CYPRIS VILLAGE: LANGUAGE LEARNING IN VIRTUAL WORLDS

A Dissertation
Submitted
to the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Education

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May, 2017

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ABSTRACT

Online virtual worlds provide a unique environment for language instruction and learning, yet there are few longitudinal studies that chronicle the workings of existing communities on avatar-based graphical platforms. This study focuses on Cypris Chat, a nonprofit English learning and teaching group within Linden Lab's Second Life. In this study, I discuss the structure of this community, the factors behind this group's development from five members in 2008 to 882 in 2016, and the reasons for its appeal as a virtual world language learning group. I also examine the ways in which teaching and learning take place there. Although the study is primarily descriptive and ethnographic, it also makes use of three theoretical frameworks to analyze different aspects of the group. The digital habitats framework of Wenger, White, and Smith (2009) was used to judge Cypris' efficacy as a working online community. Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework was utilized to explore how adequately the group made use of affordances specific to learning opportunities in virtual worlds. Finally, Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural learning theory was used to analyze recorded discourse of formal and informal language learning activities. Data were collected through interviews of 21 Cypris staff and members; a majority of participants were adults of Japanese nationality, but members from Europe and the Middle East also participated. Participant observation and my personal experiences with Cypris' history were also utilized, both to inform the development of interview questions and to determine the long-lasting appeal of the group; observations drew on my eight years experience as resident researcher and volunteer tutor at Cypris. Finally, disparate learning activities, both formal lessons and

informal impromptu interactions during extracurricular conversations and games, were recorded, and select incidents were analyzed through discourse analysis. Results suggest that members' perception of the importance of both formal activities and informal socializing outside of class was crucial to the continued existence of the group. Additionally, they also suggest that the group's long-lasting appeal is related to the adventurous spirit of key members identified as Internet early adopters. As for teaching and learning within the community, observations indicated that tutors and learners alike took advantage of both traditional instructional methods and the unique affordances of the Second Life environment, both within and outside formal instruction at Cypris. Conclusions suggest that both Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats and Lim's (2009) Six Learnings frameworks are robust measures of online learning communities, and Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural learning theory was shown to be applicable to both exploration of learning through play and informal interactions as well as more structured lessons in online virtual world learning groups like Cypris. This study contributes to the body of research on models of online language education, multimodal learning in virtual worlds, and the potentially revolutionary possibilities and challenges inherent in language learning communities such as Cypris.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for all the encouragement and support I received during this study, and I would like to thank everyone who contributed advice and guidance along the way. Dr. Mark Peterson at Kyoto University and Dr. Dongping Zheng at the University of Hawaii at Manoa provided inspiration early on, and it was almost beyond imagining that they would offer both their time and expertise to my proposal and defense committees. I would like to thank Dr. David Beglar and the inspirational staff at Temple University Japan, especially my adviser, Dr. Eton Churchill for his infinite patience and confidence in this study. He went above and beyond the call of duty on many occasions with his assistance, and in a sense, this is as much his study as mine.

I would also like to thank all my participants from the Cypris Chat learning community. Over the last five years, they have given up their time for my questions, allowed me to record their classes and conversations, and shared their lives with me for this study. Most of all, I would like to thank Mike McKay and Mystie for their inspiration. Without them, there would be no Cypris Chat, and this study would not exist.

Finally, I would like to thank my family who never wavered in their support throughout this project. My loving parents, Lon Milo and Constance DuQuette provided encouragement from afar, and my wife Miwa and son Alex never let me forget who I was really writing this paper for.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I teleported into Cypris about 20 minutes before my scheduled activity. Checking my mini-map, I noticed a few avatars over at the Chat Ring, so I quickly flew over. Backy was there, talking with someone I hadn't seen before about the difference between "he is taller than I" and "he is taller than me." Once he saw me, he said hi, and before he could even ask, I posted a link to a website on the "than I / than me" controversy. The new woman laughed, and from her profile and voice, she appeared to be a Japanese bilingual living in San Francisco.

"Since you like minimal techno," I said, referencing her profile, "you might want to join my DJ chat thing. It starts in 5 minutes over at the Tiki Bar."

I led Backy and the new woman across the wooden bridge that separates the Chat Ring from the Cypris Tiki Bar. The decorations for the 5th anniversary party were still up. Avatars began materializing around me, as I assumed my position behind the DJ booth and accessed the Internet radio stream I had rented earlier that day. As I began streaming my music mix into the parcel via Winamp Shoutcast, the learners began clicking on the glowing dance ball floating above the floor, their avatars starting to gyrate with the randomized dance animations provided by the ball.

"Okay, let's get started,"I spoke into my headset. "You know the drill. I give you incorrect sentences in text chat. You correct them. Be careful of punctuation,

capitalization, spelling, grammar, and word choice. Today's story is the Chinese fable of The Hunter and the Quail. Note that "quail" is both countable and uncountable as a noun."

*"**Once, a flock of quail lived on the banks of river**" I cut and pasted the sentence from a Word document into local text chat.*

*"**Once, a flock of quail lived on the bank of river**" Backy typed in local.*

"No, 'banks' is not the problem. A river can have one bank or two."

*"**Once, a flock of quail lived on the banks of the river"** typed Vet, the undisputed champion of this activity.*

"You got it Vet, but there's just one more thing," I said aloud. "Almost there."

*"**Once, a flock of quail lived on the bank of the river."** Vet typed into text almost immediately, punctuating the utterance with an audible "Period!" over voice chat.*

"Well done! Vet wins this round, and I'm giving him one Linden," I put my cursor over Vet's avatar and right clicked. An option to "Pay" appeared, and I transferred one Linden dollar from my account to his. "Next sentence…"

It is obvious that the language learning activity described above did not take place within the confines of a traditional school setting. In fact, it could be disputed that the "place" in which it occurred exists at all. Yes, the server space simulating the environment described is owned by Linden Lab, based in San Francisco, California, but just where among its thousands of servers in three different locations in Texas, California, and Virginia is not public knowledge. The participants themselves were located in different

parts of the world—Japan, the United States, Algeria, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and China at this particular event. This might seem extraordinary, but it is the day-to-day reality of Cypris Chat, a robust online language learning community in the virtual world of Second Life that has been active since December 2008.

Before delving further into what Cypris is and why it should be of interest to education researchers, it is important to contextualize it within the current rush to take advantage of online learning environments. Online learning is fast becoming an option for more and more students throughout the world. As of 2014 it is estimated that between approximately 5.8 million students in the United States now take at least one online course as part of their formal post-secondary education (Allen & Seaman, 2016, p. 4). Perhaps just as significantly, there has been an explosion of cost-free online resources for independent learners of every sort, from coaching sites such as the Khan Academy (2017) to online lecture repositories such as TED.com (TED: Ideas worth spreading, 2017). It does not end there, especially in relation to language learning; the Internet is able to engage autonomous language learners with a variety of opportunities to integrate language, content, and culture (Warschauer & Meskill, 2000). As Davidson and Goldberg (2010) stated, "the Internet offers unprecedented access to an enormous range of information and the possibility of an extraordinary range of learning modalities, not all of which have been tested" (p. 23).

One particular area that requires research is that of online virtual world communities. These communities have been purported to offer a potential nexus of language learning, cultural immersion, new media, intercultural encounters, role-play,

and authentic communication (Svensson, 2003, p. 140). However, when novel communication technologies are implemented, one can never be certain that new modes of discourse and interaction do not vary substantially from modes that the majority of learners are accustomed to (Schwienhorst, 2008, p. 3), and this is to be expected owing to the wide range of participatory and collaborative interaction now possible, at a distance, both synchronous and asynchronous (Davidson & Goldberg, 2010, p. 88). In the case of virtual world learning communities, learning might not take place only during specified lesson times; social engagement itself—both in and outside formal instruction—might become the site for the creation of knowledge and meaningful academic outcomes. Howe and Mercer (2007) observed that it is often outside of the class that students develop communicative skills (p. 18); in a *persistent environment*, one that does not disappear when a user turns off one's computer, that allows for unlimited discussion, gaming, and other collaborative activities between formal classes, it is likely that learning also occurs in the interactions between scheduled classes.

Statement of the Problem

Two issues need to be explored in relation to Cypris Chat. First, factors contributing to Cypris' longevity have to be examined. Despite the potential for new types of language learning communities in virtual worlds, there are few examples available of such groups that have maintained such robust participation over an eight year period. Universities, including Harvard and Stanford (Shepherd, 2007), along with private language schools like LanguageLab (Au, 2011) were quick to see the potential for

learning within Second Life, but many educational institutions have gradually pulled out of the platform for various reasons. Cypris Chat, on the other hand, although experiencing membership expansion and contraction that mirrored the overall increase and decrease in popular interest in Second Life, has been able to maintain an enthusiastic group of learners and volunteer tutors since 2008. An analysis of Cypris as a community facilitates a greater understanding of characteristics that might influence the survival, or encourage the creation, of similar online language learning groups.

The second issue is that it is unclear just how language learning takes place in a community like Cypris, in which there is no clear distinction between language learning, practice, and socializing. The Second Life platform lends itself to different interaction styles and possibilities compared with typical offline classroom environments, and Cypris staff themselves have been quick to point out that the group is not a school. Conclusions about how teaching and learning occur in such online groups can only have be drawn after direct observation. There has previously been no detailed examination of a virtual world English language learning community that could provide a potential model for the different types of learning and teaching that could be implemented in Second Life. In order to provide a road map for educators potentially interested in fostering an online language learning group like Cypris, a more detailed understanding of its workings is required.

Purposes and Significance of the Study

The first purpose of this study is to provide an examination of a working virtual world language learning community. This study adds to the growing literature related to communities in online virtual worlds, and gives an in-depth look at how an English language learning community functions in Second Life. Although there have been similar ethnographic analyses of emergent groups in virtual worlds (e.g., Pearce, 2009), there are very few which have focused on language learning communities. It was previously unclear whether or not there were meaningful models or principles regarding institutions in this essentially emergent field (Davidson & Howe, 2010, p. 142), since little research has been done on working online learning groups. Understanding how groups such as Cypris function can provide us with insights related to their possible uses, not only in regards to options for low-cost, life-long learning, but as possible supplements to existing university classes.

The second purpose is to explore why Cypris thrives while other Second Life schools have not. To reiterate, it is important for online education researchers and program administrators to fully understand how Cypris has survived in the Second Life environment from which many universities and private schools have withdrawn. Whether as a result of Second Life's notorious hardware requirements (Dudeney & Ramsay, 2009, p. 18), the learning curve of the browser (Peterson, 2012), concerns about security, or simple lack of profitability (Dudeney & Ramsay, 2009, pp. 12-13), many educational groups that once used the platform have been unable to maintain their user base. Universities have endeavored to offer quality online coursework, yet attrition rates are

high, and such courses are often unsuitable and unattractive to struggling students (The Trouble with Online College, 2013). It might be instructive for administrators and educators to look at online communities that have been able to motivate students to continue learning for months and even years without extrinsic reward. With online courses still attractive to many universities despite current student dissatisfaction (Allen & Seaman, 2016), the unique affordances of virtual world environments (Sherblom, Withers, & Leonard, 2009) offer unique opportunities to address potential deficiencies in current online curricula. With an understanding of how a successful virtual learning community is run, which individuals seem suited for such communities, and what the benefits are for those involved, language learners, teachers, and administrators might have a new option available that straddles the current traditional/online education dichotomy.

The third purpose is to explore the role socializing has had in both maintaining group cohesion over time and in language learning. If language learning is indeed taking place within groups like Cypris, there needs to be an understanding of just how it takes place in both formal and informal activities. As the influence of the Internet and social networking sites become ubiquitous in many contexts, it is crucial that educators understand how learning groups like Cypris function, how they benefit those involved, and their limitations. Only then can educators, administrators, and volunteers efficiently leverage virtual environments for their own learners.

Theoretical Perspective

The historical, longitudinal nature of the study of the workings of a culture-sharing group lends itself to a base in qualitative analyses. Three distinct but arguably compatible theoretical perspectives are used in an attempt to provide insight into the group and virtual world language teaching and learning strategies at Cypris. Issues related to the structure and development of the group were examined using Wenger, White, and Smith's (2009) conception of *digital habitats*, "an experience of place enabled by technology" (p. 38). This is an extrapolation of Wenger's (1998) earlier conception of *communities of practice*, "communities where the learning component is central" (Wenger et al., 2009, p. 3);. Wenger et al.'s (2009) theory informed the analysis of both participant observation and interviews. Conversely, the Cypris model was used to test the applicability of the digital habitats framework to virtual world communities. Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework of learning in virtual worlds also serves as a reference, as it specifically focuses on best practices within virtual world teaching communities. These two frameworks are used to outline the overall community structure and determine how well it utilizes Second Life's learning affordances.

The ways in which English is practiced and learned are evaluated through discourse analysis informed by a specific strain of sociocultural learning theory. Discourse analysis can be broadly defined for language learning researchers as "a device for systematically describing the kind of interactions that happen in language classrooms" (Ellis, 2008, p. 778). It is used to categorize interactions between interlocutors within activities and to identify the underlying frames in which these interactions occur

(Goffman, 1974). Data obtained through observation is analyzed through discourse analysis and the prism of sociocultural learning theory, specifically Lois Holzman's (2010) interpretation of neo-Vygotskian theory, with additional interpretation guided by Swain, Kinnear, and Steinman (2011), and Vygotsky himself (1986).

These three perspectives, digital habitats, Lim's Six Learnings framework, and Holzman's particular interpretation of sociocultural learning theory, were indispensable to a holistic understanding of Cypris as a group. By exploring Cypris from a structural perspective, that is, by examining how it measured up to existing rubrics for robust online communities, this study was able to both verify the utility of these rubrics and explore the characteristics essential to Cypris' continued existence. Additionally, through discourse analysis informed by Holzman's (2010) take on neo-Vygotskian learning theory, I am able to analyze events suggesting how teaching and learning actually take place on a daily basis within the group. These two theoretical foci do not compete with one another; indeed, they compliment each other. One focus offers a macro perspective based on an essentially historical analysis of the group and its members, as well as an indication of how well the group understands the educational affordances of the Second Life environment. The other focus provides a micro perspective focused on exemplars of teaching and learning events within the group.

In summary, these two perspectives lead to two different investigative approaches. The first section is an evaluation of the extent to which Cypris fits into Wenger et al.'s (2009) model of digital habitats and Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework. This section utilizes analysis of interview data and notes from participant observation to compare

characteristics of Cypris with those of successful digital habitats and virtual learning communities. The second section consists of exemplars of learning events taken from discourse analysis of classes and activities. This section uses Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural learning theory as a guide to identifying these events.

Each section is used to answer a different research question. Research Question 1 asks what lies behind the relative success and longevity of Cypris as a Second Life community. Research Question 2 is concerned with pinpointing what sort of language teaching and learning, if any, takes place within formal and informal activities in Cypris. By answering these two questions, a robust description of the group as a whole was developed, one that has implications beyond this particular virtual learning community.

Definition of Key Terms Related to Virtual Worlds

Many of the terms related to online technology used in this study should be familiar to most readers, and those related to the history of online virtual environments and specific theoretical perspectives are explained in turn. However, some terms and concepts common to interactions in the Second Life platform found throughout this study are introduced here.

Avatar. In Second Life (and other virtual worlds), an avatar is a 3D graphical representation of the user controlling it (Sadler, 2012, p. 29). In Second Life, a new user begins with a default avatar, typically a male or female human shape, although more recently one can start out as an animal, vehicle, monster, or several other default shapes,

customizable to reflect taste or mood. Note that although users can change many aspects of their avatar's appearance, their Second Life user name can not change.

Griefer. This is a Second Life user that harasses others (Griefer, n.d.). Harassment includes (but is not limited to) verbal abuse in text or voice chat, the use of offensive avatars or avatar accessories, and the abuse of devices that affect other users' ability to remain logged into Second Life or crash entire servers.

Inworld. This refers to interactions that take place within Second Life (Inworld, n.d.).

Lag. A colloquial expression for low-reaction time within Second Life. Lag (n.d.) is commonly complained about as if it were an entirely server-based phenomenon analogous to the weather, but it has various causes, many of which are related to users' computer specifications and Internet connection.

Resident. This is the term Linden Lab uses to describe Second Life users. *Robin Linden* (aka Robin Harper) explained that the choice to use the term implied that users "have a stake in the world and the way it grows" (Harper, 2006).

RL. Just as Second Life is abbreviated SL, RL (Real Life) and sometimes RW (Real World) are used to refer to users' experiences outside of virtual worlds (Sadler, 2012, p. 28).

Sim. Although technically a sim is both a physical server and the sum of the processes that the server uses to simulate regions in Second Life, among Second Life users it commonly refers to a region, a 256 m x 256 m (65, 536 m^2) simulated virtual space (Land, n.d.).

Delimitations of the Study

This is a qualitative case study that focuses on a specific context, the Cypris Chat community within the virtual online world of Second Life. This study focuses on the functional and organizational aspects of the community. It also examines language teaching and learning within the group. It focuses primarily on the experiences of 21 participants within the community. Data collection officially began on June 28, 2013 and continued through January 2017; however, my participation within the group began with its founding in December 2008. Data were collected from participant interviews, notes on participant observation, and video recordings of formal and informal activities.

