



# VR FOR STUDY ABROAD

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# Overview

- Introduction
- Background
- Methods
- Results with limitations
- Conclusions and lessons learned
- Final thoughts and questions

# Constant Advancement = Constant Improvement?

- Tech requires review for teaching
  - Avoids panacea movements; tech being the answer to everything
- Virtual Reality (VR) has recently been regarded as a technology of huge potential in language learning (Sadler, 2017, Lloyd et al, 2017)





# Background - VR

VR has been shown to treat a variety of anxiety disorders from PTSD to neurorehabilitation to special language impairments. (Repetto, 2018)

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) explains that the learning process is a sort of recursive 'upward spiral' or a positive feedback loop, where each step influences the future and previous learning that has occurred and that will occur. (Kolb, 1984)

Extended Cognition (based in Embodied Cognition) talks about how we use our environment, when available, to replace the mental representations that we keep in our minds. I.e. when we learn the word 'table' in a new language, there's no need for a mental representation if there's a table right in front of us. In a way, this removes a level of abstraction from the learning process. (Atkinson, 2010)



# What I did

- Summer 2018
- 29 Scholarship recipients from a Southwestern University, going to Orvieto, Italy immediately in the Fall, or the following Spring semester
- 3 x 2 hour workshops
- Used 3 - two minute videos during last workshop, previously used in other research (Berti et al, In Press)



*Street*



*Restaurant*



*Townsquare*

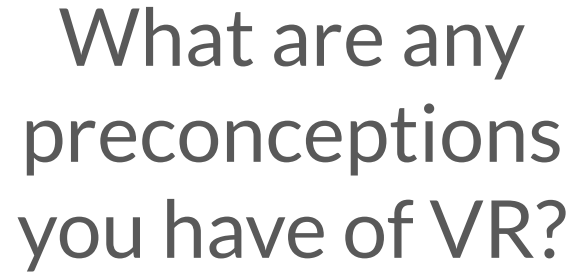


## **Results - Student Perceptions Pre-Survey**

Have you used virtual reality (VR) before?

53% YES

Purpose was mainly ENTERTAINMENT



What are any preconceptions you have of VR?





# What are your preconceptions and thoughts of studying abroad?

7 culture, world

-I think it's going to be a great life experience.

6 learn

-That it will be fun, and exciting but also scary

5 experience

-It's an amazing experience that everyone should try.

4 opportunity, great, will, new

3 studying, cultures, excited, amazing...

-That I am going to be lost and confused most of the time.



# What are your preconceptions and thoughts regarding studying in Italy?

10 will

“Nervous, but excited.”

8 excited

“I think the culture is going to be very enjoyable.”

5 culture

“Nothing.”

4 difficult, think

“I get homesick, so I know it will be hard for me.”

3 opportunity, different, history, food, see

“The architecture will have me not wanting to go home.”

“I’m excited to enjoy the food of the culture as well as interacting with the people.”



# What are your concerns about studying abroad?

5 language, home

Not speaking the language.

4 will, able

A language barrier.

3 homesick, culture, barrier, time, lost

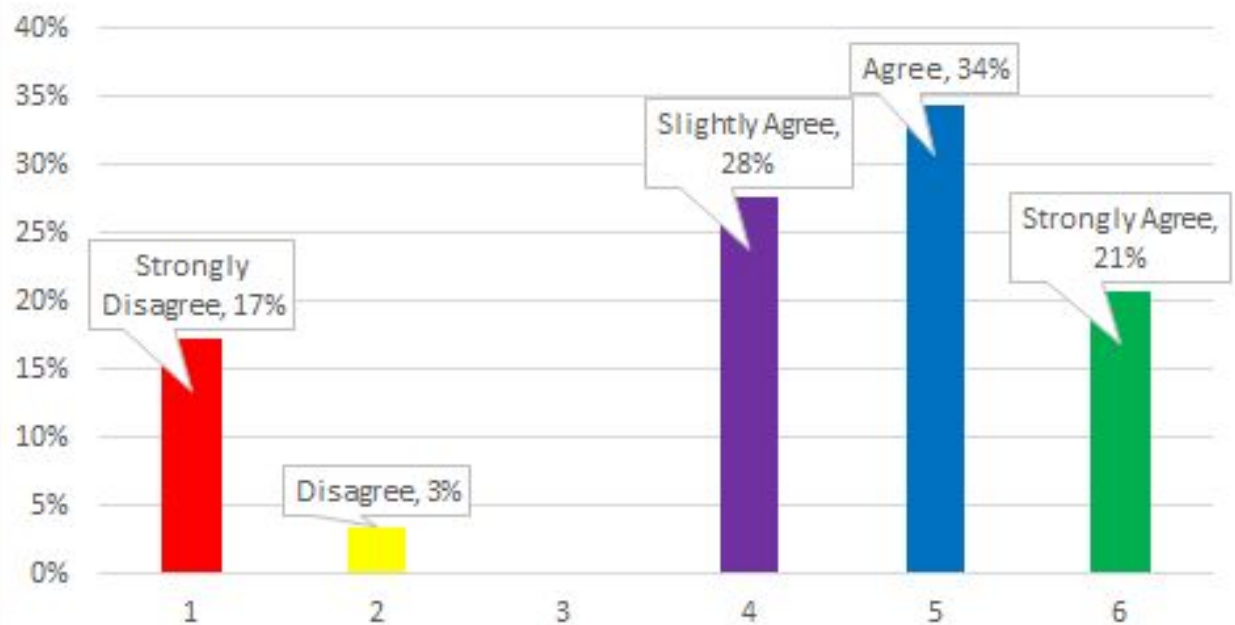
Being homesick in general and feeling left out of my group.

