**Virtual Reality “Taster” English Corner workshop**

**Warm-up discussion**

1. What do you know about VR technology?
2. Have you ever had any VR experience? (When, where & what?)
3. Do you think VR could be helpful in language learning? How?

**Post-experience Task**

1. *Read the article “Pros and cons of virtual and augmented learning experiences” and summarize the main arguments.*

Only a decade ago, technologies such as Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) were firmly confined to the realm of science fiction. But with the advancement of science and the ongoing digitisation of the world, what was once considered impossible has now become practically commonplace. Nowhere does this hold truer than in the fields of VR and AR. Global corporations have enhanced efficiency and profitability through the incorporation of these techniques; e-commerce and retail businesses have pushed the boundaries of the home shopping experience; and the gaming and entertainment sectors have taken immersiveness to whole new levels. And the next field undergoing a radical transformation as a result of these new advancements is that of education. The usage of AR and VR in education adds an entirely new dimension to a field that has remained relatively static for the majority of its existence. They unlock new possibilities, enhance existing practices, and allow for unique methodologies and techniques to be implemented. However, the introduction of such a radical set of tools to a sector as critical as education merits debate. To that end, this article will examine the advantages and disadvantages of using these technologies in a learning environment.  
**The pros of VR and AR learning experiences**

*Heightening the interest of students*

Traditional classroom experiences have always been reliant on a teacher’s ability to capture and maintain the attention of their students. Unfortunately, this ideal outcome isn’t always realised, and students can frequently find their attention drifting when faced with a stream of dry concepts and figures.   
The usage of VR and AR can radically alter this dynamic. By incorporating a visual and interactive component to otherwise abstract information, the focus and interest of students will sharply increase. This will motivate them to actively engage in classrooms, and positively influence the way in which learning is approached.  
*Experiential learning and practice*

Educators have long struggled with the challenge of encouraging students to pursue a career in the STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. VR and AR offer a solution to this issue. Purely theoretical subjects such as mathematics can be made more interesting through the visualisation of the theories and formulae being studied in a three-dimensional framework. The implementation of augmented reality in fields such as medicine and engineering allows students to practice the techniques they are taught and gain valuable first-hand experience in a safe, controlled environment. Showcasing these critical fields to learners in an entirely new manner has the potential to spark a lifelong interest at an early age, and produce a generation of highly skilled, motivated, and enthusiastic specialists. Revolutionising distance learning

The decade has seen online learning surge in popularity, both in India and across the world, driven by improved access to the internet, the professionalisation and standardisation of the field, and a growing acknowledgment of its usefulness. However, this increase in popularity has also exposed several shortcomings. Key among them is the absence of the classroom environment and lack of engagement with teachers and fellow learners. The introduction of VR and AR has opened an avenue through which these issues can be addressed. An academic model that combines the advantages of online learning with the experiential possibilities of these technologies has the potential to overhaul the system and have lasting impact on the future of education.

**The cons of VR and AR learning experiences**

*Barriers to entry*

Although VR and AR technologies have advanced in leaps and bounds since their inception, they are still comparatively rare and prohibitively costly. This limits their availability to institutes and individuals with the financial means to access and utilise them. As such, they have the potential to create an imbalance in the field of education, creating a stark division between the haves and have-nots.

*The potential for isolation*

While interactive technologies can prove hugely beneficial to learning outcomes, they do come with a caveat. Strapping on a pair of VR goggles and learning in an entirely virtual environment can lead to isolation and undermine the element of human interaction that is so vital to successful learning environments. It is therefore vital that VR and AR be used to supplement interpersonal learning techniques, rather than replacing them entirely.  
Addictive nature of virtual environments

In our rush to embrace the latest advancements in education, it is important to recognise the potential hazards and downsides associated with them.   
VR addiction is a form of digital addiction associated with the use of VR applications, offering users an avenue through which they can escape the stress and concerns of everyday life. Given the relatively recent nature of these new technologies, a great deal of research remains to be done on the long-term impact of their prolonged usage. Until then, it is best to use these devices in moderation.  
(Adapted from Raunaq Kakkar: <https://yourstory.com/2020/07/pros-cons-virtual-augmented-learning-experiences>)

 