

SECOND LIFE LESSON PLANS AND ACTIVITIES

Most of these can be used with any language, but are not specifically related to any chapter or lesson.

1. Command forms can be started at any time, ideally as soon as verbs are introduced.

Lessons should be linked to vocabulary-specific content as given in chapter vocabulary

Commands; Explain the singular, usually informal, form of the verb and the polite or plural form. Students should have studied the vocabulary before the activity.

They should assemble in the large auditorium because of the seating. Give commands by individual and by group. Juan, get up and move to José's side of the room. Sit next to José. All students on the left side of the class, please stand up. All students trade places with the others on the opposite side.

This lesson would include prepositions and adverbs as well as command forms. Verbs of movement will be the most used, by their very nature, but other command forms can be incorporated. Command forms are a good way to familiarize students with the vocab meaning as well without any conjugating.

Other suggestions. Have a short command lesson once a week, Commands should be used in class from day 1, with visual cues. With SL it is easy to convey those cues.

2. Vocabulary associated with clothing and body parts is easily illustrated in SL. Each student may follow commands with his/her avatar, manipulating or morphing the changes as commanded. Because of the immediacy of creating a functioning avatar (with or without wings, tails, etc) this would tend to be something covered earlier than is normal in a foreign language classroom.

The body parts are listed to the side of the menu with sub-groupings. Students will be given or generate (better) their own list of words to use in the activity. Also immediately usable is color vocabulary. While one might not always teach that at the same time as body parts, the nature of SL might make it more appropriate.

Since clothing acquisition is another immediate necessity of SL, the short list at the side of the screen will suffice. The color changes are visual but may be accompanied by cues from the instructor that could also combine another command lesson, i.e. everyone change his shirt to green. Along with acquiring the vocabulary, the students may go on a virtual field trip with the instructor at the beginning and very soon will be sent on a shopping trip on their own.

Part of the mechanics of SL that require practice after acquiring the clothing entail learning to use a sand-box or another designated changing area to open, try on and discard items. Aside from clothing, many "freebies" will soon clutter up the inventory.

A side bar to that is another potential class activity, just conversing about what the students find, show and tell, and sharing. They may give away or let others copy the items providing another opportunity for discussion.

Student may be sent to another area of the virtual classroom, so that dialogue is limited as it often gets confusing if there is a larger group.

Thematic vocabulary units may be designed by the instructor as content areas are found throughout SL. The far-reaching and fantastic worlds, such as the Titanic, complete with ballroom, Paris in the 1900's, and ancient Egypt offer an enormous range of vocabulary acquisition. And what you see is much more easily acquired than just the printed word. The instructor has to keep working ahead of the class to find these areas!

Another and really socially helpful ploy is to send students out in pairs or small groups with a specific task in mind, either to meet with others and make their acquaintance, offering friendship. The social contacts, when the students identify themselves, will make it easier to use their language skills in conversation. While syntax and grammar are not as easy to type rapidly, even the native speakers resort to verbal shorthand. The communication factor is as important as grammar as one is immediately involved without worrying about accent or fluency.

3. Inviting SL friends to the class is an incredible opportunity that isn't feasible in RL. Although one has to allow for time differences, 7 to 8 hours in Europe, 18 hours in Australia, often these people are night-owls and if you are in the lab during the day you may be able to get a guest speaker to come to your class. Within our hemisphere, it is the same time in Colombia as in the US, so no problem there. The people that one meets are all computer-literate or they wouldn't be on SL and love to share their expertise and visit with you. Or they will invite you there to go to a club, learn dances and chat. Foreign travel at no cost.

4. Some of these sites are quite large so you could take an entire class there and spread out and look around, come back and report on what they have seen. A few students may wish to get together at an interesting landmark and write a report on it. Some more enterprising among them could do some peer tutoring when they are not in class by arranging a time when they can be on-line together and work on a project assigned by the teacher.

5. The educational opportunities available within SL are always available to identifiable groups. Since the number of SL participants on a college level is growing by leaps and bounds, you can link up with groups with similar interests, meeting at "their place or ours" to pursue some goal.

For example there is a Literature Alive site, run by English teachers that promotes many aspects and ways of studying literature where you can dig right in and participate.

6. Start your own group. That's right. The Society for Creative Anachronism notwithstanding, SL offers an unparalleled chance to get together with like-minded folk and make rules and do something that you all agree on. You have to abide by SL rules, but you can dress up as wildly as you like and have an outrageous or creative group that will attract global members. My favorite so far is the anti-Johnny Hallyday groups that depicts the aging French rocker, an Elvis-type given to American country and Western themes, on its logo embracing the current President of France, Nicolas Sarkozy who as well has attracted an anti-group. (This of course is so French) A class can get together, write a blog, get some PR out and be up and running. And no money is lost!