That I won't be able to enjoy my time in a new country due to homesick.

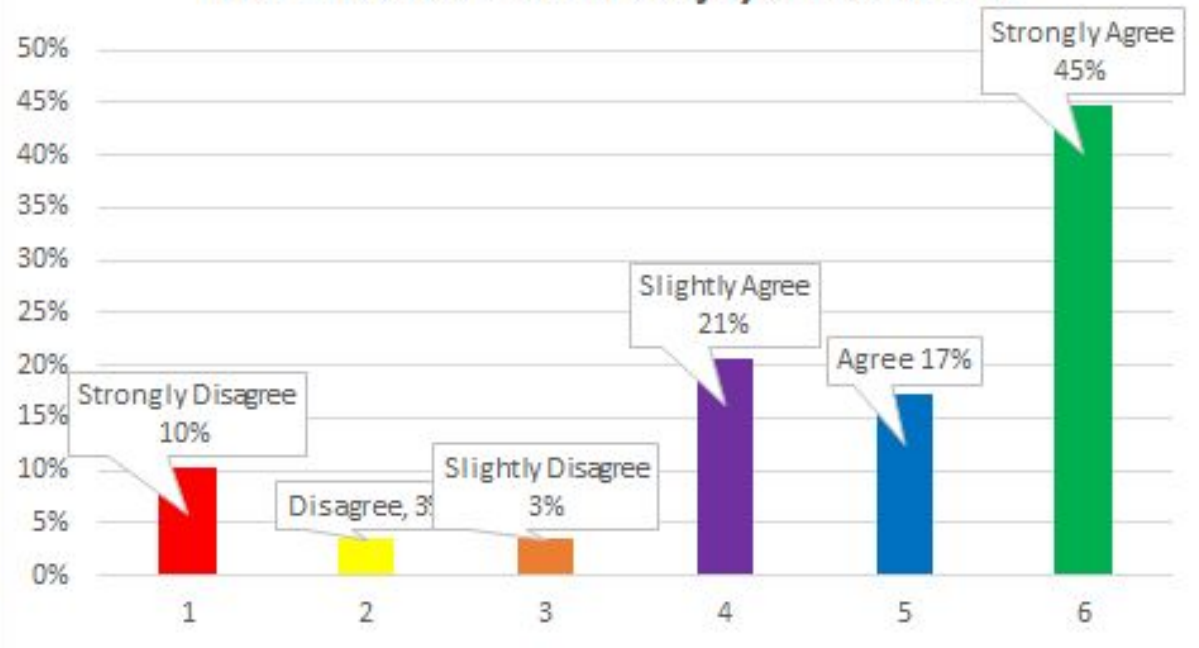
Not knowing what to do or say when in troubling situations.

