



Virtual Reality Enhancing Intercultural Competence

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Abstract:

This article explores the impact of virtual reality on the development of intercultural skills, a key objective of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which guides language policies in Europe and beyond. Our research aims to determine how effectively virtual reality can facilitate and enhance the acquisition of these intercultural competencies.

Keywords: intercultural competence, CEFRL, virtual reality, foreign language teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) is a crucial tool for standardizing language teaching in Europe and beyond. It provides a detailed description of the skills learners need to effectively use a language in various communication contexts. The CEFR focuses not only on basic language skills, such as listening, reading, speaking, and writing, but also on the sociolinguistic and pragmatic skills necessary for appropriate and effective communication. Additionally, it includes the cultural competencies required to navigate intercultural interactions successfully, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding cultural differences in language use.

In this context, virtual intelligence emerges as an innovative and effective educational tool for developing intercultural competence among young learners. Through virtual interactions with native speakers, learners have the opportunity to explore different cultures in an immersive and interactive way. These virtual interactions not only allow learners to practice the target language in authentic situations but also to gain a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances, customs, and thought patterns of native speakers. Artificial intelligence technologies can simulate natural conversations, provide real-time feedback, and adapt learning scenarios to meet the individual needs of learners, making the learning experience both personalized and engaging.

These virtual encounters, facilitated by artificial intelligence, create a dynamic learning environment where young learners can develop linguistic and intercultural skills in an integrated manner. By interacting with native speakers, learners can enhance their language



proficiency while gaining an understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. This not only improves communicative competence but also helps in shaping globally competent and open-minded citizens, capable of navigating with confidence and sensitivity in an increasingly interconnected world.

Virtual intelligence represents a significant advancement in language teaching, aligning with the goals of the CEFRL to promote effective and intercultural communication. To what extent can virtual reality instill intercultural competence in learners of French as a foreign language?

We assume that virtual reality could equip learners of French as a foreign language with intercultural competence and the ability to accept others in their diversity.

Virtual reality (VR) holds significant promise for enhancing intercultural competence among learners of French as a foreign language. By immersing learners in simulated environments that closely mimic real-life interactions with native speakers, VR provides an unparalleled opportunity to practice language skills in context. These virtual experiences enable learners to engage in authentic conversations, navigate cultural scenarios, and observe social norms in a controlled yet realistic setting. This immersive approach allows learners to develop both their linguistic abilities and their understanding of cultural subtleties, such as non-verbal communication and social etiquette, which are essential for effective intercultural interactions.

Moreover, VR can offer tailored learning experiences through its adaptive technologies. Artificial intelligence within VR platforms can analyze learners' responses, provide instant feedback, and adjust scenarios based on individual progress and needs. This personalized approach ensures that learners not only practice their language skills but also gain insights into the cultural dimensions of communication. By encountering a variety of cultural contexts and scenarios, learners can build empathy, enhance their cultural sensitivity, and learn to navigate different social expectations, thereby fostering a more profound appreciation for diversity.

Incorporating VR into language education aligns with the goals of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL), which emphasizes both language proficiency and intercultural competence. By equipping learners with the skills to interact effectively and sensitively across cultures, VR contributes to shaping globally competent individuals. As learners of French engage with virtual simulations of diverse cultural environments, they develop the ability to understand and respect cultural differences, preparing them to thrive in an interconnected world. Thus, VR not only enhances language learning but also supports the development of well-rounded, culturally aware global citizens.

1. The aims and objectives of the Council of Europe's language policy

Indeed, these efforts include general measures such as ensuring that all segments of the population can acquire the necessary language skills to meet their communication needs, promoting the exchange of information and ideas with people speaking another language, and



fostering understanding and appreciation of different cultures. Teachers and learners are encouraged to apply the principles of language learning system development, taking into account the needs, motivations, and resources of the learners.

2. The Cultural Dimension of Language

Language is not merely a means of communication or knowledge transmission; it is also a cornerstone of cultural identity, both for individuals and groups. Language and culture are inseparably linked: learning one inevitably involves learning the other, as each language reflects its own culture. Many aspects of the cultural system, such as traditions and moral rules, are expressed through language. Language embodies culture, materializes it, and enables its transmission. Understanding the meanings of words in a language requires knowledge of the culture from which it originates. Thus, culture is not a secondary dimension in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language; it is essential, as it constitutes the very fabric of society and its internal strength.

