



## Creating Machinima Empowers Live Online Language Teaching and Learning

### 4.1 General Guidelines about the Use of Machinima in Classrooms



#### Disclaimer

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Description: Any project that develops new technology for classroom use stands and falls on implementation. In order to optimise implementation two elements are key: training teachers in the use of machinima, both from a technical perspective and how they might be used in the classroom and piloting their use. WP4 will capitalise on the technical guidelines produced in WP2 and information received from the field testing in WP3 to create a teacher training package to enable teachers to create and use machinima effectively in a variety of situations. The package will provide a two-stage approach – the creation of machinima themselves and the uses they might be put to in the classroom.

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## **4.1 Ways in which machinima may be used in the classroom**

As the initial part of the teacher training package WP 4 will produce a set of general guidelines about how machinima could be used in the class room. These will highlight the differences between using machinima and other, more traditional, multimedia platforms.

In this document we are going to look at how to use pre-existing machinima in the classroom, making machinima in a virtual world, cover general guidelines about how to use machinima in the real world classroom, using machinima to feedback to learners and the difference between machinima and regular language learning videos or audio files.

### **PART 1**

#### **HOW TO USE PRE-EXISTING MACHINIMA IN THE CLASSROOM**

Machinima is just one kind of video; it is often referred to as machinima video in the research literature. Machinima is a neologism of the words machine and cinema and describes a video made in a 3D environment such as a virtual world or a digital game. Many teachers will already be familiar with how to use video in the language classroom and therefore the transition to pre-existing machinima need not be significant. However, if you are new to using video in the classroom, the following prompts may help you to get started.

When introducing a machinima into a lesson, it is essential to get learners engaged with the topic that it covers. Try to stimulate interest before watching the machinima so that learners have an interest in finding out what is going to happen next in the narrative.

In some respects using a machinima in the classroom is like using any other video. Some teachers like to have three different sets of activities: before watching, whilst watching and after watching the machinima. Other teachers like to use machinima to introduce a new topic, as a stimulus to learners. For example, learners may be introduced to new vocabulary in an easy-to-understand way using visual prompts such as words about winter in a machinima showing people throwing snowballs, skiing, sledging and ice skating. Machinima may also be used to set the mood for a topic, for example, environmental issues, where learners may look at an underwater scene of someone swimming along a coral reef before the discussion begins.

In the following sections, you will find ideas for these three types of activities - 'before', 'during' and 'after' - both in, and outside, the virtual world. Many of these are generic ideas; teachers could use and adapt them to any of their machinima.

## **ACTIVITIES FOR BEFORE WATCHING THE MACHINIMA**

Learners could work alone or in groups to discuss:

- what learners already know about the subject
- what learners would like to find out
- what they think the machinima is about
- to write their own version of what they think the story is in groups
- to write a dialogue which would suit the topic in ten lines (with no more than about five or six lines for each actor to say)
- listen to the machinima without watching it and try to describe the setting, the scenery, the characters or the situation

Teachers could start exercises such as:

- brainstorming by means of images, pictures, drawings, fixed image or (virtual) freeze frame
- drawing a mind-map, referring to a keyword or phrase
- selecting words from a "word jumble" with words that fit into the predetermined title of the film
- preparing the sequence with newspaper articles and cuttings with regard to content of the film-to-be-shown
- collecting questions related to a specific subject
- providing the learners with a picture/snapshot taken in Second Life of the avatar, letting learners speculate about the avatar (his/her past, professional background, skills, hobbies etc.)

- starting with the title of the film, the learner speculate about the content of the film sequences

### **ACTIVITIES WHILE WATCHING THE MACHINIMA**

Learners start with practical, straightforward observation tasks, with, e.g., some learners concentrating on specific/individual characters, in order to be able to describe them after viewing.

To help in this task, the teacher could use the following techniques:

#### **Running images without sound**

Learners make an educated guess about what is said in the film sequence. The learners are encouraged to describe the scene, maybe even to create large speech bubbles to formulate thoughts or to create texts created themselves. These texts are to be compared later with the original text of the film sequence.

