

Multilingualism in non-formal learning settings - virtually and physically

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The range of language learning opportunities grows with the advent of “language cafés”. Void of assessment and formality, such cafés provide a non-formal social learning setting which is conducive to autonomous learning. Language cafés are also characterized by multilingual teaching- and learning strategies. Another form of non-formal language learning is tandem learning, where learners of different L1s come together to support each other in learning the other’s language (Bechtel 2010). Although in most cases language learning represents the primary goal of learners, also cultural learning takes place in these settings (ibid.). This makes tandem learning a multilingual, intercultural learning method. For foreign language learners it is often difficult i) to find available, matching tandem partners and ii) to regularly meet with them in person. In Social Virtual Reality (SVR) this problem is solved as learners can choose from a global pool of tandem partners that can connect from any place at any time. VR technology provides motion capture and scenarios that can be accessed in a 3-D environment from a first-person view. Learners can immerse in those digital environments and in *ludic* hands-on interactions with their tandem partners. Instead of *speaking about* imaginary scenarios in the classroom setting, they can *experience* them by bodily actions and joint activities. We will present an approach of building Social-VR learning spaces for tandems from our current project “Hololingo!”. As examples of autonomous, multilingual, intercultural language learning activities we will discuss and compare data from physical and virtual *language cafés*.