Interview data are analyzed to determine possible commonalities in participant backgrounds and preferences in order to determine their reasons for participation in the group. Interview data are also analyzed to determine whether or not Cypris aligned itself with the characteristics of Wenger et al.'s (2008) digital habits framework. Data taken from participant observation are used to determine whether Cypris members took advantage of the unique affordances of online learning as espoused by Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework. Finally, discourse analysis of recordings of teaching and learning within both formal classes and informal activities are explored with the aim of identifying teaching strategies used by Cypris tutors and learning events as interpreted through Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural learning theory. The ultimate goals of the study are to provide a greater understanding of the group's appeal among its members, to give a detailed description of different learning activities within the group, and to test

the utility and applicability of the theoretical frameworks used in a virtual world environment.

As the qualitative data here are drawn from prolonged observation of this unique context, the reader is reminded that there is no attempt here to generalize the findings from this study to other contexts. It cannot be judged as generalizable in terms of positivist, quantitative outcomes (Duff, 2008). Some researchers are, in fact, highly critical of case studies. Dobson, Hardy, Heyes, and Humphreys (1981) went so far as to state that such studies are in a sense a convenience sample, and that they are "descriptive and valid only for its subject" (pp. 32-33). However, I contend that case studies have value to the research community. As interaction within a specific context and between specific participants might resemble interaction in other contexts. Merriam (1998), contended that "a single case or nonrandom sample is selected precisely *because* the researcher wishes to understand the particular in depth, not to find out what is generally true of the many" (p. 208). Stake (2005) argued that "the search for particularity competes with the search for generalizability," (p. 439). and also proposed the term *instrumental case study* (p. 445) to refer to case studies undertaken to facilitate an understanding of a certain field that leads to a *transferability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of principles or findings. Cypris is a unique context, but I contend it is not an alien one. It might represent a model for future online learning communities. It is hoped the readers will draw their own conclusions about transferability of this study's findings in regards to their own learning, teaching or research contexts.

Additionally, the decision to utilize qualitative methods in this study was also driven by practical concerns. Although some online gaming contexts can be mined for quantitative data (Bell, Sheth, & Kaiser, 2013), the Second Life platform, one based on relative user anonymity, does not offer researchers extensive publicly available user information on resident backgrounds or inworld habits. This necessitated the use of a qualitative approach, one focusing on observation and interviews.

The Audience of the Study

A greater understanding of communities such as Cypris should be of interest to researchers, instructors, and administrators in various fields. First, this study has applicability to media and communication studies researchers who look at how people interact in digital environments. Behavior within online communities occurs in context bounded by *technology stewards* (Wenger et al., 2009). These leaders are tasked with using technology to achieve stated community goals and attend to emergent member needs and preferences. Research of Cypris, a virtual world community in which the work of technology stewards and their membership are uniquely intertwined, offers media and communications researchers a look at "spaces for virtual co-presence that are fertile for exploring other identities and new social worlds" (Wenger et al., 2009, p. 66).

Tertiary educators and administrators interested in online language practice would also benefit from a greater understanding of how teaching and learning can be accomplished in virtual worlds. This is especially applicable to those who wish to leverage the Internet to utilize native speakers and non-native speakers from different

first language backgrounds while still providing a modicum of safety and anonymity for their students. Previous research on Second Life in blended classes suggests students are engaged in these online interactions (Pellas & Kazanidas, 2014a, 2014b). Through the examples found in multimodal transcripts of teacher and learner interactions in Second Life, educators can gain a sense of how copresence in virtual worlds functions and better understand the potential for online socializing as language practice.

Finally, this study is of interest to researchers and educators interested in online options for continuing education and lifelong learning. Cypris is representative of similar environments in which age is less of a psychological barrier to communication between members of different age groups and backgrounds than in many offline contexts (Sanecka, 2014); a majority of Cypris members participating in this study are in their 40s, 50s and 60s. It is also relevant to those educators and language learners who are otherwise unable to practice a second language or socialize offline, including those with sociocultural or religious restrictions, those living in remote or impoverished geographical locations or those who simply do not have access to brick and mortar institutions in which to congregate, situations notoriously difficult for learners to otherwise overcome (Carr, 2009).

Organization of the Study

This study is organized as follows. In Chapter 2, a review of the literature on education in virtual worlds and the history of Second Life is provided, including criticisms of Second Life and as well as education research specific to that platform.

Then, background on the three theoretical frameworks used in this study is given, gaps in the literature discussed, the purposes for this study reiterated, and finally two research questions are explicitly stated. In Chapter 3, the Methods section, the context of this study, Cypris Chat, is described in detail. The participants are then described, data collection and analysis methods are explained, ethical concerns are addressed, and limitations of the methodology are explored. In Chapter 4, results from interviews and participant observation regarding Cypris as a community and virtual world language learning space are explored. In Chapter 5, data from discourse analysis are used to examine how teaching and learning take place in both formal and informal activities at Cypris. In Chapter 6, Research Questions 1 and 2 are addressed, theoretical and practical implications offered, and contributions of the study provided. In Chapter 7, a final overview of the study is given, along with its limitations, directions for future research, and final thoughts on the Cypris community.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, literature on education and educational groups in online virtual worlds is reviewed. The focus is then narrowed to studies on language learning on Linden Lab's Second Life platform, before briefly introducing the Cypris Chat community; although the locus of the study is in Cypris Chat within Second Life, auxiliary interaction on Facebook and the Cypris website (Cypris Chat, n.d.) are also included. A description of three conceptual frameworks used in analysis follows: Wenger, White, and Smith's (2009) digital habitats, Lim's (2009) Six Learning framework, and Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural theory. Finally, a reiteration of research gaps, the purposes of the study, and research questions guiding this study are explicitly presented.

Education in Virtual Worlds

Second Life was far from the first online virtual world to have been utilized by educators; as technology and software developments have progressed, so too has research interest in virtual worlds. It can be argued that the first online virtual worlds were *MUDs* (multi-user domains/dungeons), epic fantasy themed, text-based role-playing environments hosted on university servers. MUD1 was developed in 1979 (Bartle, 2004), and others followed in the 1980s (Castronova, 2006). These games were locally-hosted client-server applications, accessible to multiple users simultaneously. They were often patterned on the fantasy worlds of J.R.R. Tolkien's (1954) *Lord of the Rings* and

borrowed liberally from table-top role-playing games, in particular, *Dungeons & Dragons* (Gygax & Arneson, 1973). These programs were essentially databases storing text that represented places, items, and computer-controlled opponents. Later on, in the early 1990s, more flexible environments called *MOOs* (Multi-user domain, Object-Oriented) were developed, distinguishing themselves from MUDs by their customizable nature and a shift in focus from game play to socializing and programming play (Schwienhorst, 2000). LambdaMOO, in 1990, was the first free, open-ended world to be built on a modular architecture that allowed players to add their own content and areas (Curtis, 1992). Although MOOs were designed primarily for entertainment purposes, teaching and educational research have been done within them (e.g.,Kotter, 2002; O'Rourke, 2002; Peterson, 2001). The focus has been on the potential benefits of using computer-mediated communication, including improved motivation (Kelm, 1992), more egalitarian participation patterns (Warschauer, Turbee, & Roberts, 1996), reduced anxiety (Hudson & Bruckman, 2002; Kern, 1995), and increased learner autonomy (Chun, 1994; Peterson, 2008).

There have also been studies done specifically on the benefits of virtual environments for language learning in MOOs. MOOs have been shown to foster development of intercultural competence, because interlocutors were often from different geographical areas (Von Der Emde, Schneider, & Kotter, 2001). Kotter (2003) found that interaction in MOOs is more direct and resulted in more collaboration between learners to negotiate meaning, and Warner (2004) lauded MOOs for their ability to foster language play and risk-taking. Schwienhorst (2008) made a case for MOO use in language and

cultural exchange programs, citing his study of tandem learning between German and Irish university students. He concluded that MOOs can offer more "data" to students in a flexible context, as well as provide elements that are unavailable in a typical language classroom (p. 167). In summary, because MOOs are international, play-oriented, collaborative, and text-based, they have been considered potentially useful for language learning.

Although MOOs have been seen as promising CALL (computer-assisted language learning) environments, since the late 2000s, research interest in virtual worlds has shifted away toward more compelling, graphical 3D environments made possible by advances in graphics and networking capabilities. Improvements in graphics cards and streaming technology allowed software developers to create immersive environments known as virtual worlds or MUVEs, multi-user virtual environments. Bell and Smith-Robbins (2008) defined them as persistent, massively multi-player spaces on wide area networks in which users represent themselves through *semi-autonomous* agents now known as *avatars*. While MOOs and MUDs make use of representation in the broadest sense, in the way users describe their appearance and actions in text, for example, the avatars in this new generation of virtual worlds are more viscerally compelling in their realism and include sight and sound. In this way, avatar use and MUVE platforms in general have built on the capabilities of text-based environments by adding features, not replacing them (Dede, 2004; Zheng, Young, Brewer, & Wagner, 2009). However, avatars became, in a sense, more limited than the purely imaginary worlds of text, as they are

scripted by automated animations and limited appearance options (thus the term *semi-autonomous*).

Before continuing, a note should be made regarding *telepresence* (Hillis, 2009), a characteristic that distinguishes text-based virtual worlds, such as MOOS and literature-based education-focused environments, from MUVEs. Hillis defines telepresence, also referred to as *copresence* (Schroeder, 2012), as "the experience of presence and the simulation of immediacy by means of a digital, networked communication technology" (p. 81). Text-based multi-user digital environments, including interactive fiction (e.g., Aver, 2012; Rumohr-Voskuil & Dykema, 2012; Taliaferro, 2012) have proven engaging to participants, but lack the sense of telepresence, the illusion of being physically present in a situation with others, that MUVEs manifest. Telepresence was a factor taken into account in relation to participants' motivation to remain Cypris members, and this is briefly addressed further in the Discussion section.

Active Worlds was one of the first MUVEs to be explored by CALL researchers. Developed in the 1990s, Active Worlds allowed individuals and institutions to design their own "worlds," servers built for a certain theme or purpose; there were also worlds open to all owned directly by ActiveWorlds, Inc. (ActiveWiki, 2015). Although character design was cartoonish, voice chat unavailable, and content creation highly moderated, Active Worlds became the virtual home for thousands of users, and English as a foreign language (EFL) and education researchers took advantage of these worlds, primarily focusing their research on environmental affordances. For example, Svensson (2003) explored the interaction of native speaker and non-native speaker communication in his

case study, suggesting that the environment fostered a feeling of telepresence and relaxation different from other computer-mediated communication environments. Peterson (2001, 2006, 2008) focused on learner interaction in the Active Worlds MUVE among his Japanese university student participants. Peterson's (2008) findings supported Svennson's (2003) contentions and suggested that if learners make the effort to become familiar with the interface, the use of avatars supports a sense of immersion and fosters a high degree of participation and engagement in learning.

Also notable is CALL work in Quest Atlantis, an Active Worlds-based environment geared towards quest-based learning for 9-16 year-olds. This multi-disciplinary environment was designed to stimulate "transformational play" (Barab, Gresalfi, & Ingram-Goble, 2010) and encourage extracurricular use of classroom learning. Zheng et al. (2009) used the system in their language learning research among middle-school students in China. They concluded that the environment improved self-efficacy among participants and fostered intercultural collaboration skills.

Before moving on, it is important to realize that the aforementioned CALL research using MUVEs and Active Worlds have utilized text chat as the primary mode of communication. Accordingly, affordances of the environment that Peterson (2001, 2006, 2008) and Zheng et al. (2009) proposed are based on extended opportunities to review utterances and actions by scrolling up through chat logs, the increased time available by interlocutors to process utterances, the elimination of accent or even pronunciation as an obstacle to communication, and the complete anonymity afforded the user. In contrast,

this study focuses on both text and voice chat, with the primary focus on voice-based interactions.

Second Life: A Multi-User Virtual Environment

This study took place in Second Life, currently the most well-known and most popular MUVE, created by Linden Lab in 2003 (Guest, 2007). Although the number of Second Life residents is impossible to calculate with certainty (owning to many users having more than one Second Life account), approximately 900,000 accounts were accessed every month in 2015 (Weinberger, 2015), with over 31,000 sims being simulated by thousands of servers (Tateru Nino, 2011). In contrast to similar platforms (e.g., ActiveWorlds, Twinity), Second Life was developed primarily as a virtual space for user content creation; nearly every environment, object, and programming script found there has been developed by users using the free creation tools available in the Second Life browser or through other modeling tools. This freedom provides residents with an unprecedented amount of creative possibilities.

Second Life residents take part in a wide variety of activities. Some spend time in sims dedicated to games or role-play; however, most residents also spend time chatting about their offline lives, creating virtual goods, studying, and shopping; Linden Lab's virtual currency floats at about $200 L to $1 USD. This has led to two separate, but not entirely exclusive groups of residents: immersionists and augmentationists (Llewelyn, 2008). Immersionists use their avatar as a truly "second life." They typically do not discuss life outside of Second Life, at least not in public chat, and do not use Second

Life's voice chat feature because it limits anonymity. As Hillis (2009) stated, the point is to "live virtually and 'persistently' in the environment that one constructs and then renovates as one's own and as one desires, and to do so while coexisting, like a character in a novel, with other residents within that setting" (p. 162). Augmentationists, on the other hand, see Second Life as simply another platform for play, socializing, and education. Complete anonymity for them is unnecessary, and indeed an annoyance, as it would prevent them from discussing their real lives, and voice chat is not anathema, though text chat might still be the primary mode of communication. However, it is important to note that these are essentially labels of convenience; immersionists can take part in out-of-character (OOC) chat in private messages or bracketed in parentheses, while augmentationists can dabble in role-play in some areas while remaining themselves in others. That said, this distinction proves useful later in discussion of possible common characteristics of Cypris participants.

There have been broad discussions of Second Life as a social phenomenon in attempts to come to grips with how users interact on the platform. In *Coming of Age in Second Life*, Boellstorff (2008) examined different aspects of social life on the platform from an ethnographic perspective that informs my own. In this seminal work, he explored concepts related to virtual place and time, including discussion of virtual land and lag. He looked at personhood, how one's embodiment in their avatar could be perceived, and intimacy, including sexuality and addiction. Finally, he described instances of community, including popular pastimes and griefing, as well as political economy. Boellstorff (2008) concluded that interaction in Second Life is representative

of "the age of techne" (p. 21), an era in which humans "craft themselves" (p. 57), highlighting the importance of what Balsamo (2011) later terms *technological imagination*. Boellstorff's work offers a comprehensive look at different aspects of Second Life, yet his observations do not, and do not claim to, account for the variety of experience possible on the platform. Also, for an ethnographic study, it is unusually reticent in discussing details of the author's relationship with his participants or specific events in which data was collected; without this context, it is easy to incorrectly assume that the data presented is broadly representative of behavior on the platform. For example, as Boellstorff was not particularly interested in education, but was intrigued by how avatars potentially reflected user identity, he seemed to emphasize immersionist rather than augmentationist perspectives.

Other studies have also explored aspects of social life in Second Life. Adrian (2009) looked at how social order was created out of a seemingly anarchic platform, and concluded that participants were collaborating on the creation of a platform-wide civil society. Lastowka (2009) looked at the legal ramifications of who owns what in a platform designed specifically with user created content in mind. Sant (2009) described his positive experiences with live music and the performing arts in Second Life. Finally, since 2013, Bernhard Drax has highlighted notable Second Life residents in his Drax Files series on YouTube. Through over 43 episodes (as of January 2017), Drax has highlighted uniformly positive personal stories related to Second Life, including episodes related to historical simulations (2013a), Parkinson's disease (2013b), use in a Texas A&M chemistry class (2014a), use with amputees (2014b), and a variety of other topics.

Although these short videos do not represent a critical examination of the Second Life environment, they nevertheless provide a counterpoint to some of the critiques found below.

Criticisms of Second Life

Before continuing further, it is important to address criticisms that the Second Life platform has weathered since its release in 2003. These complaints have come from Second Life residents, as well as businesses and educators. Four areas are briefly addressed here: critique of the technology, critique of Linden Lab's business model, critique of the community, and critique of its use for education. Although these criticisms do not appear to have had a direct impact on the participants of this study, they inform the context, and for some, perhaps, the stigma, of learning on the Second Life platform.

The first criticism is that Second Life does not work on every computer. Second Life was never designed for inexpensive computers with low technical specifications. Although high speed Internet connections and relatively powerful graphics cards are now ubiquitous, this was not the case in the 2000s. Residents without the recommended hardware or Internet connection had to reduce their graphics preferences or experience lag, crashes, or other technical problems. Despite initial enthusiasm, hardware requirements sometimes made use of Second Life cost prohibitive for many individuals and institutions (Glogowski, n.d.). Consequently, this led to a stratification of experience among residents; enthusiastic Internet early adopters, PC gamers and professional designers often enjoyed a vastly smoother and more immersive experience than the

general public. In more recent years, as computers have become more sophisticated, this issue has become less of a problem, but machines that have no trouble rendering high quality content in online games can still stutter in Second Life. The sprawling, interconnected nature of the Second Life network still makes it vulnerable to short term problems with voice chat, instant messaging, and a variety of other issues related to the display of one's avatar and immediate virtual surroundings.