Learners could then:

- describe characters, avatars, places, actions, objects
- identify information provided by specific images in a film sequence prompted by questions
- use excerpts, articulate assumptions about the given situation and plot of the film
- arrange a sequence of (still) images taken from the film/machinima in the correct order
- describe a scene, based upon a fixed image or (virtual) freeze frame and then write a corresponding text

## **Playing the sound without image**

This technique will help learners to understand the difference between verbal and visual information. Using the following techniques will encourage the use of spontaneous:

Learners could then:

- guess the location of where the action takes place
- speculate about possible actions and objects
- allot specific textual information into a grid: e.g., numbers, toponyms, personal names, time indications etc.
- name the subject
- judge voice according to congenial and uncongenial impression
- note “internationalisms”

## **Image and sound**

Learners could then:

- compare the film sequence with assumptions made in the pre-phase
- make a list of headwords
- arrange provided statements according to the succession of the film sequence
- recapitulate the gist (verbally or in written form)
- answer multiple-choice questionnaire about the sequence
- recognize right and wrong statements about the film sequence
- arrange a sequence of images in the right order
- stop the video and let learners speculate about further progress of the plot
- whilst watching note any questions that you would like to ask about the machinima

- note any words or phrases that you heard but do not understand
- observe the scenery, costumes, props, light, or anything else interesting to discuss after watching
- think about the characters, who they are, what they look like, the situation that they are in
- split the class into three groups and have each group observe different things, e.g., how many people are involved in the scene? Why is ... Where ...

### **ACTIVITIES FOR AFTER WATCHING THE MACHINIMA**

- discuss the teaching point about the language being used in the machinima is (if known at this point)
- discuss, revise or practise any grammar rules being covered
- learn or revise the vocabulary for making another version of the story or situation
- write a completely new dialogue or narration to read to the film played through without sound. This is especially good for the stories and conversation type of machinima
- write a new narrative for the machinima which has a narration, record it on a smartphone or any other recording device and share in small groups
- do a back-to-back exercise where one person can hear but not see the machinima, the seeing person must describe the machinima to the hearing person
  - Discuss how accurate the description was
  - Were there any misunderstandings to sort out?
- discuss the language involved. (See the transcripts on YouTube either in the YouTube description area or the one which YouTube has created by speech to text on the transcript button on YouTube page.) For example, you could elicit phrases used in certain situations, and discuss how people use them, for example 'See you later', 'I won't be a minute', 'Give me a ring sometime' and 'Well, I mustn't keep you'

- explore any subject-related phrase that learners hear regularly, e.g., ‘Nice day isn’t it?’ in ‘Talking about Weather’ machinima
- discuss what the process of making the machinima may have involved, for instance, camera angles, characters, costumes, scenery and anything else noted when watching
- talk about who the characters are, how they feel, and what the next steps in the story might be
- work (in groups) to develop a script aligned to the theme; if a grammar point is being learned or rehearsed, then that must feature in the script
- share the work created, assess each other’s scripts and work on language skills as necessary
- act out the script for other groups in the classroom situation
- act it out and make a video
- share the video with the other groups via a blog or on a video hosting site such as YouTube or Vimeo. Make comments on each other’s work
- hold a classroom debate or discussion on a subject or theme covered in the lesson
- research a theme and create a role play and then video record it using smartphones

## **General Guidelines About How to Use Machinima in the Real World Classroom**

### **Teaching activities**

Possible teaching activities in response to viewing a machinima in the bricks-and-mortar classroom could be:

### **For listening and responding**

- using “freeze frames” (by pausing the film) or film stills ask students to describe the scene.



- using visual clues to ask students to predict what may happen next.
- using freeze frames or film stills to ask students to make a list of words and phrases based on what they can see or hear.
- provide a list of phrases or words (that appear and don't appear in the clip) and ask students to play word bingo and to tick the phrases or words that they hear.

### **Role-play**

- ask students to re-enact/perform the scene in the way they feel is best (e.g., by adding new dialogue or characters etc.).
- film review (written, oral, blog, video diary, podcast).
- design a new poster for the film.
- to write an alternative ending.
- to develop a story about a favourite secondary character.
- to create a short film (in the real world with a video camera or smartphone) based on a specific element of the film.
- to retell a scene from different points of view.
- to find maps, photos or videos of the places / areas / locations used in the film and to create a presentation about an imaginary journey.

### **Comparing**

- a teacher presents scenes from written texts / novels and contrasts them with the film/machinima adaption.
- (re-)writing subtitles and comparing them with the actual subtitles used in the machinima.

### **Problem-solving**

- prediction (trainees speculate on what happened before and after the selected machinima).
- investigation (trainees play detective to determine place time, genre, mood based on cultural clues found within the machinima).

### **Sharing personal experiences**

- discuss favourite scenes and the ending.
- talk about favourite or least favourite characters.
- discuss alternative endings.
- highlight key themes / issues.