Culture shock/ language /communication

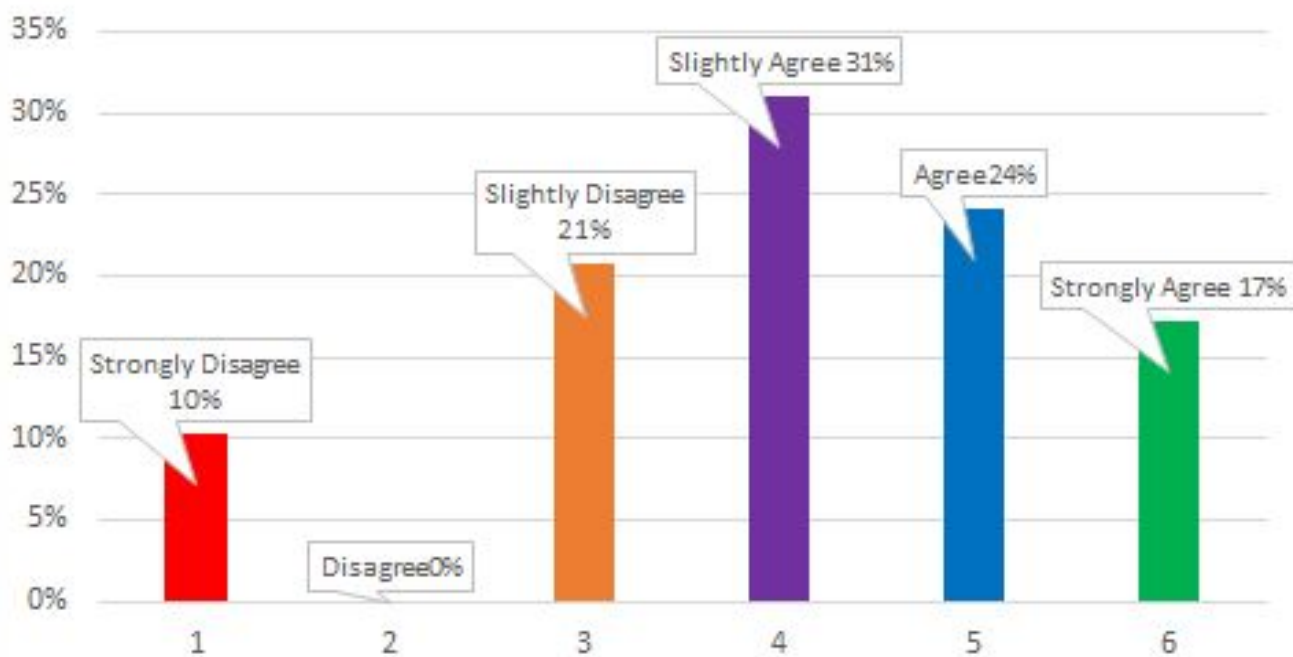
## Using VR for travel abroad preparation is useful.



### VR in the classroom is enjoyable and fun.

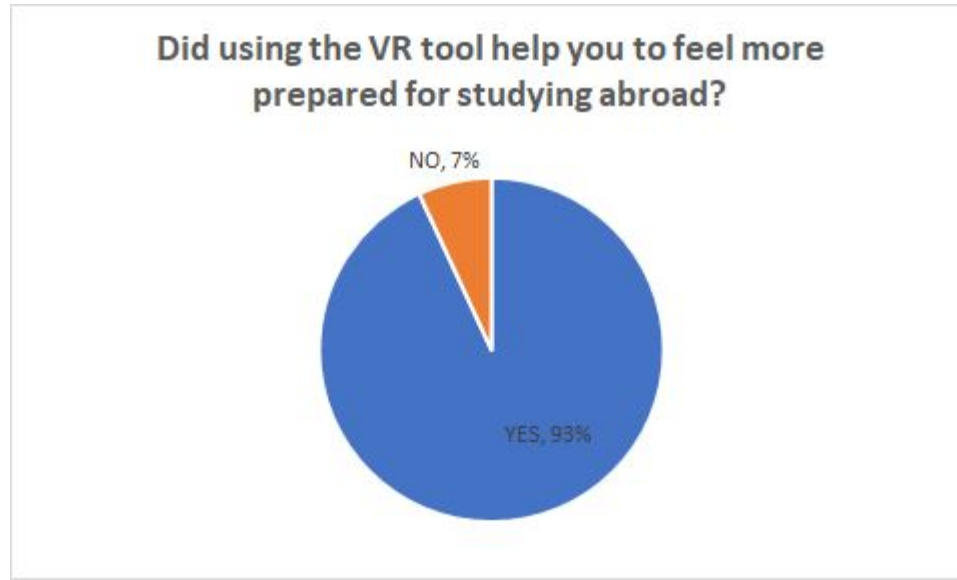



## I think VR enhances language learning.



## Results - Student Perceptions Post-Surveys

*Did using the VR tool help you to feel more prepared for studying abroad?*





*In what way do you think this VR experience was/was not helpful in preparing you for study abroad? 8 Negative/22 Positive remarks*

“It gave context to a country that is always romanticized”

“I think it gave us a great perspective as to what we are to expect in Italy. Oftentimes we had this sort of expected stereotypical image that is often wrong compared to the real experience.”


