

# Applying a Role Reversal Strategy in Second Life Virtual Interview Training

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**Abstract:** Technology has changed the ways we do things. Traditionally, counseling used to be in a face-to-face environment to help those in need. But today, there are more and more new technologies being applied to counseling. One of the developing trends of counseling is cyberization. College students are facing the need of counseling on their job-hunting, so this project is proposed aiming at using a 3D-based environment to help college students on virtual interview training. We constructed an interview scene in Second Life and used role reversal strategies to proceed with virtual interview. Four students recruited to participate in the pilot study thought that the virtual interview can provide them with the opportunity to practice and be less afraid in the real situation.

**Keywords:** Career counseling, Second Life, role reversal strategy

## Introduction

With the development of technologies, immersive environments have become more matured. The early age of the Internet technology could only transfer texts, but with the advance of technologies, we could now transfer multi-media data such as images, videos, voices and animations [1]. These days, both software and hardware relating to computer technologies are more advanced and are now capable of transferring 3D objects through the Internet. The 3D virtual reality environment is bringing more and more people to use the immersive environment as a tool to different kind of activities. Traditionally, counseling helps people to solve their problems through face-to-face conversation. Today there are other varieties of technologies which could be applied in counseling, such as eMail, bulletin board, instant messaging, video conferencing, and so on. Virtual reality is a novel technology, and adding it to the counseling tool kit may be one of the future trends.

Counseling is a very broad category that covers many sub-fields. Among the various counseling sub-fields, career counseling is an important subject for undergraduate students especially for seniors. For seniors, letting them have the chances to prepare the resume and to have the interview rehearsal experience will be helpful for them. However, letting each student has a real interview rehearsal costs a lot for the students. Virtual reality platform, such as Second Life, provides the realistic environment for them, where the students can have interview rehearsals as many as they wish.

Solely providing an immersive environment for the students is not enough for them to have the interview rehearsal. Further interactive strategy is needed to realize the activity. Role playing is a general pedagogy and also a commonly used counseling technique. Role reversal is one of the ways we could use in role playing. Through exchanging roles, students can experience different thoughts and feelings of the opposite role. In career counseling, by using reciprocal role reversal strategy, a student as the job seeker can have a chance to play the interviewer. S/he can perform an interviewer in a realistic environment experiencing the interviewer's view and concerns.

In this research, we tried to let students exchange their roles in Second Life. With virtual interview, students can understand the thoughts of both job seeker and interviewer, in hope to help students complete their interview successively in the future.

## **2. The Internet Counseling and the Second Life**

Counseling is an important subject, which covers on various fields. Traditionally, the format of counseling used to be in face-to-face environment. Technology has changed a lot of ways we do things. There are now a wide variety of technologies being used in the Internet counseling, either synchronous or asynchronous communication, each with its own advantages. The common tools used in the Internet counseling including telephone, eMail, chat, instant messaging (IM), video conferencing [2]. The advantages of the Internet counseling cover on convenience, efficiency, and anonymous. Beyond the traditional text or graphical user interface technologies, immersive environments, like second life, become more matured. With the development of virtual reality, it may now be a new choice for the Internet counseling.

Second life is a 3D virtual environment connected by the Internet, where users can socialize, interact and create using free objects, voice, and text chat. It was first put out by the Linden Lab in 2003, and soon gained a lot of members around the world. Except the entertainment it brought to the users, it also has a great value on commercial and educational applications. Commercially, it attracted corporations to use Second Life as a platform for commercials, exhibitions and services. Educationally, scholars tried to use Second Life as a tool of teaching and research [3]. Second Life has great potential on educational fields. The 3D virtual reality environment acts as a great tool for teaching simulations and role playing activities. According to the research of NMC [4], three most possible items used in educational applications of Second Life are art performance, role playing and teaching simulations. Our research tried to use Second Life for virtual interview training. Students can play different roles in immersive environments for job-hunting counseling.

## **3. Role Reversal Interview Environment in the Second Life**

Our research used Second Life for virtual interview training. The students can use the e-portfolio system for preparing their resume, and then by reversing roles for the virtual interview. Students can have their virtual interview in Second Life by playing the roles of interviewer and job seeker. Three students playing the role of interviewer can team up to design their company's logo, mission statement, job opportunity, qualifications wanted, and interview questions according to career route map developed by their department. Students playing the role of job seekers will have to prepare their resume and autobiography, and respond to the posted job opening that they are interested in and complete virtual interview in Second Life.