Criticism of Linden Lab's business model comes on two fronts. As stated above, the Second Life user economy is focused on the creation and sale of virtual goods. However, Linden Lab's primary income is derived not from managing or taxing user-created content, but through the rental of server space: virtual land. Compared to the microtransactions used to purchase virtual goods, land can be expensive; as of February 2017, rental of a full region (server) can cost as much as $600 USD as a start-up fee with an additional monthly cost of $295 USD (Land detail, n.d.). Second Life was designed as an open *sandbox*, a term used in gaming to refer to digital environments with non-specific goals (Breslin, 2009), a playground for technoliberalism, a "distinctive combination of distrust of vertical authority, faith in technology, and faith in the emergent effects" of the platform (Malaby, 2009, p. 16). Yet because land use is often prerequisite, Second Life can become "an expensive hobby for those who want to run a virtual business," admitted Linden Lab CEO Ebbe Altberg (Au, 2015b). This stratification of possibility along economic lines seemed incongruent with Linden Lab's otherwise egalitarian business model. On another front, companies such as Reuters, Nike, Sony-BMG and Toyota that initially saw promotional opportunities for both virtual and

real world products (Layton, 2006), gradually pulled out of Second Life when they realized that advertising in Second Life was not reaching their target demographics.

Perhaps the criticism most frequently leveled at Second Life in the popular media is not related to the platform itself, but at the culture of Second Life residents. Linden Lab has very few restrictions regarding what users choose to do within Second Life. This freedom has allowed groups and sims dedicated to pornography, adult-oriented role-play, and virtual prostitution to flourish. Beyond the sexual content, griefers in Second Life roam well-populated servers. They sometimes disrupt other Second Life residents' interactions by playing loud music into their microphones, using offensive chat and inworld items, or utilizing tools that allow them to create lag or actually crash Second Life servers. Despite banning some universally offensive behavior, such as sexual role-play involving child avatars (Glogowski, n.d.), Second Life has a reputation as a platform in which deviant behavior is tolerated. This is the reason why Twitch, a popular platform for live online video game broadcasts, refuses to livestream Second Life (Au, 2015a).

Finally, Second Life has faced specific criticisms from educators and university administrators. Second Life has a learning curve. Students (and instructors) must have basic computer literacy and typing skills, as well as time to practice with the Second Life browser before they are able to participate in most activities. Students who come into Second Life with experience playing certain online computer games might have little problem understanding how to move and interact within the environment (Malaby, 2009, p. 82), but teachers must usually assume the worst and spend several sessions practicing with the Second Life browser before most educational activities can take place.

Additionally, as has been previously mentioned, Second Life requires relatively high-end hardware, a pass through university firewalls, and the participation of a student body that might question the face validity of learning through what might be considered a video game. It is no wonder that many universities that once flocked to Second Life have gradually withdrawn their support for the platform and maintain their online campuses purely for promotional reasons (Hogan, 2015).

Very little of the above criticism has a direct bearing on the following educational research that has been done within Second Life nor on the Cypris Chat community. However, it is important to realize that the legitimacy of the platform has faced harsh criticism, and Second Life residents themselves can find their participation stigmatized as an addiction to fantasy (Clarke, 2012). Despite negative public perception of the platform and the initial enthusiasm and later abandonment of Second Life by some 'early adopters', many researchers have seen the potential for education within the Second Life environment.

Educational Research in Second Life

Several tertiary educational institutions at one time or another offered classes in Second Life.. There were for-profit language schools such as Languagelab.com (Erard, 2007) as well as libraries and universities, famously including Harvard Law School and Stanford (Lim, 2009). There is little research available on semester-long or ongoing classes, but there have been smaller, quasi-experimental studies done in university classes. For example, Andreas, Tsiatsos, Terzidou, and Pomportsis (2010) looked at how

collaborative learning techniques could be utilized in virtual environments, and they concluded that activities in Second Life could supplement face-to-face learning.

Other positive pedagogical experiences can be found throughout the literature, with a specific focus on training and simulations. Broadribb, Peachey, Carter, and Westrap (2009), utilized role plays to train staff and students at the UK's Open University. Wiecha, Heyden, Sternthal, and Merialdi (2010) looked at Second Life use in a postgraduate training program, and suggested that use of the platform increased confidence among participants. Bani and his colleagues involved with the University of Pisa's Arketipo project focused on learning through collaborative reconstruction of historical buildings (Bani et al., 2009), and they detailed how instructors linked history, multimedia production, and 3-D modeling in the Second Life environment. Similarly Ball, Capanni and Watt (2008) examined how Second Life could be used in collaborative landscaping. Anderson (2009) investigated instructor immediacy in Second Life, and concluded that through their avatars, instructors could and do portray nonverbal immediacy behaviors, behaviors that decrease the negative psychological distance between teachers and students, which she tied directly to research by Andersen (1979) on positive outcomes related to effective learning and motivation. Finally, Belei, Noteborn, and de Ruyter (2009) saw the Second Life economy as a powerful learning tool in marketing, while Gu, Gul, Williams, and Nakapan (2009) found the collaborative nature of Second Life beneficial to students in a design course. Although these papers are uniformly positive in their praise of Second Life as a learning environment, they all focus primarily on the platform as a boon to job training simulation.

The Schome Park Programme (Twining & Footring, 2010) was perhaps the most ambitious Second Life educational experiment to date, a pilot for an educational system that would ideally "support people learning throughout (participants') lives, from the cradle to the grave" (p. 53). This project, hosted by the UK's Open University, took place on the now defunct Second Life Teen Grid. It offered a student-centered, project-oriented curriculum, an alternative to traditional classroom instruction. The Schome Park Programme set out to find "what (future) educational systems might be like" (The Schome Park Programme, n.d.). Although short-lived, the project led to a greater understanding of ways in which virtual world education could replace classroom learning, and how ethnography is useful in virtual worlds research because such environments are essentially "deeply cultural, human world(s), that can be approached through an interpretive, ethnographic stance" (Gillen, 2010, p. 88). The ethnographic approach was integral in Gillen's formulation of a skills set for virtual worlds literacy, a set she could not have formulated without participant observation.

There have also been other broadly theoretical discussions of best practices and the unique affordances of virtual environments, and although they are not specifically related to language learning, their conclusions inform this study. Coffman and Klinger (2007) discussed the potential for studying art and design. Sheehy (2010) predicted that innovative spaces for learning that centered on social engagement might develop naturally adjacent to designated educational spaces and indeed, this phenomenon is explored more fully in this research. Warburton (2009) outlined both the opportunities and challenges of using Second Life in the university classroom, concluding that the move to such complex

virtual environments is anything but certain because of these challenges. The complexity of teaching in Second Life was also mentioned by Carr, Oliver, and Burn (2010) who discussed the "pain barrier" (p. 18) in use of virtual worlds for education, the learning curve that must be overcome before bafflement and annoyance turn to enjoyment of the environment.. Finally, Thackray, Good, and Howland (2010) observed how the roles of learner and instructor are broken down in virtual worlds when learners might actually be more proficient at use of the learning interface, the Second Life browser, than the instructors themselves.

These studies have provided insights for prospective virtual world instructors and researchers; they also introduced issues such as the inclusive education of marginalized individuals, the fostering of student confidence and engagement, and the breakdown of static barriers between staff and learners. All of these perspectives proved useful in analysis of Cypris as a community, yet the prescriptive nature of these papers, and the fact that they do not use data from or target virtual classes as they were actually being taught limits their usefulness as analytical tools without further research.

There has not been extensive virtual classroom research in Second Life language learning. This is not to say that language learning research is not being done; Peterson (2012), for example, brought his MUVE research into Second Life and outlined some of the affordances of the environment. Similarly, Liou (2012), wrote about his experiences bringing his Taiwanese EFL students into the Second Life environment, and surveyed their impressions; they were both excited by the virtual locations and the ease of text chatting, but frustrated by problems of lag and limited bandwidth. Similarly, Wang and

Shao (2012) documented their use of a Chinese translation of Second Life instructional materials as a learning aid for their students. Balcikanli (2012) described a cultural and linguistic exchange between students in Gazi University in Turkey and the University of Florida, with generally positive feedback regarding its ability to foster communication among shy students. Liang (2012) integrated online conversations in Second Life with native speakers as part of her English language course. Varli (2009) interviewed EFL teachers about their experiences in both paid and volunteer schools. Notably, Sobkowiak (2015) described how members of Virtlantis, a multilingual language learning community that shares membership and some characteristics with Cypris, utilized Facebook to ask and answer questions outside Second Life, announce activities, blog, lead language lessons, socialize, and advertise the school's existence. These are all ways Cypris members and staff also utilize social networking to augment their inworld activities. However, beyond my own examination of a reading circle class in Second Life (DuQuette, 2011) and disparate blog entries, notably Luke Meddings and Scott Thornbury's Dogme classes (SL Experiments wiki, 2016), there has been little published regarding how languages are being taught in Second Life classes for Second Life residents. Potentially seminal explorations into Second Life second language teaching and learning have gone unexamined, and that is the impetus for this study.

Theoretical Frameworks

It is not necessarily advantageous to bring theoretical frameworks into a primarily ethnographic paper. A case can be made that the limitations inherent in a particular

framework might obfuscate possible alternate research avenues that become apparent only once primary data collection is underway (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012, p. 53). This possibility should not be discounted; this is one reason that notes from participant observation and interview data in this study were coded and labeled using a broad, open framework. However, I agree with LeCompte and Schensul (1999, p. 98) when they noted that ethnographers "try to create an overall design in which anticipated details and activities are spelled out as far as current information permits." My extended participation in the group has provided the preliminary understanding of the context necessary to choose theory appropriate to both the environment and my research concerns.

There are three distinct but compatible theoretical perspectives that are used to provide insight into Cypris: one to examine the overall organization, one a rubric for best practices in virtual worlds teaching, and one to examine language learning and teaching at Cypris. In this study, issues related to the structure and development of the group are examined using the family of theories related to Wenger et al.'s (2009) conception of digital habitats, with occasional reference to Wenger's (1998) earlier communities of practice framework and James Paul Gee's (2005) related conception of affinity groups. Secondly, pedagogy at Cypris is evaluated through Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework, a rubric designed to explore whether or not the affordances of the Second Life environment are being fully utilized. Finally, discourse analysis of language teaching, learning, and practice are conducted through a perspective informed by Holzman's (2010) conception of sociocultural language learning theory (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011; Vygotsky, 1986).

Cypris as Digital Habitat

Cypris's continuing existence in Second Life is due in part to its appeal to Second Life residents as a *digital habitat*, an "experience of place enabled by technology" (Wenger et al., 2009, p. 38). This is an online extrapolation of Etienne Wenger's (1998) *communities of practice* paradigm. The notion of a community of practice (CoP) is the central construct of Wenger's social theory of learning. A CoP is defined as a group of people "who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis" (Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002, p. 4). The CoP as construct represents a fundamental and flexible perspective potentially encompassing one's family, schoolyard, or workplace clique, sports team, or any focus of active participation that involves construction of a separate identity for that group. "Such participation," Wenger (1998) stated, "shapes not only what we do, but who we are and how we interpret what we do" (p. 4).

Not all communities can be termed CoPs. Characteristics that might indicate one has formed include long-term social relationships, shared ways of doing things, mutually defined identities, and a shared global perspective (pp. 125-126). A successful CoP is defined by its overall productivity and sustainability (Harris & Shelswell, 2005, p. 176). The CoP's practicality, flexibility, and its focus on identity through participation, emergent structure, and meaning-making make it an attractive conceptual tool in dealing

with a volunteer group such as Cypris, in which there are few initial assumptions one can safely make about differences in member participation.

The CoP framework was also conceptually appealing based on its utility in participant observation of educational groups. Wenger (1998) saw researcher participation in practice as a way to "negotiate diverging meanings and perspectives" (p. 114) that might otherwise be difficult to interpret. Barton and Tusting (2005) saw CoP as an "attractive middle-level theory between structure and agency which is applicable to and close to actual life and which resonates with detailed ethnographic accounts of how learning happens" (p. 3). In specific reference to CoP's utility in analysis of educational communities, Barton and Tusting stated:

> It takes learning out of the classroom and addresses the variety of groups and locations where learning takes place, including adult learning, learning in the workplace and learning in everyday life. It helps identify commonalities across these settings and contributes to understanding differences between formal and informal education. (p.3)

All of these factors suggested that the CoP framework could be applicable to this study.

However, the digital habitats framework that Wenger et al. (2009) subsequently developed is both more specifically tailored and more robust in its ability to explore the characteristics of online CoP. Wenger et al. asserted that it is through communities' *technology stewards*, individuals well-versed in computer-assisted communication, that digital habitats are created. The technology steward might assume responsibility for the

technology that enables a community for several reasons: to build a professional reputation, to learn and grow, or to create a leadership opportunity. Perhaps there is simply satisfaction in providing a service to a community that no one else is capable of delivering (p. 29). Looking at Mike McKay, the owner and founder of Cypris Chat, and the senior staff as technology stewards was a starting point for analysis in this paradigm.

The digital habitat, as fostered by the technology steward, is conceived of as a community and a space. If Cypris Chat as a group is to be considered a CoP (or two separate CoPs, learners and tutors), then it is Cypris Village, the layout of the virtual geography itself that makes up the digital habitat. Wenger et al. (2009) described the digital habitat as a community space. "Like a community that always meets at a regular café," they wrote, "distributed communities need their online place" (p. 31). "Communities of practice need habitats to learn together" (p. 38), they reiterated. The habitats that Wenger et al. (2009) envisioned are the websites and message boards of real world organizations, but they make special mention of virtual worlds:

> Avatar-based, immersive environments, which make us feel like we are in another world (like…Second Life) create new places for communities to form and interact. They offer spaces for virtual co-presence that are fertile for exploring other identities and new social worlds. These stimulate social imagination and open the possibility of new forms of togetherness. Communities are exploring the use of these environments as places for meetings, as repositories to store artifacts, and as informal social spaces to build relationships. (p. 66)

Virtual worlds are not only possible venues for digital habitats, they also create unique places to both work and play, creating bonds of togetherness that other online resources can lack (pp. 66-67).

Wenger et al. (2009) listed extensive design cues, parameters for success for prospective technology stewards. These *signs of life* gauge the likelihood that a digital habitat will meet the needs of its community. These include regular, well-attended meetings (p. 73), social bonding and friendship between members (p. 87), the accommodation of individual participation styles (p. 91), dynamic engagement and cultivation of the community (p. 93), and a mission fully driven by the context of the community (p. 97). A more detailed description of the five signs of life used in this study can be found in Appendix A.

There are indications that each of these five signs of life are conceptually sound for use of analysis of virtual world language learning groups. There is support for the contention that synchronous meetings are important for all communities (McEuen & Duffy, 2010; Robert & Gingras, 2007). Krotoski (2009) contended that virtual world communities and networks are only as strong as the personal connections made within them. Although Davies and Graff (2005) found problems in e-learning classes in which students did not participate in a uniform manner, Mugar, Østerlund, Hassman, Crowston, & Jackson (2014) supported the idea that different participation levels can be useful, especially in situations involving mentoring. Heckman, Østerlund, and Saltz (2015) posited that intense engagement with a community provides unexpected opportunities for teaching and learning. Finally, Dresser (1996) agreed that the context of the language

learning environment, particularly the cultural backgrounds of the students, needs to be taken into account lest miscommunication occur. These studies support the conceptual strength of the five signs of life mentioned, and these signs become the criteria to explore the development of Cypris in relation to both intentional and emergent design decisions.

Other researchers have taken CoP theory and adapted it to their own studies on online communities, and this study borrows from two such perspectives as well. In *Communities of Play*, Celia Pearce (2009) specifically addressed emergent groups in virtual worlds, which, it is argued, includes Cypris Chat. She borrowed Bar-Yam's (2003) definition of emergence as collective behavior in which a system accomplishes by virtue of its relationship with its environment what it could not do by itself. "Emergence refers to an understanding of how collective properties arise from the properties of the parts" (Pearce, 2009, p. 44). She proposed that online virtual worlds have particular characteristics that foster unique opportunities for emergence. First, they are discrete, closed systems that allow for multigenerational patterns, that is, patterns of behavior that are repeated with each new wave of participants. At the same time, they are also open to outside transactions, and they are open-ended in the sense that they lack predetermined goals and objectives and are dependent on users to bring their own goals. Finally, they are persistent—that is, they do not disappear when one user turns off his or her computer—allowing for cumulative action. The development of Cypris as an essentially emergent phenomenon was important to keep in mind during analysis of its history.

Additionally, gaming theorist and linguist James Paul Gee (2005) proposed an alternative to CoP for online interaction by focusing not on types of participants, but on

the space where interaction occurs. By focusing on groups as semiotic social spaces, he laudably aimed to avoid labeling groups of people (p. 215), but it was his focus on how software and websites implicitly control interactions through their design choices that brings analytical depth to study of behavior within communities in software-based environments.. The point that software can have an influence on language use is an important one to keep in mind when analyzing virtual world communities. As both Pearce and Gee focus on ludic rather than learning principles in their theories, many of their ideas are not directly relevant to the present study. However, their thoughts on emergent behavior and how the medium can influence the content of interactions are taken into account.