“It was helpful in helping me realize that Italy isn’t all that different from America and that my fears are somewhat unfounded.”

“It didn’t have people interacting with you.”





**How does the VR experience compare with other experiences you have had, for example learning with a book, using an app, or learning from a teacher-led presentation?**



“Learning using VR feels to me like the most realistic way of learning. You can read something in a book and have an expectation that might not quite line up to the reality.”

“The VR experience has made me have realistic ideas about what to expect in Italy which I find more helpful than reading about Italy in a book”

“There is just so much that you can get from books and photos. This almost live presentation is much different and helps you feel like you're there.”



## Post Study Abroad Reflections

*What concerns about studying abroad did VR help to alleviate?*

“It helped showed me what to expect and how many cities in Italy might be.”

“VR alleviated my concern that I wouldn’t feel comfortable in strange new surroundings when in actuality Italy is very similar to America”

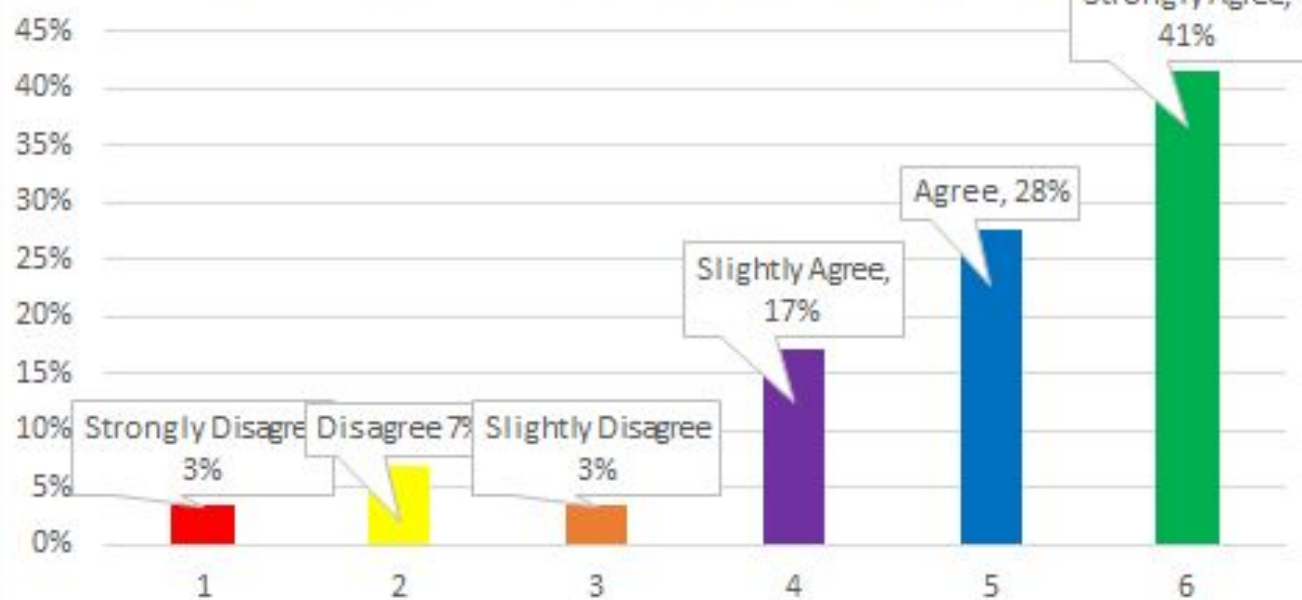


## What concerns did VR highlight?

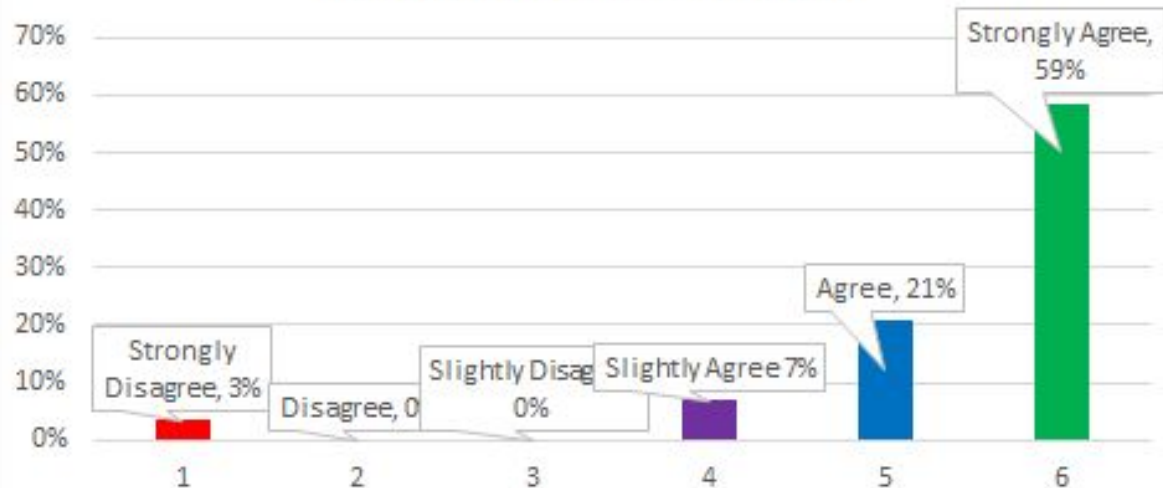
“I don’t think I’ll be able to communicate with the Italians in general on the street.”

“It made me realize i need to improve on my italian language speaking skills.”

