

KANKURUBA: The use of Second Life for English Language Teacher Education

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Introduction

In order to understand educational practice(s), it seems paramount to understand praxis within teacher education in the context of pre-service English language teachers. Kemmis (2010) claims a philosophical ground where practices are comprehended as ways of living in any field being teacher education one of them. In that sense, and inspired by the Aristotelian perspective, praxis should not be claimed as merely action. Praxis “is action that comes together and coheres in the context of a way of life, in a way of orienting ourselves in any and all of the uncertain situations we encounter in life” (Kemmis, 2010, p. 418).

The end purpose of such idea of praxis is to contribute to the good of humankind. This noble aspiration implies that praxis interrelates logic (sayings), physics (doings) and ethics (relatings) where they inform each other. These interrelations shape practice architectures which “are the densely interwoven patterns of saying, doing and relating that enable and constrain each new interaction, giving familiar practices their characteristic shapes” (Kemmis, 2009, p. 466). This means that practices are organized nexuses of actions (Schatzki, 2002). Consequently, “practitioners are co-habitants of sites along with other people, other species and other objects, and ... are in interdependent relationships with these others, not only in terms of maintaining their own being and identities, but also in and through their practices” (Kemmis, 2012, p. 788).

A good number of studies in the Colombian scholarship have dealt with pre-service English language teacher education published in specialized local journals like *Profile*, such as *Journal*, *Íkala*, *Lenguaje*, *Gist*, *Voces y Silencios* and *CALJ*. In a research review, Viáfara (2011) identifies two foci of study

Este capítulo se deriva de un proyecto de investigación financiado por el Instituto de Estudios e Investigaciones Educativas –IEIE– de la Universidad Distrital Francisco José de Caldas, Convocatoria 10 de 2015, código 2415550815 y administrado por el Centro de Investigaciones y Desarrollo Científico –CIDC– de la misma Universidad. Igualmente cuenta con registro de la Vicerrectoría de Investigación y Extensión de la Universidad Industrial de Santander, código 2015-011-03.

reviewing the intersection between foreign language teacher education and technology. The first one relates English language teachers' attitudes and educational effects of technology use in language teaching. The second one focuses on teachers' interactions with colleagues. However, few studies have ever been conducted focusing on the interplay of Second Life and pre-service English language teacher education. Far less is known about how this intersection could promote the (co)construction of practice architectures. This chapter interrogates practice architectures within Second Life environments where future English language teachers are educated aiming at narrowing the literature gap that characterizes the field at least at the local level.

Practice Architectures

Castañeda-Peña, Rodríguez-Uribe, Salazar-Sierra & Chala-Bejarano (2016) have investigated pre-service English language teachers' practice architectures through narrative events. These authors recommend longitudinal practice architecture studies. This stance could better inform moments where future teachers long imagined communities (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007; Kanno & Norton, 2003). Such longing could constitute dynamic practice architectures where sayings, doings and relatings (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014) are not stable. This instability also manifests in actual communities of practice (Wenger, 1998). Castañeda-Peña *et al.*, (2016) also contend that most research about language teacher education focuses on the making up of professionals. However, investigating narrative events makes it feasible to comprehend how future language teachers praxize (Sharkey, 2009) their own reflections theorizing their practices whilst practicing their own theories (Díaz-Maggioli, 2012).

In that line of thought, Castañeda-Peña *et al.*, (2016) claim that practice architectures and communities of practice help to understand the micropolitics shaped when doings and relatings are shared in educational contexts. This sharing is supported by the constitution of sayings. In their view, it is in the "sayings where mutuality, disputes and agreements are constituted as forms of relatings where knowledge is shared *in situ* guaranteeing simultaneously possibilities to belong to professional and academic communities" (Castañeda-Peña *et al.*, 2016, p. 130). From this perspective, according to Kemmis *et al.*, (2014) the sayings constitute a space of semantic order in which meanings are (re)signified and negotiated, understood, received and reacted to in specific ways, according to the diversity of intentions and the use of language modes (Rowse and Walsh, 2015). The doings constitute a space of temporal

order where actions and activities that simply happen are interwoven (re) accommodating the spaces to the extent that the individuals assume the activities. Finally, the relatings reveal how individuals connect and relate to each other, what roles they assume, their formal and informal relationships, the meaning of power, trust and solidarity, and how individuals are understood in social space.

