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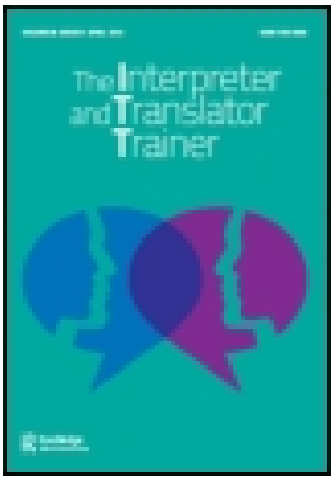

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Virtual Worlds in Interpreter Training[1]

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Abstract. *With translators and interpreters being increasingly expected to develop sophisticated computer skills to succeed in the translation and interpreting industries, interpreter trainers must explore new and effective ways of integrating new technologies in their courses. Virtual worlds have quickly exceeded the affordances of social networking tools and are now assuming an important place in educational settings worldwide. This article outlines the main features of a popular virtual world (Second Life) and explores how it might be used as a platform for interpreter training. After contextualizing the pedagogical use of virtual worlds within the wider approach to computer-assisted interpreter training, the article examines the advantages derived from learners' access to multi-sensory stimuli as well as quasi-professional practice settings that Second Life facilitates. This is followed by an overview of the ways in which Second Life supports blended learning without compromising the degree and quality of practice and feedback involved in such courses. The final section outlines the main steps to cover in setting up an interpreting course using Second Life.*

Keywords. Virtual worlds, Interpreter training, Information and communication technologies, Computer-assisted interpreter training, Second Life.

Introduction

The last two decades have witnessed the emergence and generalization of 'teletranslation' and 'teleinterpreting' (O'Hagan and Ashworth 2002), two new modalities of language mediation oriented to the demands of digital communication environments, where "translators cater mainly to digital contents, which are produced and distributed in digital media, while interpreters carry out remote interpreting in virtual environments" (*ibid*.:24). More recently, a number of developments driven by the spread of mobile and networked

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communications have brought about the proliferation of Web 2.0 tools, the exponential growth of social networking sites and even the emergence of virtual communication environments known as 'virtual worlds'. Although technological advances have not changed the core of the translation and interpreting professions, they are bound to create new working environments for translators and interpreters. Concomitantly, new learning environments designed around such technologies need to be created if students are to successfully meet the demands of multilingual communication in digital and virtual contexts.

The importance of integrating information and communication technologies in translator and interpreter training programmes has been widely recognized in the literature (Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez 2007, Bowker *et al.* 2008, Alcina 2008, Şahin 2009, Olvera-Lobo *et al*. 2009). Information and communication technologies enable and facilitate the practice of translation and interpreting in pedagogical contexts and enhance productivity and consistency in professional settings. From the perspective of translator and interpreter trainers, computer technologies open up novel and important avenues for pedagogical innovation. One of the arguments developed in this article is that by capitalizing on the affordances of technology, interpreter trainers are able to increase motivation among trainees. Indeed, as the new generations of student translators and interpreters are equipped with ever more sophisticated levels of digital literacy, trainers need to take advantage of such skills and exploit them for pedagogical purposes. With well-equipped facilities and technology-savvy trainers, it is possible to develop new interpreter training environments that allow students to experience the dynamics and constraints of real life professional settings.

Although there is already a substantial body of academic literature on the use of technology in interpreting and interpreter training, there has been so far no attempt to explore the use of virtual worlds in the field. This article aims to examine the pedagogical potential of virtual worlds for interpreter training and interpreting practice, as illustrated by Second Life, probably the most popular virtual world program.

1. Technology in interpreting practice

Interpreting is central to multilingual communication in a range of institutional contexts, including multinational organizations and public services. Although some experimental studies have explored what a full automation of the interpreting process may deliver (e.g. machine translation of oral texts), human interpreters are still at the heart of these processes of mediation of spoken texts. Fügen *et al*. (2008:247), for example, report on "a first real-time simultaneous speech translation system for spontaneous technical lectures" and present some "intriguing results [which] leave room for speculation on whether superhuman simultaneous interpretation performance may one day be possible by machine". Although such groundbreaking experiments are

quite promising, it would be fair to say that machines are by no means close to replacing human interpreters *yet*.

