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CREATIVITY, CULTURE, BUSINESS GERMAN,
AND A MOO?
INTEGRATING ON-LINE TECHNOLOGY INTO
FOREIGN LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

In recent years, foreign language educators have been searching for alternatives to a classroom learning environment that casts teachers as producers and suppliers of information and students as consumers of material to be learned and integrated. Some of the most effective new teaching strategies enter and expand a world in which students already feel comfortable and energized, the space of the Internet, where students' curiosity and enthusiasm for social interaction never seems to sleep. One of these on-line venues for computer-mediated communication is the virtual realm of a MOO, short for Multi-User Domain, Object-Oriented, where many users can communicate and create, edit, and display virtual texts and objects on-line. The following discussion will use examples from *bizMOO*, a MOO for business German, to demonstrate how MOOs can integrate technology into foreign language instruction for international business.

One attractive quality of MOOs is that although they can be constructed for almost any purpose, they affect course dynamics in similar ways. Since *bizMOO* has recently been designed and will be used in spring 2007, many observations on student interaction with MOOs emerge from three years of teaching with *MOOse*, a MOO for intermediate students in a German cultural studies course at Vanderbilt University from fall 2004 to 2006 (German 221).¹ *bizMOO*, short for "Business German MOO," is a collaborative space for students in an intermediate level business German course (German 216). Students in *bizMOO* will practice doing things in a German business setting, from preparing job application materials to interacting in a business environment.² For the benefit of readers interested in using this kind of environment for other foreign languages, ways in which the on-line domain engages student potential and intelligence in general will be provided. The name, *MOOse*, a play on the German word for "muse," or "Muse," emerged from its

¹Margaret Setje-Eilers, *MOOse*, 2004, Vanderbilt University, Available: <http://helios.vanderbilt.edu:7000>, 25 Apr. 2006.

²Margaret Setje-Eilers, *bizMOO*, 2006, Vanderbilt University, Available: <http://helios.vanderbilt.edu:8000>, 25 Apr. 2006.

objective, inspiring users to interact imaginatively with course materials. Precisely that has happened; students interact with each other and with German texts and culture in innovative ways not available in traditional classroom settings.

The textual-graphical on-line environments of *bizMOO* and *MOOse* use free, open-source software called *enCore*, developed by Jan Holmevik as principal programmer and expanded by Daniel Jung.³ The *enCore* software is a technological shell with many features that invite creativity, inspire students to write and interact dynamically, and to participate in simulated situations. *enCore* needs to be downloaded and configured by ITS administrators at the university. The only requirement for the administrators of the MOO is space on a host server for class members to access, and for students, an Internet connection, a login name, and a password.

To understand what a MOO is, consider the two-part acronym, Multi-User Domain, Object-Oriented. “Multi-User” means that any number of people can access the on-line environment at any time from any location and “talk” by writing. Students communicate and collaborate in a spatial layout that contains texts, images, assignments, and other educational resources and materials. “Object-Oriented” means that users can change the virtual world by adding items called “objects” created by clicking, naming, and describing. Guests can also explore and talk to people on-line, but since only users with character identities can add to the MOO, guests cannot create anything, and they see fewer buttons in the top menu bar.⁴ With *enCore* software, every creative action follows the same paradigm. Users select the object editor from the top menu bar, click the type of object desired, name and describe the object, and possibly add graphics and music. For example, an object could be a written text, an item like a virtual “desk,” a note board, or a whole room. Each object is assigned an object number, and the name of the object appears as a clickable link that leads to a web page with graphic and audio capabilities.

³Jan Rune Holmevik was the principal programmer of *enCore*, an Open Source Project (1997–2006) through version 4.0.1. Daniel Jung assumed this function for version 5 with Trond Pettersen. Free software download and license conditions (GNU) at <http://sourceforge.net/projects/ele>. Copyright at http://lingo.uib.no:6002/Xpress_Login/main.html?option=copyright.

⁴You can visit a MOO that uses *enCore* if you enable cookies in your browser and install Java (free downloadable program). Leave the password field blank and click on “log in.”