Cypris as Virtual World Pedagogy

Second Life contains affordances that should be recognized to best take advantage of the platform for education. Discussion of best practices in virtual worlds learning should ideally focus on taking advantage of the environment to its fullest. There has been limited discussion on best practices in teaching and curriculum design in Second Life . Notably, Lim (2009) outlined what he calls his Six Learnings framework as a way for educators and administrators perhaps unfamiliar with virtual worlds to begin conceptualization of curriculum design in Second Life:

1. Learning by exploring—related to exploration of structured or unstructured installations, communities and landscapes

2. Learning by collaborating—related to joint problem-solving activities and other forms of structured inquiry

3. Learning by being—related to explorations of self and identity

4. Learning by building—related to activities that require the construction of virtual items and programming scripting

5. Learning by championing—related to activism and social causes from real life

6. Learning by expressing—related to the productive expression of "inworld" activities to those in"real life" including blogs, podcasts and *machinima* (video production in virtual worlds) that create a greater public understanding of virtual worlds learning (pp. 7-9)

Lim said that this framework was "broad and largely generic in its envisaged application…arguably the nature of many proposed contributions to a nascent corpus of theory (in this case the theory of informing pedagogies for virtual worlds)" (p. 10), and he admitted that research on education in virtual worlds was still in its infancy. Still, he pushed for a progressive curriculum that made use of the Second Life environment as a tool for self-exploration and an opportunity to connect offline activism to Second Life communities.

Lim's contentions are supported by the conclusions of other researchers. Saunders, Rutkowski, van Genuchten, Vogel, and Orrego (2011), utilizing theories of spatial learning (Biocca & Levy, 1995; Couclelis & Gale, 1986), asserted that activities that include exploration in virtual worlds can accelerate effective learning of spatial

concepts. Tang, Zhao, Cao, and Inkpen (2011) agreed that collaboration in online educational projects, specifically synchronous collaboration, is essential despite the difficulties present. Hillis (2009) and Akkerman and Bakker (2011) both agreed that virtual worlds are important for identity exploration and role exchange between teachers and learners, and echo Block's (2003) and Huang's (2011) contention that identity creation can be important in learning a new language. Barson and Debski (1996) posited that design projects are one way to effectively contribute to a learning community. Freire (1996) contended that championing of social causes within the classroom is a moral imperative, and Hung and Chen (2008) similarly asserted that promotion of successful virtual learning environments should be a part of what learners do within these worlds. Although Lim's ideas are exploratory, they are supported by researchers and theorists. In this study they are utilized as a rubric for analysis, a rubric specific to virtual learning groups.

Sociocultural Theory and Cypris

Now that the conceptual frameworks for analysis of the Cypris community as a whole have been explained, and a rubric for specific analysis of virtual world pedagogy is in place, it is time to turn to analysis of teaching and learning activities. Meaningful exploration of how language teaching and learning take place at Cypris requires a paradigm that takes into account several types of interactions; not only teacher-learner interactions must be examined, but also interactions between learners, between learners and native speaking visitors to Cypris, and finally interactions between learners,

environmental affordances and tools of the Second Life platform itself. It is unlikely that research based on domain-centered design, essentially the transmission model of instruction, or learner-centered design, which does not focus on peer collaboration and interaction, is applicable in technology-enhanced learning groups such as Cypris (Gifford & Enyedy, 1999). Coffman and Klinger (2007) saw Vygotskian theory as uniquely applicable in Second Life, since it designates play as important in learning (p. 31). Accordingly, neo-Vygotskian sociocultural theory, as conceived by Lois Holzman (2010), has here provided a broad and flexible conceptual framework, a starting point for identifying of learning events at Cypris.

Neo-Vygotskian sociocultural theory (SCT) sees learning as mediation. According to SCT, people, activities, and artifacts mediate learning in a primarily social process (Ratner, 2002; Salomon & Perkins, 1998). Learning takes place primarily through language use and occurs in both informal settings, such as the home and in peer groups and in institutional ones, like school, clubs and work (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Its conceptualization of learning is tied to the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1986) between a learner and more experienced interlocutor. This way of looking at learning might be limited in a sense by its focus on novices and more experienced interlocutors. Nevertheless, it remains a powerful conceptualization of the learning process. Before continuing further, it is important to specify how ZPDs are conceptualized and operationalized in this study.

Lev Vygotsky's ZPD has been interpreted by psychologists and education specialists in several different ways (Holzman, 2010). Some envisioned the ZPD as a

characteristic of the learner, a measure of the learner's proficiency (Lantolf, 2000). By this definition, the moment that internalization occurs, basically the negotiated process in which agents in one's environment bring about learning (Winegar, 1997, p. 31), is difficult, if not impossible to definitively recognize as events in recorded data. This is especially the case without longitudinal observation of a learners' interactions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). Despite its strengths, the conceptualization of the ZPD as an internal process does not easily lend itself to use in analysis of learning events.

Other theorists focused on the dyadic nature of ZPDs and perceived it as a way of viewing scaffolding (Berk & Winsler, 1995). In this conceptualization, ZPDs are reduced to a two-person unit, a learner and an instructor. However, I would agree with Holzman (2010) that limiting one's focus to primarily teacher-student interactions (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976) is short-sighted. Vygotsky (1978) also encouraged researchers to focus on "collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). In addition, the limited focus on teacher-student interaction neglects the possible contributions of environmental affordances in learning.

Finally, in what I deem the most appropriate interpretation for this paper, the focus on the ZPD can be seen as a result of social activity, a "collective form of working together" (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 202). This inclusive definition is "more usefully understood as a process rather than as a spatio-temporal entity, and as an activity rather than a zone, space, or distance" (Holzman, 2010, p. 23). The ZPD, defined as an activity as Newman and Holzman (1997) do, can refer to both the environment and the learning-leading-development as it occurs (Holzman, 2010, p. 23). The ZPD becomes observable.

Instead of focusing on internalization as the most fundamental principle behind the ZPD, Holzman instead distinguished her interpretation from others by emphasizing Vygotsky's emphasis on imitation and completion. "Development based on collaboration and imitation is the source of all specifically human characteristics of consciousness," stated Vygotsky (1987, p. 210), in a bold assertion. Yet Holzman (2010) is also bold, as she perceived the interaction and environment in which this negotiated imitation takes place as "as much activity as it is context" (p. 32). As for completion, she argued that a learner's correct use of language is not simply a display of internalized knowledge:

> The structure of speech is not simply the mirror image of the structure of thought. It cannot, therefore, be placed on thought like clothes off a rack. Speech does not merely serve as the expression of developed thought. Thought is restructured as it is transformed into speech. It is not expressed, but completed in the word. (p. 33)

Although oral or written production does not guarantee learning, Holzman argued that, in a sense, internalized knowledge is both displayed and made manifest through expression. This focus on the ZPD as a language event, a collective activity that can be recorded rather than a proficiency rating or scaffolding tool, offers maximum flexibility for interpretation of possible language learning interactions in virtual environments such as Cypris, in which learning take place between interlocutors, and between interlocutors and their environment, in unexpected ways.

There are other aspects of SCT that inform this study. Guk and Kellogg (2007) suggested that interaction between learners outside the teacher-student relationship can

create a powerful ZPD, although they found that teacher-student interactions focus on grammar construction while student-student interactions were focused on co-constructing discourse (p. 297) and argue that sociocultural theory is appropriate for studying such relations. Additionally, sociocultural theory has included aspects of learning related to affect, emotion, and feelings of belonging that might mediate the learning process (Mahn & John-Steiner, 2002; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011; Vygotsky, 1987); again, the flexibility in interpretation allowed by these viewpoints fosters a more comprehensive evaluation of learning at Cypris, a group at first glance as much bound together by personal loyalties and idealism as by the desire for professional and second language development.

This point brings us to the question of how ZPD activities can be "pinpointed" in recorded data in the first place. Defined as a stage of development, it seems very difficult to measure outside the realm of proficiency testing. This option is not feasible within the scope of this study. Conceptualized as dyadic scaffolding, as Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) did, the quantity and quality of tutorial assistance could be measured longitudinally, which could indicate just how much help an individual needed before learning takes place. It does not, however, represent a mechanism for theorizing exactly when learning takes place. However, if the ZPD is interpreted, as Holzman (2010) did, as "a collective form of working together" that is "actively and socially created" (p. 22) then, taking into consideration the conditions likely prerequisite for a ZPD interaction to occur within a given activity, I posit that moments during which a learner understands a new concept can be identified through analysis of recorded discourse. This proposition is

key to this study, in that it acts as a way in which learning can be identified within discourse analysis. This does not imply that production necessarily equals learning, but it opens up a necessary, observable condition for its existence. This is very much in line with Swain and Lapkin's (1998) findings that the enactment of mental processes and L2 learning can be identified by "language-related episodes" (p. 320) within recorded discourse, and it is this kind of episode that are searched for within the data recorded.

Holzman (2010) outlined four elements that foster ZPDs: freedom from knowing, creative imitation, play and completion. In a typical school, students are not free from knowing; a learner's ignorance of subject is seen as a deficit, not as a starting point. Creative imitation is eschewed in favor of individual accomplishments, rote learning and testing (Holzman, 2010, p. 32). Play is not factored into learning. Completion—the acquisition of a target form in this case—is acquired through correction and competition (Holzman, 2010, p. 32). She feels these counterproductive attitudes towards learning commonly found in traditional streamed, large group classes, stifle the occurrence of ZPDs. Studies support her conclusions that such classes are not optimal learning environments, and that small, unstreamed groups, such as those found in Cypris, can lead to superior learning outcomes (Mathis, 2016; Smyth & McCoy, 2011; Yi, 2008).

It is important here to summarize how learning is defined in Holzman's (2010) interpretation used within this study. As she defines it, learning is a social process of collaboration and creative imitation that takes place within the ZPD, which, again, is conceived of not as a state of development, but as an activity. ZPDs, and therefore instances of learning, can be identified within spoken or written interactions;

internalization, which cannot be measured, is deemphasized while completion (i.e., demonstration) of learning is accomplished (though perhaps not exclusively) through language use. As Vygotsky (1987) stated: "Thought is not expressed but completed in the word. We can, therefore, speak of the establishment…of thought in the word" (p. 250). Vygotsky asserted that thought and expression were intimately connected. Holzman elaborated on this, and contended that speaking/thinking is a dialectical unit in which speaking completes thinking (Holzman, 2010, p. 33). Speech is not only proof of learning, but learning made manifest. From this perspective the ZPD can be analytically operationalized as a language learning episode identifiable through analysis of written and spoken discourse.

As both sociocultural theory and CoP/digital habitats rely on intermental, in other words, social, relationships, learning through interaction and learning as identity transformation (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011), they complement each other. Sociocultural theory is essentially a theory of learning based in psychology while the digital habitats framework is not; however, the former is able to compensate for the weaknesses in the latter (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011). Essentially, both frameworks address different but related concerns; Wenger et al. (2009) are able to address best practices in the development of an online educational community, but are not equipped to pinpoint learning events. Holzman (2009) conceptualized the existence of recognizable learning events and the environment that could foster such events, yet her framework is unable to answer concerns about how to practically foster learning groups that would foster these events. In Chapter 7, this synthesis is shown to be

a valuable starting point in the development of a critical, macro viewpoint (Tusting, 2005) that allows for historical contextualization of Cypris within non-traditional educational paradigms, although extensive exploration along these lines was not within the limits of this study.

In summary, this study utilizes ideas from three distinct theoretical frameworks to explore three different aspects of the Cypris Chat community. First, it uses the concept of digital habitats (Wenger et al., 2009), while keeping in mind the concepts of emergence (Pearce, 2009) and software affordances (Gee, 2005) in the analysis of the structure and development of the group. Second, Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework is used to measure Cypris' efficacy as a virtual world learning community. Finally, discourse analysis is used to analyze data as broadly defined by Ellis (2008) and Goffman (1974), and sociocultural theory (Holzman, 2010; Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011) is utilized to examine how teaching and learning take place in both formal and more informal activities at Cypris.

Gaps in the Literature

This study is designed to fill several gaps in the research related to language learning communities in virtual worlds. First, there has been little research on classes based in Second Life for Second Life residents. Research has often focused on the potential affordances that virtual worlds might provide (e.g., Sheehy, 2010; Thackray, Good, & Howland, 2010), without ever entering a virtual classroom or chatting area to test assumptions. In a call to action, Kang and Burton (2013) wrote:

> the educational implementation of (Second Life) is no longer in its infancy. Research has outgrown the phase of merely discussing or envisioning how (Second Life) should or could be used for educational purposes and switched to empirical explorations. (p. 365)

Sadler (2012) also commented specifically on the lack of empirical studies of language learning in Second Life. Many thought pieces relatable to the platform, including Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats and Lim's (2009) Six Learning frameworks, are compelling, but without actual observations to test or reinforce their assumptions, they remain in the domain of science fiction. Theory on virtual world learning communities needs to be applied to preexisting groups in order to test its usefulness.

Previous research has also focused on the results of bringing university students to practice within the Second Life environment (e.g., Liou, 2012; Peterson 2012). This is perfectly understandable, as researchers are curious about integrating Second Life into university classes and a researcher's own students are often the only participants available. Small scale surveys of university student attitudes toward use of Second Life are sometimes positive (e.g., Cheng, 2014). Almost universally, however, researchers encounter difficulties using their offline university students. Issues range from problems with university computers with specs unable to run Second Life properly, to campus computer lab firewalls, to the time and effort it takes training busy students (who can lack basic computer literacy) to navigate the many options of the platform. Students might also see Second Life as an obstacle, not an aid, to their quest for English proficiency. With the rare, recent exception of Sobkowiak (2015), there has a been a lack of studies

that look at Second Life learning communities in which the participants are not too busy to spend their free time learning a language online, are not too shy to connect with interlocutors from other countries, and are not constantly struggling to overcome the learning curve of the Second Life browser. It is improbable that a researcher could draw many useful conclusions about the validity of theories related to online learning communities with participants who are only inworld as part of their university coursework.

Lastly, there is a lack of research that focuses on virtual language learning groups that primarily use voice, not text, as the mode of communication and instruction. What happens to the affordances of virtual worlds, listed in Peterson (2008) and Zheng et al. (2009), when the environment is a multimodal one focusing on speech? One can no longer review every utterance in a text log. There is no extra time to process utterances, no elimination of accent as an obstacle to communication, and a lack of complete anonymity (Zheng et al., 2009). Without text chat, a whole set of affordances disappear, but new ones potentially arise: practice in listening and speaking, the exposure to world Englishes, and the trust involved in revealing oneself through one's voice while still maintaining some anonymity through the use of avatar. These are all potential affordances that have yet to be explored. As Thorne, Black, and Skyes (2009) succinctly stated, "there is great need to more substantially explore the educational potential of social virtualities in ways that move beyond text-based CALL paradigms to examine other possible effects, dynamics, and uses associated with visually rendered and avatar-based virtual worlds" (p. 809).

Purposes

This study addresses the aforementioned gaps in the literature through its investigation of Cypris Chat. First, it provides an examination of a working online learning community, not a theoretical exercise in discussion of possible best practices. Second, it seeks to find the reasons why Cypris works as a community and avoids the pitfalls of research utilizing often reluctant university students by focusing on a group of tech-savvy participants already familiar with the virtual world they are interacting in. Third, this study explores the role socializing has in both maintaining group cohesion over time and in language learning. While filling these gaps, it offers a historical and structural analysis of a successful online language learning group and its participants and explores how multimodal teaching and learning can take place within such a community.

Research Questions

Two main foci of inquiry are explored. First, what factors lie behind the robust longevity and appeal of this group? Because virtual environments have heretofore not been found to be intrinsically appealing to language learners (Ballou, 2009; Peterson, 2008), the appeal might lie with the way the community is run, the way it has evolved emergently or in the learning (and teaching) preferences of its members. To address this question, a rich, detailed description of Cypris' development as an emergent community is required, including an analysis of its history, goals, and objectives, as well as its evolving geographical layout. Additionally, motives behind extended participation among

long-term members are explored to determine whether commonalities in background are the key to Cypris' growth. Criteria from Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitat framework and Lim's (2009) Six Learning's framework are used to analyze the data collected, and the usefulness of those frameworks are evaluated.

Second, what sort of language teaching and learning, if any, takes places at Cypris, and what sort of strategies do Cypris tutors use when teaching classes within Second Life? If learning does occur, in what ways does it take place? Besides formal classes, interaction between learners can take place in casual conversation or in various other activities including field trips, building and content creation, games, and within participation as a Cypris volunteer. All of these activities are examined closely to see tutors' methods and approaches, as well as what learners are getting out of these interactions. Incidences of learning, as operationalized by ZPD activities, are sought for using discourse analysis of various activities, with the tenets of sociocultural learning theory (Holzman, 2010; Swain, Kinnear & Steinman, 2011) as guides.

In summary, the research questions are:

Research question 1. What factors lie behind the robust longevity and appeal of Cypris Chat as a language learning community?

Research question 2. What sort of language teaching and learning, if any, takes places at Cypris?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter is divided into four parts. First, I describe the research context, Cypris Chat, in more detail. Second, there is a description of the main participants in the study. Third, data collection, instruments and analytical methods are explained. Fourth, ethical concerns and data security are addressed.

The Research Site: Cypris Chat

Cypris Chat is the name of both an online group and a virtual location, sometimes referred to as Cypris Village. The group is open and membership is free, although prospective members must agree to obey the rules of the group and demonstrate that they have a working headset. The section of the sim occupied by Cypris is open to avatars that are at least one week old; this rule, instituted in 2013, was specifically designed to discourage one particular griefer, a malicious individual staff have nicknamed Jason, who still occasionally comes to the sim to disrupt classes. All Cypris members are tacitly understood to be augmentationist while at the sim; in other words, they are not role-playing. Cypris Chat has moved four times in its history; the sim can currently be accessed by entering Second Life and searching *Cypris Chat* in the search function. As of February 2017, once inworld, the following SLurl (Second Life URL address) can also be used: Mallo/195/141/23.

