



## Second life: Anxiety-free language learning?

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### Abstract

*Second Life* is a virtual world that was created by Linden Labs in 2003 and that can be easily downloaded and accessed over the Internet. In the last few years, there has been a dramatic increase in its use as an educational tool (Carter and Click, 2006; Pholke, 2007; De Freitas, 2007; Molka-Danielsen et al., 2007; Fetscherin and Lattemann, 2007; Conklin, 2007; Salmon, 2009; Bell, 2009). There are currently over 300 higher education institutions from all over the world that own a virtual campus in *Second life*; a large number of interesting educational projects can be found across a range of subject areas, including language learning and teaching. This paper will look into the advantages offered by *Second life* for language learning. More specifically, *Second life* will be presented as a potential alternative platform for oral and written communication between language learners that may have a positive impact in the affective variables that come into play when learning a language, i.e self-esteem, motivation and, particularly, anxiety (Dulay and Burt, 1977; Krashen, 1981, 1982; MacIntyre and Gardner, 1989; Horwitz, 2001; Pichette, 2009). According to recent research, anxiety levels seem to be lower in computer-mediated communication, as users feel shielded behind their screens (Kiesler & Sproull, 1992; Kiesler et al., 1984; Rosell-Aguilar, 2006; Warburton, 2009). As part of my proposed presentation, I will showcase some of the activities designed for a pilot experience between students from Roehampton University and Cádiz University (Spain). I will also detail the future stages of this research project, which will involve the use of methods such as Foreign Language Anxiety and Galvanic Skin Response tests to determine whether students' anxiety levels are any different when using this virtual world.