When considering the purpose of teaching foreign languages, it becomes evident that teaching a language in isolation is impossible and unthinkable. Florence Windmuller emphasizes that learning a language is not an end in itself. It is not just about acquiring linguistic knowledge for the sake of knowing words, grammar rules, or syntactic structures. Language is primarily a tool for opening up to others, building bridges between cultures, and promoting an enriching intercultural dialogue for all humanity.

Language educators agree that teaching a language is tantamount to teaching a culture. Language and culture are thus closely correlated. Learners do not study a language to demonstrate its mechanisms but to use it in interaction with the foreign culture. Viewing language as a vehicle for transmitting foreign culture is fundamental in foreign language didactics. Linguistic errors made by a foreigner are rarely stigmatized, whereas cultural gaps can often lead to severe judgments. Learning a foreign language involves incorporating a cultural component in the classroom, which motivates learning.

2.1 The Concept of Interculturality

Teaching a foreign language cannot be separated from its culture. Language embodies the values, norms, and history of a people, thus conveying an entire culture. The interest in learning a foreign language would be significantly diminished if it were decontextualized. It is from this perspective of interaction between the learner's culture and that conveyed by the foreign language that the concept of interculturality has emerged. The term "intercultural" first appeared in 1975 in France, within an educational context. Since the 1980s, the Council of Europe has fueled discussions on fundamental principles such as intercultural dialogue, the rejection of ethnocentrism, and the adoption of cultural relativism principles. Interculturality has become a genuine field of study and a focal point for several disciplines, including language didactics, sociology, and ethnology.

According to Philippe Blanchet (2005), interculturality is not merely an idea or theoretical concept but is realized through specific methods and actions, concrete practices applicable in



real-life interactions between people from different cultures. The main objective of interculturality is to understand what actually happens when people from different cultures interact, bringing with them their cultural schemas, that is, their frames of reference, values, and behaviors specific to their respective cultures.

The concept of interculturality in foreign language teaching is essential because it intrinsically links language to culture. Learning a language is not limited to mastering its grammar and vocabulary; it also involves understanding the values, norms, and history of native speakers. Language is indeed a reflection of a specific culture, and it is through language that this culture is transmitted.

The concept of interculturality emerged in the 1970s in France, within the educational system, to address the need to integrate language learning with its cultural context. In the 1980s, the Council of Europe refined this idea by promoting principles such as intercultural dialogue, opposition to ethnocentrism, and the adoption of a cultural relativism perspective. These ideas fostered deeper reflection on interactions between different cultures, leading to the establishment of interculturality as a distinct field of study.

According to Blanchet's idea, interculturality goes beyond a theoretical concept; it manifests in concrete practices. This means that interculturality occurs in real interactions between individuals from different cultures. These interactions are not just linguistic exchanges but also involve the sharing of cultural references, values, and behaviors. Interculturality aims to understand and analyze these exchanges to better grasp what truly happens when people from different cultures meet and communicate. It is based on the idea that each individual carries a framework of reference unique to their culture, and the encounter of these frameworks creates an intercultural dynamic that deserves to be studied and understood.

2.1.2. Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence is the ability of an individual to facilitate exchanges with different cultures and to thrive in this diversity. It is based on three essential components

Knowledge: Cognitive understanding related to collective memory, sociocultural context, and the diversity of lifestyles.

Skills: The application of knowledge to operate in the target language and adjust behaviors according to the cultural environment.

Attitudes: The affective and psychological dimensions, including cultural awareness, acceptance and interpretation of other cultures, and transcultural competence, which integrates and respects the values of other cultures.

Intercultural competence, as the ability to interact effectively in diverse cultural contexts, does not develop overnight but requires continuous learning and thoughtful practice. This competence is especially crucial in a globalized world where intercultural interactions are frequent, whether in education, work, or social relationships. To fully understand this



competence, it is important to continue exploring the three essential components: knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and their interdependence.

•**Knowledge:** As the first component, knowledge is not static; it constantly evolves as we acquire new information and deepen our understanding of cultures. This involves a continuous learning approach, where we seek to enrich our knowledge about the cultures we interact with. This process can include studying languages, history, literature, social practices, or political systems of different cultures. Intercultural competence thus requires regular updates of this knowledge to remain relevant in interactions. Additionally, understanding power dynamics, social inequalities, and contemporary challenges faced by these cultures strengthens this component, helping to place exchanges in a broader and more nuanced context.