Clicking on links to enter various rooms filled with images, texts, and other objects creates the perception that the MOO is a three-dimensional realm. In addition to communicating with another character or a group, students with character identities can “build” their own rooms or spaces, and use commands to “get” and “drop” objects, thereby moving them around, and to “post” notes on note boards. Many types of objects, such as rooms and texts written on “notes,” can play music clips and display graphics, as well as written descriptions and external links. Students can also create objects called recording devices, carry their recorders to any room during or outside class time, turn them on with textual commands, and record their conversations. Furthermore, they can edit texts they create and organize their writing on note boards. The public display of all writing makes it possible for students to respond to other students’ work. At least once a week in *bizMOO*, students write responses, but they also meet on-line to write in certain simulated situations, and to prepare presentations with each other. Students collaborate on-line, either at the same time to discuss a topic (synchronous computer-mediated communication) or at different times to respond to another student’s writing (asynchronous computer-mediated communication).⁵

Although MOOs are well-suited for distance learning, they do not take the place of classroom interaction. Most of the time in the 50-minute class periods is devoted to live discussion, but because the business German course meets in a computer classroom three times a week, students can also access selected materials in the MOO during class. Classroom and virtual space are integrated and thus complement each other; neither space has the objective of “global simulation” based on one extensive semester task, as advanced by Glenn Levine.⁶ *bizMOO* will be used in combination with a business German textbook, but a MOO could also be designed as a standalone module, to accompany any textbook, for any foreign language, or for virtually any other communicative purpose.⁷ In theory, the MOO provides space for reading and writing in collaborative and individual tasks, while class time is mainly reserved for listening and speaking about related textbook materials. In practice, because students talk to each other by writing, and listen

⁵For a concise summary of computer-mediated communication, see Judith L. Schrum, in Shrum and Glisan 421–26.

⁶Levine 26.

⁷I will use Conlin’s textbook, *Unternehmen Deutsch*.

by reading the responses, the MOO blends all four skills in one environment, where reading and speaking merge with listening and writing.

As a password-protected domain, *bizMOO* continues to use secret character aliases, a successful feature of *MOOse*, and an aspect that recalls early multi-user on-line technology. Students with character aliases in *MOOse* have consistently demonstrated freer and more spontaneous communication without the anxiety that often impedes foreign language production. Students in *bizMOO* will select semester-long secret aliases from a list of names of multicultural business people who might now live in Berlin. Students can design their character names to become who they want to be on-line, simply by redefining gender and characteristics, and they adapt their new identities to communicate with one another.

It is true that *bizMOO* reflects the same principle of task-based, communicative-driven creativity that underlies *MOOse*. Because the essay writing component in the pre-*MOOse* German cultural studies course had been unproductive and rather dull, the course was reconfigured as an on-line environment, where curiously, writing became the highlight.⁸ In addition to meeting for three 50-minute sessions in a computer classroom, students logged into *MOOse* with their aliases for weekly collaborative writing activities, most often role-play based on a reading. The redesign emerged from a sense of mismatch between past students' language proficiency and the demanding course material, and it incorporated many principles of Task Based Learning Language Teaching (TBLT) as succinctly outlined by Haynes, from tasks as the unit of analysis to rich input.⁹ Students found that technology fused foreign language learning and creative writing in the target language, transforming their traditional relationship "to" cultural history and propelling them "into" cultural studies, where they could experiment with the mystery of alias identities.

In addition to relaxing the atmosphere, using aliases in the cultural studies course enabled an astonishing level of creativity. Students found the anonymity of aliases exciting, especially in the first several weeks when they

⁸*MOOse* was developed over three semesters, from spring 04 to spring 05, with support and funding from the Provost's Award for Innovation in Teaching and Learning with Technology at Vanderbilt University. I am grateful to graduate student Mark Looney for his invaluable help, especially with the graphics. Thanks also to the students of G221 in 2004, 05, and 06, who inhabited the virtual world of *MOOse* and shaped it with humor and ingenuity.

⁹Haynes 200.

were unsure who their partners were, and some students succeeded in keeping their personae secret until the end of the semester. The aliases continued to have far-reaching consequences in *MOOse* long after students thought they had matched personae with student identities (although they were sometimes wrong). For a while, they engaged in activities without knowing their partners' actual identities, but even after they believed they knew the aliases of other students, they refrained from discussing their on-line identities publicly in class and enjoyed the aspect of play. Not everyone was sure of every alias until the end of the course, and when students "came out" to the class and revealed their identities to give final oral presentations created in the MOO with another character, everyone continued the game and pretended to be astonished (and some actually were). Since most of the activities involved role-play, for example acting out a scene from a text, characters often assumed other roles in addition to their aliases. Negotiating between multiple layers of identities liberated students on many levels, most importantly sending them on journeys into creative writing in virtual space.

