It is said that one lives in an age of pictures, and iconic turn is victorious. Virtual worlds are embedded into physical ones, and new technologies as 3D and augmented reality are on rise. In these virtual worlds the sense of time and space is altered.

Learning nowadays in virtual worlds is mostly visual and 3D orientated. No surprise that sometimes virtual worlds can carry more information that the real ones. Examples as Second Life, Cloudparty and Oculus (3D Facebook) can be mentioned. In these worlds characters interact with each other as they were virtual objects. This is also the way knowledge is often gained. Still, some aspects of learning depend on verbal culture and written discourse. Besides using their avatars, users in virtual worlds prefer written, real-time communication – chat. This world is depicted by writer and theorist Ernest Cline.

At the same time another theorist Manfred Spitzer, who published a book titled Digital Dementia, argues that that during childhood and early adolescence the human brain is astonishingly plastic. It means that it forms its circuitry of neuron paths in response to the way the brain is used during this age; later, in adulthood, these wires become fixed. Having this in mind it is essential to give developing brains the full range of stimuli that comes from interacting with the real world, not a virtual one. So that comes from confronting physical obstacles through problem solving to social interactions. Spitzer says that, by comparison, the virtual world offers less stimuli and less opportunity for the developing brain to achieve its full potential.

In our paper we intend to argue that virtual worlds which rely on the iconic turn cannot be exact and whole without verbal elements, while at the same time chat in virtual worlds defers digital dementia.

György MOLNÁR, PhD, is Deputy Head of Department, Assistant Professor at the Department of Technical Education, Budapest University of Technology and Economics. Has studied Engineering and Informatics, as well as Educational Science, at the same university (MSc 2000, Engineer in Electrical Engineering; PhD 2008, Pedagogy). He is a certified engineer-teacher. As a teacher and researcher, he specializes in vocational training, the educational role of infocommunication technologies, and e-learning environments. He has published, with András Benedek, “Three Dimensional Applications in Teaching and Learning Processes”, in Fezile Özdamli, Jesus Garcia Laborda, Yasas Maasoglu (eds.), WCES, 6th World Conference on Education Sciences, Malta, 2014; “ICT in Education: A New paradigm and Old Obstacle”, in Arno Leist, Tadeusz Pankowski (eds.), IARIA, ICCCI 2014: The Ninth International Multi-Conference on Computing in the Global Information Technology, Sevilla, 2014, pp. 54–60; “Flashes or Steady Light? Or the Potentials of Developing Networked Learning”, in M. Baptista Nunes – M. McPherson (eds.), Proc. of the IADIS International Conference.

Zoltán SZÜTS, PhD, b. 1976, is Professor and senior social media manager at Kodolányi János University of Applied Sciences, Department of Media and Communications. Studied at Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest, earned his PhD degree in literary science. Was a lecturer at Hankuk University of Foreign Studies, Seoul, Korea, from 2004 until 2007. His research interest is focused on the theory and practice of online media and communication, visual communication, hypertext and online communities. Author of the book Metaphors of the World Wide Web: An Introduction to the Art of New Media, published by Orisis Kiadó in 2013, and numerous articles, including “An Iconic Turn in Art History – The Quest for Realistic and 3D Visual Representation on the World Wide Web”, in András Benedek – Kristóf Nyíri (eds.), The Iconic Turn in Education, Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, 2012. E-mail: szutszoltan@gmail.com.