•**Skills:** This component requires active practice and critical reflection. It involves not only applying cultural knowledge appropriately but also constantly evaluating the effectiveness of these applications in real situations. For example, when interacting with a different culture, a person must be able to decode non-verbal signals, understand nuances, and adjust their communication according to the context. This adaptability should not be seen as mere imitation of observed cultural behaviors but as a strategic skill where the individual assesses cultural expectations, adjusts their approach, and reflects on the outcomes. This also includes managing intercultural conflicts, where skills involve the ability to navigate cultural misunderstandings with tact and diplomacy.

•**Attitudes:** This is perhaps the most subtle yet powerful component, as it touches on the personal and emotional dimensions of intercultural interaction. Developing attitudes means cultivating an openness, empathy, and respect towards other cultures. It requires an awareness of one's own cultural biases and a willingness to challenge them. Attitudes also manifest in the ability to put oneself in another's shoes, to understand the emotions, motivations, and perspectives of individuals from other cultures. This component enables the establishment of authentic and lasting relationships, as it is based on recognizing and valuing cultural diversity as a source of mutual enrichment.

An individual can not only become an effective participant in intercultural environments but also contribute to promoting a broader intercultural dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding. Intercultural competence, thus conceived, goes beyond merely avoiding misunderstandings: it becomes a tool for building bridges between cultures, fostering cooperation, and enriching human interactions through cultural diversity.

This process of mutual enrichment is essential in a context where intercultural exchanges are not only inevitable but also valuable for personal, professional, and societal development. Intercultural competence thus enables individuals not only to navigate a diverse world but also to shape it positively by contributing to the creation of spaces where diversity is welcomed and valued.

3. Virtual Reality



Definition: Virtual reality is a digital technology that allows a user to be fully immersed in an environment that feels real and interact with it.

Virtual reality has undergone significant evolution since its inception in the 1960s with the Sonorama headset, which simulated a virtual walk through New York. By the 1980s, the EyeTap headset, a precursor to Google Glass, could already display virtual information in real-time. The term (virtual reality) was introduced in the 1990s by Thomas Caudell and David Mizell from Boeing to describe the overlay of computer-generated elements on the real world. This technology has advanced thanks to improvements in computing and mobile devices, leading to widespread adoption starting in the 2000s with the rise of smartphones equipped with GPS, cameras, and Internet connectivity.

This technology has advanced significantly due to improvements in computing and mobile devices, leading to widespread adoption starting in the 2000s with the advent of smartphones equipped with GPS, cameras, and Internet connectivity. Popular applications like Pokémon Go illustrate this shift by incorporating augmented reality elements to enhance user experiences.

4. The role of virtual reality in education

Virtual reality (VR) plays a transformative role in education by providing immersive and interactive environments that enhance learning experiences. It allows students to explore complex concepts in a hands-on way, promoting active engagement and deep understanding. For example, VR can be used for virtual field trips to historical sites or inaccessible locations, helping students visualize and interact with environments they might never visit in person (Johnson-Glenberg, 2018). By providing multisensory experiences, VR fosters a more dynamic and experiential form of learning, which can improve retention and understanding compared to traditional methods (Merchant and al., 2014).

Additionally, VR supports the development of practical skills in fields like medicine and engineering. Medical students, for instance, can practice surgical procedures in a safe, virtual environment before working on real patients, which improves their

confidence and competence (Seymour and al., 2002). This technology also encourages collaboration and problem-solving by allowing students to work together in simulated environments where they can tackle real-world challenges (Dalgarno and Lee, 2010). Moreover, VR has been found to enhance students' motivation and engagement by creating a more personalized and interactive learning experience (Blascovich and Bailenson, 2011)

In flipped classrooms, this technology offers students authentic and individualized learning experiences without the risks associated with making mistakes.

Virtual Reality (VR) represents a major technological advancement that profoundly changes how users engage with digital environments. It not only creates immersive simulations but also redefines the interaction dynamics between users and virtual worlds, opening new possibilities across various fields, including education. Since its modest beginnings in the 1960s with the Sonorama headset, which provided a virtual walk through New York, VR has evolved rapidly. The development of the Eye Tap headset in the 1980s, capable of displaying real-time



information, marked a significant step towards the VR technology we know today. The term "virtual reality," introduced in the 1990s by Thomas Caudell and David Mizell of Boeing to describe the overlay of digital elements on the real world, helped to more precisely conceptualize this emerging technology. With the rise of smartphones in the 2000s, equipped with GPS, cameras, and Internet connectivity, VR became widely accessible, as seen in popular applications like Pokémon Go, which use augmented reality to enhance user experiences.

