Chapter 19

Technology Enhanced Language Learning in Virtual Worlds

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ABSTRACT

The application of Information Technology makes distance learning possible. Teachers can teach students who live in another side of the globe via Internet. They can see each others’ images and hear each others’ voices, which could not be done twenty years ago, through Internet. With the development of Internet, students can learn without the limitations of time and space. American Society for Training and Development proposed that digital learning includes learning through Internet, learning by computers, learning in virtual classrooms, and digital cooperation. The digitalized course contents can be transmitted via Internet, local or global networks, audio books, videotapes, satellite, interactive televisions, and compact disks.

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INTRODUCTION

The Application of Information Technology in Language Learning

Information technologies that applied to language learning include multimedia, internet, web, wireless network, mobile devices, web2.0 and web 3.0. Following briefly describe the application of information technology in language learning (see figure 1).

- **Multimedia**: According to Wikipedia, multimedia refers to media such as text, pictures, sound and film that are transmitted through internet, audio books, compact disks and satellite. Therefore, the teaching materials in language learning are closely related to multimedia.

- **Internet**: Internet is a network of networks that consist of millions of private, public, academic, business and government networks. The applications of internet in language learning are e-mail, video conference, blog, e-Portfolio, etc.

- **Web technology**: A web is created by editing HTML and XML while a 3D web is created by editing VRML. The content of a web includes texts, pictures, sound, and films.

- **Wireless network**: Owing that wireless network can transmit data without passing through internet cable, it has characteristics of high motion, high flexibility, low cost, and easy to set up. Nowadays, mobile devices such as notebook, PDA and wireless phone have become cheaper and cheaper. More and more people surf the net by mobile devices via wireless network.

- **Mobile devices**: Mobile devices such as smart phone Personal Digital Assistant (PDA), and mobile phone are portable devices. Teachers or students may connect to the internet via wireless network or 3G-network while they are doing outside learning activities.

- **Web 2.0**: Web 2.0 is a platform where terminal users are encouraged to use collective
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