Attempts to integrate information and communication technologies into pedagogical and professional interpreting contexts, however, are being made ever more frequently by interpreters and interpreter trainers. Braun (2006), for instance, has explored the challenges that interpreting in videoconferencing raises for interpreter trainers. According to Braun, gaining a better understanding of this modality of remote interpreting is necessary for a wide range of reasons, including:

- the lack of interpreting booths in certain conference rooms;
- the shortage of qualified public service interpreters available in some areas;
- the need to reduce interpreters' travel and accommodation costs;
- unforeseen events or urgent circumstances where the immediate presence of an interpreter is required;
- the need to preserve the security of interpreters, e.g. in situations of conflict.

The increasing use of web conferencing tools to develop virtual meeting environments has also increased the demand for interpreters who are able to mediate successfully in these new communicative encounters. Sárközy and Haidegger (2005) have referred to this new online context as "the Global Conference Network" and defined it as a "system [that] attempts to establish audio and video connections independently from language and actual place of residence". Such systems are likely to develop with the advancements in the technology and give way to new working environments for interpreters. The role that technology plays in these contexts has led Braun (2006) to distinguish three virtual meeting environments where the interpreters' mediation may be required, as summarized in Table 1.

Extension of Traditional Interpreting Settings	**Videoconference Interpreting**	**Remote Interpreting**
• Majority of primary participants and interpreter(s) present in the same location. • Individual 'remote' participants in a different location.	• Primary participants distributed across different locations. • Interpreter(s) at one of the participant's locations or at a third location.	• Primary participants together on site. • Interpreter(s) at a different location.

Table 1. Virtual interpreting settings (Braun 2006)

The first type of interpreting setting identified by Braun is, effectively, an extension of traditional interpreter-mediated encounters. Prevalent since the 1940s, this type of setting, where one of the parties to the encounter might be in a different location, still remains the most popular. Video conferencing, the second type of setting, emerged as networked computers equipped with high-speed Internet connection became widespread. Finally, remote interpreting, the most recently established working environment, refers to "situations in which interpreters are no longer present in the meeting room, but work from a screen and earphones without a direct view of the meeting room or the speaker" (Mouzourakis 2006:46). Remote interpreting – which is used to reduce travel costs, overcome physical building constraints, and increase interpreter availability – is beginning to redefine the working conditions for interpreters (*ibid*.). Although institutions such as the United Nations and the European Union have experimented with this new interpreting modality, interpreting scholars have drawn attention to its limitations. Moser-Mercer's (2005:735) study, informed by the technologies used in early 2000s, highlights the lack of speakers' virtual presence as one of the most important drawbacks of remote interpreting. As she notes, "for true presence to develop … the distance between the real world and the virtual environment still needs to be bridged". Indeed, a decade ago, remote interpreting relied exclusively on acoustic input and the interpreters' lack of access to visual cues and other paralinguistic features made it very hard for them to interpret effectively. As part of her discussion on issues of multi-sensory integration into remote interpreting, Moser-Mercer (*ibid*.:736) highlights the key role that learners will play in the future development of this interpreting modality, noting that "[i]t remains to be seen if indeed a new generation of computer savvy students arrives with acquired cognitive processes that seem more amenable to the task at hand". Considering the fact that today's learners are digital natives (Prensky 2001), it is safe to assume that, with appropriate training and enhanced awareness of the pedagogical affordances of new technologies, remote interpreting will become a more viable proposition.

2. Current interpreter training methods

Approximately one decade ago, interpreter training relied almost exclusively on cassettes and printed documents as basic learning materials. Interpreting labs, however, are now normally equipped with workstations connected to and directed by a teacher workstation, from where audio and video files are broadcast via classroom management software applications – such as Sanako, Symposium or other locally-created programs.

