“The Humanities in Virtual Reality (HumaniVR) – Developing Methods and Applications of Virtual Reality for the Humanities”

Research project at the University of Hildesheim
Head: Dr. Karsten Senkbeil

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Social VR as a new space for language learning…

intercultural learning …

scientific learning …

But how exactly?
Language learning in Social Virtual Reality

Strengths and possibilities

- activity-oriented, immersive, collaborative communication in language tandems and groups
  (see also „Digital-game-based language learning“)

- 3D-space and motion in first hand experience emphasize important grammatical and lexical areas, e.g.:
  - prepositions
  - motion verbs
  - deictic terms (hier, da, dort, hierher, dorthin etc.)
  - etc.

- embodied learning (see: cognitive linguistic theory on the space/language-intersection): dynamics between the
  autopoietic body (real) and the allopoietic body (the avatar)
  → is there oben and unten in a virtual space without gravity?

- conversations with new modalities in terms of space, time, identity
  (see Karl Bühler: „Ich-Hier-Jetzt-Origo“, 1934)
Example 1: German *da* has several, diverse meanings/characteristics

- deictic (a place in the distance „*da*“ vs. „hier“)
- expeditive (directing the listener’s attention to something: „sieh mal, *da!*“)
- part of a directive speech act („*geh da entlang!*“)
- operative (organising the temporal order of events in oral communication: „ich wollte gerade das Haus verlassen, da klingelte des Telefon.“)

L1: German NS
L2: Spanish NS, learns German as a foreign language
Virtual Reality as a „third space“
(see postcolonial theory, Bhabha (1996) et al.)

- neither „home“ nor „foreign space“ for all participants
  → intercultural meeting always at „eye-level“ (?)

- freedom from economic, social, sociopolitical pressures (?)

- large degrees of freedom in terms of identity construction (gender, ethnicity age, dis_ability, etc.)
Virtual Reality as a „non-place“
(cf. Augé 1994)

- VR as a prime example of „non-places“

- The step from postmodernity to supermodernity (?)

- Pessimistic voices: „non-places“ are places of „loneliness“; they „lack identity and history“; our experiences there are “partial and incoherent”; we may travel through them, but never (like to) stay there.

→ will VR become and remain such a place of „loneliness“ and „incoherence“ for its users?