As of December 2016, Cypris Chat membership comprised 883 members, although it is unclear how many members are active. In October 2012, Cypris was featured in the live feed of *What's Hot in SL* on the Second Life website, providing some indication of its popularity at that point in time. In Facebook correspondence with charter members and group managers Mike McKay and Mystie estimated that Cypris was at its most active from 2010-2012. As of 2015, there were on average of 11 activities per week led by nine volunteer tutors. An example of official activities can be found in Table 1. There are currently a variety of different classes available, yet most, besides Mr. Hammond and Grama's classes, take place in early morning Second Life time, evening for east Asia. Outside of official activities, Cypris members can be found chatting, building virtual objects or playing board or word games together at Cypris at any time of the day or night. Along with Virtlantis, another language learning community, Cypris has become a well-known language learning group in Second Life.

A more detailed description of Cypris as it currently exists is warranted here. Unlike many other areas in Second Life, all activities and most between-activities interaction make extensive use of Second Life's voice chat feature. The group integrates avatar-based synchronous voice and text chat activities with more conventional asynchronous learning on the Cypris website (Cypris Chat, n.d.) and on Facebook (Cypris Chat English in Second Life, n.d.). This requires members who wish to participate fully to have a headset and a stable Internet connection. Participants must also follow the four principles of Cypris that are posted in the welcome area and on the website:

Table 1. *Cypris Chat Schedule (August 20-26, 2015) All times PDT.*

Day	Time (Pacific Standard)	Activity
Sunday	4:30 AM – 5:45 AM	Let's Read Harry Potter! with Mystie
Monday	4:45 AM – 5:45 AM	Phrasal Verbs A-Z with Duke
	11 AM – 12 AM	Field Trip Activity with Duke
Tuesday	5 AM – 6 AM	Beginner's Listening and Reading with Mystie
	11 AM – 12 AM	Study Group with Mr. Hammond
Wednesday	11 AM - 12 AM	Study Group with Mr. Hammond (plus Scrabble)
Thursday	6 AM – 7:30 AM	Themed Lesson Time with Duke
Friday	5 AM – 6:30 AM	Nature Photos with Kaede
	6:30 AM – 7:30 AM	Language Exchange with Showshow
	10 PM – 11:30 PM	Reading Lounge with Grama
Saturday	6 AM – 7:30 AM	An Hour and a Half with Pink

Share

After joining our family, members should find ways to share what they have learned or done in Second Life. Tell us where you have been, what you have seen. Show us your safe toys, clothes, avatars, and gadgets. Sharing promotes communication.

Respect

Second Life is very different from real life, but it is real for many of us. We all come from different cultures, different backgrounds and with different reasons for spending time in (Second Life). We might not understand each other but we both have the same goal, to learn or teach.

Respond

Share your opinions about Cypris. Let us know what you think. Help us make this community a better place for you. Your feedback is what makes Cypris so great. Your opinion matters the most. Help each other with learner/teacher feedback. Communicate mistakes and successes.

Be Active

Speak. Talk. Ask questions. Say something. We are not passive learners, we are active! In order to improve, we must practice. To practice we must participate. To participate we must SPEAK! Less text chat and more voice chat. We are here to help our members improve their ability to communicate in English. (McKay, 2013)

Although this mission statement, visible in the Cypris welcome area, is more a mission statement than a code of conduct, members have been ejected, banned or ignored for not following these tenets. Not following the principle regarding respect, in particular, has been used as rationalization for removing members disrespectful towards others' cultural

or religious beliefs and members engaged in sexual harassment, griefing, or discrimination for any reason. Additionally, members who do not log in or participate in Cypris activities for more than two months were previously removed from the group, as they are considered in violation of the "Be Active" policy; however, this policy has not been in effect since 2015.

Membership is currently split into three categories: *tourists*, *guides*, and *tutors*. Those who wish to join the group must approach a staff member —a guide or tutor— demonstrate that they are able to use voice and assert that they have read the Four Principles of Cypris and agree to follow them. Tourists can be promoted to guides should they choose to dedicate themselves to volunteering a certain amount of time weekly, either simply giving assistance to newcomers, or leading casual activities. Guides can be of any language proficiency, as long as they are able to communicate in English with others about the basic features of the group. They do not teach classes. Tutors are responsible for at least one weekly 90-120 minute class at a regularly scheduled time. They are either native speakers, or highly proficient non-native speakers of English.

Although some effort was briefly made by Mike McKay to coordinate Guide and Tutor activities around monthly themes, it was abandoned, and there is currently no set curriculum. Guides and tutors are expected to advertise their activities 24 hours in advance in three ways: as a Cypris group notice that goes out to every member in Second Life, on the Facebook group and on the website forums (Cypris Chat, n.d.). There are currently no restrictions regarding what sorts of activities can be carried out by volunteers, with the implicit exception of political or religious meetings.

To illustrate a typical activity, an example of one of my weekly themed lessons is outlined here; it has had the same basic format since late 2009. First, there is a warm-up discussion question related to the theme of the lesson, and a Second Life notecard is distributed via a box floating above the campfire in the center of the Cypris Chat Ring. Vocabulary and idioms are introduced, and then a dialog is read aloud twice, once by a pair of advanced learners and then once by a pair of less able learners. Afterwards, a matching exercise and several discussion questions round out the lesson.

The Chat Ring (Figure 1) is composed of orange chairs for active participants, blue chairs for observers, and one white chair for the instructor. There is currently no official limit to class size, although this was once not the case; the entire Cypris sim had occasionally been limited to 20 avatars at one time in 2009-2010. The ring is also divided into four sections: red, blue, green, and yellow. Each color corresponds to a teleport pad located on the outer rim of the Chat Ring; during small group work or discussion, participants can use the teleporter in their area to move to small, similarly color-coded platforms high above the chat ring so the groups cannot hear each other during discussion.

As of 2015, there are several other areas besides the Cypris Chat Ring designed for different activities:

1. The Welcome Area: This is where visitors to Cypris first materialize. There are tutor portraits here, with a notice as to their online status, as well as a schedule of classes. There is also a sign post pointing to different areas of Cypris. Clicking on the sign instantly teleports a member's avatar to the selected area.

Figure 1. Screenshot: Cypris Chat Ring (circa 2014).

2. The Tiki Bar: This area features a dance floor and several gaming tables. It is the most popular area for chatting. There are DJ and live music events, as well as gaming tournaments hosted there.

3. The Sandbox: Cypris members wishing to build virtual items in Second Life can do so here. There is also a Scrabble board where weekly scheduled games are held.

4. The holodeck: This is an area for role-play lessons in which different locations can be materialized instantly. Locations include a restaurant, a hotel lobby, and an airport.

5. Beginner's Area and Reading Circle: These are two smaller areas developed specifically for beginners and reading circle classes.

6. The Cypris Mile High Club: This is a staff lounge suspended in a “sky box” high above Cypris used for staff meetings.

There are also various other areas including several sky boxes for activities, a room for single player English practice games, and a self-access learning room. It should also be noted that in 2014, two senior Cypris members—both Japanese nationals—rented land adjacent to Cypris and created their own Cypris Japan group for beginner level Japanese English learners. Japanese language lessons are also currently offered there.

Both the schedule of activities and the geography of Cypris have undergone many changes since Cypris' inception. For example, the sim once held permanent residences and offices for the staff to encourage their availability in Cypris between classes, and regular monthly staff meetings have given way to discussions on a closed Facebook group for Cypris staff. More significantly, staff members who have brought their own activities have come and gone and come again, including McKay himself, who has currently relinquished most aspects of the management of Cypris to charter member Mystie. This evolution of Cypris has reflected a continuing interaction between learners and staff. This often emergent process is outlined through an exploration of Cypris's history and through interviews that clarify why and how the community has developed. Exploration of this interaction is important in understanding the ways online learning communities such as Cypris survive and grow.

Discourse Analysis

Before continuing, it is important to look at how discourse analysis is defined in the study. Discourse analysis, as broadly defined, is "the study of how sentences in spoken and written language form larger meaningful units such as paragraphs, conversations, interviews, etc." (Richards, Platt, & Platt, 1992). It is methodology informed by a social constructivist epistemology (Gergen, 1999). It examines language in use and "focuses attention on the processes whereby the social world is constructed and maintained" (Philips & Hardy, 2002, p. 2). As Ellis (2008) defined it, discourse analysis "give(s) attention not only to the function of individual utterances but also to how those utterances combine to form larger discoursal units" (p. 778). In specific reference to language learning environments, Ellis (2008) frames discourse analysis positively as "a device for systematically describing the kinds of interactions that occur in language classrooms" (p. 778). He also stated that discourse analysts "aim to account for the joint contributions of teacher and student and to describe all the data" (p. 778). In this study, discourse analysis is defined as a holistic, constructivist methodology that attempts to derive meaning from examination of written or spoken discourse.

Discourse analysis is the methodology, not a theoretical framework, utilized in answering both research questions in this study, although it is used to answer the two research questions of this study in different ways. In regards to Research Question 1, which requires data from participant interviews, it is used in its broadest sense as a way to interpret interview data along with Seidman's (2006) system of phenomenological interviewing. In Research Question 2, which focuses on observations of formal and

informal teaching and learning activities at Cypris, it is used in analysis of teaching strategies and learning events. Use of discourse analysis was not without its potential problems. As it is not a psychological methodology, per se, it might have lacked the conceptual strength to wrestle meaning from discussions of participant backgrounds and preferences in some cases. In observations, especially among non-native speakers, discourse might have been misinterpreted, participants' limited language ability being a possible cause of misunderstanding. Care was taken to ameliorate these potential weaknesses through careful interpretation and member checking.

Participants

There are two overlapping categories of participants in this study: those who were interviewed and those who participated in activities that were observed and recorded using FRAPS **(**FRAPS, n.d.) and D3DGear (D3DGear, n.d.) video capture software. Interviewees were purposefully selected through knowledge of prospective participants' backgrounds, essentially aiming for a balance of younger and older, higher and lower proficiency, offline gender, and nationality. With one exception, all volunteer staff members active at the time of the research were interviewed, as well as a selection of students who had been with the group for more than six months and exhibited language proficiency sufficient enough for interviews in English. Twenty-one participants were interviewed in total; this strategy is in accordance with recommendations from virtual ethnographer Bonnie Nardi (Boellstorff et al., 2012), who suggested that around 20

participants is an adequate number for this sort of ethnographic study. Participants observed during activities consisted of those members present during observations.

Participants interviewed ranged in age from early 20s to 60s; there were no volunteer staff younger than 30. The group is an international one; at one time or another, the staff has included Americans, Japanese, Spanish, Jordanese, Brazilian, Saudi Arabian, Chinese, and Polish members. Their English proficiency as measured by standardized tests, years of formal English education, and much of their backgrounds were largely unknown; learning more about participant backgrounds was a greater part of why interviews were conducted in the first place.

Participants received a digital notecard in Second Life inviting them to participate in the study. The notecard explained the purpose of the study, foreseeable risks and benefits, assurances of confidentiality of personal information, and the details of their potential involvement. Appendix B contains a copy of the informed consent form for participants in recorded activities, while Appendix C shows the corresponding form for interviewees. An additional informed consent form also given to all Cypris participants can be found in Appendix D. Participants were able to withdraw from participation at any time or refuse to answer any questions during the interview process; they could also retroactively withdraw permission for their comments to be used in this study, although none did so. Participants were asked to decide whether or not to be referred to in the study by their avatar name or a pseudonym of their choice. They then typed their avatar name at the bottom of the notecard, renamed and dated the notecard, and returned a digital copy to me. Participants were encouraged to retain a copy of the original form for

their own records. Utmost care was taken to make sure that Cypris participants completely understood the informed consent form before agreeing to be identified in this study, and this involved an oral paraphrase provided in simplified English in some cases. With some Japanese participants, a brief oral explanation in Japanese was also given to assure comprehension.

Interviews

To answer the first research question of the study, namely what factors lie behind the robust longevity and popularity of this group, two sets of semi-structured interviews were initially planned for 21 learners and tutors using FRAPS and D3DGear motion caption software; FRAPS was initially chosen because of its high quality resolution, but was later replaced by D3DGear because of issues related to file corruption, difficulty in the recording of my voice, and file size. D3DGear, also had its own issues, as it would seemingly arbitrarily cut and start new files; this led to some interviews, and later observations, having multiple files of varying lengths. However, after the first few interviews, it became clear that some interviewees strongly preferred to have a single, longer interview in place of two short ones. Accordingly, some participants were interviewed once and some twice, with interview length varying for participants; in the end, 26 separate interviews were conducted on the 8 Cypris staff (Table 2) and 13 Cypris members (Table 3). Quotations taken directly from video recordings include citations indicating name, time stamp, video file number (if there was more than one file recording for that date), and date.

Table 2. *Interviews with Cypris Staff*

Avatar nickname	Gender	Age	Nation	Proficiency	Dates	Time
Kaede	F	60s	U.S.A. Montana	Native	1/6/16*	83:49
Feronymous	M	50s	U.S.A. (Korea)	Native	12/17/15, 12/30/15	92:34
Flo	F	30s	Japan	Full bilingual	6/11/16	38:57
Grama	F	30s	Eastern Europe (Canada)	Near-native	2/15/16	59:00
Mystie	F	50s	Japan	Near-native	6/28/13, 6/10/15*	93:20
Pink	F	50s	Egypt (UAE)	Near-native	2/15/16	96:18
Power	M	20s	Jordan	Intermediate	3/18/16	39:44
Mike McKay	M	40s	U.S.A. (Japan)	Native	3/30/16	43:54

Note. Proficiency levels are based on subjective evaluation. * indicates corrupt files that resulted in lost video.

Table 3. *Interviews with Cypris Members*

Avatar nickname	Gender	Age	Nation	Proficiency	Dates	Time
Cata	M	40s	Rumania	Advanced	2/13/16*	76:47
Cem	F	30s	France	Intermediate	2/18/16	24:40
Dori	F	40s	Japan	Advanced	6/3/16	34:57
Hairo	F	20s	Lithuania	Advanced	12/19/15, 1/24/16*	74:00
Honey	F	40s	Japan	Low intermediate	1/20/16, 1/27/16, 6/4/16	102:37
Jeff	M	30s	Turkey	Near-native	2/13/16	26:19
Margolya	F	30s	Ukraine	Intermediate	12/1/15	24:38
Phoenix	F	30s	Japan	Near-native	6/5/16	78:12
QP	M	40s	Japan	Beginner	6/2/16	39:31
	F avi					
Showshow	M	60s	Japan	Low intermediate	6/1/16	23:06
Taka	M	40s	Japan	Intermediate	6/8/16	25:05
Takashi	M	40s	Japan	Low intermediate	6/5/16	26:30
Zen	F	40s	Denmark	Near-native	2/13/16	54:32

Notes. avi refers to gender of the above user's avatar. Proficiency levels are based on subjective evaluation. * indicates corrupt files resulted in lost video.

Interviews were conducted from a constructivist perspective, in which the researcher and participant were "joined together in the process of coconstruction" (Hatch,

2002, p. 15); this involved sharing many of my own personal experiences related to interviewee responses. The first section of each interview covered participants' learning histories in relation to both English and computer use. This section was relatively unstructured, but learners and non-native speakers were generally asked these questions to stimulate conversation:

1. When was the first time you encountered English in your childhood?
2. Were you taught English in school? If so, how did you feel about English learning in school?
3. When did you first learn to use a computer?
4. When did you first have your own computer?
5. Did you play any video or computer games when you were younger?

For English native speaker staff, Questions 1-3 were not used, and were replaced with various questions related to their first teaching experiences.

The second section of each interview focused on participant perception of their own involvement in Cypris and Second Life. The second section was key in that it is here that I focused on participants' relationships within the digital habitat that is Cypris. Although the interviews were open-ended, they were semi-structured, and an attempt was made to touch on five categories corresponding to five important aspects of successful digital habitats (Wenger et al., 2009). The categories and some examples of related questions can be found below:

1. Meetings: What do you think about how staff members communicate? Would you prefer meetings? Do you pay attention to Facebook or the Cypris website?

2. Relationships: Is socializing important at Cypris? What do you think about the way people get to know each other at Cypris? How do you see your role at Cypris? Do you connect with students outside class time? Have you made friends with anyone here? You have to use voice at Cypris, and does this make you feel uncomfortable? Do you ever feel that people ask too many personal questions at Cypris?
3. Individual participation: Do you think Cypris lets you participate the way you want to participate?
4. Community cultivation: Do you think Cypris is responsive to your needs?
5. Serving a context: Who do you think Cypris serves? Should Cypris be doing anything else/different?

The interviews were conducted using Second Life's voice chat, although text chat was occasionally used to clarify points in certain interviews. These interviews were conducted as prescribed by Schuman (1982) and adapted by Seidman's (2006) system of phenomenological interviewing: The first section was designed to contextualize the second for the interviewee, ideally leading to more fruitful insights. An understanding of participant background and motivation often led to a clearer picture of the kind of individuals for whom learning in Second Life is an option. A sample interview set with Mystie, Cypris' manager is provided for reference (Appendix E).

Additionally, seven mid- to lower-proficiency participants were selected for post-activity interviews after three classes led by myself. Each interview took place directly after the learner attended a class that I had recorded (see the Analysis of Teaching and

Learning Activities later on in Chapter 3). Interview questions focused on learner self-reports and self-observation (Cohen, 1994) regarding what participants felt they learned in the previous activity, and their interpretations of my analysis of the activities in which they participated. Participant self-reports were then compared with recordings and discourse analysis.

