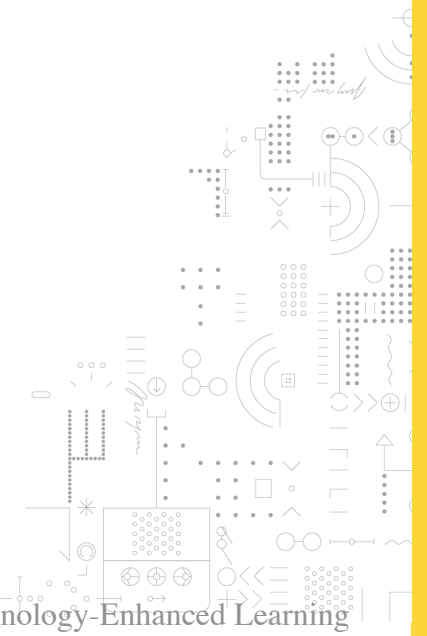
Methods

- Phenomenological perspective

- Data collection by
  - Observations, artifact collections, interviews

- Triangulation of multiple data sources using different techniques
  - Reflexivity, researcher as detective, member checking, low inference descriptors, observation

Data and analysis

- See examples of data in the article

- We will go through some of them in class

- Categorization of data
  - Conventional vs. non-conventional
  - Two subcategories for each
    - Familiar and innovative

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Findings

- 80% were skeptical to integrating Second Life into their content area

- They thought it would be more of a hinder than a help

- 20% thought that SL would be useful as a supplementary tool to their teaching
  - To experience and to manipulate objects, e.g. to promote learning by doing
  - To bring subjects "alive", e.g. in history

Open issue

- How to bridge the gap between pre-service teachers preferred teaching methods to students ' learning style?

- Ought to start studying the characteristics of pre-service teachers who enter the teaching profession for finding approaches to resolve the issue