Similarly, students in *bizMOO* also have a chance to explore many roles, at the very least public and private personae. Besides being a space to practice various types of writing, *bizMOO* is designed to engage students on many levels by modeling aspects of professional and personal life in contemporary Berlin. Students choose internships with major German corporations, and in this particular scenario all the companies have branch offices in the same building at the Sony Center. Before selecting an internship, students explore links to websites of German corporations. After making informed decisions, students write company profiles and job descriptions of the internships they have chosen. Because their offices are all located in the Sony Center, interns interact frequently in formal business situations and informal lunch breaks. In addition to creating and furnishing their offices, interns build and decorate their personal living spaces in Berlin, where they can meet informally.

As part of their day's work, student interns perform tasks they can find by clicking on links to the training center, a space with links to information and task-based collaborative activities on topics such as social benefits, correspondence, job search, and the European Union. They can find additional materials in the library and the conference room. From the heliport on top of the Sony Center, they can also take a helicopter to destinations that include the corporate headquarters for each of the interns (a list of links to homepages) and trade shows (also a list of links). In these professional environments, students need to use the formal address "Sie" and appropriate language. When

their workday is over, students take the subway-like public transportation link called the “S-Bahn” to return home to their personal spaces, where they meet their peers, and where they use the informal address “du.” They can record, read, and edit the transcripts of all conversations.

Because students constantly add new objects, texts, and writing to MOOs, the virtual environments soon turn into substantially student-created realms. In a strongly empowering manner, a MOO transforms traditional relationships of students to information, or input, allowing them to become not only producers of texts, but also of their own world in the target language. In *bizMOO*, these texts take the form of interactive dialogs, and many of the role play situations involve collaborative negotiations that begin with peer-driven role distribution. The dialogs are permeated with similar aspects of task-based interchange or negotiation, in J. F. Lee’s words, “interactions during which speakers come to terms, reach an agreement, make arrangements, resolve a problem, or settle an issue by conferring or discussing.”¹⁰

Speaking, whether it is recorded or not, takes textual form in a MOO and with the short cut built into *enCore* for talking, most students quickly become rapid speakers if they are not already comfortable in a chat environment. The short cut involves typing one quotation mark into the box at the lower left of the screen, followed by the message. For example, if Rebecca logs in under her alias Carola and types “Hello,” everyone else can read her greeting on the upper left side of the screen: Carola says “Hello.” After practicing for the first time in class, one student commented, “It is like talking, but I can read it.” “Talking” by writing not only merges speaking and writing, but also lets students show that they can distinguish between professional, formal language and more informal expression.

Toward the end of the semester, the on-line writing inventory of each intern contains transcripts of formal and informal dialogs, as well as materials needed to apply for a permanent position, such as a resume, a cover letter, and a job description. These documents may actually be used after the course is over. Other writing tasks include contributing articles to a newspaper for interns, an activity that can be substituted for dialog writing sessions if a student misses a scheduled meeting. Collaborative writing activities involve recording dialogs on given topics, as well as writing and responding to a series of business letters to and from selected (unknown) partners. Each student needs to write an inquiry, quote, and order, and may choose to write a

¹⁰ Levine 28.

reminder and a complaint for extra credit. In addition to composing business letters, student interns discuss the advantages and disadvantages of issues in German business culture, such as flexible working hours, the social benefit system, and admitting Turkey into the European Union. Students also take part in a simulated formal visit to a supervisor's home.

Letters and dialogs, in short, all types of written materials except newspaper articles, are displayed in each student intern's office on note boards, in other words, bulletin boards that organize texts as clickable links. After students write their texts in objects called "notes," they can "post" them on a note board by typing a simple command: "post #x on #y" (where x is the number of the note, and y the number of the note board). If they forget how to perform a certain action, students can consult a handbook posted on a note board in Potsdamer Platz. The handbook is a "how to" guide in English with explanations of the main actions in a MOO, from talking to creating objects. It also includes advanced topics such as making robot-type creatures and programming bots, in other words, substituting German phrases for English keywords and responses built into the "bot" objects. Bots can be fashioned to hold entertaining conversations with a single student or with unsuspecting visitors. In addition to the resource handbook with instructions in English, samples of required writing texts can be found on note boards in my office.

Students also create note boards to hold their final oral presentations. The presentation format will follow the procedure used in *MOOse*, where each student worked in the MOO with an unknown character as a partner and created a presentation stored in a room built by one of the partners. Ideally, neither character will know the other's identity until the day of the in-class presentation, an experiment in *MOOse* that not only reduced anxiety, but greatly inspired creativity. In *bizMOO*, partners choose two unrelated companies from a list, imagine a merger between them, come up with a new product they want to develop or a solution to a new problem, and hold their oral presentation as if explaining the results to a corporate board meeting.