Analysis of Interview Data

Logs were created of each video including analytic memos (Saldana, 2009). Then, selected excerpts that seemed particularly revelatory were transcribed. Transcriptions included both voice and text messages, as well as relevant gestures or animations participants used to express themselves. Transcriptions and coding were done through simple word processing software (Microsoft Word for Windows 2013). Further coding and categorizing of data was then necessary (Saldana, 2009, pp. 8-9), with a focus on identifying both historical commonalities and learning preferences that might have contributed to participants' long-term participation in the group. The first round of coding focused on descriptive coding and values coding as recommended in Saldana, (2009). Descriptive coding focused on identifying topics (Tesch, 1990), while values coding identified "a participant's values, attitudes and beliefs, his or her perspectives or worldview" (Saldana, 2009, p. 89). Using these two different yet complementary analytical frameworks allowed for identification of experiences and attitudes common to participant backgrounds.

As per Boellstorff et al. (2012), interview videos were then systematically tagged into micro-units related to motivation for their continued engagement at Cypris; different colors represented different themes. 8 micro-units were identified: focus on socializing (red), Cypris as a school (green), first adopter history (pink), history of role-play (orange), pedagogy focus (brown), rules/safety/politeness (mustard), Cypris as cost-free (blue) and otherwise interesting quotes (dark red). An example of tutor Feronymous' interview data collection at this stage can be found in Appendix F. The data was then coded into higher-level constructs such as *desire to practice English despite poverty* or *use of Second Life to build objects for sale*, and the data was reexamined with an aim at further building up of categories and themes to lead to commonalities regarding participant affinity for this particular sort of online learning community. Finally, the data was thematized in an effort to determine wider patterns among participant responses.

Post-interview Meetings

Once interview data was collected and analyzed, two meetings with several sets of participants were arranged to further explore the interview data and my initial conclusions as a group. These involved two meetings: one for volunteer staff and one general meeting open to all members. These meetings were initially designed as focus groups to generate data through the interaction of cooperative groups of similar participants (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2007), though in the end this proofed unfeasible. Because much leeway was given to allow participants' concerns to lead the interaction, these meetings inevitably evolved into discussions of best practices within the group,

galvanizing the group into action on several points that had been revealed to be important to all members. However, these interactions did confirm preliminary conclusions that were drawn during the interview process. Like the interviews, these meetings were video recorded and then coded. This shed light on the factors responsible for Cypris' long-lasting appeal for these participants, and was evidence of their willingness to reevaluate group policy to improve members' teaching and learning experiences.

Analysis of Teaching and Learning Activities

In order to answer my second research question regarding what sort of language teaching and learning takes places at Cypris, recordings, again using the video capture software FRAPS and D3DGear, were made of three types of activities: lessons, casual chat, and games. The focus was twofold. First, teaching methods and strategies used by Cypris tutors were examined. Then, exemplars of learning taking place within these activities were identified. Lessons were chosen that reflected a variety of teaching styles and subject matter: a content-based science class, a reading class, a grammar class for beginners and my own activity focusing on practice of phrasal verbs were examined. Additionally, informal interactions outside of class were observed: these included instances of storytelling, play utilizing Second Life objects, and interactions playing Second Life board games (Table 4). Learning events were identified as interactions in which participants demonstrably did not know information or currect usage of an item beforehand but demonstrated understanding by the end of the class. Based on these recordings, language related episodes that appeared to indicate learning were identified,

Table 4. *Recorded Activities and Discussions*

Activity	Dates	Videos (files)	Attendance	Total time
Kaede's Fantastic Science Class	12/16/15	#1 (3)	5	85:24
	12/30/15	#2 (3)	11	88:50
	1/6/16	#3 (3)	8	89:23
	1/13/15	#4 (3)	8	97:18
	1/20/16	#5 (3)	9	88:57
	1/27/16	#6 (2)	6	91:62
	2/3/16	#7 (3)	7	110:23
	2/10/16	#8 (3)	7	93:57
	2/17/16	#9 (3)	7	132:39
	2/24/16	#10 (4)	8	104:51
	3/8/16	#11 (4)	8	93:15
Grama's Reading Class	12/19/15	#1 (1)	4	90:29
	2/13/16	#2 (2)	4	80:47
	3/26/16	#3 (5)	7	69:30
Mystie's Beginner's Activity	12/8/15	#1 (4)	6	139:40
	1/12/16	#2 (3)	7	96:53
	1/19/16	#3 (3)	7	89:53
	1/26/16	#4 (3)	5	118:18
	2/2/16	#5 (2)	6	89:01
	2/16/16	#6 (4)	11	124:44
	2/23/16	#7 (3)	9	96:57

Table 4 (continues)

Table 4 (continued)

Activity	Dates	Videos (files)	Attendance	Total time
	3/1/16	#8 (5)	9	159:20
	4/5/16	#9 (6)	6	121:32
	3/15/16	#10 (4)	6	100:25
	3/22/16	#11 (5)	4	79:18
	4/19/16	#12 (5)	9	89:22
Duke's Phrasal Verbs Class	6/13/16	#1 (5)	9	86:99
	6/20/16	#2 (5)	9	71:28
	6/27/16	#3 (7)	10	147:40
Conversation: Power's ghost stories	2/12/16	#1	5	38:16
Conversation: Hairo's brussels sprouts	12/18/15	#1	7	33:32
Conversation: Jan's Parcheesi	3/5/16	#1 (2)	4	45:38
Focus Group–Staff meeting	6/11/16	#1 (4)	5	67:08
Focus Group–All member meeting	6/12/16	#1 (5)	6	82:00

As an analytical approach, discourse analysis had a broad, descriptive orientation. As is typical of qualitative studies such as this one (Tarone, 1994), an ethnographic approach "in which…a small number of learners are observed in communicative interactions with those around them, and the patterns in their language use…systematically described" (p. 676) was deemed appropriate. It was also utilized for two other reasons. First, various types of interactions might potentially occur between teachers and learners, between peers, and between learners and artifacts or affordances specific to the Second Life environment. Second, considering the multimodal nature of interaction in Second Life and the various L1 and cultural backgrounds of the teachers

and learners, this open-ended approach had advantages over classroom interaction analysis, in which categories of analysis must be predetermined (Spada, 1994). However, the focus was on language learning episodes that fell within four categories: morpho-syntactic (grammar), lexis (vocabulary), orthography (spelling, hyphenation, capitalization, word breaks, emphasis, and punctuation), and sociopragmatics (situational language use) (Jackson, 2001, p. 299; Kasper, 2000; Storch, 1998).

Episodes deemed to be representative of teacher strategies and potential language learning episodes were treated as exemplars and transcribed, again transcribing voice and text chat as well as other relevant cues, such as avatar position and motion. Excerpts from activities were then numbered for later reference as in Adger (2001); text chat, when utilized, was identified as such at the beginning of each utterance. Transcription and quotes from formal activities and informal interactions were cited with the activity name, activity number, video recording number (there were often multiple videos needed to record one instance of an activity), the time stamp within that recording, and the date. Wigham and Chanier's (2013) methodological framework for speech acts for virtual world interactions was referenced, in which interactions were first put into verbal, nonverbal, proxemic, and kinesic acts. However, as the interaction between text and voice chat was considered most relevant (Wigham & Chanier, 2015), that was to be the primary focus. Learning episodes related to language use were then broken down even further into categories, including verb tense/aspect, prepositions, articles, linking nouns in noun phrases, linking ideas, subject/verb agreement, use of the passive, sentence structure, word form, punctuation, and vocabulary (Storch, 1998).

Discourse analysis then focused on incidents that fell under Holzman's (2010) interpretation of ZPD activities, namely, collective forms of cooperative activity that led to a demonstration of learning (Vygotsky, 2004, p. 202). This included examples of scaffolding, and dyads of imitation and completion between interlocutors, but also examined language play, tutor assessment, and other indications that learning had occurred; this was anything from a correct response to a comprehension question in certain cases, to the act of asking a question and then demonstrating understanding through subsequent interaction. In most cases, demonstrations of learning by individuals in these exemplars were characterized by two factors: there were indications the learner was ignorant of the target structures before exposure and there were clear indications that comprehension had taken place sometime after initial exposure. In the cases of the 7 focal participants, learners were also asked to self-report what they learned after each activity (Cohen, 1994).

Participant Observation

The author's experience as volunteer and in-house researcher at Cypris was an additional resource that guided both interviews and discourse analysis. I am a charter member of Cypris Chat and have been a volunteer tutor since 2008. From December 2008 – 2009, I routinely taught one 90 minute course a week on Thursdays, but subsequently I led various activities on Mondays as well, including sentence correction games, free-form chat sessions and field trip activities. Since 2014, I have led four 90-minute activities a week. As of December 2016, I have spent over 1000 hours leading

activities in the environment; this does not include participation in staff meetings, fund raisers, and countless informal conversations with participants both within Second Life and through affiliation with Cypris' Facebook group and website (Cypris Chat English in Second Life, n.d.). My participation as a volunteer instructor has been instrumental in fostering an empathy and understanding of Second Life residents and their experiences, just as it would be for ethnographic researchers in other environments (Grimes, Fleischman, & Jaeger, 2010, p. 88). In exchange for volunteering my time with the group, I have received access to Cypris members for a variety of projects, research publications, and academic presentations (DuQuette, 2011; DuQuette & Hann, 2010).

However, my familiarity with the way the group and individual activities have been run in the past does not necessarily imply that I had a thorough understanding of Cypris' most recent incarnation. Newer staff members and Cypris veterans alike currently lead activities I had not personally attended and needed to familiarize myself with. Additionally, activities and interactions that have occurred at times inconvenient to my time zone had also gone mostly unobserved. Without a solid understanding of the recent cultural context of Cypris membership, it would have been difficult to develop insightful questions during interviews and reach insightful conclusions while examining discourse analysis.

Therefore, in addition to information gleaned from my lengthy history with Cypris Chat, a month of formal participant observation research was completed. This involved the taking of a field note journal, regular observations and recordings in Cypris during both formal and informal activities, and autoethnographic evaluations of my own

activities. Formal observation is integral to any study with an ethnographic focus (Boellstorff et al., 2012, p. 65), and participation is integral to studies of games and virtual worlds (Williams & Skoric, 2005). By doing so, I received a more intimate, authoritative, and holistic picture of how Cypris currently functions as a community.

Notes were recorded in an MS Word file by a form of *two-boxing* (Boellstorff, Nardi, Pearce, & Taylor, 2012, p. 83), essentially observing the Second Life browser through one monitor and taking abbreviated *scratch notes* (Ottenberg 1990, p. 148), a stream of informal impressions, in another, along with screenshots during observations and interactions with Cypris members. On several occasions, with participant permission from Cypris members, video recordings of conversations were also taken (Table 3). Notes were expanded and refined within 24 hours of each observation session, so as to take advantage of details and impressions while they are still fresh in the mind. All observations of informal interactions later reported in Chapter 5 were done during periods of participant observation.

Beyond records of virtual location, time and activity, a basic notation system was used to categorize interactions and utterances as they occurred. This included several notations of modality for different types of utterances. For example, interactions could be in local, group or private text chat or voice chat. *Proxemic* communication, as expressed through avatar proximity with other avatars, was also taken into account, as were gestures or sampled sound recordings and role-playing *emotes*, in which participants refer to their actions literarily, usually in the third person through a popular Second Life keyboard shortcut. Descriptions of avatar appearance were included when deemed potentially

meaningful to a given interaction. Again, participant observation was important in that it provided information necessary to design insightful questions during participant interviews and gave a greater context for the observation of classes and activities.

The conclusions derived from interviews, meetings, discourse analysis and field notes were used to evaluate how Cypris fit into two rubrics, the signs of life of successful digital habitats (Wenger et al., 2009), and Lim's (2009) Six Learnings Framework. Again, these frameworks were used to examine how Cypris measured up to managerial norms and best practices of virtual learning, while at the same time testing the usefulness of these rubrics in defining what a successful online learning community should be.

To summarize, to explore what lies behind the robust longevity of this group, recordings of interview sets, meetings and informal interactions between Cypris members were conducted, and potentially informative discourse was transcribed and coded. Conclusions were compared to the previously established but untested criteria for successful online groups set out by Wenger, White, and Smith (2009) and Lim (2009). Also, to examine how language learning and teaching occurred in both classes and informal activities in Cypris, recordings of disparate categories of classes and interactions were recorded. Analysis uses Holzman's (2010) conception of sociocultural learning theory to determine demonstrations of language learning episodes representing possible ZPD events. Additionally, 7 participants were observed over the course of three consecutive activities, and interviewed. These additional interviews focused on comparing self-reported learning with the discourse recorded during the activities.

Member Checking

In November 2016, all Cypris participants received access to the sections of a pre-publication draft of this study in which their participation was recorded and analyzed. In qualitative, naturalistic research, member checking, i.e., sharing one's conclusions and conferring with participants before publication, is key to credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 881) and to protect the researcher's status within the group. Participants were encouraged to submit comments in writing or orally within Second Life to verify or rebut preliminary analyses and to approve screenshots that included participant avatars (Figures 5-10); this allowed participants to review statements that might inadvertently have a negative effect on their interactions within the Cypris Chat community. This was especially crucial because misunderstandings could easily arise simply because the participants are non-native speakers of English. In this case, one participant, Mystie, did offer additional comments, and her input was integrated into the discussion of the activity she led. In the end, member checking did not lead to reevaluation or extension of the study's conclusions, but it was deemed essential in order to be fair to participants and to ensure that I did not inadvertently endanger my own status as in-house researcher within the group.

Ethical Considerations

The required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Social/Behavioral Research Basic Course was completed on August 27, 2015. This research acknowledges the directives of the 1981 U.S. Department of Health and Human

Services' (DHHS) Common Rule 45 CFR 46, Subpart A (1981) and the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's Belmont Report (1979) which set forth ethical guidelines for research involving human subjects. This entails respect for personal autonomy, beneficence and justice. Participants' personal autonomy was protected through a research design that gave weight to participant opinions and decisions; individuals judged to have limited English language ability, and who were in a sense working in a state of diminished autonomy in regards to participation, were communicated with in their native language (in this case, Japanese) when possible to verify their understanding of the conditions of their participation. The concept of beneficence was respected through both an effort to minimize any possible psychological distress caused by interviews and observations and to maximize potential benefits for the participants. Immediate benefits from my participation for observees included additional opportunities for English practice for learners and potential assistance for tutors. Long-term benefits include the possibility for increased public interest in the Cypris Chat group that this research might provide. The concept of justice, in the sense of equal representation, was addressed through selection of interview participants from a cross-section of disparate offline backgrounds.

Anonymity

Second Life is unique in that residents already possess as much or as little anonymity as they desire. "What sort of ethical guidelines and norms," Wankel and Malleck (2010) wrote, "are required to establish trust and build communities in an

environment where identity is variable and always in flux?" (p. 3). Even if full avatar names were utilized in this study—names searchable on the Second Life platform—it would be very difficult to connect members' Second Life pseudonyms to individually identifiable information tied to offline identities (with the notable exception of Mike McKay). With the potential of harm to participants so relatively insignificant, and experiences using avatar surrogates inworld sometimes being deemed less 'real' than offline interactions (Wankel & Malleck, 2010, p. 2), there is a temptation to neglect some ethical considerations regarding anonymity. Some have gone so far to propose that the study of avatars, that technically may or may not be directly controlled by a human actor, might not even necessarily fall under the Common Rule protecting human subjects, because avatars do not technically fulfill the definition of a living individual (Martinez, 2015).

However, in the case of Cypris Chat, this would be a mistake. Cypris members do not have an identity that is "always in flux," (Wankel & Malleck, 2010, p. 3), but in fact foster an online persona through one avatar; to my knowledge, in eight years, only one Cypris member has regularly used more than one avatar within the community. This persona has a reputation within the group in which it interacts, and that reputation can be damaged. Should this study, when published, be read by Cypris members, it will most likely be obvious who said what based on the close knit nature of the group. To complicate the situation further, many staff members and learners already see this study as an opportunity to attract new members, and to advertise, as a somewhat comparable study (Sobkowiak, 2015) has recently done for the Virtlantis language learning group. In

a sense, the levels of anonymity in relation to identification with offline identities have already been predecided by participants themselves. It is much more difficult, and in some cases, undesirable, to provide anonymity for Second Life identities.

Accordingly, participants in this study were afforded the level of anonymity that they requested, and this was determined during the informed consent process. Some requested to be referred to by their offline and Second Life names, as in the case of Mike McKay, only by an abbreviated form of their Second Life user name, as in Mystie's case, or through a self-selected pseudonym. Participants were also informed that they could change their level of anonymity at any point during the study, and two participants did so.

Privacy and Security

Privacy within Second Life is not necessarily guaranteed. If one is using local voice or text chat in the same sim, it is entirely possible that an unknown person or persons might be able to listen in. Accordingly, all interviews were conducted either in private one-on-one voice and/or text chat, or through conference call style discussion audible only to invited members. Although participants' avatars did not technically even need to be within the same sim as the researcher's avatar for interviews and meetings to be conducted, all participants chose to have their avatar nearby the researcher's avatar during interviews.

Finally, although it is highly unlikely that a breach in data security would result in physical or psychological harm to participants, protecting personal privacy was still an important concern. All data files, including, but not limited to video files from interviews

and observations, transcripts and field notes were secured on a dedicated hard drive within password protected folders at the researcher's residence, and utmost care was taken to safeguard personal information and interview data.