In education, virtual reality offers unprecedented opportunities to transform learning methods. By immersing learners in simulated environments, VR helps contextualize abstract concepts and makes complex subjects more accessible. This approach aligns with constructivist and socio-constructivist theories, which advocate for an active learning process where students build knowledge from their experiences. With its interactive and immersive framework, VR enhances learner autonomy, encouraging exploration, experimentation, and self-discovery rather than passive information reception.

In a flipped classroom context, VR proves especially powerful. It allows for the creation of authentic and personalized learning experiences where students can safely interact with concepts without the usual risks associated with mistakes. For example, students can practice complex surgical simulations, explore historical reconstructions, or manipulate 3D molecules, all within a digital environment designed to maximize engagement and learning effectiveness.

Integrating virtual reality into education not only boosts learner engagement but also diversifies teaching methods, making learning more dynamic, interactive, and tailored to individual needs. This technology supports a more inclusive educational approach, where each student can learn at their own pace and according to their preferences, while being encouraged to explore new horizons in a safe and stimulating manner.

Methodology

For this research, we employed a rigorous methodology centered on semi-structured interviews with French as a Foreign Language (FFL) teachers at Ferhat Abbes High School in Bordj Bou Arréridj. This approach was chosen for its ability to deeply explore teachers' perceptions, experiences, and pedagogical practices—specifically the use of virtual reality as a didactic tool to enhance and develop intercultural competence among young learners in an increasingly globalized world. We selected three FFL teachers for this study. The data collected will be analyzed using emerging thematic coding techniques, focusing on the impact of virtual reality on developing intercultural competence.

The semi-structured interviews with the three selected FFL teachers at Ferhat Abbes High School are designed to elicit detailed insights into their experiences with virtual reality (VR) in the classroom. This method allows for an in-depth exploration of each teacher's perspectives on how VR is integrated into their teaching practices, its effectiveness in fostering intercultural competence, and any challenges or benefits they have observed. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews enables respondents to discuss their experiences and observations in their own words, providing rich, qualitative data that can reveal nuanced understandings of VR's role in language education.



Following the interviews, the data will be subjected to thematic coding, a process where key themes and patterns are identified and analyzed. This approach will help to categorize the various ways in which VR impacts the development of intercultural competence among learners, as reported by the teachers. The thematic analysis will focus on aspects such as how VR experiences influence students' cultural awareness, the effectiveness of VR in simulating real-life interactions with native speakers, and the overall impact on students' linguistic and intercultural skills. By examining these themes, the research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of VR's potential as a didactic tool in language education and its effectiveness in preparing students for a globalized world.

Results

The interviews with the three teachers provided valuable insights into how virtual reality is used to develop intercultural skills among high school students. The immersive simulations and experiences help students engage with cultural traditions in a tangible way, which boosts their motivation to learn. They particularly appreciated how VR can bridge cultural gaps and offer experiences that would otherwise be impossible.

Teachers also noted improvements in students' understanding of cultural and historical references. One teacher mentioned that students showed a better grasp of artworks and their contexts after virtual museum tours. Another observed that visualizing literary scenes in their original context helped students grasp the historical and cultural nuances of texts. Additionally, one teacher found that simulations of conversations with native speakers helped students understand cultural and regional subtleties, thus enriching their intercultural perspectives.

Another significant aspect of using virtual reality in teaching, as noted by the interviewed teachers, is its role in developing critical and reflective thinking skills among students. VR encourages students to compare different cultural and historical interpretations they encounter in virtual experiences. For example, during a historical event simulation, students can explore various viewpoints, prompting them to critically evaluate sources and historical narratives. One teacher also observed that students are encouraged to ask questions and discuss the cultural elements they discover, fostering an interactive and reflective learning environment.

Moreover, the teachers noted that VR seems to enhance collaboration and teamwork. VR activities often require students to work together to solve problems or explore complex cultural scenarios. This collaboration allows students to share their ideas and perspectives, enriching their intercultural understanding. They learn to value their peers' contributions and work effectively as a team.

The interviews with the three teachers revealed that virtual reality (VR) is a powerful tool for developing intercultural skills in high school students. The immersive simulations and experiences help students engage with cultural traditions in a tangible way, which boosts their motivation to learn. Teachers observed notable improvements in students' understanding of cultural and historical references. For instance, virtual museum tours help students better grasp artworks and their contexts, while visualizing literary scenes in their original settings aids in understanding the cultural and historical nuances of texts. Simulations of conversations with



native speakers also enhance students' intercultural perspectives by helping them grasp cultural and regional subtleties.