MMORPG and Second Life

Castañeda-Peña, Salazar, González, Sierra & Menéndez (2013) have profiled research on Massively Multiplayer On-Line Role-Play Gaming (MMORPG) and found four research trends: “i) the game itself as a researchable object, ii) game experiences, iii) systems architecture and iv) educational MMORPG and all of them could be in one or another direction be related to educational research” (Castañeda-Peña *et al.*, 2013, p. 92). In relation to education, it seems clear from these authors’ research study that the most preferred topics being searched are learning communities, mobile learning and language learning. It also appears that research on language teaching and learning started in 2007. There is a good concern for understanding what learning in such context of language teaching means. An emerging area of research curiosity is language learning trajectories. There is also interest in studying skills development, methodologies and literacy. A network of these research interests is illustrated in figure 1.

However, language teachers have become a less manifest topic. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, specialized literature exploring in a concrete way Second Life and education have dealt with topics such a speaking development (Deutschmann, Panichi & Molka-Danielsen, 2009; Zhang, 2012) and its affective factors (Melchort-Couto, 2016), listening development (Levak & Son, 2017), language learning motivation (Wehner, Gump & Downey, 2011), general reviews in general education (Pellas & Kazanidis, 2015; Wang & Burton, 2013; Wang, 2015; Warburton, 2009), general teacher education (Cheong, 2010; Mahon, Bryant, Brown & Kim, 2010) and foreign language education (Uzun, 2017).

Within such panorama, it could be said that virtual worlds (VWs) are basically “graphical environments that enable geographically distant individuals to interact via graphical avatars (i.e., digital representations of users). These environments are no longer academic prototypes but have become mainstream

interaction platforms” (Yee, Harris, Jabon & Bailenson, 2001, p. 5). Second Life has been understood as a VW where “behavioral changes over time do occur as users acclimate to interacting via digital avatars but that these changes occurred across all users” (Yee, Harris, Jabon & Bailenson, 2001, p. 6). In agreement with Kemmis & Mutton (2012, p. 188) “changing practices requires not only changing the awareness, understanding, concerns and skills of individual participants in the practices, but also changing the practice architectures that hold existing practices in place”. This study discusses partial findings related to practice architectures when pre-service English language teacher interact in a VW like Second Life.

Methods

The methodological background of this study implies a design that puts together teacher education contents within a specific technological context (e.g. a VW such as Second Life). The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature.

Participants

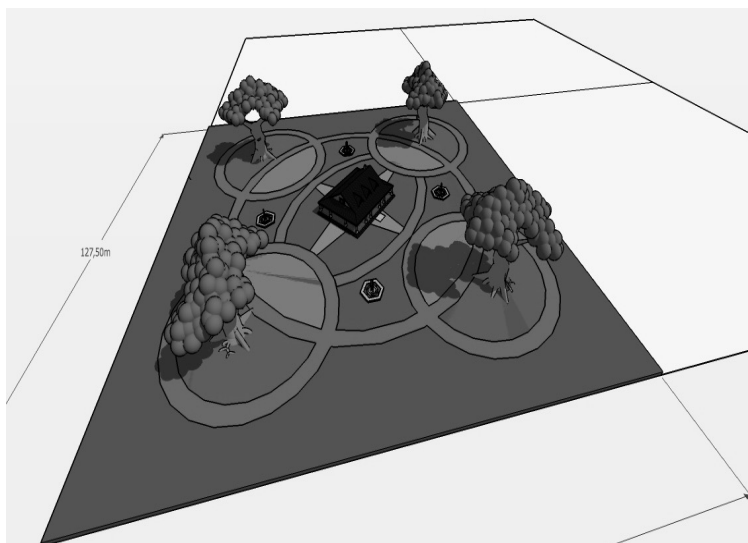
Future English language teachers taking a pedagogy class participated in the experience on a voluntary basis. Students were simply notified of the meetings at Kankuruba so we never knew who was going to show up at the virtual meetings. Students did not know beforehand the types of activities they were going to be faced with in Kankuruba. There were 10 sessions that lasted approximately 90 minutes each over a three-month period (September, October and November, 2016). All interactions were videoed and transcribed verbatim.

