Using Second Life in Your Language Class: Designing a Hybrid Course

María Parés-Toral
Marquette University
CALICO Conference-2012

What are Virtual Worlds?

- "Are persistent virtual environments in which people experience others as being there with them- and where they can interact with them." (Schroeder, 2008).

- Are characterized by being immersive, animated, collaborative, 3D environments available via the Internet. (The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2006).

- Users interact through avatars – 3D graphical representations of the user, which can be humans, vampires, robots or objects (Annetta, Klesath, & Holmes, 2008).

- Differ from Massively multiplayer online roleplaying games (MMORPGs) in that they don't focus on a goal such as winning points or passing a level, which is the goal in MMORPGs (Schroeder, 2008).

Avatars and learning

- Their use helps overcome some of the limitations of text-based computer mediated communication (CMC) by allowing users to display non-verbal communication cues and emotions in real time (Peterson, 2006).

- The environment's three-dimensionality and use of avatars increases students' sense of social presence by placing the user within the scene (Calongne, 2008).

- Within virtual collaborative environments, avatars decrease users' feelings of uncertainty by providing a means of identifying and evaluating others (Bente, Ruggenberg, Kramer, & Eschenburg, 2008).

- The anonimity factor provided reduces anxiety and produces a low-stress environment for students (Peterson , 2011).

Why use virtual worlds to teach languages online?

• Offer an increased sense of community and more opportunities for interactions than other technologies used in online learning. As a result, student engagement in learning increases and feelings of disconnection are reduced (Wallace & Maryott, 2009).

• Promote exploration and discovery, while facilitating constructivist learning through its collaborative, immersive environment (The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative).

•The immersive, social environment found in virtual worlds facilitates "unintentional" learning and presents opportunities for students to create knowledge in order to complete a task (The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative).

Why use virtual worlds to teach languages online?

• Allow learners to be active in their learning and increase student ownership by offering opportunities to participate in hands-on experimental learning and training (Calongne, 2008).

• Facilitate opportunities for students to engage in higher-order intellectual activities (Trevett-Smith, 2010).

• Facilitate participation in investigations, role-playing activities, synchronous and asynchronous discussions, engage in formal and informal learning, and problem solving (McArdle, Monahan, & Bertolotto, 2006).

Why use it?

- Intercultural competency

- Interpersonal skills across culture → conversations with native speakers from different countries.

- Broader perspective

- Mimics being abroad

om/watch?v=z3gHCupXSMs

Course Design

- Intermediate Spanish 2 (3 credits) MWF

- Objective of the online component:

  o   Develop intercultural competency

  o   Practice oral and written discourse

- Online components

  o Second Life sessions

  o Reflections

- 2 workshops

- 6 sessions in Second Life

- Physical space/virtual space

Designing Activities

BRAINSTORM

PREPARATION

WARM-UP

SECOND LIFE

REFLECTION
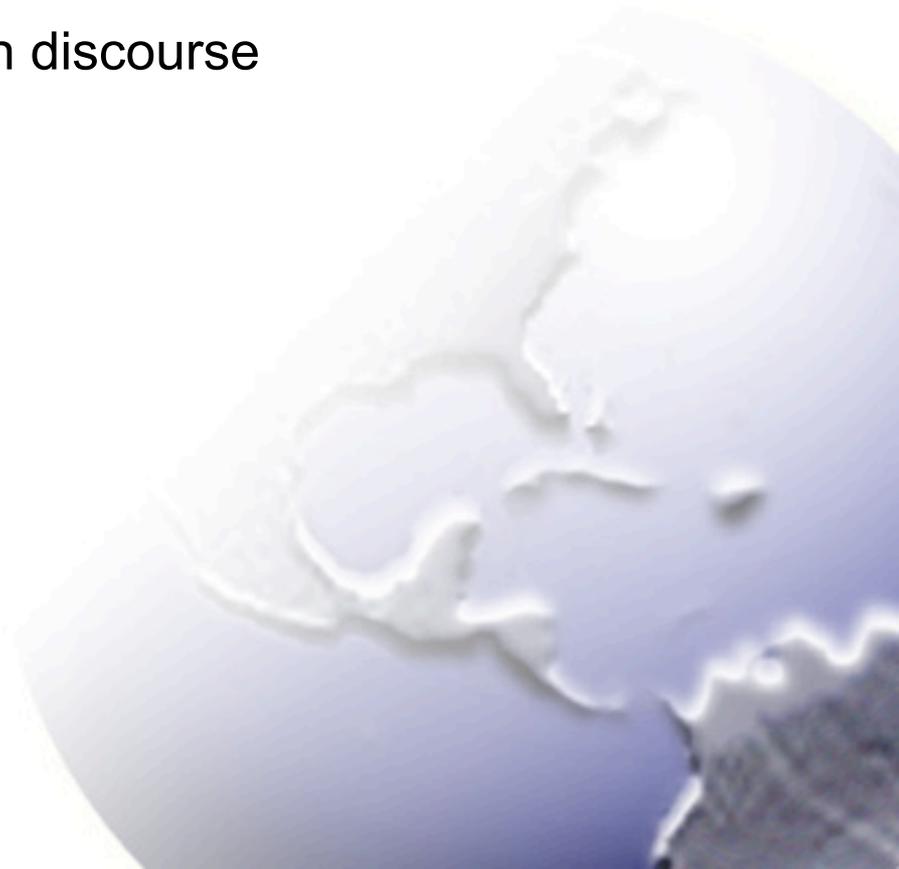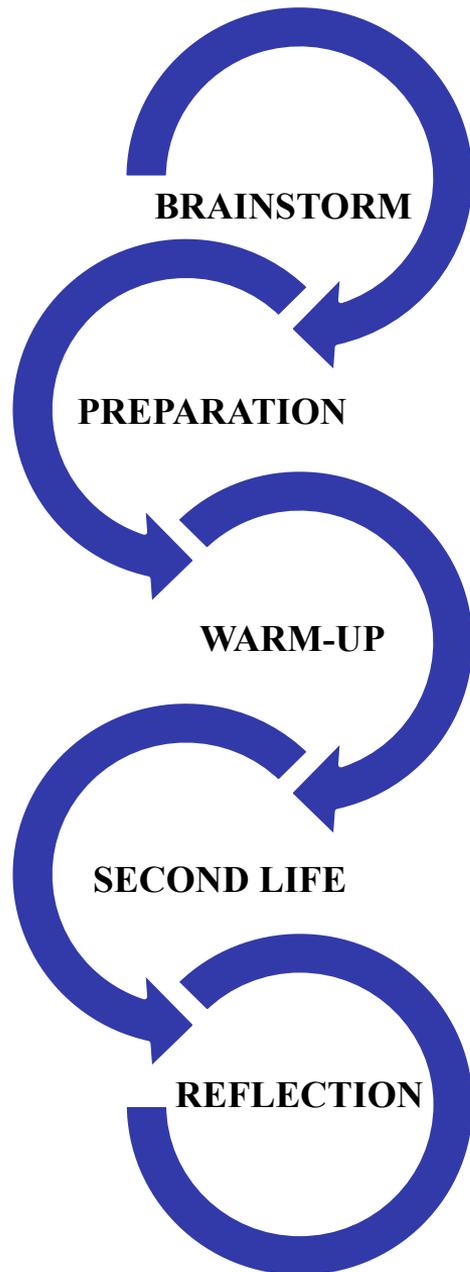
1. Define the learning objective.
2. What is the focus? Cultural or linguistic competency?
3. Language functions and forms.

4. Sections and scaffolding.
5. What cultural background knowledge do students need?
6. How does it relate to the material they're working on F2F?
7. How is it reflected in the assessments?

Exolingual conversations

Objective: Introduce yourself, ask and answer questions about likes, dislikes and routines.

Actividad 1: Conociendo a gente de otros países

Preparación.

A. En grupos de tres, escriban una lista de cosas que definen su identidad a nivel individual y como miembros de una cultura.

(ejemplo) *pasatiempos* _____

_____   _____   _____

_____   _____   _____

B. ¿Qué preguntas le podemos hacer a una persona para conocerla mejor? Piensa en los temas de la *sección A* y escribe un mínimo de 7 preguntas para hacerle a tu compañero/a. Escribe la pregunta en los blancos enumerados 1, 2, 3, etc. Luego, escribe tú respuesta a la pregunta en los blancos enumerados 1a, 2a, 3a, etc.