In these instructional settings, a teacher-centred approach is usually adopted: students are normally required to wait for their turn to listen,

interpret, and record. Creating an authentic learning environment is thus crucial in preparing students for real-world working conditions (Sawyer 2004). This insight is endorsed by proponents of constructivist approaches to translator training such as Kiraly (2000:193), who asserts that "conventional instruction should be supplemented with authentic praxis-oriented work through which students can come to grips with the types of constraints and expectations they can expect to face once they graduate as language mediation experts". Authenticity of learning materials and training environments is much more important in interpreting because it is a real-time activity in which errors are often irreversible. Interpreting instructors have traditionally used speeches delivered by them, which meant that students would not always gain exposure to source language texts read or recorded with a native accent. Recently, however, students have been presented with more authentic tasks as trainers have begun using pre-recorded audio and video clips. De Manuel Jerez (2006) explores the ways in which new technologies can be exploited to bring interpreter training closer to real-life communicative situations and shows how a more realistic approach to training material increases student motivation during the learning process.

Speaking in front of a live audience is an important aspect of interpreter training programmes (Nolan 2005). Stage fright can be a major hindrance for students' performance and needs to be overcome through practice in near-authentic environments. In some interpreter training programmes, students attend conferences to observe professional interpreters at work and, occasionally, are given a few minutes to practice. The stress created by having to perform in front of a live audience, which can overshadow the real capacity of novice interpreters, is another aspect that can be addressed through the design of authentic learning environments. As the next section shows, new technologies would appear to have the potential to serve as such platforms.

3. Technology in interpreter training

Technology not only changes the working environment for interpreters, but also offers novelties for interpreter trainers. The e-learning project run by interpreter trainers at Universitat Jaume I in Spain (Blasco Mayor and Jiménez Ivars 2007) is a good illustration of how interpreting programmes can benefit from the incorporation of non-standard technologies. According to Blasco Mayor and Jiménez Ivars, the 'interpreting website' and virtual environment created for the e-learning of simultaneous and consecutive interpreting skills has a number of benefits for the student's learning experience: it increases attendance rates, students play a leading role in the learning process, and the teacher is prompted to take on the role of learning facilitator.

Ko (2006) has explored the teaching of 'interpreting by distance' mode,

giving examples of institutions that deliver this kind of training. "[T]he availability, reliability and affordability of any single medium to adequately meet the requirements of synchronous verbal and visual interaction in teaching interpreting", Ko argues, "are limited" (*ibid*.:91). More recently, Ko (2008) has investigated the advantages and constraints of teaching interpreting by distance mode, using the telephone, from an empirical perspective. Based on the findings of this study, Ko further acknowledges the limitations of using a sound-only teleconferencing facility and advocates the integration of both verbal and visual features in such experiments. For their part, Ko and Chen (2011) focus on the implications of teaching different types of interpreting – dialogue, consecutive, and simultaneous – as well as sight translation online, using a synchronous learning management system (SLMS). Although their experiment with 16 participants was not part of a formal training programme and they did not compare the results of this online experiment with those of a conventional training course, Ko and Chen conclude that the experiment was technically feasible and no delay was experienced in the delivery of course contents. As the next section will show, the findings of this series of studies on phone interpreting are, to some extent, transferable to other training environments, including virtual worlds.

Tymczyńska (2009) discusses the use of online activities in healthcare interpreter training through an open-source learning management system (Moodle*)*. Within the framework of this course, instructors developed "a set of appropriate complementary online resources for self-paced practice that foster student autonomy and intrinsic motivation" (Tymczyńska 2009:149). There are also several interpreting courses taught fully through online environments at a number of institutions, e.g. New York University School of Medicine[3]. Moreover, the European Master's in Conference Interpreting (EMCI) has in the past incorporated a videoconferencing component[4] in which five different institutions were involved. According to Donovan (2008), the objectives of this project included the capacity to pool resources across the 5 consortium members; the possibility of exchanging best practice in interpreting pedagogy; and the capacity to develop best practice for use of new technologies in interpreter training and professional practice. According to Donovan (*ibid*.), this project offered a number of pedagogical advantages:

- students gained exposure to authentic, stimulating working situations;

[3] For more information, see http://www.med.nyu.edu/cih/language/interpretation.html (last accessed March 2010).

[4] See http://web.ff.cuni.cz/media/utrl-2009-01-19-videoconference/EMCI_DISTANCE_TEACHING_19_Jan.pdf (last accessed 15 November 2012).