Moreover, the note board feature of *enCore* not only helps students organize presentations, conveniently displaying contributions from more than one character, but they also reveal the degree of student participation in joint projects because they display date, time, and character name of the student posting each note on the note board. Consequently, using note boards increases the chances of equal work distribution, and it is impossible to hide makeshift, last-minute efforts. Student work is therefore both private and

public. The private nature of traditional class writing becomes quasi-public because everyone can read it, but since students control the secrecy of their aliases, their writing is in reality only as public as the characters choose.

The texts produced throughout the semester become material for self-reflection at the end of the semester, when students prepare on-line learning portfolios. Students select excerpts from writing they consider outstanding, briefly explain their choices, and post the information in a number of notes on a note board. Initially in *MOOse*, the project was designed to encourage students to reflect on what they had done during the course, but the portfolios became astoundingly creative outlets with graphics and music clips. Compiling learning portfolios, performing tasks, and playing roles on-line all move students beyond communicative language learning toward the goal of functional and cultural literacy in the target language, merging pedagogy, creativity, and the empowering aspects of play in one environment.

Since the 1990s MOOs have been used for creative educational purposes, and are therefore by no means new teaching tools. Their heritage helps explain their great attraction to imaginative users. They evolved from multi-user domain role-play of “Dungeons and Dragons” game software, the text-based MUDs (Multi-User Domains) of the 1970s, to new kinds of user interaction and learning, graphical-textual MOOs (Multi-User Domains, Object-Oriented) of the 1990s. The transition from simply *being* in a virtual space to *staging* a written text as an environment with spatial attributes could not have taken place without these pedagogical developments in MOO technology. Because users in the new educational environments could not only change and add to the on-line realm, but also shape and expand the virtual world, MOOs began to stretch social and physical frontiers. Since then, learning in MOOs has happened differently from learning in traditional classrooms, for students do not have to be in the same physical space during a specified meeting time, and as Haynes and Holmevik note, virtual environments profoundly change learning: “The beauty of learning in MOOspace is that it takes the notion of classroom and redefines the meaning of that term and the boundaries of classroom space. It also undoes the meaning of classtime. Time and distance have historically served as fixed limitations in educational institutions.”¹¹

MOOs bring together users from different locations, but unlike chat rooms, they offer a variety of other communicative channels, including whispering to

¹¹Haynes and Holmevik 125.

a particular character or paging (talking to) a character in a different space.¹² Haynes emphatically distinguishes MOOs from chat rooms.¹³ Emoting, one of the most important differences, has far-reaching implications for creative expression. Characters can “emote,” that is, use body language and show feelings, thoughts, or “physical” actions, similar to a third-person narrator describing a character’s gestures, thoughts, or emotions. For example, if the character Carola types the short cut for emoting, a colon and her message, other people on-line will read her message expressed in the third person. If she types, “:wonders if Torsten knows about previous problems with this supplier,” and presses “enter,” other characters will read: “Carola wonders if Torsten knows about previous problems with this supplier.” The capability of emoting enables students to become third-person narrators as well as actors writing in the first person, and it raises the pedagogical potential of foreign language production in a MOO to a level far beyond that of a chat room.

In addition to multiplying communicative layers, MOOs also provide more creative opportunities than the abstract space of a chat room. As Silke von der Emde and Jeffrey Schneider point out, the characteristics of a MOO help achieve important goals of second language acquisition: “peer teaching, autonomous learning principles, intellectually rich content-based instruction, individualized learning, and last but not least, play,” objectives that echo those of computer-aided language learning (CALL) proposed by Underwood in 1984.¹⁴ My experience teaching with *MOOse* corroborates von der Emde and Schneider’s observation that peer recognition, even for an on-line character with an alias, motivates students to reach a high level of on-line humor and general eagerness to understand the topic under discussion.¹⁵ In *MOOse*, students produced surprisingly witty dialogs, while demonstrating a good grasp of specific course materials at the same time. The considerable amount of autonomous student work in a MOO reinforces Haynes’s argument that “(a) rhetorical language learning pedagogy that is self-reflective, student-centered,

¹²Schneider and von der Emde 18.

¹³Haynes 200.

¹⁴von der Emde, Schneider, and Kötter 211. Silke von der Emde and Jeffrey Schneider created *MOOssigang* at Vassar College in 1998, the first bilingual German MOO to use *enCore* software in the United States.