1. *¿Qué le gusta hacer en su tiempo libre?* _____

    1a. Usualmente, me gusta surfear la Web y chatear con diferentes personas. _____

2. _____

    2a. _____

3. _____

    3a. _____

4. _____

    4a. _____

5. _____

    5a. _____

6. _____

    6a. _____

7. _____

    7a. _____

Peer-to-peer conversations

Objective: Describe different works of art and give your personal opinion.

El arte

Paso 1. Ustedes trabajan en el Museo de Arte de Milwaukee y su jefe les ha pedido que vayan a varios museos y galerías de arte para buscar la obra de arte principal para la próxima exposición del Museo. Como críticos del arte, paseen *(walk around)* por el museo o galería en *Second Life* que les asignó la profesora, y hablen sobre lo siguiente para cada obra que vean.

¿Qué te parece este cuadro? ¿Es un paisaje, naturaleza muerta, una obra abstracta, etc.? ¿Cómo te sientes al verlo? ¿Cuál es tu interpretación de los colores y los símbolos usados por el artista? ¿Se burla de algo?¿Cuál es el significado del cuadro? ¿Por qué incluirías esta obra de arte en una exposición del Museo de Arte de Milwaukee? ¿Por qué no la incluirías en una exposición? *¡No se limiten a estas preguntas!*

Frases útiles:

Ni fu ni fa. / Ni me va ni me viene.	*It doesn´t do anything for me.*
No tiene ningún sentido para mí.	*It doesn´t make any sense to me.*
¡Qué maravilla!	*How marvelous!*
¡Qué horrible!	*How horrible!*
¡Qué barbaridad!	*Wow! (negative connotation)*
(No) me conmueve porque…	*It moves me/doesn´t move me*
brillante /oscuro	*bright/ dark*
colorido	*colorful*
significado	*meaning*

Paso 2. Tómate una foto enfrente de la obra de arte que quieres presentarle a tu jefe para que añada a la colección del museo y presente como la obra principal de la próxima exposición.

Instructions to take a snapshot of yourself in Second Life:

1. Click on the **Snapshot button** on the left menu.
2. On the top menu, go to **World → Snapshot**. OR You can also use the shortcut **Ctrl-Shift-S**.
3. You can change the camera view with the **Camera Controls** button on the bottom menu.
4. Once you've taken the picture, you can email it to yourself.

Note:
✓ If you don't see the Snapshot button on the left-hand menu, you can add it to your toolbar by:

1. Right-click on the Top toolbar → **Me** → **Toolbar buttons**
2. Drag the Snapshot button to the location you want it.

✓ To go back to the default view, double-click on your avatar.

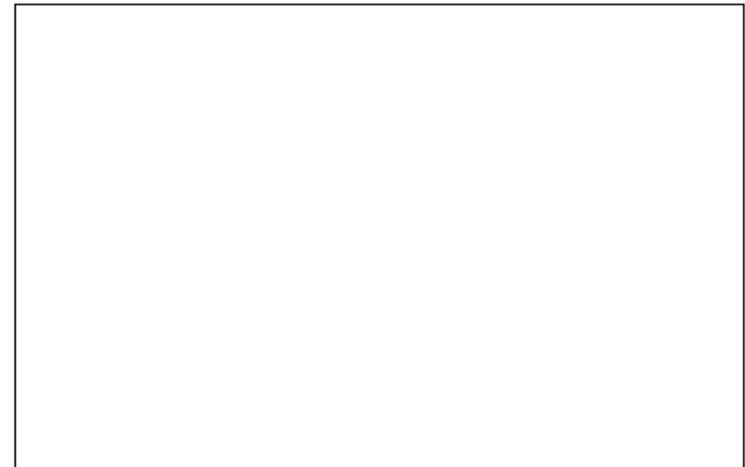## Apuntes sobre mi pintura

Lugar en donde está la obra: _____

Si no tiene título, ¿qué título le pondrías? _____

Tipo de arte: _____

¿Cómo es la obra?