- trainees were provided with the opportunity to practise techniques taught in the classroom setting;
- student interpreters had access to a wide range of speakers (and listeners);
- trainees received input and feedback from trainers at other institutions and from recruiters.

The use of technology in interpreter training has also proved to be helpful in terms of creating opportunities for self-study and autonomous practice which, according to Sandrelli (2005), are central to interpreter training programmes. As Sandrelli notes, "[n]o trainee can attain the required standards just by attending classes. Individual and group work are an important part of any interpreter training course, and yet students do not always have access to suitable study support and appropriate practice materials" (*ibid*.:15). Sandrelli outlines a project involving the design of a computer-assisted interpreter training tool that "enables teachers to combine audio, video and textual resources to create exercises tailored to their students' needs ... [and] includes functions to create the following types of exercises: shadowing and clozing, paraphrasing, sight translation and simultaneous interpreting, and simultaneous interpreting with text" (*ibid*.:6). Such authoring tools certainly have great potential to provide opportunities for practice and autonomous learning, although other authors have also noted the importance of exploring the contribution of free and low-cost technologies for use in translator and interpreter training (Bowker *et al*. 2008). This article focuses precisely on the potential contribution of virtual worlds to interpreter training in line with the concerns outlined in this section.

4. Virtual worlds

Virtual worlds have evolved greatly since the times of Multi User Dungeon[5] (late 1970s) and Habitat (1980s)[6]. Although there are currently a range of virtual worlds in operation, Second Life is currently accepted as one of the most popular.[7]

[5] M[ulti] U[ser] D[ungeon] (also referred to as MUD1, to distinguish from its successor, MUD2) is the oldest virtual world in existence. Originally developed in and around 1978 at Essex University, England, MUD ran for many years on the University's computers. For more information on this game, see http://www.british-legends.com/history.htm (last accessed 15 November 2012).

[6] A survey of different virtual worlds, including Habitat, is available online at http://sl4calico.pbworks.com/Background-on-Virtual-Worlds (last accessed 15 November 2012).

[7] See http://www.pcworld.com/article/228000/the_11_most_influential_online_worlds_of_all_time.html (last accessed 15 November 2012).

4.1 Second Life

Second Life[8] is a three-dimensional, Internet-based, user-created virtual world software application that can be freely downloaded. There are about 27 million registered users in Second Life, mostly from Europe and the USA.[9] Users are represented by avatars and interact with one another and with other objects using audio and video features. Communication between users can also be text-based and machine translation of typed chat messages can be provided automatically by enabling this feature, which is powered by Google Translate. SL is used for a variety of purposes, from business and education[10] to entertainment. Many universities have a virtual campus in Second Life (e.g. Figure 1) where they offer dedicated virtual courses or add a virtual component to their face-to-face courses.

