THE FUTURE OF TEACHING ENGLISH WITH VIRTUAL REALITY

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Virtual Reality (VR) has become one of the most exciting innovations in education, offering immersive and interactive environments that change how students learn.

In the context of teaching English, VR provides unique opportunities to create real, engaging, and highly effective learning experiences that go beyond the traditional classroom. Unlike books or regular audio-visual tools, VR allows learners to be transported into real-life situations where they can practice speaking, interact with computer-generated characters, and experience cultural settings directly. This transition from passive to active learning shows that VR could have a major role in shaping how English is taught in the future.

One of the main benefits of using VR in teaching English is its ability to create realistic communication environments. Students can enter virtual places like markets, airports, restaurants, or classrooms, giving them chances to use English in practical, real-life situations. This hands-on approach increases student motivation, reduces nervousness, and helps learners become more confident when speaking in front of others. Studies show that using immersive technologies improves memory retention and engagement by making students feel like they are actually in the situation (Lan, 2020). For instance, VR tools like ImmerseMe and MondlyVR let learners speak with AI-controlled characters that respond in real time, helping them improve their fluency and listening skills in realistic settings.

Beyond helping students practice language, VR can also help them understand different cultures, which is a key part of learning English as a global language.

By exploring virtual settings that mimic English-speaking countries, learners can learn about cultural norms, traditions, and social habits. This integration of language and culture not only improves communication skills but also helps students understand the world better, preparing them for life in a global society.

Additionally, VR supports personalized learning: students with different skill levels can work at their own pace, using resources that match their abilities while still taking part in group activities.

However, even though VR is promising, there are still some challenges. The high cost of VR tools and software makes it hard for many schools, especially in poorer areas, to access. Teachers also need training to use VR in the classroom, as the technology itself cannot replace proper teaching methods. There are also worries that depending too much on virtual environments might reduce real human interaction, which is important for language learning because it involves emotions, body language, and social signals. Therefore, teachers remain essential in the learning process, with VR being a helpful tool rather than a replacement.

Looking ahead, VR is expected to become more affordable and widely used in schools as technology improves and becomes more common.

Improvements in artificial intelligence, natural language processing, and 3D design will make VR learning systems more realistic and adaptable. Combining VR with other technologies like augmented reality (AR) and AI-based assessments can create mixed learning environments where students get both immersive practice and individual feedback. The future of teaching English using VR will depend on a balanced approach where new technology supports and enhances traditional teaching.

In conclusion, Virtual Reality has the potential to transform English language teaching by offering deep, real, and culturally meaningful learning experiences.

Although there are ongoing issues with cost, access, and how to teach effectively with VR, the fast progress in VR technology suggests it will gain more importance in future classrooms. By combining VR with traditional teaching methods, educators can build more engaging, student-centered learning environments that better prepare learners for real-life English communication.

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