TAREA: En un documento en *Word*, pon la foto que te tomaste enfrente de la obra de arte que quieres presentarle a tu jefe. Escríbele una carta a tu jefe, el comisario (*curator*) del museo, describiéndole la obra y explicándole porqué debe incluir esa obra en la exposición. **Tienes hasta las 2:00pm del lunes, 16 de abril** para entregar la tarea a través del Dropbox en D2L.

Assessments

- Focus on cultural competency

- How is the activity reflected in the assessments?

- Homework, reflections, quizzes, writing assignments, short narrations

Criteria	4 points	2 points	0 points
Student posted his/her reflection by the due date	Yes	Late	Didn't post
Reflection post about personal experience	Student provides personal opinions, and answers all the prompt questions in the blog in a thoughtful, insightful manner. S/he gives examples to support his/her point of view.	Student responded to some of the prompt questions. Student responded to all of the questions in a vague manner. Reflection is superficial.	Student did not respond the reflection questions. His/her responses were incomplete, and demonstrate lack of thoughtful analysis of his/her experience.
Student comments on other posts	Student commented on one or more peer reflections. Student contributed to the blog by posting personal opinions, personal insight, and asking probing questions.	Student commented on one post, but his/her post was superficial and did not promote discussion or reflection by the audience.	Student did not comment on any posts. His/her comments did not contribute to the reflection.

Assessments

- Homework → preparation for the conversation in Second Life (points given for completion)

- Reflections → Done in English.

- Quizzes and tests → students use the language to discuss the readings and what they learned during their conversation with a native speaker.

- Short narrations → students use the language to narrate their opinions about what happened in their meeting, describe what they did or saw, explain, etc.
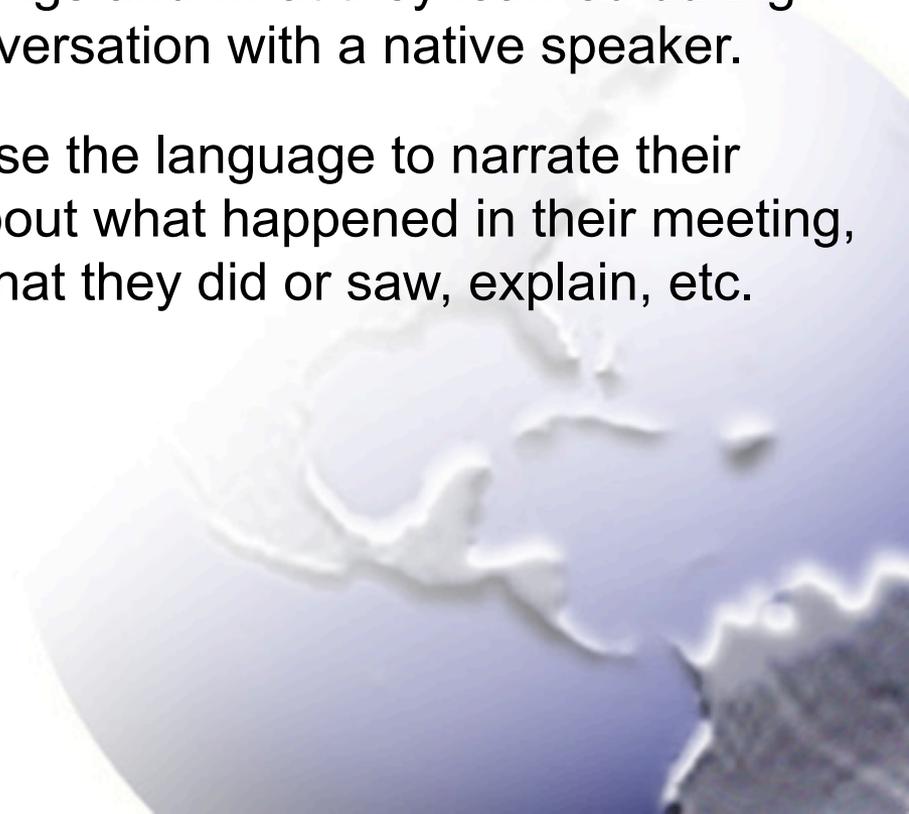
Challenges and considerations

- Troubleshooting...Freeze-ups! I can't stop dancing!

