The 'all-in-one' Virtual School
Learning through exploration, autonomy, collaboration, and simulation

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Hellas Alive!

- Online language-learning platform
- The Partners
  - Hellenic American Union: Concept and Learning Content
  - Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute: Software Design and infrastructure
- Learning and Cultural Immersion Features
  - Virtual School
  - Virtual City
  - Cultural Playspaces
- Current target audience: learners of Modern Greek
- Open to all languages
The Learners in the Virtual School

- Knowledge exploration
- Learning autonomy
- Creative collaboration
- Immersive simulation
Learning through exploration

• The dilemma
  – learning by exploration?
    or
  – learning by mastering productive strategies?
• For learners, exploring involves a number of intriguing questions
  o Where do I search?
  o Why do I search?
  o Is it by accident or on purpose?
• What is the role of interface design?
  o Easiness to reverse actions
  o Provision of automated feedback
  o High degree of interactivity and involvement
  o Unified access
    ✓ The ‘3-clicks rule’: Fact or fiction?
    ✓ The ‘Rule of 5’
Virtual School - Unified Access

- Three-Click Rule
  - Myth or Reality?
  - Intended destination reached quickly
  - Intended destination reached successfully

- Five-Click Rule
  - Logical structure
  - Controlled complex and multi-layered menus

- Hellas Alive: Interface I
  - Action toolbars – media screen – playlist guidelines – instructions – workbook

- Hellas Alive: Interface II
  - Grammar - vocabulary
Learning through Autonomy

• A dynamic process
• Exploring new ways of learning - beyond classroom boundaries
• Less risks of unexpected exposure
• Increased student empowerment
• Shift of learning responsibility and role changing
  – from teachers to learners
• Learners in control of their own learning
  – Seeking meaning from events
  – Creating an environment for learning
• The technology
  – Physical autonomy
  – Learning guidance
    • Functional (buttons, colors, etc)
    • Pedagogical (content, learning navigation)
Virtual School - Learner autonomy

- Role of instructor redefined
  - Absence of physical presence
  - Learning is aided and not guided
- Traditional teaching revisioned
  - Emphasis on active and independent learning
  - Different learning styles and paces addressed
- Human need for contact satisfied
  - In-built contact tutor feature
  - Access to authentic and tailor-made material in all forms
Learning through Simulation

• A promising tool for supported learning
• An interactive mechanism for student involvement
  – Learning of new information through experimentation
  – Grasping of difficult ideas and concepts
  – Interacting with ideas and explaining of simulation results
  – Promoting collaboration
  – Using of personal time and interests effectively
Virtual School - Simulation

- Integration of different components
  - Language learning
    - Web-delivered
    - Feedback rich
  - Cultural awareness
    - Highly stimulating environment
- Real-world contexts and interactions
  - Use of authentic texts and activities
  - Executed on line
- Contemporary cultural context
  - Immersion in real-life situations
    - Through media enhanced narrative scenarios
Learning through Collaboration

• The ideal learning environment
  “…encourages student–tutor contact, promotes cooperation among students, supports active learning, provides prompt feedback, emphasizes time on task, communicates high expectations and respects diverse talents and ways of learning…” Chickering et al

• A socially interactive process enriched by interpersonal communication
  – emphasis on the importance of student brought knowledge

• Learning is not merely the result of development: it IS development
  – It requires learner invention and self-organization
  – It may require the undoing of earlier conceptions
Virtual School - Collaboration

- Community building
  - Emphasis on team work and interpersonal involvement
- Culture promotion
  - Emphasis on inquiry and evidence
    - Through explicit and shared goals for learning outcomes
    - Resulting in more effective and reinforcing community
- Relevant knowledge applied to improve practice
Virtual School - ‘All in One’

• Multiple screens serving the same purpose
  – Learning efficiency
    • Expandable text screen
    • Automated bilingual instructions
    • Links to language assistance
    • Complete dialogue
    • Media screen

• Consistent linkage among overall components and individual parts
  – Parts of dialogue text linked to vocabulary and grammar explanations area

• Provision of access to interfaces
  – Vertical and horizontal
  – Integration of sensing – rendering – simulation
  – Creation of the impression of regular classroom environment

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For more…

http://www.hellasalive.gr/