Another important point raised by the teachers is the development of critical and reflective thinking. Students are encouraged to compare different cultural and historical interpretations encountered in VR experiences, which prompts them to critically assess sources and historical narratives. Interactive discussions about the cultural elements discovered contribute to a more engaging and reflective learning environment. Additionally, VR appears to foster collaboration and teamwork, as VR activities often require students to work together to solve problems or explore complex cultural scenarios. This teamwork allows students to share their ideas and perspectives, enriching their intercultural understanding and their ability to work effectively in groups.

The interviews indicate not only the immediate impact of VR on learning intercultural skills but also its deeper pedagogical implications. By allowing students to experience cultural traditions in an immersive way, VR creates more engaging and memorable learning experiences. This immersion helps build a deeper cultural empathy and emotional connection to the subjects studied, surpassing traditional textbook-based teaching methods.

The improved understanding of cultural and historical references, as observed by the teachers, suggests that VR can play a crucial role in modern education by making cultural contexts more accessible and understandable. Virtual experiences allow students to see and interact with cultural and historical elements directly, promoting better information retention and a more intuitive grasp of complex subjects.

Furthermore, VR seems to hold significant potential for developing critical and reflective thinking skills in students. By exploring multiple perspectives and comparing different cultural and historical interpretations, students learn to question sources and analyze narratives more sophisticatedly. This ability to think critically is essential in a world where information and cultural perspectives are increasingly diverse and accessible.

Finally, the collaborative aspect of VR activities, as highlighted by the teachers, demonstrates that this technology can also enhance essential social skills. Teamwork and collaboration in immersive virtual environments enable students to share their ideas, learn to value their peers' contributions, and develop effective communication skills. These skills are crucial not only for a deeper intercultural understanding but also for success in an increasingly globalized and interconnected world.

The teachers' insights underline that virtual reality (VR) is not just a tool for engaging students but a transformative educational technology with far-reaching benefits. The immersive nature of VR fosters a more dynamic learning environment where students are not passive recipients of information but active participants in their learning journey. By experiencing cultural traditions and historical contexts firsthand, students develop a deeper emotional connection and empathy towards different cultures. This immersive engagement often leads to a more profound understanding of the material, enhancing both retention and application of knowledge.



Moreover, the emphasis on critical and reflective thinking through VR activities is particularly noteworthy. As students interact with diverse cultural and historical simulations, they are prompted to analyze and question the information presented, leading to a more nuanced and critical approach to learning. This process of evaluating multiple perspectives and sources helps students develop essential skills for navigating an increasingly complex world, where critical thinking and media literacy are vital.

The collaborative aspect of VR, highlighted by the teachers, further enriches the learning experience. Working together in virtual environments encourages students to collaborate, negotiate, and communicate effectively, fostering teamwork skills that are valuable in both academic and professional settings. This collaborative learning approach not only enhances intercultural understanding but also prepares students for global interactions by emphasizing the importance of cooperation and shared problem-solving in diverse contexts.

In summary, the interviews reveal that VR has a substantial impact on developing intercultural competence, critical thinking, and collaboration among high school students. By providing immersive and interactive experiences, VR supports deeper engagement with cultural and historical content, promotes reflective learning, and enhances social skills, thereby contributing to a more comprehensive and effective educational experience.

Conclusion

The interviews with the teachers reveal a rich and nuanced perspective on integrating virtual reality into high school French instruction, with profound implications for intercultural education and 21st-century skill development. VR emerges as a powerful educational tool that can transform learning experiences, making them more immersive, interactive, and engaging for students.

Teachers unanimously highlighted VR's ability to enhance students' intercultural understanding by immersing them in virtual environments where they can explore various cultural and historical contexts. VR provides students with authentic experiences that go beyond mere textual descriptions. For instance, a simulation of the French Revolution or a virtual tour of cultural landmarks allows students to interactively and vividly grasp the issues and subtleties of the events and cultures studied. This immersion not only improves knowledge retention but also fosters a deeper appreciation of cultural diversity.

The integration of virtual reality (VR) into French instruction in high school settings is rapidly gaining attention for its potential to revolutionize traditional teaching methods. Based on recent interviews with educators, it has become clear that VR is not only a tool for enhancing language acquisition but also a significant catalyst for fostering intercultural understanding and the development of 21st-century skills. Through immersive and interactive experiences, students can explore cultural and historical contexts in ways that were previously unimaginable, allowing them to engage more deeply with the material and build critical global competencies.



