



Waipapa  
Taumata Rau  
**University  
of Auckland**

# Virtual reality for language learning

Neil Cowie



November 12<sup>th</sup> 2025



English Language Academy

# My background

**2021-2025**

**Three collaborative VR projects with Mehrasa Alizadeh**

- **Student-teacher exploratory research**
- **Zoom vs VR**
- **Intercultural competence**





# Today's plan



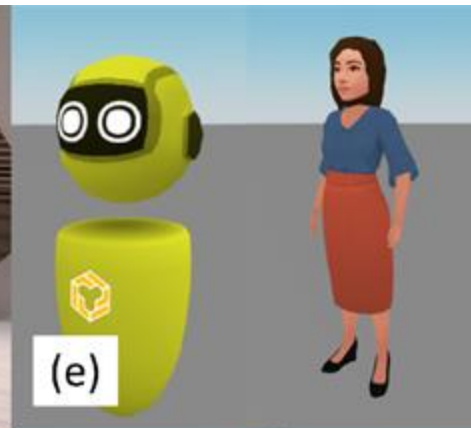
- **VR basics and class activities**
- **Individual apps**
- **Challenges and teaching tips**
- **Future trends**
- **Q & A**



# VR basics



- **Alternative 3D world**
- **Different immersion levels**
- **VR environments**
- **Platform examples**
- **Kinaesthetic interaction**









# VR class activities



- 1. Familiar classroom activities**
- 2. Student artefacts**
- 3. Virtual tours**
- 4. Multimedia**