### *a. Construction of the Interview Environment*

Our researcher team constructed a scene for virtual interview training. There are three floors in the scene as described below:

- **First Floor- Lobby**

The first floor is the lobby which includes the front desk, a recreation area and a reading area. Users can see the function of "Join club" at the front desk, allowing students to join local clubs. "Main contact" is to provide users with help if they have any questions. The recreation area provides a space for users to gather and chat, and by the use of sofa, table and

coffee machine, user can practice basic operations of moving around in Second Life. The reading area provides students with website links to career life via SLOODLE platform [5].

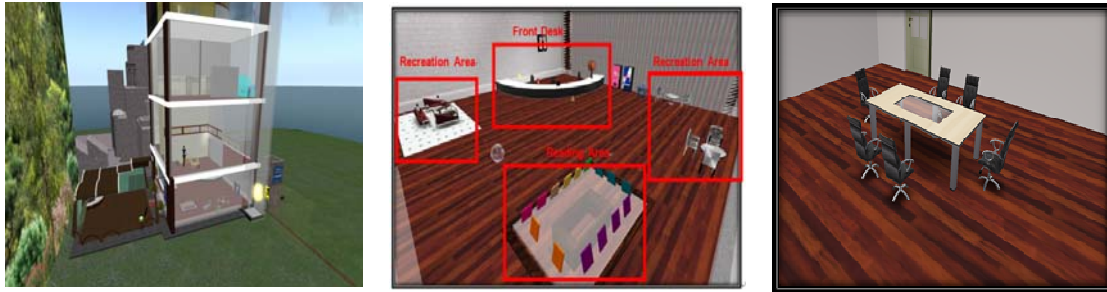


Figure 1: The Screenshots of the Virtual Interview Environment

- Second Floor- Landmark Information

The users can be teleported to other sites in the second floor with a focus on virtual clothing by landmark. Most of the landmarks that the researchers provide are free malls, but students can search for other malls in Second Life world. Users can choose any outfits and accessories that they think are appropriate for interview.

- Third Floor - Main Interview Training Scene

There are two meeting rooms at the third floor. These are the main scene for virtual interview. Users could choose from two different types of meeting room: one is decorated as a formal meeting room with a more serious atmosphere, the other with a more relaxing surrounding.

*b. Facilitating the Students to have the Role Playing Activities*

In this career counseling activity, the students were divided into two groups. One group played the job seekers, and the other group played the interviewers. To facilitate the job seekers preparing the resume, an ePortfolio platform was applied. The main content of the resume included self-introduction, educational background, work experiences, career goal, autobiography, and school year report cards. Students could fill in the required information in the form, which could be completed like regular resume in a simple way. To facilitate the students who played as the interviewers preparing the interview plan, a career route map developed by the students' department was used. The students played as the interviewers could have a clearer career path according the career route map. In this study, the students who played the interviewers need to study the career route map before have the interview.

#### 4. Pilot Study

*a. Procedures*

For preliminary test of the constructed virtual space in Second Life, four seniors from the Department of E-Learning Design and Management, National Chiayi University, Taiwan were invited to participate. Among them, three are male and one is female. Two students played as the interviewer and the other two as the job seeker. Through the platform on Second Life, they used voice call to have the one to one virtual interview and completed their resume by the built-in Second Life text system. The study last for two weeks. At the

first week, students learned the basic skills of Second Life, the implementation procedures of this study, before completing their resume and interview questions. The on-line virtual interview was held at the second week through voice call. A debriefing session after the virtual interview was arranged to gather data on the potential of Second Life as a tool for virtual interview.

#### *b. Results*

Students reflected after the virtual interview on the advantages of this interview included:

- Having the opportunity to practice responding to question in a short period of time in an appropriate way
- To come up with questions for interview in the perspectives of interviewer
- By coming up with interview questions in the first place, students can think about how they are going to answer it
- Being an interviewer can have the chance to listen to different answers, helping students to develop multiple ways of thinking
- They are less afraid in using the virtual interview environment

Regarding the Second Life environment, there are some problems that need to be overcome:

- Second Life needs higher processing power of hardware. Computers with not enough memory or processing speed might not be able to run the program
- Students need more scaffolding in preparing the resume and the interview plan
- Nowadays resumes are aesthetically designed. They are hard to be shown on Second Life

### **5. Conclusion and Suggestion**

The development of technologies makes virtual interview on immersive environments possible. In this research, we tried to have virtual interview training on Second Life. Using the role reversal strategy, students got the chance to play the role of interviewer and job seeker so that different perspectives and feelings of such roles could be experienced. The construction of the environment just completed and is now ready for more pilot tests. On our next step, we will have students from different departments to participate in the virtual interview training on Second Life.

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