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The group of researchers were first immersed into Second Life and through real-time collaboration and web-conferencing became “literate” as VWs’ users. Snapshot 1 illustrates members of the research team travelling using a flying carpet in one training session. After this stage, the researchers gathered and developed a WV through collective thinking strategies in a rented Second Life land. The VW was named Kankuruba and was designed by a VW architect according to the ideas provided by the research team. The name Kankuruba comes from a Colombian indigenous language and honors the ceremonial house of the indigenous Kogi, who live in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta. The design resulted in four VWs (scenarios) within Kankuruba.



Snapshot 1. Research team on a flying carpet touring Second Life worlds.



Snapshot 2. Kankuruba's planimetry and the four teleporting vortices to Siki, Wunuu, Muria and Jutnaa.

These scenarios have teleporting vortexes found in four trees around Kankuruba that teleport to other four VWs as illustrated in snapshot 2. Participants' avatars were able to teleport from Kankuruba in a fraction of seconds and rematerialize digitally on any of these VWs called Siki, Wunuu, Muria and Jutnaa. The research team with the help of the VW architect constructed in these other four VWs a number of sub-scenarios to practice language skills and vocabulary, to reflect upon pedagogical contents and to simulate social situations that could potentially mirror actual classroom situations.

Data analysis and results

Transcriptions were coded keeping in mind three analytical categories: sayings, doings and relatings (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014). Since the ten Kankuruba sessions occurred over three months (September, October and November) during 2016, it was decided to report in this chapter a temporal categorial analysis as shown in the frequencies in table 1.

Category	Subcategory	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Sayings	Asking for information	95	141	55	291
	Giving information	88	102	57	247
	Giving instructions	29	190	101	320
	Explaining activities and tasks	23	60	13	96
	Expressing positive assessment	6	27	16	49
	Accepting information	4	3	1	8
	Verbally responding to instructions	3	31	26	60
	Greeting	2	27	15	44
	Asking for participants' attention	2	2	8	12
	Expressing doubts about activities and tasks	2	0	3	5
	Thanking	1	40	32	73
	Replying to greetings	0	8	9	17
	Explaining language aspects	0	0	1	1

Doings	Asking about activities	94	132	23	249
	Keeping social etiquette	45	111	41	197
	Configuring the space verbally	31	24	28	83
	Organizing the virtual space	29	132	47	208
	Showing understanding about the space	29	28	32	89
	Helping participants to move around the space	9	88	37	134
	Following instructions	7	16	21	44
	Assessing positively	6	27	15	48
	Making assumptions about space social organization	1	1	1	3
	Socializing work agendas	0	1	0	1
Relatings	Sharing information	109	110	67	286
	Playing the role of the questioner	97	142	49	288
	Playing the role of the organizer	28	220	87	335
	Keeping in touch with others	12	73	86	171
	Accepting information informally	4	5	0	9
	Making people feel recognized	3	74	46	123
	Using courtesy rules	3	43	25	71
	Making hypotheses for others about what they are supposed to do	1	0	1	2
	Agreeing with others	1	0	0	1
Total	764	1858	943	3565	

Table 1. Frequencies of the subcategories found in Kankuruba's verbal interchanges.

In general, it could be argued that October was the month where most of the subcategories were salient. This could be because of the familiarity at the time with the VW but also because of the type of tasks performed. It should also be noticed that most of the subcategories are salient in all the categories

along the timeline. In the following sections, we will try to briefly analyze how each category developed through time.

Sayings

It was argued before that the sayings refer to shared discourses and contents as they are part of a semantic dimension. The most frequently used speech acts have to do with asking for and giving information and giving instructions. This seems logical as the VW was a new space for the student participants to negotiate meaning, in that sense they found information about the tasks and they also responded to instructions verbally. This could be assumed as a way for the participants to negotiate meaning which is later on translated into actions (doings) and the structuring social relationships (relatings). The following examples illustrate the type of instructions centered on telling participants what to do to develop the tasks.

1:50 shouts: asnwееее the riiidles...

1:52 shouts: hurry up!!

1:54 shouts: defeat the beast!!

The instructions “answer the riddles”, “hurry up!” and “defeat the beast” correspond to the group meaning making that resulted after comprehending an activity in an ancient castle where participants were challenged to read riddles placed in an in-door cemetery guarded by a type of Jabberwocky. So, in order to have access to the gravestones where the riddles were carved participants have to get their own guns and swords to fight with the Jabberwocky. After killing the beast, they read the riddles, discussed the vocabulary and interpreted the meaning. Interacting through avis and responding to a challenge created in a VW helped them to start using the language in a naturally-occurring context. It seems interesting to highlight the fact that meanings were constructed around the tasks and the activities and not necessarily around language aspects. This could have been caused by the language level student participants displayed and that they have gained through their experience as language students in a higher education institution. More importantly, the negotiated meaning implied to act as fighters, explorers and to shout due to the excitement of the activity. This, we would like to argue, would never happen in a language centered classroom. The sayings are of course closely related to the doings.