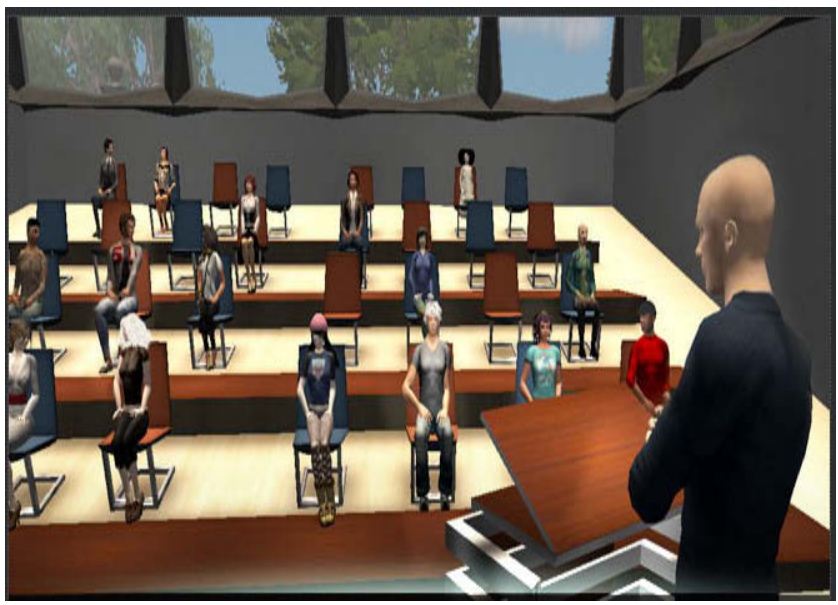

Figure 1. Screenshot of virtual classroom in Second Life

In her comprehensive study, De Freitas (2008) divides virtual worlds into five categories: role-play worlds, social worlds, working worlds, training worlds, and mirror worlds. Second Life, which Freitas includes under the social worlds category, is currently being explored in terms of its applications

[8] Second Life's URL is http://secondlife.com (last accessed 15 November 2012).
[9] See http://www.hypergridbusiness.com/2011/07/virtual-world-usage-accelerates (last accessed 15 November 2012).
[10] Molka-Danielsen and Deutschmann (2009) present a good overview of how Second Life can be used for learning and teaching.

for pedagogical purposes,[11] as it can be applied flexibly in educational settings and it is also able to accommodate individual learning preferences. By providing users with a sense of social presence, it enhances students' motivation and engagement, and facilitates collaboration in the form of groups, meetings and conferences. Overall, Second Life provides experiential learning opportunities that are not available in traditional learning environments.

Interpreter trainers and novice interpreters will need to master a number of basic Second Life operations. These include setting up their profiles; deciding on their avatar's appearance; learning to move around (walking, flying, and teleporting); taking inventory of resources they own within Second Life (e.g. notes, scripts); searching and setting landmarks (i.e. linking to favorite places within Second Life); and socializing and communicating in-world (via groups, instant messaging, text chat, voice chat, and note cards exchanged in Second Life).[12]

Molka-Danielsen (2009:14) provides a comprehensive list of some possible activities that can be carried out in Second Life by interacting with different contexts and users, and that can be used "to spark the imagination". The list below reproduces only those that are, in principle, relevant to interpreting training:

- holding conferences and business meetings – e.g. to pitch a budget;
- collaborating on shared tasks;
- designing and developing campus representations;
- designing and building – by creating an immersive context, scripted tools, etc;
- holding job interviews – and learning to play relevant roles to participate in them;
- building libraries – and learning to interact with them;
- delivering and attending performances – live or recorded, whether musical or not;
- taking part in role-play – arts, history, health, business;
- engaging in social interactions – meeting with friends, working together on homework;
- working in virtual offices – and interacting with employers or clients.

These activities can be readily associated with the professional development of interpreters in one way or another. Some of them (e.g. collaborating, taking

[11] A wiki and an e-mail list have been set up for those who use SL for educational purposes. See https://lists.secondlife.com/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/educators (last accessed 15 November 2012).

[12] Building objects in Second Life is also an important feature of this virtual world, although it is not a vital for most disciplines. All objects in Second Life are created by users through the 'build' function, which involves the use of a range of pre-built basic templates. Building complex items in Second Life requires computer design skills and it is not highly relevant to interpreter training.

part in job interviews, engaging in social interaction, working in virtual offices, working at/using libraries) have to do with interpreters' processes of socialization or the contexts where they prepare their assignments. Activities such as attending conferences and business meetings are closely related to settings for actual interpreting practice. Finally, developing campus representations, attending or organizing performances, and taking part in role-play scenarios also have direct pedagogical implications, as they contribute to creating immersive and motivating teaching and learning environments.

4.2 Teaching interpreting in virtual worlds

According to Freitas (2008), Second Life has great potential to create an environment for immersive learning and simulate real working conditions for many professions. Indeed, its pedagogical dimension is already being exploited for the training of professionals in fields such as architecture, fashion, engineering and medicine, owing to its three-dimensional and highly interactive nature (Gage 2009). From a similar perspective, Sant (2009) emphasizes the great potential of using Second Life for performing drama, music and live art events.

