



Designing for authenticity: a framework and guidelines for conversation simulation courseware

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Researchers in the CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning) field are confronted very often with the 'no significant difference syndrome': language teaching supported by ICT is no more effective than traditional face-to-face classroom language teaching. We hypothesize that the effect of ICT can be maximized when its design is dependent on the design of the entire learning environment, and when its potential usefulness is defined as the extent to which it contributes to the creation of a language learning environment geared towards realizing both pedagogical and personal goals of learners and teachers. This is the approach adopted within Distributed Language Learning (DLL), a conceptual and methodological framework based on more than twenty years of experience in the theory and practice of CALL design. DLL is a form of educational engineering, meaning that real-world hypotheses are formulated on the basis of theory and previous experience, in a cyclic but staged approach.

In this presentation, we will introduce the IIC model (part of DLL), which was developed to show all possibilities offered by ICT for a particular learning situation, in order to allow designers to make justified/justifiable design choices. The IIC model, which stands for Information-Interaction-Communication, clearly shows different degrees of authenticity in materials and interactions, and allows to gauge their appropriateness within the context of a particular language learning situation. We will then show how we applied this design framework in DISCO, a research project funded by the STEVIN programme of the Nederlandse Taalunie, which aims to develop and test a prototype of an ASR-based (Automatic Speech Recognition) CALL application for training oral proficiency for Dutch as a second language (DL2). The requirements of DISCO are a/ to offer

individualized feedback on linguistic aspects such as pronunciation, morphology and syntax, and b/ to simulate an authentic language learning environment by adopting a communicative approach. We will show how we designed for authenticity by taking into account both the pedagogical goals for and personal goals of the target users. On the pedagogical level, authenticity appears in the design of content (real-life communicative situations) and tasks (simulated conversation with virtual partners, methods for authentic assessment). On the personal level, authenticity is achieved by respecting the learner's identity. We will elaborate on the ontological specification of the prototype, and will conclude by discussing possibilities for collaborative research in this respect.

Biodata

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