### **Task-based approach**

Language teachers could incorporate a task-based framework for the implementation of machinima in their classes. This would include the following phases:

#### **Pre-task phase**

The teacher and the learners plan for the preparation and the materials needed for the production of the machinima:

- the teacher introduces the concept / nature of 3D Virtual Learning Environments and machinima creation.
- the teacher and the learners then engage in a discussion of the topic or theme.
- learners pair up or make up groups and assign roles.

## **Task phase**

- learners engage with the task (teacher monitors, encourages, comments and helps with the task).
- learners plan ahead the machinima (reading), script (writing), shooting angles characters and the plot (negotiation of meaning).
- learners rehearse (speaking) and do the filming, then do the editing (listening).
- teachers help with the linguistic features used in the final product.
- learners upload their final products, the machinima.
- learners exploit their machinima through social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, and their own blogs).
- teachers prepare language activities using the finalized machinima.

## **Planning**

- learners plan and prepare for presentation of their machinima to the whole class.
- learners prepare rationale for their content, and process of production.

## **Report**

- learners present their machinima to the whole class.
- learners report on the rationale for the content and process of production.

## **PART 2**

### **MAKING MACHINIMA IN THE VIRTUAL WORLD**

Getting the learners involved in making machinima in a virtual world is a very powerful teaching resource. Learners have to agree and write a script, plan the storyboard, prepare the characters and scenery, rehearse and take different roles in the production process. Teachers who get their learners to make machinima frequently say how much work goes into perfecting everything including the pronunciation! We see instances of how having an audience automatically makes people want to produce their best work!

Working in a virtual world enables learners to do many things that cannot be done in the real world. Avatars can ski, fly, parachute jump, become a lion, talk to an elephant and many other quite unusual things without any training or safety considerations. Situations which are impossible or undesirable in real life suddenly become very easy. Simulating a plane crash, a boat sinking, a factory explosion, someone having a heart attack on a plane, a road traffic accident and more offer a massive range of experiences which learners can use to explore the language of the situation and can use to undergo training, all of these can be recorded as machinima for discussion and revision purposes. Learners are engaged in this immersive learning experience, it is experiential and as such makes a big impact on the learner. The following is a set of genres that learners may work with:

- documentaries
- poetry
- storytelling
- grammar
- idioms
- conversation practice
- heritage
- humour
- instructional machinima

- informative machinima
- project-based machinima
- roleplay
- sketches
- intercultural issues
- advertising

Learners can make machinima to meet lots of different needs and share them with each other so that learners become teachers and to be teachers learners have to know their subject! Their learning is enhanced.

### **Machinima as language speaking practice task (Student Work)**

Learners could make machinima:

- to aid the interpretation of a poem.
- to review a book a variation could be an interview with a character from a book or the author.
- for advertising a book, piece of art etc.
- based on well-known myths or legends, or create your own myth and produce a machinima.
- based on a short story.
- presenting a typical everyday situation of a tourist such as booking a hotel room, ordering a meal, buying goods in a shop, asking for directions, going to a doctor, renting a car, reporting a crime and etc.
- presenting the latest news.
- about a business meeting a variation could be producing a presentation, negotiation sequence or job interview in business context.
- based on a TV discussion/debate presenting different views about a particular topic.

- as a travel report for the target language country.
- about famous authors, their life and their books.
- about public services.
- about life of historical events and people, artists, singers etc.
- about important regions or places in the world.
- explaining a scientific concept, or a case study, a lecture, a debate, or a documentary
- on health and safety issues leading to a police investigation etc. interviewing people.

### **Writing practice**

Machinima could include practising writing skills such as:

- passing and exchanging instant group or private messages when spoken interaction is impossible and inappropriate.
- correspondence by letter, fax, e-mail, etc. could be used as some of the props and built into the storyline.
- negotiating the text of agreements, contracts, communiqués, etc. by reformulating and exchanging drafts, amendments, proof corrections, etc.; participating in online or offline computer conferences.
- face-to-face interaction may of course involve a mixture of all media: spoken, written, audio-visual, paralinguistic and para textual.

### **Presenting subject content with Machinima for Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**

These may be teacher produced depending on the area content area but learners could make the for each other or as a result of individual study or themes such as:

- a particular artistic style, movement, or period in history.

- particular art pieces of famous artist or musician, or about their lives.
- explaining scientific method, fact, particular field of science or natural phenomena (e.g., the water cycle, recycling, alternative fuels, global warming, or biodiversity).
- famous research scientists, mathematicians and their achievements.
- demonstrating numbers and simple mathematical operations.
- demonstrating the understanding of some element of basic statistics and how they apply to the real world.
- explaining public information programmes about the benefits of a good diet, positive health practice such as smoking cessation, drug avoidance, or regular exercise.
- presenting public information program about a topic such as AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, gender identity issues, or family planning.
- on sports, games, rules and personalities in this field.
- presenting current affairs and news items.
- presenting cultural, geographical, historical or religious information.