Interpreting is a highly interactive activity since both the source text producer and the target text receiver are/need to be present in the same time and space (in traditional communicative encounters) while the interpreter acts simultaneously as both the source text receiver and target text producer (Nord 2005). Different activities can be designed in Second Life for the different modalities of interpreting (consecutive interpreting, liaison interpreting, simultaneous interpreting) as in this virtual world it is possible to communicate on a one-to-one, one-to-many, all-at-the-same-time basis. External noise and selected individuals can be muted in order to help learners concentrate on one single person's speech. In contrast to the sound-only set-up available in remote interpreting scenarios, Second Life allows users to follow speakers' gestures, movements (to a certain extent), PowerPoint slides and other aspects of visual communication. Contrary to what happens in real professional contexts, however, interpreters are not confined to the booth and can channel their attention to any speaker or any spot within the Second Life conference setting.

Simultaneous interpreting requires a high degree of professionalism on the part of interpreter trainers. Insofar as interpreting instructors do not always possess sufficient pedagogical experience, interpreting courses are often taught by professional interpreters. Unfortunately, their interpreting assignments and travel arrangements make it difficult for them to be regularly available to teach interpreting courses at universities – normally on a part-time basis (Moser-Mercer *et al.* 2005). Second Life provides trainers and their institutions with the means to overcome this difficulty in a number of ways:

- virtual worlds such as Second Life offer a quasi-authentic environment with both audio and 3-D video features for teaching interpreting by distance mode;
- teachers and students can meet in a virtual classroom within Second Life and communicate with each other as a group or individually;
- teachers can use presentation slides, video and audio files, and send note cards to students as a group or individually;
- Second Life enables the recording of everything that occurs on screen, using capturing programs such as Camtasia or Captivate, through 'machinimas', i.e. the "technique of taking a viewpoint on a virtual world, and recording that, editing it, and showing it to other people as a film creation of films inside virtual realities" (Hancock and Ingram 2007:10). Machinimas facilitate the provision of feedback both from peers and the instructor and also allow for self-evaluation;
- interpreting lessons can be followed up by creating a wiki or by uploading captured video files onto a virtual classroom in Moodle – a well-known Open Source course management system. Both options allow users to provide comments on students' interpreting performance.[13]

Overall, Second Life provides interpreter trainers with ample opportunities to capitalize on the advantages of Computer-Assisted Interpreter Training (CAIT), as outlined by Sandrelli and de Manuel Jerez (2007:275). These include (i) promoting a shift from the teacher-centered (transmissionist) approach that prevails in most interpreter training programmes towards a learner-centered (constructivist) approach; (ii) establishing a strong connection between class work and students' self-directed study, for example by using materials from the same conference in class and in a CAIT tool; (iii) helping trainees to acquire self-assessment skills and hence engage in an active learning process; (iv) and providing students with individual feedback. In particular, using CAIT tools encourages a shift towards situated learning, creating authentic activities, contexts, and interactions.

On the other hand, integrating Second Life in interpreter training is likely to entail a number of disadvantages: (i) the multimodal interface of this virtual world may cause learners' distraction; (ii) distancing themselves from reality and representing themselves as an avatar may undermine learners' concentration on their learning; (iii) disruptions may arise from users' dependence on network connection and technical support; (iv) users become reliant on a third-party software producer (Linden Labs in the case of Second Life). It is worth noting, however, that all working environments have their own disadvantages, which can be overcome through careful pedagogical planning.

[13] Sloodle (Simulation Linked Object Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) is an Open Source project which allows for the integration of Second Life's multi-user virtual environment with the Moodle learning-management system. Sloodle can be accessed at http://www.sloodle.org/ (last accessed 15 November 2012).

Despite its limitations, Second Life serves as a platform for effective blended learning which combines "face-to-face classroom instruction with online learning and reduced classroom contact hours" (Dziuban *et al*. 2004:2); this virtual world also facilitates learners' exposure to resources and knowledge pertaining to different subject matters, as well as access to a range of accents in the source and target languages. Prospective interpreters are thus likely to find Second Language is a more productive and motivating learning environment than more traditional approaches to interpreter training.

