Reviewer's report

Title: Use of a Virtual World Computer Environment for International Distance Education: Lessons from a Pilot Project using Second Life

Version: 2 Date: 3 December 2013

Reviewer: Lazaros Papadopoulos

Reviewer's report:

Major Compulsory Revisions
1. The authors should add a brief description of their survey's findings in the "Conclusions" section.

2. In the "Discussion section", the authors should discuss their statistical findings more thoroughly. They should also discuss any problems they faced during the online lesson and write a few words about the technical reasons the majority of the participants (40 persons) chose the live video broadcast instead of using the SL viewer.

Minor Essential Revisions
1. The authors wrote:
   "They are one-dimensional, not visual, and subject to communications delay with time zone differences."

   All the three social networking tools provided by the authors have visual capabilities, but not 3D, like VW. The authors may have wanted to say "tools with two-dimensional graphics" which better describes the lack of 3D navigation of these tools. (?) The term "one-dimensional" is not correct when describing a communication tool. Also, time-zone differences are present in VWs too.

2. The authors stated that:
   "- Rehearsal time is mandatory.", and
   "- The facilitator must be comfortable in the virtual world."

   The authors didn't describe how they reached these conclusions. It is suggested that some details of the authors' experiences during the lesson be added, in order to support these conclusions.

3. The authors wrote:
   "The learners gave high ratings to the session's effectiveness on all learning goals and cited many advantages to this form of learning. They were engaged, asked informed questions, and chatted with each other about the session content and its significance."

   It will be better if the authors add some of the students' questions/comments to
support this.

4. The authors wrote:
"A virtual world setting accommodates learners at all levels of participation."
This can not be a conclusion, because it was not proved through the paper or the bibliography. It is suggested to alter the sentence to: "...many levels of participation."

5. In the "Conclusions" section the authors stated:
"VW learners can gather in an immersive space for an authentic feeling of collaboration and exchange without the need for passports, visas, or airline expense of the real world."
It should be pointed that these advantages are found in all distance education tools, not only in VWs. It is also suggested that the sentence be changed to "...without the need for travel expenses."; not everybody travel by the given means of transportation.

Discretionary Revisions
None.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
no to all.