- Griefers

- Where do I send students?

- Finding people

- Voice chat: I can't hear you!

- Net-etiquette

- Working around time constraints

- Faculty training and ongoing technical support.

Findings

- Is there a learning curve?

- Student training in (Net)-etiquette

- Private IM vs. general chat

- Combination of exolingual and peer-to-peer conversations

- Overwhelmed by multitasking?

- Global topics and prompts should elicit open-ended questions

- Multiple native speakers vs. a partner

- Language Proficiency

- Motivation

- Cultural interest spark
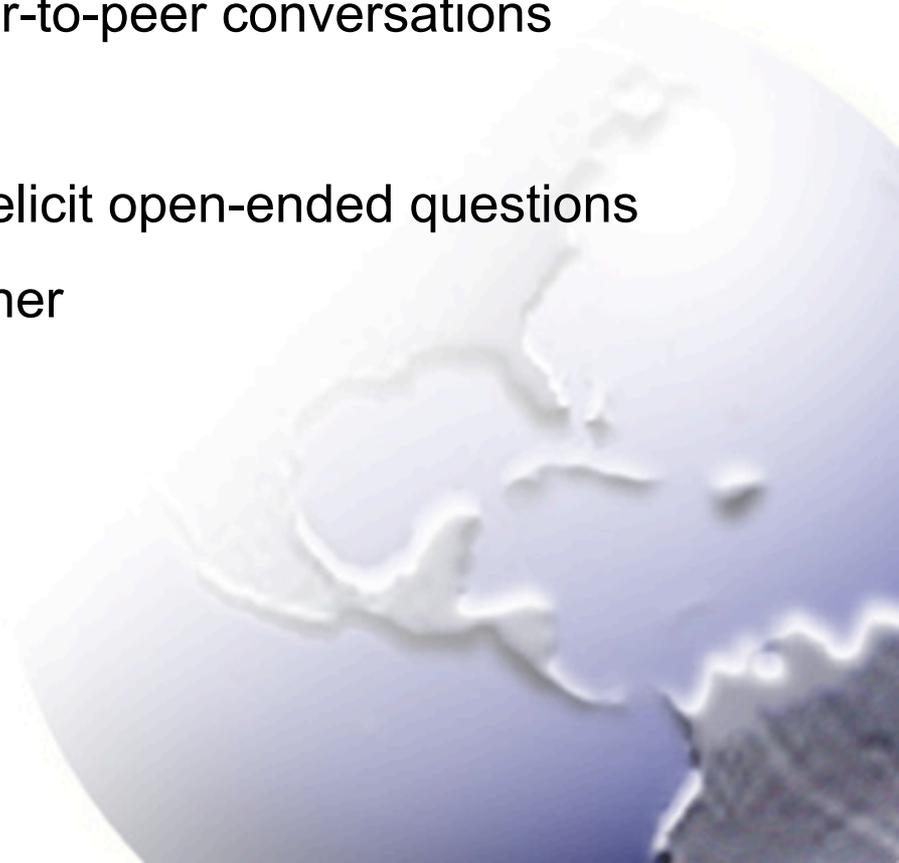
Future research and course development

- Exposure to colloquial or chat lingo and its effects on SLA.

- Strategies to support learning structure within virtual environments.

- Faculty training and support. Who has a learning curve?

- Student training → Jing/ Captivate and handouts.

- Linguistics and semiotics within virtual worlds.