PEOPLE: 38

CHAT

GO TO

3 Sota Hatanaka is talking



# Natsuki Umeda

3 sot

2 Ayumi Sawate

Shimane Kobayashi

15 Yuta Tagen

25 Aika Hashimura



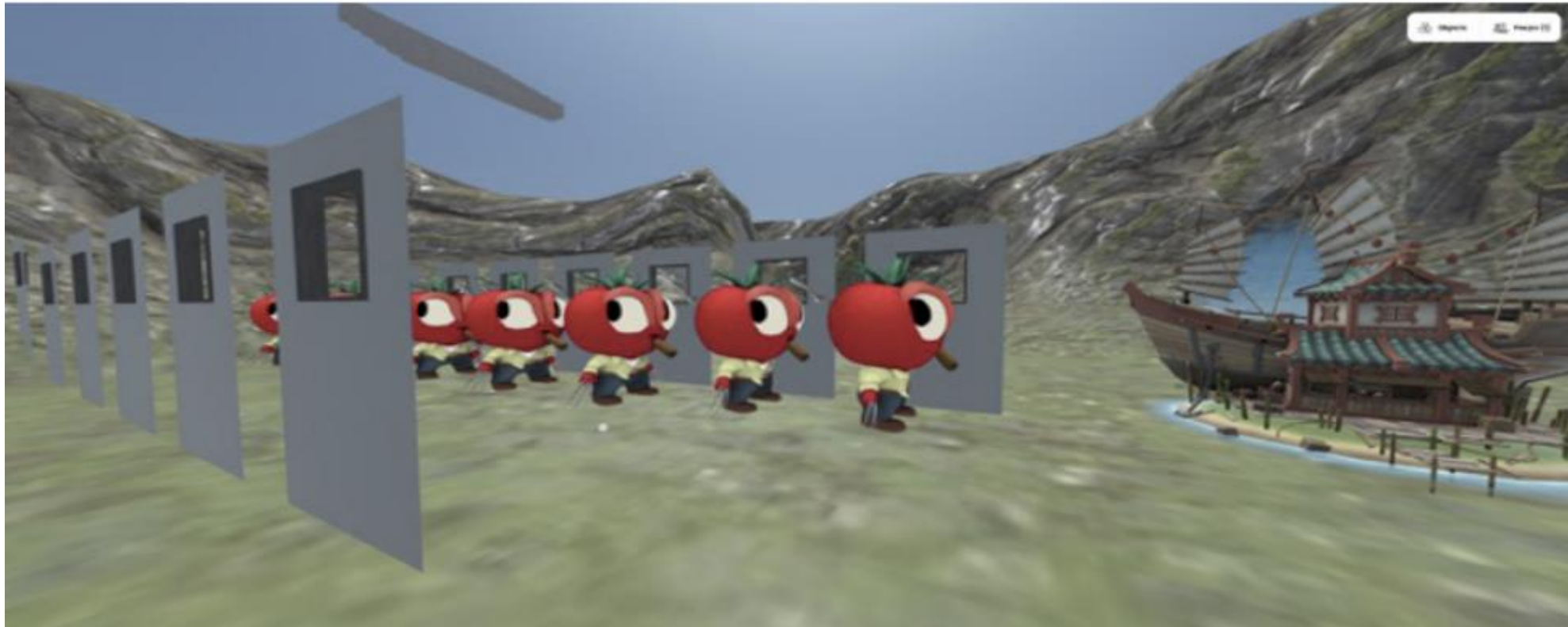


# VR class activities



1. Familiar classroom activities
2. **Student rooms**
3. Virtual tours
4. Multimedia

# Student 'rooms'



# Infinity



# Art Propaganda



# VR class activities



1. Familiar classroom activities
2. Student rooms
3. **Virtual tours**
4. Multimedia



# South African Horse Ranch



# Okayama University Campus

# Thing Link





# VR Class Activities



1. Familiar classroom activities
2. Student rooms
3. Virtual tours
4. **Multimedia**

SOLO

TO THE

SOUTH  
POLE

A person in winter gear is standing on a snowy landscape, looking towards the horizon. The person is wearing a dark jacket, blue pants, and a hat. They are holding ski poles. The background is a bright, clear blue sky with a soft glow. Large, bold, blue text is overlaid on the image, reading "SOLO TO THE SOUTH POLE". The text is arranged in two lines: "SOLO" and "TO THE" on the top line, and "SOUTH" and "POLE" on the bottom line. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, between the two lines of text.





# Quick chat with your neighbour



# Why use VR?



- 1. Motivation and engagement**
- 2. Decrease anxiety**
- 3. Contextualised learning and embodied cognition**



# Individual Apps



## 1. Scenarios/360 videos

**Virtual Speech**

**Mondly VR**

**ImmerseMe**

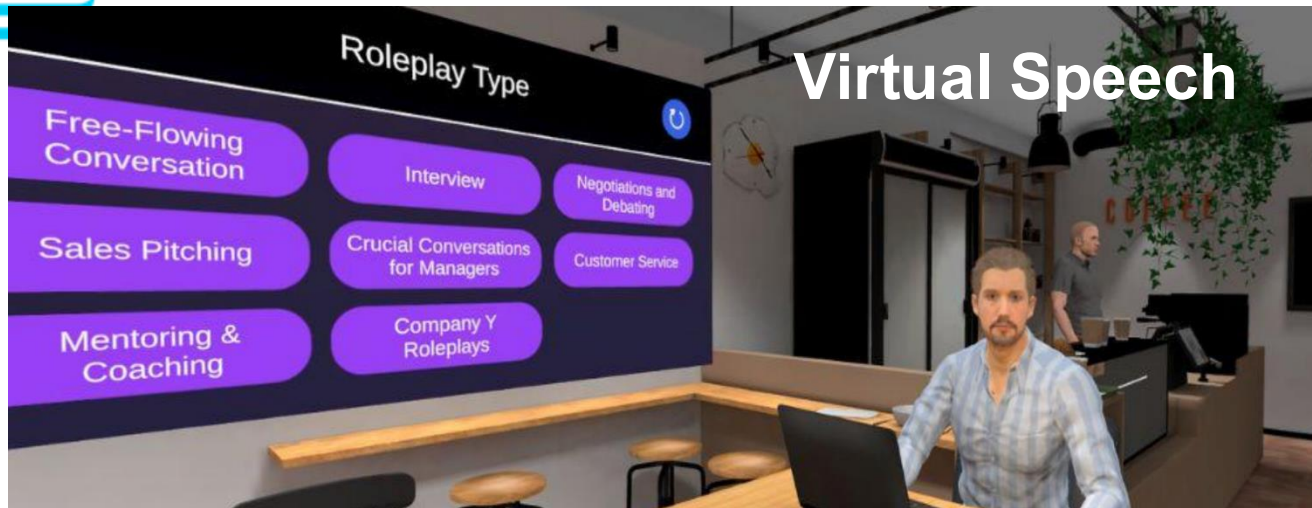
**BodySwaps**

## 2. Vocabulary

**Panolingo**

**Noun Town**

**Language Lab**





Pause (k)



0:04 / 1:54



YouTube





# Vocabulary Apps



Checklist +

Nouns 35/38

Verbs

Lesson

Learning Rush B

Cassettes





# Challenges to using VR



- 1. Limited long-term language gains**
- 2. Lack of teacher expertise and materials**
- 3. Cost and maintenance burdens**
- 4. Cybersickness: Discomfort and motion-related issues**



# Getting Started



- **Start simple**
- **User training and scaffolding**
- **Set clear rules**
- **Work with others**



# The future?



- 1. Lower cost and greater accessibility**
- 2. Improved realism and computing power**
- 3. AI integration for personalized learning**
- 4. Realistic avatars via motion and facial tracking**
- 5. Generative AI for easy VR content creation**




## In sum

- • **VR offers exciting, engaging learning alternatives**
- **Challenges remain: cost, training, and limited evidence of long-term gains**
- **Future: AI-driven avatars and chatbots for affordable personalized coaching**



# References

Alizadeh, M., & Cowie, N. (2022). Language learning and virtual reality: A scoping review. In S. Wilson, N. Arthars, D. Wardak, P. Yeoman, E. Kalman, & D. Y. T. Liu (Eds.), *Reconnecting relationships through technology. Proceedings of the 39th International Conference on Innovation, Practice and Research in the Use of Educational Technologies in Tertiary Education, ASCILITE 2022 in Sydney*: e22258. <https://doi.org/10.14742/apubs.2022.258>



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<https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccaf025>

# Q & A



# Get in touch?

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