¹⁵von der Emde, Schneider, and Kötter 213–20.

and decentered (in terms of authority in the teacher/student relation) is highly effective in a MOO environment.”¹⁶

To understand better why interacting in a MOO excites students to participate in ways they have not previously imagined in a course, particularly to include humor, it is helpful to think of MOOs in terms of “multiple intelligences,” a concept developed by Howard Gardner in his theory of intellectual competences, *Frames of Mind* (1983). Objecting to a single indicator of intelligence, such as a tested IQ, Gardner describes various areas of “intelligences,” the titular “frames of mind,” and proposes a “new theory of human intellectual competences.”¹⁷ An intelligence, he claims, is not a learning style, but instead a combination of human problem-solving and product-fashioning skills.¹⁸ In a theory that profoundly inspired pedagogy, he initially proposed seven components of intelligence, including linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, and two types of personal intelligence—intrapersonal and interpersonal.¹⁹ In *Intelligence Reframed* (1999), he added three more types: naturalist, spiritual, and moral.²⁰ Combined, they are “sets of know-how—procedures for doing things.”²¹ According to Gardner, intelligences do not appear in isolation.

By encouraging students to choose aspects of the on-line community that have the most appeal and to develop them creatively, a MOO enables each student to activate a particular configuration of what Gardner describes as components of intelligence. Interaction in the foreign language obviously draws from linguistic intelligence. A student with well-defined aural intelligence will add links to music clips that play when any object is opened, while another student might give every object a visual aspect by adding an icon and image (after obtaining permission).²² Some students design elaborate architectural complexes with interconnecting rooms in ways that call for logical-mathematical skills, and they exercise spatial, as well as bodily-kinesthetic components of intelligence whenever they move through

¹⁶Haynes 222.

¹⁷Gardner, *Frames* 5.

¹⁸Gardner, *Frames* x.

¹⁹Gardner, *Frames* 20th 276.

²⁰Gardner, *Intelligence Reframed* 47.

²¹Gardner, *Frames* (20th) 69.

²²It is best to store the images on the university server in a separate webspace for consistent access. Students need to have a procedure for asking permission to use the images that are not freely available.

these domains, as well as within the intricate textual spaces of their dialogs. In addition to providing multiple outlets for creativity, a MOO offers a variety of ways to write, and students who are less attracted to visual and audio enhancements can concentrate on experimenting with performance skills and cultural knowledge in dialogical interchanges.

Arguing for a collective set of intellectual competences, Gardner also associates inventors and actors. The abilities to create and to perform both draw from multiple intelligences—bodily-kinesthetic, linguistic, musical, personal. No performance (or cultural role), according to Gardner, uses only a single intelligence.²³ He distinguishes between intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence. As he explains, actors who use the Stanislavski method recreate a mood by focusing on intrapersonal, inwardly directed intelligence, or “inner vision.” In contrast, other actors use different acting techniques to activate interpersonal intelligence directed toward relationships between the self and others.²⁴ Communicating in a MOO, especially in dialogs, involves interpersonal talents that access the channel of cognition that establishes relationships. Alternatively, students writing company profiles or newspaper articles draw mainly from what Gardner might call intrapersonal intelligence. Because correspondence involves writing and responding to letters, it merges inwardly directed as well as socially collaborative texts, and it accesses what Gardner calls intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence.

Although the general characteristics of a MOO that have been outlined so far allow students to create a mix of professional and personal spaces, this online environment is pedagogically well-suited to demonstrating intercultural aspects of business German. Not only do students speak German by writing, they also use the emoting feature for nonverbal communication to describe body language, emotions, and physical movements. Besides offering a way to practice both the first- and third-person grammatical forms, emoting enables students to demonstrate intercultural sensitivity and appropriate behavior. For example, they can show their knowledge of German culture through emoting; they can knock before opening closed office doors, remove wrapping paper before giving flowers to a host, shake hands on certain occasions, use proper forms of address, and provide a suitable amount of context. Students alternating between professional and personal spaces need to demonstrate

²³Gardner, *Frames* (20th) 207.

²⁴Gardner, *Frames* (20th) 227.

appropriate behavior for each setting, and they can capture and display their cultural competence by recording their interactions. Effective emoting in a MOO not only helps to propel students toward cultural literacy in German business, it turns on-line collaboration into an environment that might be compared to an ecological system.