- Assessment of learning within virtual worlds.
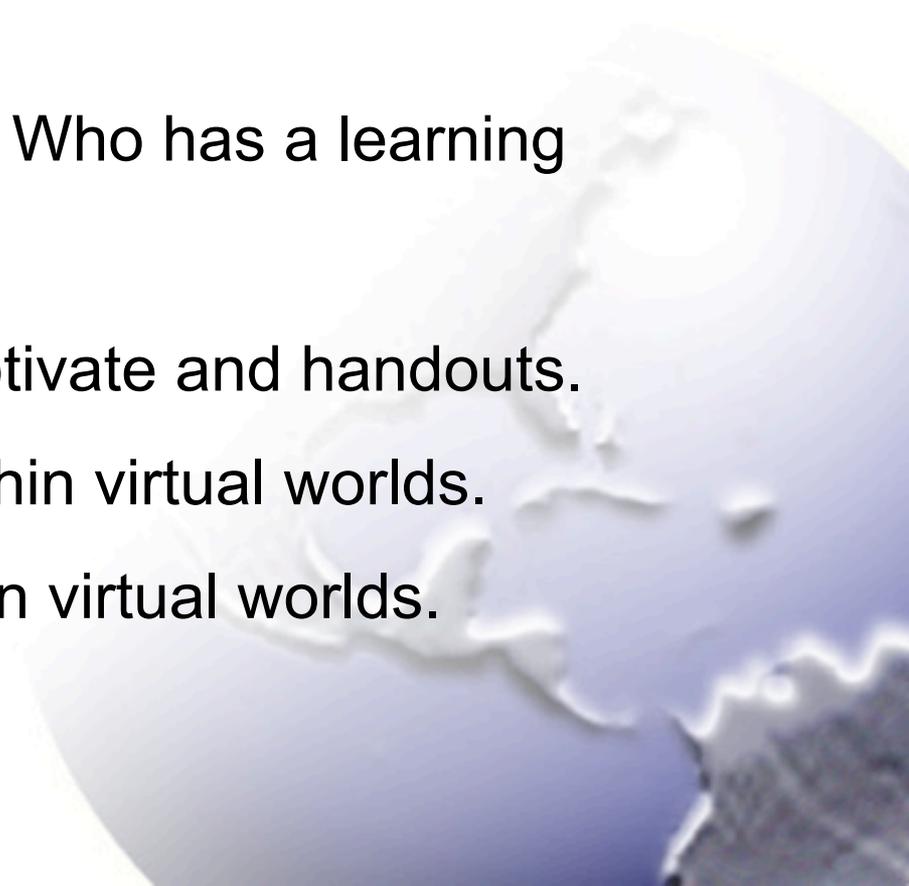
Presenter contact information

María Parés-Toral

Email: maria.pares-toral@mu.edu

Second Life: MariCrux

Skype: maria.pares.toral

Reference List

Annetta, L., Klesath, M., & Holmes, S. (2008). V-learning: How gaming and avatars are engaging online students. *Innovate, 4*(3). Retrieved from http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=485

Bente, G., Rüggenberg, S., Krämer, N.C., & Eschenburg, F. (2008). Avatar-mediated networking: Increasing social presence and interpersonal trust in net-based collaborations. *Human Communication Research, 34*(2), 287-318. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.00322.x

Calongne, C.M. (2008). Educational frontiers: Learning in a virtual world. *EDUCAUSE Review, 43*(5), 36-48.

Garrett, N. (2009). Computer-assisted language learning trends and issues revisited: Integrating innovation. *The Modern Language Journal, 93*(1s), 719-740.

Kelton, A.J. (2008). Virtual worlds? "Outlook good". *EDUCAUSE Review, 43*(5), 15-22.

McArdle, G., Monahan, T., & Bertolotto, M. (2006). 3D collaborative virtual environments for e-learning and m-learning. In *Proceedings of the 5th IASTED International Conference on Web-Based Education*, ed. V. Uskov, 1-6. Anaheim, CA: ACTA Press.

Peterson, M. (2006). Learner interaction management in an avatar and chat-based virtual world. *Computer Assisted Language Learning, 19*(1), 79-103.

Peterson, M. (2011). Towards a research agenda for the use of three-dimensional virtual worlds in language learning. *CALICO Journal, 29*(1), 67-80.

Schroeder, R. (2008). Defining virtual worlds and virtual environments. *Journal of Virtual Worlds Research, 1*(1), 2-3.

Sweley, M.H. (2008). Unreal world: Second Life adds new dimensions to second language study. *The Language Educator, 3*(2), 22-25.

The EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative. (2006). *7 things you should know about virtual worlds*. Retrieved July 28, 2010 from http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ELI7015.pdf

Trevett-Smith, M. (2010). Second Life provides real-world benefits. *Faculty Focus*.

Wallace, P., & Maryott, J. (2009). The impact of avatar self-representation on collaboration in virtual worlds. *Innovate, 5*(5). Retrieved from http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=689