One of the most striking insights from the teachers' perspectives is VR's unparalleled ability to immerse students in cultural and historical environments. In the context of French language instruction, this goes far beyond the usual scope of vocabulary acquisition or grammar practice. VR introduces students to authentic, lived experiences within French-speaking cultures. Through simulations and virtual tours, students can engage in meaningful, context-rich learning that situates language in its cultural milieu.

For instance, rather than reading a textbook passage about the French Revolution, students could participate in a VR simulation where they walk the streets of 18th-century Paris, observe key events like the storming of the Bastille, and interact with characters representing historical figures. Such an immersive experience allows students to gain a more nuanced understanding of the complexities of this period, as well as the socio-political factors that shaped it. By stepping into these virtual spaces, students can "live" history, which not only aids in memory retention but also provides a more profound emotional connection to the subject matter.

Similarly, a virtual tour of Paris or other Francophone cultural landmarks enables students to explore diverse cultural contexts interactively. Walking through the streets of the French capital, visiting museums, or attending a virtual concert allows students to experience the nuances of French art, architecture, music, and daily life. This kind of learning goes beyond what can be captured through textual descriptions or videos, as students can explore at their own pace, ask questions, and interact with elements within the virtual environment. The richness of these virtual experiences broadens their intercultural understanding, making them more appreciative of the diversity within Francophone cultures.

One of the challenges of language learning is bridging the gap between the classroom and the real-world contexts in which the language is spoken. Students often struggle to connect what they learn about a culture in a textbook to how people actually live, think, and interact in that culture. VR has the potential to bridge this gap by placing students in real-time cultural scenarios, where they can observe, explore, and even "participate" in cultural activities.

For example, through VR, students could attend a French-speaking market, navigate the conversations and transactions taking place around them, or even practice ordering food in a virtual French café. This not only builds their practical language skills but also gives them insight into the cultural norms and etiquette that govern these everyday interactions. Such exposure helps students become more culturally aware and sensitive, allowing them to develop skills that are critical in our increasingly globalized world.

In terms of intercultural education, VR can also facilitate encounters with cultures and perspectives that may be geographically distant or difficult to access in a traditional classroom setting. For example, students can participate in a virtual exchange with peers from French-speaking countries in Africa, Canada, or the Caribbean, fostering direct engagement with the linguistic diversity of the Francophone world. Such experiences not only deepen language proficiency but also foster empathy and cross-cultural understanding, equipping students to be more thoughtful and informed global citizens.



Beyond its contributions to intercultural education, VR also holds immense potential for the development of 21st-century skills-particularly those related to critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and creativity. Teachers noted that VR encourages active, rather than passive, learning. Students are not simply recipients of information but become participants in a dynamic, interactive learning process. The immersive nature of VR requires them to engage with the material in new ways, think critically about the information presented, and make decisions based on their observations.

For instance, in a VR simulation of a historical event, students might be asked to take on the role of a decision-maker, weighing the consequences of different actions based on historical facts and cultural context. This kind of experiential learning fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills, as students must analyze information, consider multiple perspectives, and make informed choices. These are exactly the kinds of competencies that are vital for success in the 21st-century workplace, where adaptability, collaboration, and innovation are key.

Moreover, VR encourages collaboration among students, as they can participate in shared virtual environments and work together to solve problems or complete tasks. For example, students might collaboratively explore a virtual Francophone city, working together to navigate its streets, engage with its inhabitants, and learn about its cultural landmarks. This kind of collaboration in a virtual space mirrors the kinds of teamwork and digital literacy skills that are increasingly important in today's interconnected, technology-driven world.

Creativity is another skill that VR naturally fosters. As students interact with virtual environments, they are often required to think creatively, whether they are designing their own virtual worlds or finding innovative solutions to problems within a simulation. This blend of creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration mirrors the demands of many modern careers and helps prepare students for the future.

Virtual reality is more than just a novel educational tool; it represents a paradigm shift in how we think about teaching and learning, especially in language and cultural studies. For French instruction at the high school level, VR offers a way to make the language come alive, providing students with immersive, interactive experiences that go far beyond traditional teaching methods. By enhancing intercultural understanding and developing crucial 21st-century skills, VR has the potential to transform not only how students learn French but also how they engage with the world around them. As educators continue to explore its possibilities, VR could well become an indispensable component of modern language education, equipping students with the knowledge, empathy, and skills needed to thrive in a globalized, digital age.



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