Doings

The doings were conceptualized before as part of a space of temporal order where actions and activities happen and are interwoven (re)accommodating the spaces to the extent that the individuals assume the activities. So, how were the VW activities assumed by the participants? From the examples above participants had to think strategically, had to act as warriors and demonstrated joy whilst fighting the beast. Most participants have to (re)configure the virtual space where they were interacting and this of course occurred through language as shown in the examples below:

13:15 Well, this is the: fair, the Kankuruba's fair, so, welcome to it and (as) you see, there are some signs on the floor, please follow them/ or follow Sebastian, he is another guide/ in this opportunity (450:450)

13:21 Yeah, let's go// this is a race, a horse race//. Kmigo94, if you want, follow me, there are two attractions where you can get an award, so, try// (461:461)

For students to travel to the moon and develop a pedagogical task where they had to reflect upon the use of information and communication technologies, they had to find another vortex located in a fair. Kankuruba's fair was an amusement park with attractions with hidden clues. What seems interesting is that participants have to verbally organize themselves within the VW from what they saw on the screen. And they interacted with other peers acting as guides in the fair assuming such role. So, the activity was a type of pretend-to-be someone in a context that became real for the participants. This pretend-to-be simulation demanded specific organizational skills within the VW. Participants actually were part of a horse race riding the horses of their choice whilst collecting information of how teleporting to the moon. In the examples below, participants constitute themselves as virtual interactants just giving instructions that could accommodate participants' doings in an initial stage (e.g. teleporting, talking to others, etc.).

13:44 Ok, this is the next tree, you can see a wooden sign, so please, Who can read it? Remember you can talk, you (should touch the) microphone on your conversation box, so please, Jane Johnson, Kmigo94 or Asggard read the wooden sign/ or Alejandra... (517:517)

13:48 Yeah, I suppose, ok, the name is Muria, Muria Tree, "this teleports you to a medieval castle, where you will get awesome

adventures and games". So, goa head, please touch the Green Poporo... (525:525)

Interestingly, an emergent social etiquette was also salient. People acknowledged the virtual presence of others, for example, "9:133 Lucy, hi Lucy, I'm Rose (1412:1412)". They also evaluated in a positive way what others did, for example: "1:117 Very good Majo (265:265)" or "1:139 That's right the skull (350:350)". This was implicitly creating bonds and ways of relating to each other.

Relatings

Trust and solidarity became salient as forms of relatings in this group of pre-service English language teachers. They used to make people feel recognized through thanking (e.g. "1:120 Thanks to all of you for your help (275:275)") or by keeping in touch with others (e.g. "2:37 Welcome Silbermond! (75:75); "13:25 Wow, you won a gift, congratulations/// 466:466)"). They also played the roles of organizers and questioners. In general, solidarity was present because apparently students recognized each other as new comers in a VW so they tend to have a similar social status even though they played different roles.

Conclusions

The practice architectures (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014) that participants (co)created in Kankuruba were changing from month to month. It could be argued that these changes in the sayings, doings and relatings demonstrate that practices are not static but socially constructed. For that reason, these practices tend to differ from normalized teaching practices occurring in face to face interaction. Using a VW as an educational scenario for teacher education allows the emergence of practices that affect the architecture in terms of sayings (e.g. participants created their own social meanings according to the challenges they faced), doings (e.g. participants teleported, were warriors, enjoyed themselves in an amusement park, etc) and relatings (e.g. participants were organizers of the social space, performed the activities with others with no prescription, shared a social status and trust and solidarity were socially salient). More empirical research is needed to examine practice architectures in language teacher education taking place in VWs such as Second Life in order to established advantages and challenges. Therefore, more research is needed in order to locate this type of instruction as a pedagogical innovation that could

complement, or not, face to face classrooms. However, these partial results seem to back up the idea that we hypothesized before: “changing practices requires not only changing the awareness, understanding, concerns and skills of individual participants in the practices, but also changing the practice architectures that hold existing practices in place” (Kemmis & Mutton, 2012, p. 188).

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