Positionality

It is important to reemphasize the positionality of the researcher within the Cypris community. One of the primary limitations of studies with an ethnographic focus is the insider/outsider dilemma (Erickson, 1991; Hornberger, 1994). My familiarity with Cypris and the Second Life platform, the characteristic that allowed me access to participants "may distort interpretation toward shared biases" (Hornberger, 1994, p. 689). Similarly, I might have failed to notice relevant cues or information that might be immediately apparent to someone who has not spent so long within Cypris Chat and the Second Life platform.

Other personal characteristics of mine might have influenced participant responses or behavior. It is common knowledge in the group that I have lived in Japan, and speak some Japanese. My position as a Caucasian American male, as is clearly visible in my Second Life profile, and as a native-speaker and perceived authority on English teaching were also factors that might have influenced participants differently, as was my reputation as a long-time volunteer in the community. There is a danger that the data I obtained could be less critical of the group because of my perceived role in the group as staff.

As a charter staff member and a volunteer, I have formed personal relationships and fostered friendships with current and past Cypris members, even meeting with key staff members offline on more than one occasion. There is a tacit assumption that my research would be fair and respectful to the Cypris community of which I am a member. As a researcher, this trust is an undeniable asset when obtaining candid accounts of participants' learning histories or when exploring participant feelings regarding the behavior of other members. However, it was entirely plausible that interviews might have revealed commonalities in background or personality that might been seen as negative, such as extreme shyness, antisocial behavior, or addiction. It is also possible that discourse analysis might have contradicted self-reported testimony that Cypris activities are useful for language learning. These points were discussed frankly with members during member checking. Anonymity levels were occasionally adjusted to protect the dignity of individual participants and my position within the community without compromising my conclusions.

Finally, when ethnographic research of this kind is done within a group, there is sometimes the danger of role conflict, when the stated goals of an online group itself can conflict with the researchers own goals (Grimes et al., 2010; Kerr & Hiltz, 1982). Accordingly, research was conducted not only using the guidelines set out in the aforementioned Common Rule, but also within the framework of Cypris' mission statement: I will share my research motives and interpretations, respect the culture and privacy of participants, respond to participant questions and critique of my work, and be active in the sense of introducing Cypris Chat to those in the academic community.

Although participants will not receive individual compensation, it is hoped that interest generated in the group through this study enriches Cypris membership with curious students, educators and researchers.

CHAPTER 4

CYPRIS: AS A DIGITAL HABITAT AND VIRTUAL LEARNING GROUP

This chapter addresses the first research question regarding what factors lie behind the robust longevity and appeal of the Cypris community in three ways. First, I look at how Cypris measures up against select characteristics of successful digital habitats as defined by Wenger et al. (2009). Next, I examine how Cypris takes advantage of Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework, a set of strategies that specifically take advantage of virtual world environments. Finally, interview data are examined for commonalities that correspond with community orientations also posited by Wenger et al. (2009, pp. 69-100). Again, throughout this section quotations taken directly from video recordings include citations indicating participant name, time stamp, video file number (if there was more than one file recording for that date), and date. A full list of interviews can be found in Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter 3.

Cypris as a Successful Virtual Habitat

In order to determine if Cypris Chat is a functional digital habitat (Wenger et al., 2009), interview data were examined related to the extent in which Cypris exhibited five categories of community "signs of life" (p. 720): meetings, relationships, individual participation, community cultivation, and the serving of a well-defined context (Appendix E). Questions pertaining directly to these topics were integrated into

participant interviews. By examining the group using this rubric, it can be shown that Cypris is by Wenger et al.'s (2009) definition a healthy online community.

Meetings

Wenger et al. (2009) posited that regular, well-attended meetings foster enthusiasm to participate, connection with others, and promote useful outcomes vital for a healthy online community (p. 73). From their perspective, meetings, and the "visible participation of members…assert the community's existence" (p. 72). Meetings, whether they be face-to-face, synchronous or asynchronous, are crucial to an online group's well-being.

Until 2014, the Cypris Mile High Club, the official staff group of Cypris, had regular monthly meetings. They were led by Mike McKay (known in Second Life as Professor Merryman), and usually reflected whatever issues were on his mind; these included dealing with griefers, promotional events, and the discussion of roles within the group. McKay stated that:

> The concept was that Cypris was a place run by its members. So if you're going to have a community, you're going to have to have meetings and be communicative as much as possible. I just thought that the meetings, these once a month meetings, and the notecards and newsletters and the things like that were just a way to keep everyone informed about everything that's going on. So that nobody is left out of the loop, and everyone feels like they're an owner in the community. So I was doing that as an

> example. I was trying to show Mystie or others could do meetings themselves. And that they should all be non-native speakers trying to use English to run the community. They're using English to run a group…so what I was doing was just an example.
>
> McKay, 12:00-13:00, Video 1, 3/30/26

Participation in meetings was a way that members were encouraged to use their input to shape the community itself; this echoes thoughts by Wenger (1998) that "the ability (or inability) to shape the practice of our communities is an important aspect of our experience of participation" (pp. 56-57). However, when Professor Merryman retired from managerial duties in 2014, regular meetings stopped. This did not seem to have any immediate effect upon the group. Discussions about griefers and activities continued on the Facebook groups, groups which were popular because of their asynchronous nature; members from different time zones could offer feedback immediately, or whenever they were able. However, monthly discussions in voice chat about other matters ceased.

The prevailing opinion among participants was that meetings had been useful. However, there were problems with Cypris meetings within Second Life. One of the key unresolved issues was accommodating staff from different time zones. Feronymous mentioned that "they were so late." (Feronymous, 2:40-2:50, Video 2, 12/30/15). Jeff, a Cypris Tutor, mentioned that the meetings were productive, but too long. This was in reference to the discussions that would sometimes continue long after the scheduled meeting time. Power, a Cypris Guide, did not think that meetings were necessary, because anyone with new ideas was free to share in the Facebook group. Additionally,

Showshow lamented that because of his low English level, he could not follow what was being said at meetings sometimes. Taka simply admitted that he found meetings in general to be boring. Many factors seemed to have contributed to the decision to discontinue regular meetings, although it is unclear whether this has been beneficial to the group.

However, among those interviewed, 18 out of 21 participants called for the return of meetings, not only for staff, but for members as well. Cem mentioned that as not everyone uses Facebook regularly, meetings in Second Life would be useful. Hairo also said that she would prefer Second Life meetings, as she would feel more involved, and she could plan possible promotional events more effectively. Pink admitted that Facebook is a useful base in which to contact others, but she much preferred meetings in voice chat. "Second Life," she reiterated, "is the main place to connect with this group." (Pink, 3:00-3:20, Video 2, 2/15/16). Phoenix referenced her experiences with the U.S. veterans' group she is affiliated with in Second Life.

> Sometimes we don't really know about what each individual is thinking. But whenever we do meetings, some people who never shows for events would come and they're gonna say some stuff. And some people are complaining about that, but it's important that we as a group think about each individual's interest.
>
> Phoenix, 0:00-2:00, Video 2, 6/5/16

Flo thought "avatar to avatar" meetings were beneficial because:

> you get to know people better…and when you have a crisis or a problem it's always better to talk with people you know…things on (text) chat get too excited, sometimes people don't get the meanings right or they misunderstand something…when you talk face to face, you don't get that.
>
> Flo, 13:00-14:00, Video 1, 6/11/16

It was clear that despite the obstacles, a majority of those interviewed felt that a return to regular meetings would benefit the group. As the number of Second Life residents has shrunk, so has the pool of active Cypris members. Although there is no indication of a causation, the fact that so many staff would like to return to having meetings suggested that they would like to have more active input in the shaping of the community. In conclusion, monthly meetings contributed to Cypris' vibrance as a digital habitat until 2014, and although there is no direct evidence this contributed to the decline in membership since, several members have indicated that they believe restarting them would benefit the group.

Relationships

A successful digital habitat allows for networking, bonding, friendship and references to one's real life in conversation; it allows for members to get to know each other, provides opportunities to connect informally and provides individual control over personal exposure and disclosure (Wenger et al., pp. 86-89). Cypris provides all of these

opportunities. It is unusual for Cypris members not to make friends within the group as there are many chances for members to interact both in and outside of class.

Unlike immersionist groups that depend on text chat and anonymity, Cypris members often speak freely about their daily lives offline; however, this is commonly done both in in-class discussions and informal conversations outside of class, so for some members there are limits. Kaede, for example, asserted that she does not want people to "know who I am, where I live, (and) what I do because it complicates things, especially for a woman." (Kaede, 10:30-10:40, Video 2, 1/6/16). As no men have complained to staff about overly personal questions, this might be a problem more problematic for women at Cypris. Pink also observed that online norms of nosiness seemed to be related to the home culture of the individual. She also related a story of problems she has had with individuals once they discovered she was an Arab and a Muslim.

However, most interviewees were not shy about discussing many aspects of their offline lives. Hairo believed that the questions commonly asked within and outside of activities do not expose anything personal. She admitted that she and other members will sometimes ask personal questions, but they usually do so with humor, which she indicated allows interlocutors a safe way to remain silent if they are reluctant to share information about their lives. Honey explained how once she got used to voice chat, she became less reluctant to reveal things about her real life. Most members simply accept that discussion of offline matters, with the exception of religious or political proselytizing, is a norm within the group.

Individual Participation

Members of a healthy digital habitat develop their own style of participation (Wenger et al., 2009, p. 89). Diversity is valued, different modes of participation are facilitated and a variety of different tools are available to support these different modes. Cypris provides this sort of environment. However, interviews and participant observation only provide part of the picture.

First, there are different tags within the group that currently reflect one's level of participation. These group tags are displayed over an avatar's name when they have them active. As of December 2016, there were 883 members total. All members are first classified as Cypris villagers and tourists by default (villager was the default member designation earlier in Cypris' history, so a villager tag indicates a long-time member). Within this 883, guides (16) make themselves available to show newcomers around the sim, while hosts (11) and tutors (6) are teachers that lead formal classes or other activities. These groups are fluid in that, for example, a tourist can easily get permission to become a guide, host or tutor depending on how they want to serve the group.

Members can also be divided into less formal sub-groups. As is subsequently explored in more detail, members can be separated into those that prefer a focus on formal activities and lessons and those who prefer games and socializing. There are also sub-groups, primarily staff, that regularly communicate on Facebook and smaller groups of friends, including Power and Hairo, that choose to augment their Second Life friendships on Skype and by occasional meetings in real life. Finally, members can participate in some situations as *lurkers*. Lurkers are members who either cannot or will

not use voice chat for activities. Many of these are non-native speakers who might have not used voice chat in Second Life before and lack the confidence or ability to speak. At the main and Beginner's Chat Ring, McKay and Mystie created seats reserved specifically for these individuals. This shows that despite the heavy emphasis on voice chat, the designers were well aware that newcomers needed to be given a way to ease into full participation gradually. The tutors accept this situation. Feronymous, for example, acknowledges that it is important for beginners to listen for a while before speaking, and the listeners' seats were seen as a transitory stage.

In summary, within Cypris, members participate under different official designations, with unofficial affiliations, and through different modes of communication. This acceptance of different levels of participation is important to Cypris as an online community. Wenger et al. (2009) noted, "Learning together does not imply homogeneity. People bring different backgrounds, communication styles, and aspirations to their participation in a community" (p. 89). This inclusive attitude at Cypris not only allows members to participate in the manner they are most comfortable with, but also provides a point of entry for individuals with comparatively low English proficiency to ease their way into the group at their own pace.

Community Cultivation

A successful digital habitat is well planned and well organized, and members find that it is responsive to their needs (Wenger et al., 2009, pp. 93-96). It is also run by leaders with the social skills and reputation necessary to motivate members. Cypris been

able to cultivate its community in this sense. When asked whether staff were responsive to member needs, all interviewees answered enthusiastically in the affirmative. Cypris tutors such as Kaede and Mystie routinely spend 30-60 minutes after the scheduled class times to review, answer questions or simply chat on related topics. Members who post questions to Cypris staff are answered promptly. There is a sense that the staff cares deeply about the needs of members.

Mike McKay was particularly effective as a community planner because he brought his love for web and curriculum design and a sense of fun to the group. Before Cypris, he was teaching in another English as a foreign language sim, but felt somewhat frustrated with the owner of that group because:

> we just couldn't agree on me doing all the work for teaching and him…playing around designing stuff and building things, which is the fun part of Second Life…for me it was fun building things and creating learning tools and materials to use, curriculum development, things like that in the virtual world. That was fun for me.
>
> McKay, 5:00-7:00. Video 1, 3/30/16

Above and beyond the curriculum, McKay was the driving force behind the regular use of inworld notices to announce classes and events, several incarnations of an affiliated website, and promotion that spilled over into Cypris Society, a short-lived real world organization based in Kobe, Japan. Until his retirement in 2014, McKay contributed considerable time and energy into cultivating Cypris as an active community.

In 2014, Mystie became the official manager of Cypris, but she understood how the group worked, and there was no feeling of a continuity gap among the members. Although perhaps not as creative as McKay, and less focused on active promotion and regular meetings, Mystie's friendly personality and ceaseless efforts working on the day to day administration of the group have gained her the respect of both Cypris and Cypris Japan. She also promoted the use of Facebook groups for general members and for staff, and this became an important feature to keep members involved in Cypris even when they were not logged into Second Life. This smooth transition was indicative of both Mystie's understanding of the day-to-day responsibilities of Cypris management, and the group's ability to weather changes in leadership. When asked about Mystie's turn as manager, Feronymous introduced a key point related to Cypris management in his praise.

> Mystie's done a good job doing that. She coordinates things, she answers questions, and she also teaches. So I think that helps her management right there. She's on both sides. She's a teacher, and she's running the group.
>
> Feronymous, 33:00-34:00 Video 1, 12/30/15

Besides managing, Mystie both teaches and participates as a learner in both Kaede's and my own classes and activities. It is this empathy with multiple roles at Cypris that allows Mystie to command respect from both staff and members alike.

In fact, this leads us to a broader point about the very visible professional interest that staff members take in each other's work. With the exception of Grama, all Cypris tutors consistently sit in and participate in each other's activities. This was an emergent sort of community cultivation among the staff, as there has never been any directive from

management to do so. It indicated a genuine professional respect for and interest in colleagues' classes and activities, which in turn validated the contribution staff members made to the community.

Regular members at Cypris were generally more concerned with learning and practicing English, yet those who became staff members were willing to work on the growth and effectiveness of the group. According to Wenger et al. (2009), leaders of a successful digital habitat "facilitate conversations, convene meetings, organize activities, collect, edit, or produce resources, connect members, keep a pulse on the health of the community, and encourage it along a developmental path" (p. 93). McKay, Mystie, and the volunteer staff did just that, and through their efforts cultivated an online community that has remained active for eight years.

Serving a Context

Finally, a digital habitat should follow the mission defined by its context. This is a rather ambiguous way of saying there there should not be a disconnect between management and group members' goals. When asked, "Who does Cypris serve?" interviewees gave a variety of similar answers. "English learners," said Cem (Cem, 22:30-22:40, Video 1, 2/18/16). "Anyone who is eager to start learning English," Hairo said more specifically, "and anyone who wants to have informal conversations outside their classes" (Hairo, 2:20-2:30, Video 2, 1/24/16). Grama provided the most detail, in that she speculated about the motivation of both casual and more serious learners.

> Cypris is for speakers who want to speak English as a second language. I notice people who come here just to chat or hang out. Or people who are actually mature learners. And they…do a little research to see if this sim is for them…People are two categories…(There) are people who actually don't want to participate in lessons, but it's because of their nature. They don't want to learn formally…But there are also people…who really hang in there and really want to progress and really ask questions.
>
> Grama, 7:00-9:00, Video 2, 2/14/16

The implication here is that those who "hang in there" are those willing to attend regular classes. However, this interpretation is not necessarily shared by all. Cypris is considered a park, a school, or both, depending on the perspective of the member. This dual identity benefits the group. It provides structured classes for those who might have initially settled for small talk, while at the same time providing the opportunity to practice English outside of class with more dedicated learners.

However, according to Wenger et al. (2009), serving a context means more than the administration doing what a group's members want. It also means cross-organizational collaboration, interaction with a "constellation of related communities" and a conscious decision to develop a public face (p. 97). "When a community is built on a mission to serve the broader public," they stated, "it needs to interact with entities and individuals outside the membership…(and) this often entails creating specific resources and activities to make the learning of the community intelligible and accessible to non-members" (p. 97). This is especially relevant in examination of a group such as Cypris, a

somewhat idealistic volunteer organization dependent on the enthusiasm that new members bring to the project.

Cypris was able to serve its context in these ways, but with qualifications. Certainly attempts were made by senior staff to encourage collaboration with outside groups. The websites were designed not only for learners and staff, but as a public face for Cypris. McKay gave several presentations at local conferences in the Kansai area to promote Cypris. He also organized offline meetings with staff members in Japan, and created the aforementioned Cypris Society. The group existed between December 2009 and January 2011, and provided several seminars at the Digital Hollywood University campus in Osaka, Japan on how to use Second Life and Cypris for English teaching. However, Cypris Society disbanded after a lack of local interest. Many Cypris members also attended classes or discussions at Virtlantis and Meow Meow, two other language learning groups within Second Life, yet personality conflicts between senior staff members on both sides kept collaboration to a minimum, mostly involving the sharing of information via Facebook regarding griefers common to all the groups.

In conclusion, Cypris as a group served its context as well as it could. There was general agreement between staff and members about Cypris' goals. Also, there were concerted efforts made among staff to make the group known and accessible to English teachers and learners outside of Second Life, although these efforts were not always successful. In the end, Cypris staff members remained true to its mission statement, and although they might not have always been successful in making the community more visible, this was not for want of trying.

