

ASCILITE 2025

Future-Focused:

Educating in an Era of Continuous Change

AI-led oral assessment through immersive simulations: Redefining experiential learning in business education

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This exploratory project addresses the ASCILITE 2025 conference theme—*Future-Focused: Educating in an Era of Continuous Change*—by introducing an innovative virtual reality (VR) experience designed for over 300 first-year business students per term. Aligned with the sub-themes of AI and Human Synergy, Inclusive Futures, and Adaptable Learners, students engage deeply with a real-world airline case to explore the SERVQUAL framework (a widely used model and research instrument for assessing service quality): reliability, assurance, tangibles, empathy, and responsiveness.

Advancing TEL Research and Practice: Responding proactively to continuous educational change, this initiative combines immersive technology with AI-led oral assessments. Grounded in contemporary Technology-Enhanced Learning (TEL) literature, it promotes embodied and accessible learning as an alternative to anxiety-inducing traditional oral assessments (Alcorn & Cheesman, 2022; El Shazly, 2021).

Innovative Practice: Students initially explore the airline case study through traditional classroom activities before transitioning to an interactive VR environment. Here, they assume the role of airline customer service staff, interacting with AI-powered avatars portraying airline passengers. This enables students to apply SERVQUAL principles through authentic conversational scenarios. AI-led oral assessments offer immediate, personalised feedback, significantly reducing assessment anxiety, logistical complexity, and associated costs (Alcorn & Cheesman, 2022; Gardner, O’Leary, & Yuan, 2021; Yong, 2020).

Theoretical Foundations: The project integrates experiential learning theory (Kolb, 2015) and cognitive apprenticeship (Matsuo & Tsukube, 2020), providing authentic professional experiences supported by structured opportunities for reflection. Drawing from social constructivist principles (O’Connor, 2022; Richardson, 2003), students collaboratively analyse their VR interactions, fostering critical thinking and resilience. The design highlights AI’s capacity to enhance motivation, reduce anxiety, and support fair, inclusive assessments (Luckin, Holmes, Griffiths, & Forcier, 2016; Rane, Choudhary, & Rane, 2023).

Enhancing Accessibility and Learner Experience: A core aim of this pilot is exploring student acceptance of AI-driven oral assessments, given their novelty compared to traditional methods. Qualitative data collection included surveys, student reflections, and assessor feedback designed to capture key student perspectives on fairness, adaptability, and overall learning experience. Guided by social constructivism, this learner-centred approach is essential for evaluating the effectiveness and scalability of this innovation (Richardson, 2003; O’Connor, 2022).

Cross-disciplinary Relevance: Originally piloted within business education, the flexibility of the VR and AI framework supports adaptation across disciplines including hospitality, healthcare, and law. Flexible access options—from VR headsets to browser-based simulations—ensure inclusivity across diverse learning contexts (Asad, Naz, Churi, Tahanzadeh, & Jermisittiparsert, 2021).

Collaborative Futures and Scholarly Impact: Developed collaboratively with educational technologists and interdisciplinary academics, this project exemplifies innovative digital education. Integrating AI-led assessments aligns with Education 4.0 and 5.0 trends, emphasising personalised and adaptive learning (Rane, Choudhary, & Rane, 2023), and opening avenues for future research into learning analytics, student engagement, and comparative assessments (Gardner et al., 2021; Luckin et al., 2016).

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This abstract presents scalable innovation, showcasing the transformative potential of immersive technology and AI-driven assessment in higher education.

Keywords: technology-enhanced TEL learning; AI oral assessment; virtual reality VR simulations; experiential learning; service quality assessment; assessment anxiety; student acceptance; automated assessment feedback; immersive education; higher education innovation

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