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Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Animated Pedagogical Agents and Immersive Worlds: Two Worlds Colliding

Animated pedagogical agents are animated characters that respond to the user, adapt to user behavior, and facilitate learning in a computer-based learning environment (Johnson, Shaw, & Ganeshan, 1998) According to Veletsianos the educational agents can be categorized as follows; tutor, coaches, agents to support collaboration, learning companions, and agent actors.

Heller and Procter stated that animated pedagogical agents (APAs) have great potential to improve communication and increase student motivation/ engagement. Motivation and engagement is problematic when dealing with students in distance education, however with the interaction that the students receive with an APA motivation is increased.

Having the ability to interact with an AI character has proven to increase student engagement and motivation. In order for APAs to be affective the user needs to feel that they are connected in some way to the APA. Veletsianos calls this “persona effect”. According to Veletsianos paper the presence of an animated agent had a positive effect on what the learner perceived. Gulz (2004) stated that APAs can fulfill the need for a personal connection. As we all know social presence is an important link in distance education. APAs bridge the need that students have to be socially and emotionally involved in a distance education environment.

References

Gulz, A., (2004). Benefits of virtual characters in computer-based learning environments: Claims and evidence. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education, 14*, 313-334

Veletsianos, George. *Emerging Technologies in Distance Education*. Edmonton,AB: AU Press, Athabasca University,2010.301-316. eBook.