In *Language Acquisition and Language Socialization: Ecological Perspectives* (2002), Claire Kramsch adopts the metaphor of ecology, explaining that many educators have already described first and second language acquisition as a system that creatively adapts to its environment. Since a MOO has its own built-in communal structures, the ecological metaphor is particularly productive for the kind of on-line interaction that takes place in this virtual setting. According to Kramsch, the ecological approach extends beyond the goals of language acquisition (mastery of forms) and language socialization (assimilation into a language community) by recognizing the dynamic interaction between language learners and their environment.²⁵ Jonathan Leather notes that ecological systems and phonology share commonalities, such as self-organizing heterogeneous components that interact non-linearly in multiple temporal and spatial modes and adapting creatively to changes in the rest of the system.²⁶ In ecology, changes (and learning) are contingent on relations between the components and on social interaction. Likewise, in a MOO, relationships among users and between materials and users inspire productivity and change.²⁷

Thinking of a MOO as an ecological on-line creative community is a metaphor for the future that acknowledges a two-way exchange of energy between learners and learning space. To appear in the transcript of the recorded dialog, one needs to participate. Those who are silent might as well not be present, but because each student can participate at his or her own level, everyone contributes, and the interaction helps to bridge the unhappy abyss between talkers and listeners that often opens up in a classroom setting. Even if some students construct elaborate sentences, while others use shorter phrases, everyone experiences the simulation as a theatrical moment. Juli Burk compares visiting a MOO and going to the theater: "Entering a MOO is not unlike entering a theater building. One travels to the site, a space that exists within society for the purpose of a specific activity that is both part

²⁵Kramsch 3.

²⁶Leather 58.

²⁷Kramsch 5.

of and apart from the real world around us.”²⁸ The communal world blends the traditional skills of writing, reading, and speaking into performative text. During on-line “performances,” students often help, peer edit, and clarify issues for others. The main objective becomes communicating in a real-time atmosphere.

My experience teaching with a MOO shows that this technology creates an atmosphere of low anxiety in which aliases relax students and promote interactive creativity in a community-building space. Remarkably, the total number of pages written by students in *MOOse* exceeded the number of pages read in the course. Students retain passwords and character names indefinitely, and after the end of each semester’s experience with *MOOse*, some students entered the on-line world to add content to their spaces. Inhabitants of *MOOse* attained a sense of imaginative collaboration that resists the dichotomies Kramersch calls legacies of traditional learning: knowing and not knowing, course material and student work.²⁹ In a virtual landscape that allows gender switching and flexible social identities, language learning occurs simultaneously on many levels. Learning is relational and reflective in a blend of writing, reading, listening, and speaking. Student work becomes part of the course for future students.

Incorporating innovative technology into coursework also calls for new ways to track and assess student participation. In addition to conventional methods of assessment based on tested textbook materials, as well as student preparation and contributions to live class discussions, evaluation in *bizMOO* follows the checklist format used in *MOOse*, with midterm and final checklists for required work. In *bizMOO*, student tasks include writing a job description, a company profile, dialogs, job application materials, and creating several objects with descriptions in office and personal spaces. As in *MOOse*, assessment is based on the quality and content of all writing and on the design and reflective content of on-line learning portfolios. Transcripts of dialogs are evaluated in terms of comprehension of the topic, as well as the level of language and emoting, peer editing and teaching, respect for other participants, and the level of humor. In addition, anonymous initial and final surveys provide benchmarks for student development and give feedback about the course. Presentations are rated according to content, participation, advance (or last-minute) preparation, and creative ideas.

²⁸Burk 235.

²⁹Kramersch 24.

Creativity, culture, business German, and a MOO? *bizMOO* is an environment poised between imagination and integration, performance and screenwriting, professional and personal domains, production and consumption, and between simulated business situations and on-line resources. On the one hand, the MOO provides information and activities for learning about the corporate environment, current issues, and multiculturalism in Germany. On the other hand, it is a workspace that contains and displays collected student writings and demonstrated knowledge of business German culture. The collaborative environment also unleashes creativity in a world in which spatial design reflects a student's own ingenuity, where one room can open onto a series of new spaces built by the student. The virtual world is a student-centered domain far removed from the paradigm of teacher-producer and student-consumer. Teaching with a MOO significantly increases participation and originality, and interacting in a MOO inspires students to communicate, negotiate, and write far more than in a course without on-line collaboration. MOO technology achieves one of the crucial business objectives that drive the corporate world, reaching output levels that substantially exceed input, by turning students into producers.

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