In fact machinima could be used to present almost any curriculum subject not already mentioned.

**Machinima could be used to help learners cope with new and stressful situations such as:**

- car accidents - calling an ambulance, administering relief, handing over to the emergency teams and so on.
- being injured and seeking help, booking into hospital.
- being robbed and going to a police station to get help.
- giving birth - the process, the language the roles.
- learning about the illness of a loved one, thinking specifically of understanding a mental illness.

- preparing for an earthquake, flood, tsunami, language.

**Machinima could be used to help with technical and business encounters:**

- explaining mechanisms.
- explaining production processes.
- explaining book printing and binding.
- describing damage.
- assembling machines.
- planning, managing and running business meetings or interviews.
- learning about architecture.
- running a hotel.
- interviewing a client, job applicant.

**Language focus**

**Analysis**

- Teacher and learners engage in a discussion about the machinima (negotiation of meaning).
- Teacher points out the language features.

**Practice**

Learners can do language practice activities prepared by the teacher for specific machinima.

The use of machinima as a task for language learning purposes may lead to successful language acquisition. As Meskill (1999, p. 143) points out, the importance of interaction is underlined by its connection with task design: “The oral/aural negotiational aspect of teacher and task supported student–student configuration is seen as a powerful venue for second



language acquisition to occur. Such configurations, in combination with well-designed and orchestrated language learning tasks, represent opportunities for learners to manipulate interdependent chunks of the target language in complex ways that see immediate, contextual effect” (cited in Hampel, 2010 p. 132).

### **Vocabulary and pronunciation presentation**

Create simple machinima that demonstrate:

- adjectives.
- classroom nouns/objects (e.g., home: house, rooms, garden, street, square, park)
- simple verbs.
- contextualize the vocabulary, e.g., travel vocabulary, educational vocabulary, restaurant vocabulary, etc.

### **Fixed expressions presentation**

- create machinima that demonstrate idioms in various contexts like animals, people etc., proverbs, familiar quotations, expressions of belief, attitudes such as clichés.
- machinima representing the “use and choice of greetings” on arrival, in introductions, leave-taking, use and choice of address forms.

### **Spoken language presentation**

- public announcements and instructions.
- casual conversations.
- public speeches, lectures, presentations, sermons.
- rituals (ceremonies, formal religious services).
- entertainment (drama, shows, readings, songs).

- sports commentaries (football, cricket, boxing, horse-racing, etc.).
- news broadcasts.
- public debates and discussion.
- interpersonal dialogues and conversations.
- telephone conversations.
- job interviews.
- informal discussion.
- formal discussion.
- debate.
- interview.
- negotiation.
- co-planning.
- practical goal-oriented co-operation.

### **Story telling / re-telling narratives**

- fables.
- fairy tales.
- classical literature.
- mysteries.
- social problems.
- stories.
- poetry.
- jokes.

## **Grammar review**

Machinima can be used to teach any grammar point like verb tenses, modals, linking words, sentence construction, passive voice, conditionals, phrasal verbs etc.

## **Intercultural communication practice**

Machinima can be produced in a number of areas to teach grammar:

- machinima about “everyday living” of the target language whose content includes food and drink, meal times, table manners, public holidays, leisure activities (hobbies, sports, reading habits, media)
- machinima about “living conditions”, housing conditions
- machinima of “interpersonal relations” (including relations of power and solidarity) class structure of society and relations between classes, relations between sexes (gender, intimacy), family structures and relations, relations between generations, relations in work situations, relations between public and police, and officials.
- machinima about “values, beliefs and attitudes” including regional cultures, social class, occupational groups (academic, management, public service, skilled and manual workforces), history, especially iconic historical personages and events, minorities (ethnic, religious), arts (music, visual arts, literature, drama, popular music and song), religion, humour.
- machinima about “body language” and “social conventions” like hospitality, punctuality, presents, dress, refreshments, drinks, meals, behavioural and conversational conventions and taboos, length of stay, leave-taking.
- machinima about “ritual behaviour” in such areas as religious observances and rites, birth, marriage, death, audience and spectator behaviour at public performances and ceremonies, celebrations, festivals, dances, discos, etc.
- machinima about “dialects and accents” of target language society.

