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by Flora Debora

Oculus Story Studio: *Henry* in English Classrooms

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Abstract

The following short article offers some simple ideas on how virtual reality (VR) can be used to teach English. Hopefully it will also inspire teachers to explore the untapped potential of VR to help students learning English in an engaging and motivating way.

A virtual reality (VR) system is an interactive technology that serves as a human-to-computer interface and enables the user being in a three-dimensional environment created by the software, hardware, and other objects (Meinhold, 2013). Initially developed for flight simulators and astronaut trainings, VR technology is now widely used for different purposes such as museum visits, marketing, and education. The high levels of authenticity, engagement, and immersion offered by VR help users to have realistic experiences within their helmets or cardboards and to understand complicated or abstract ideas easily (Christou, 2010).

Studies note that through VR technology, students can be exposed to a specific cultural and language context; and this experience stimulates their communication in the target language (Morrison, 2017). The use of VR in language classrooms helps students to enhance their vocabulary, speaking skills, and reading comprehension (Morrison, 2017). Furthermore, students like completing tasks with VR because the activities are interesting and the environment offered is dynamic with an appealing content (Chen, 2016). Considering the benefits of VR in language classrooms, scholars suggest language teachers act as facilitators and use VR as a means to increase students' interest and attention to learn a target language. However, studies show that many teachers are still reluctant to incorporate VR into their teaching because they might not know where to start (Kessler, 2018).

The following article offers some starting ideas on how the potential of a VR application *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* can be explored as a learning resource. The suggested activities hopefully will inspire English teachers to bring *Oculus Story Studio: Henry* or any other VR applications into their classrooms.

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