4.3 A sample course in Second Life

Integrating Second Life in interpreter training classroom would involve a series of basic steps: setting up a laboratory equipped with high-end computers, complete with high-quality headsets and web cameras; buying land in Second Life; designing a campus with classrooms, conference halls and meeting rooms (this step is optional, as Second Life allows users to free oneself from space limitations); training instructors and students in the use of hardware and software; creating a collection of recordings and interpreting venues; and organizing real-time events in Second Life. The remainder of this section looks at some of these steps in some more detail.

- *Buying Land*. In order to use this virtual world for interpreter training, the institution needs to buy land in Second Life, whether it is developed or undeveloped.[14] Although there are free spaces available in this virtual world, having one's own land is crucial to preserve institutional privacy and security. Today, many universities and other educational institutions have their own campuses or lands in Second Life (e.g. Stanford University, Iowa State University, EduNation, etc.). For those institutional users who do not have building and designing skills, developed lands are more desirable as they are easier to use. A conference centre designed by Linden Labs (producer of Second life) itself with all necessary equipment can be bought and used immediately. To build one's own premises on bought land without incurring high costs, it is necessary to work work in partnership with an instructional designer.
- *Instructor and learner training.* The importance of learner and instructor training in the use of CAIT environments is widely acknowledged in the literature (Moser-Mercer *et al.*). The instructors' training programme should ensure they become familiarized with a range of basic features of Second Life, e.g. moving around, changing their changing avatar look, using the audio and video controls, displaying presentation slides, buying things, or creating landmarks. It is envisaged that instructors with an intermediate level of computer literacy should be able to use these features proficiently after a one-week practice period, before they

[14] For more information on costs, see https://secondlife.com/land/pricing.php?lang=en (last accessed 15 November 2012).

move on to explore and exploit a range of training-related resources, including but not limited to video tutorials, e-mail lists, blogs, wikis, websites, or virtual books. The induction process is even easier in the case of learners, most of whom have been born into a digital world.

- *Course.* The instructor and the students do not necessarily have to meet in person for training sessions to take place. They can log in to Second Life from anywhere, as long as their computers have a high-speed Internet connection. Participants can choose to meet in the virtual conference room designed for the course, where no other visitors are allowed. All class sessions can be recorded as video files and made available to students and instructors. Instructors can choose to listen to specific students and give feedback instantly. As far as training materials are concerned, presentation slides can be viewed using the zoom function, while other text materials can be made available to students via note cards to facilitate the interpreting process. Audio and video files with various extensions can be played within Second Life. These files can be used as class materials along with real-time guests, who may take part in certain sessions to deliver speeches in real time. Mock conferences can thus be organized using participants based in different geographical locations.
- *Follow-up.* Follow-up sessions for interpreting courses taught in Second Life can be held either within the virtual world itself or via a course management system, as described above. Input from trainers can be delivered in written form or as audio or video files. Feedback can remain accessible at all times, so that learners can study and review the feedback at their own pace and convenience.

5. Conclusion

Traditional training methods and environments are no longer appealing to new learners born into a digital world. Therefore, integrating computer-assisted tools in learning and teaching is crucial to enhance their motivation and performance. In her study of the applications of information and communication technologies in conference interpreting, Berber-Irabien (2010) confirms that "more and more CITs [conference interpreter trainers] are concerned about giving the trainees what they will actually need in order to be successful in the market. Therefore, more ICTs are taught, or at least informed about, than just a few years ago" (2010:205-6). This article has thus focused on the ways in which virtual worlds such as Second Life can contribute to interpreter training. Insofar as there are many options available, it is imperative for institutions to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of different virtual worlds to establish which one best suits its needs and technical infrastructure. [15]

[15] One such review is available online at http://www.virtualworldsreview.com/ (last accessed 15 November 2013).

New technologies can help to create a quasi-authentic environment for practice and ensure that learners gain exposure to the target language in various forms, through various channels, and in different settings. But virtual worlds also have the potential to assist with professional development and interpreter training in distance mode. They can be drawn upon to create opportunities for visual interaction with the speaker, follow the audio-video components of a presentation, circumvent external noise, obtain online help, and enjoy physical freedom (in the sense of not being restricted to a booth) and security. As teletranslation and teleinterpreting become more ubiquitous, it has become imperative for higher education institutions to ensure their translators and interpreters graduates are able to perform in such communicative contexts.

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