

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF VR IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW OF APPLICATIONS, SKILLS, AND IMPLEMENTATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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The study investigates the areas of English language teaching assisted by Virtual Reality (VR), focusing on the language skills targeted, the types of higher education programs that use VR, and the VR setups used. To guide this investigation, the following research questions are developed: (1) What areas of English language teaching are commonly supported by VR in higher education? (2) What language skills are addressed by VR interventions? (3) What types of higher education programs use VR to teach English? (4) What types of VR setups are used for English language learning?. The systematic literature review was conducted using the PRISMA guidelines. A detailed search was conducted using academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. Keywords such as "virtual reality" AND "360-degree" AND "English language" AND "higher education" were used. Studies published between 2016 and 2024 were considered to reflect current advances. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Studies on VR applications in English language teaching in higher education settings and articles published in peer-reviewed journals were included, while studies investigating VR for languages other than English, non-empirical or theoretical articles, and research on secondary or primary education were excluded. As a result, 15 articles from 463 reports were analysed in the review process. According to the results, VR is used in a variety of English education settings, including English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English as a Foreign or Second Language (EFL/ESL), and General English. VR also targets speaking and writing skills, demonstrating their dependence on immersive engagement. Virtual reality is widely used in a variety of higher education programmes, including medical sciences, teacher training, and engineering and tourism. Teacher training supported by grammar teaching and classroom interaction scenarios, while engineering and tourism programmes emphasised public speaking and interaction skills. Fully immersive VR systems dominate the field, providing a high degree of involvement and realism. In terms of types of VR setups, the previous research employed the HTC Vive, Oculus Rift, and Meta Quest 2 are widely utilised. The immersive nature of VR promotes experiential learning, especially for skills that require contextualised practice. In addition, efficiently integrating VR into the curriculum requires training educators to create and deliver VR-based activities, which takes time and resources. Future research should focus on building low-cost VR systems that can be scaled to fit a variety of educational contexts. It is crucial to investigate the long-term effects of VR on language memory, as well as its potential in collaborative and cross-cultural learning situations.

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