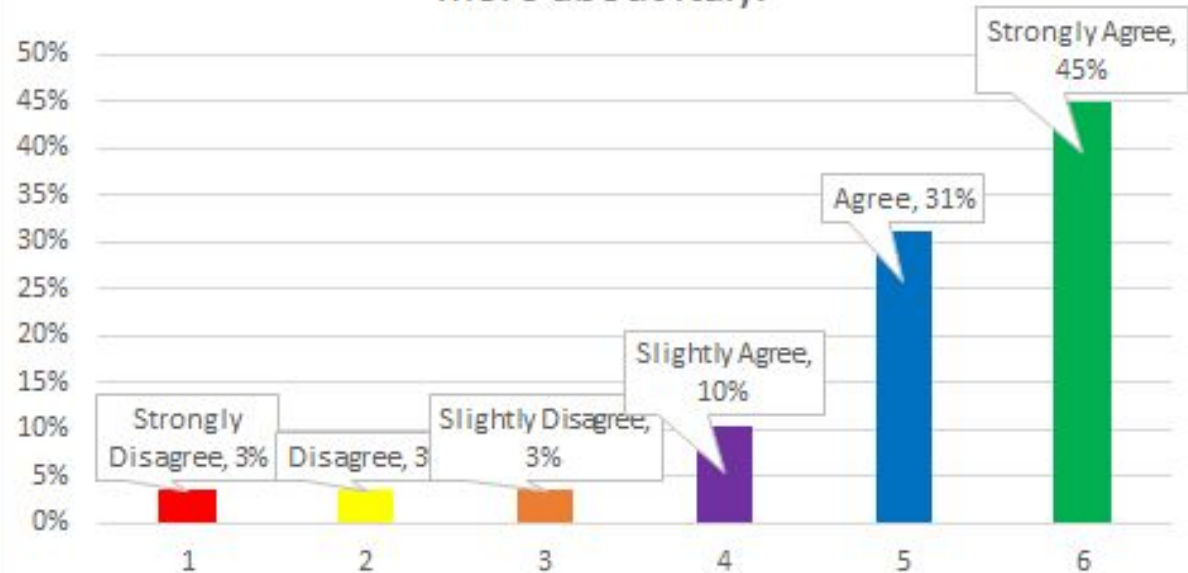
A VR experience is complimentary to other sources of learning about language and culture.



Seeing videos in 360 degrees and virtually experiencing Italian places increases my motivation to travel to Italy.



The VR experience was useful to understanding more about Italy.



## Post Study Abroad Reflections



**Now that you have returned, what aspects of the VR experience seemed more important or memorable to you?**

“The most important aspect of the VR experience was being able to take away the realism of the settings that I was about to put myself in. I think it helped lessen the shock value of being in an entirely different country altogether to just see it through VR.”






# Lessons Learned

- Dizziness is a real factor, and sometimes the students won't tell you until after
- Make sure the videos you use are relevant to the study abroad program, in the city if possible
  - Locations that students will visit that have practical value, train station, pharmacy, townsquare
- Students want to see more interactions, which may be difficult to create in an authentic 360 video
- Access - VR in YouTube doesn't work in browser mode

A case study following one or two students would be very informative



# Thank you! Please email me with questions or for the references list.

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