## **Practicing language through machinima production**

Machinima as language practice tasks (Student Work):

- machinima for interpretation of a poem.
- machinima to review a book. Variation could be an interview with a character from the book or the author.
- machinima for advertising a book, piece of art etc.
- machinima based on well known myths or legends, or create your own myth and produce a machinima.
- machinima based on a short story.
- machinima presenting a typical everyday situation of a tourist such as booking a hotel room, ordering a meal, buying goods in a shop, asking for directions, going to a doctor, renting a car, reporting a crime and etc.
- machinima as presenting the latest news.
- machinima about a business meeting. Variation could be producing a presentation, negotiation sequence or job interview in business context.
- machinima based on a TV discussion/debate presenting different views about a particular topic.
- machinima as a travel report for the target language country.
- machinima about famous authors, their life and their books.
- machinima about public services.
- machinima about life of historical events and people, artists, singers etc.
- machinima about important regions or places in the world.
- machinima explaining a scientific concept, or a case study, a lecture, a debate, or a documentary.

## **Writing practice**

- passing and exchanging notes, memos, etc. when spoken interaction is impossible and inappropriate.
- correspondence by letter, fax, e-mail, etc.
- negotiating the text of agreements, contracts, communiqués, etc. by reformulating and exchanging drafts, amendments, proof corrections, etc.; participating in on-line or off-line computer conferences.
- face-to-face interaction may of course involve a mixture of media: spoken, written, audio-visual, paralinguistic and para textual.
- interactive man/ machine communication in the public, occupational, educational and even personal domains.

## **Presenting language through content with machinima (teacher produced depending on the area content area)**

- machinima about a particular artistic style, movement, or period in history.
- machinima on particular art pieces of famous artist or musician. Variation could be machinima on their lives.
- machinima explaining scientific method, fact, particular field of science or natural phenomena. (e.g., water-cycle, recycling, alternative fuels, global warming, or biodiversity.)
- machinima on famous research, scientists, mathematician and their achievements.
- machinima demonstrating numbers and simple mathematical operations.
- machinima demonstrating the understanding of some element of basic statistics and how they apply to the real world.
- machinima explaining public information program about the benefits of a good diet, positive health practice such as smoking cessation, drug avoidance, or regular exercise.

- machinima presenting public information program about a topic such as AIDS, sexually transmitted diseases, gender identity issues, or family planning.
- machinima on sports, games, rules and personalities of this field.
- machinima about a specific company or business, variations could be a TV commercial for a real or fictional product advertising or promoting or informing about working in a particular job.
- machinima about interview techniques in business context.
- machinima about production of multimedia texts, with reference to topic/focus, sequencing, cause/effect, thematic organisation, coherence and cohesion, logical ordering, style and register, rhetorical effectiveness, text design (description, narrative, exposition, etc.), how stories, anecdotes, jokes, etc. are told, how a case is built up (in law, debate, etc.), how written texts (essays, formal letters, etc.) are laid out, signposted and sequenced.

### **PART 3**

#### **MACHINIMA AS A MEANS OF FEEDING BACK TO LEARNERS**

Teachers can screencast the teaching sessions in-world simply as a record of achievement.

This can be used to feedback to learners in several ways:

- captions could be added to the original machinima highlighting aspects which need work, corrections could be marked up, pronunciation recordings could be added for learner to listen to, useful phrases highlighted etc.
- actual content could be discussed later, for example, in college interview situations groups of learners could play back a recorded interview and discuss whether the answers given are good, how they could be improved etc.
- people could try out speeches, presentations, pitches, and similar, record them and watch to improve their performance. The great things about doing these rehearsals as machinima is that it is not the real person involved, it is an avatar, this often gives people confidence and also lessons the blame for something that is wrong.

## **PART 4**

### **The main differences in using machinima over and above ordinary language learning videos**

We see that there are three quite big differences in using machinima over and above using regular, company produced language learning video or audio clips:

- one comes from the situation where learners can contribute toward the machinima or video making. In this case the machinima or class made video is so closely related to what the learners want and need, it belongs to them, it empowers them and so learning is enhanced.
- the second is that teacher made machinima used in a classroom has been specifically made to meet what is needed so is, once again, linked very closely to the learner's needs and therefore enhances learning.
- the third is that they can be used as the learners or teachers want to use them, they can be remade, added to, mashed up, teacher or learners notes added.

If we compare these points with ready made language learning videos which are generic, designed to teach something specific, and are unrelated in the same way to the learner, we can see the benefit of using machinima to enhance learning.