Cypris and Lim's Framework

Now let us move from signs of life to Lim's (2009) framework. Does Cypris take advantage of environmental and social affordances common to virtual worlds as defined by Lim? To address this question, data were utilized from interviews and from participant observation, and organized into Lim's categories: learning by exploring, learning by collaborating, learning by being, learning by building, learning by championing, and learning by expressing. By exploring interactions in Cypris through this framework, it was possible to judge whether or not participants had taken advantage of the unique characteristics of the Second Life platform. Again, refer to Tables 2 and 3 in Chapter 3 for a list of all interview participants and their backgrounds.

Learning by Exploring

In a sense, the geography of Cypris is meant to be explored. When people first arrive at Cypris in the Welcome Area, they must make a physical choice about which way to navigate their avatar. Should one go to the south to the Sandbox, a popular place for building Second Life objects, playing Scrabble and having playful chat? Or head to the northwest to the Tiki Bar to listen to some music or play board games? Or should one go out the main exit to the Chat Ring area for formal classes and activities? There is also a park in the southwest corner of the sim that is decorated differently depending on the seasons and holidays, and Cypris Japan just adjacent to the east, accessible by a

traditional red-railed wooden bridge. Exploring the different areas within Cypris is always an option for members and non-members alike.

Cypris activities often make use of exploration in formal activities as well. For example, since May 2012, I have been leading the Cypris Field Trip activity every Monday (Figure 2). The activity was developed to provide practice in giving and receiving directions to what is basically exploration of an unfamiliar sim within Second Life. After congregating at the main Cypris Chat Ring for a brief orientation, including a vocabulary preview, all participants switch to Cypris Voice Call, a conference call style chat line in which only members can hear each other. Then the group teleports to a sim that the instructor has chosen in advance to explore. The instructor then gives an instruction in voice and local chat (e.g., "Find the cabin with the chimney. Describe the interior."). Once the first participant completes the objective, it is that participant's responsibility to help guide the others to the location in any way they can (e.g., directions involving compass directions and landmarks); once everyone has found the first objective, the leader then gives out nine or more additional "quests" to fulfill. Examples of student and teacher notecards for this activity can be found in Appendix G. During the activity, participants routinely chat, stop to play with Second Life objects and take snapshots of the excursion.

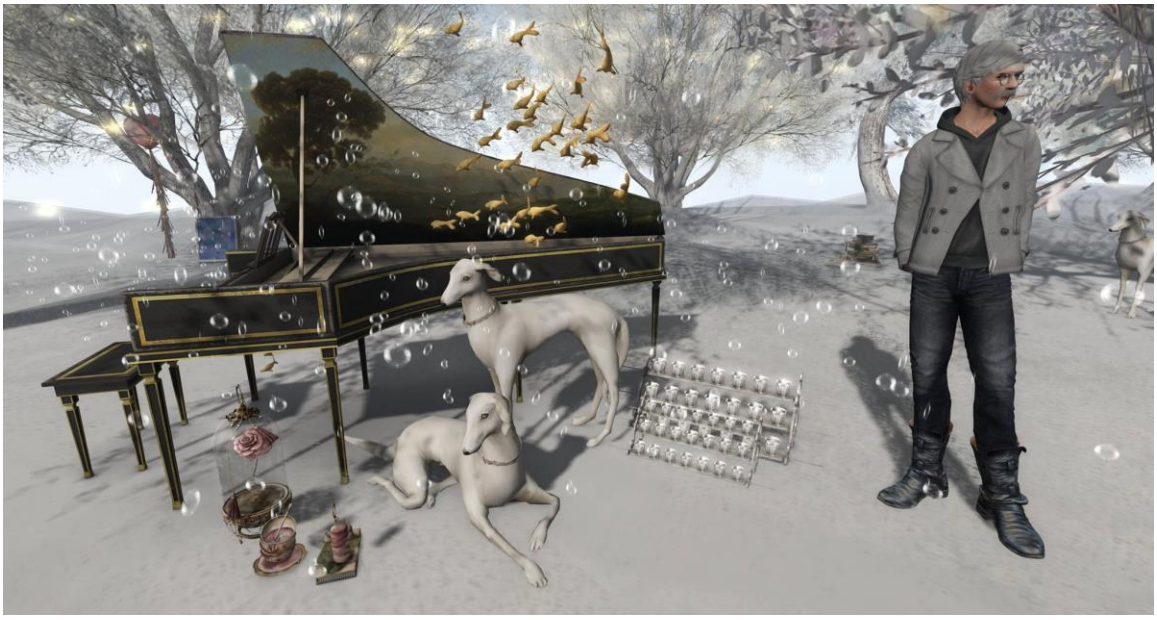

Figure 2. Screenshot: My avatar during a field trip / giving directions activity (8/7/16).

Exploration can take place in a third way as well, exploration of the Second Life browser itself. Some Cypris members, especially those who have come specifically for language learning, do not fully understand all the features of the browser. Specific activities have been used to target these unexplored features. For example, Mike McKay and other tutors, myself included, have done art-themed lessons that encourage participants to use the browser's built-in creative tools. Lessons that target the use of inventory, shopping mechanisms, teleportation and movement, and even Second Life scripting have all been ways that tutors have led to exploration of the features members might not have been familiar with.

In these three senses, exploration of the sim itself, exploration done in activities, and exploration of the characteristics and capabilities of the SL browser, Cypris provides explorative experiences that correspond with Lim's framework. Also, although it is not entirely within the spirit of Lim's categorization, it can be argued members explore in other smaller ways as well. They can explore different types of participation in the group when they switch from tourist to guide or tutor. They explore different cultures and viewpoints during discussion with individuals living on the other side of the globe. Finally, they explore the concept of Second Life as a venue for education, a revolutionary idea even for some long time Second Life residents. Exploration, on many levels, is an important aspect of Cypris as a learning community.

Learning by Collaborating

The extent to which regular members collaborate outside of class time is not entirely clear. The Sandbox is the area in which collaborative building is allowed within Second Life, and it is a popular area for members to congregate outside of activities. However, most collaboration within Cypris happens once members volunteer to take on duties as staff. For example, Hairo, who generally disliked attending formal lessons, wanted to contribute to the group in a way unrelated to activities, so she volunteered to collaborate on designing areas for the sim. Mystie asked her for assistance designing decorations and environments for the park in the southwest corner of the sim. Hairo then worked with her to create several environments for the area, most notably a Valentine's Day "love pyramid" (Figure 3). Hairo explained:

> When I heard Mystie would like me to build an environment for St. Valentines Day, I thought it was a good opportunity for me to show more people what I am into as well as take part in Cypris life. When I was thinking on what exactly to build I wished it was something I'd do with passion and remembered the game called Serious Sam I used to play with my brother and was mesmerized by the ancient Mesoamerican constructions on one of the levels. I had very little time, so it was a good idea to choose this theme as long as I could spend some night without being tired. The area is supposed to attract people, make them spend time together talking about whatever.
>
> Hairo, Facebook Messenger Correspondence, 6/26/16

Hairo's collaboration here with Mystie leveraged her past experience with video game design, and the space was later used by myself as an event space for a DJ party and a sentence correction activity.

Collaboration also took place on Cypris' Facebook pages. Members shared posts related to questions they had about English, Cypris activities, recommended websites, books, and other information of interest to the community. Staff and other members invariably provided timely feedback on such posts. Additionally, staff members shared the latest information about griefers and avatars that had been banned for various reasons, although senior Cypris members now utilize a Facebook group jointly used by the Cypris, Virtlantis, and Meow Meow communities to minimize the impact of such troublemakers.

Since 2014 and the cessation of regular meetings, Facebook instant messages were also used as a way for staff to directly propose collaboration inworld.

Figure 3. Screenshot: Hairo's Valentine's Day "love pyramid" at Cypris. (2/12/2016).

Collaboration between instructors in regards to lesson planning, however, has been declining in recent years. From 2008-2010, for example, Mike McKay and I were much more inclined to collaborate on classes and share ideas for lessons and activities. Gradually, however, when the tutors adopted a preferred style, joint activities decreased in number and frequency. That is not to say that tutors did not influence each other; as previously mentioned, tutors sit in on each others' classes with great frequency.

However, as teacher specializations became more disparate and time zone differences remained an issue, it is understandable that collaboration between tutors has become less frequent than in the past.

Collaboration among Cypris members and staff manifests itself during specific times and in specific ways. When working on seasonal projects, for example, staff leverage each others' talents and the talents of regular members to cooperate. Because meetings no longer take place inworld, Facebook is often used as a launching pad for inworld cooperation. Finally, staff observe each other's classes on a regular basis, although they do so to enrich their own teaching practice, not to provide feedback for the tutor being observed. However, as there were rarely any attempts to unify the curriculum at Cypris in ways that required much collaboration between members (who were often in different time zones), collaborations regarding activities have declined considerably, especially since McKay left in 2014.

Learning by Being

Lim (2009) defined learning by being in terms of learning about oneself and one's identity. The most obvious way in which Cypris members explore these within the group is through their avatars. Several regular members such as QP, Hillary, and Derm regularly wear avatars that do not correspond with their offline gender identity. Others, such as Dori, Hairo, Elec, and Asta, have regularly used sexually ambiguous avatars, while still others such as DeeDee and Dugong use gender neutral animal avatars. Cypris staff members are careful not to be judgmental or draw conclusions from member

avatars; if a new member makes a comment about a member with a different gendered avatar, the tutor in charge does their best to steer conversation away from this topic. Additionally, I myself regularly teach a "gender bender" activity (Figure 4) in which all participants are encouraged to come as avatars differing from their offline gender affiliation, with the discussion centering on how male and female avatars are treated within Second Life. As identity exploration is common among Second Life residents, it is not surprising that Cypris shares its norms in this regard with many other Second Life communities.

Figure 4. Screenshot : My female avatar during my Gender Bender lesson (5/7/16).

It is not within the scope of this study to investigate why certain Cypris members choose to swap genders. However, just as Hillis (2009) saw men experimenting by crossdressing on webcams as "early-adopting vanguard digital queers, (in which) the

webcam provided a pictorial ‘stage’ of web-based self-actualization and ironic visibilization of the claim to actually exist in the here and now” (p. 260), I would suggest that for some members, this representation is symbolic of, if not their offline self-image, perhaps a preferred one. As Hillis (2009) stated:

> In a very ancient way, avatars in graphical MUVEs increasingly participate in the reality of the human objects to which they point. Participants experience avatars – moving images that are also forms of allegory and emblematics…as seemingly alive...in such idealized circumstances to transmit to them…(an) aspect of this geographically distant individual to whom it directly points (pp. 113-114).

Whether the avatar presented represents a different gender or even a Second Life *furry*, a common anthropomorphic animal avatar (Gerbasi et al., 2008), how participants present themselves in Second Life and within Cypris Chat is an entirely intentional representation of self unfettered by offline restrictions, and has some role in the representation of their identities.

From a different perspective, Cypris creates an environment which fosters an international identity. As stated before, unlike other language learning groups within Second Life, Cypris restricts most political and religious discussion, as well as discussion of an explicitly sexual nature. Although this policy has sometimes led to frustration, especially among native speakers and more advanced learners, it has made the environment more welcoming, specifically to individuals who might otherwise be reluctant to interact with people from different cultural and national backgrounds. The

fact that one can feel part of an international online community is in part because there is no fear of being looked down upon because one is, for example, Muslim, Ukranian, or homosexual. As avatars often do not reveal one's ethnicity or skin color, having international friends from vastly different backgrounds simply becomes the norm.

Finally, members can experiment with their identities as learners by helping others and transforming into tutors. This was true with all non-native speaking staff at Cypris, including Mystie, Showshow, Grama, Phoenix, Pink, and several others; members joined to learn and practice their English, and then they gradually developed the confidence they needed to mentor new members. Eventually, these members realized they could take on a more substantial role in the group, sometimes in administration or as teachers. Mystie describes why she took up teaching within the group after Mike McKay's reading circle class (DuQuette, 2011):

> Usually (other Cypris members) ask (me) to become a tutor or to lead an activity. (Staff) sometimes ask, but usually they want it first. In my case, I never thought to do things like this, but I wanted to keep the energy going with the Reading Circle. Didn't want to lose it. Then prof (Mike McKay) told me to just do it. I didn't consider myself a teacher. Not even now. I probably just wanted to share what I'd learnt in my English learning.
>
> Mystie, Facebook Messenger Correspondence, 11/26/16

This is not unusual. There is constant demand for new activities from the membership, and those with high language proficiency are convinced to lead activities when native speakers are unavailable. Through active participation in the group, non-native speaking

staff have learned to accept that they too can teach, despite the fact that they do not self-identify as instructors. This subtle shift in identity is common in a group with categories of participation—tourist, guide and tutor—that are so fluid.

In summary, Cypris members learn by being in three ways. First they can freely experiment with their Second Life avatars without fear of being challenged or teased and can choose to represent themselves as a member of the opposite sex, as androgynous or as a different species. Second, members foster an identity as a member of an international community, one in which national boundaries and ethnic differences are not barriers to membership, communication, or friendship. Finally, the fluid barriers that allow learners to quickly become tutors demystify teaching and allow students to learn what it is to be a teacher. These experiments with identity not only lead to stronger group cohesion, they also lead to the development of more open, more confident, globally-minded language learners.

Learning by Building

Lim (2009) referred to learning by building in a very specific sense:

> By 'Learning by building' is meant the learning that results from tasks that require the learners to build objects and/or script them. Such activities could potentially involve the demonstration of mathematical understandings of trigonometry and physics, the learners' sense of aesthetics, as well as their grasp of the logical algorithmic flows inherent in a scripting language. (p. 8)

He was not speaking in abstract terms. Learning by building refers to learning that occurs while participants are building inworld objects such as buildings or clothes, landscaping virtual environments and writing or modifying programming scripts for items that allow them to be respond to interaction. Although building and scripting are not activities that a majority of Cypris members engage in as part of their participation in the group, there are talented individuals, such as Mike McKay, Mystie and Hairo who contribute in these areas.

Those members with talent for building and scripting have easily found ways to participate using their unique talents within the group. Besides designing and building most of the original sims, Mike McKay spent time working on a language practice *chatbot*, an object scripted to simulate a human interlocutor in text, and an app connecting Second Life with the Moodle course management system. Mystie regularly decorates the sim to keep it consistent with the seasons, and also designed Cypris Japan and promotional clothes featuring the Cypris symbol (Figure 5). In addition to her work on the aforementioned Valentine's Day pyramid, Hairo, who is a 3D modeler offline, also developed and implemented a treasure hunt event within Cypris, a customized stage for two guest pianists, a haunted house for Halloween in 2016, and novelty items given away freely to Cypris members. Building was simply another way members could utilize their talents to contribute to the group.

Figure 5. Screenshot: Mystie modeling the shirt she created for Cypris (circa 2014).

Not everyone can build and script in Cypris; many members and staff participate in Second Life because they are primarily focused on language exchange and socializing. They are not interested in the more technical or creative aspects of the platform. However, those who can build or script take on important roles and projects within the community, including sim and activity design, advertising, and the creation of seasonal decorations. Their contributions improve the aesthetic appeal of the group, develop new environments and tools for teaching and learning, and contribute to the group's promotion within Second Life.

Learning by Championing

Lim (2009) also has something very specific in mind when he explains learning by championing:

> 'Learning by championing' refers to the many initiatives by various communities in Second Life to adopt, champion, and evangelize causes from Real Life. Especially active in this regard are groups to do with health education, such as the Heron Sanctuary. 'Learning by championing' could easily be a focus of a school's social studies/humanities department, in which, for example, learners might be tasked to design an installation/exhibit inworld which sought to raise awareness and educate the general public about particular causes that might be meaningful to them. (p. 8)

When Lim discusses championing, he is specifically and exclusively concerned with the learning that can take place through inclusion of projects related to specific sociopolitical issues offline. With this definition in mind, it is clear that Cypris is unable to fulfill this criteria.

Although individual members of Cypris support different causes both in and outside Second Life, political and social activism is not something that Cypris becomes involved with. Again, this is related both to the international nature of Cypris and its ban on discussion of politics, religion and, implicitly, sex. It is true that through their participation and their donations to the group, members do champion the option of free

online education; without approximately $1,000 in donations a year, Cypris would be unable to maintain its server space. Additionally, some Cypris members have volunteered their time at other language practice sims. However, as Cypris is at heart apolitical, it would not be in the spirit of Lim's conception of "championing" to suggest that this community encourages activism in Second Life or elsewhere.

Cypris does not champion causes directly. This is not to say that politically divisive topics do not sometimes make their way into activities. Kaede's 2015-2016 lecture series on the history of global warming research was one such example of a potentially controversial topic. However, Cypris' focus on being a welcoming, inclusive environment to individuals from disparate backgrounds has heretofore prevented it from championing causes as part of language learning activities and projects.

Learning by Expressing

What Lim (2009) refers to as "expressing" might be better referred to as promotion of the Second Life environment and is categorically dissimilar to the other kinds of learning:

> 'Learning by expressing' could be argued to be distinct from the preceding five Learnings, in the sense that while the five are to do very directly with the learnings that results from activity inworld, (it) focuses more on the representation of inworld activity to the 'outside world' (that is, to an audience who are not necessarily inworld)…thus, for example, 'Learning by expressing' would encompass the authoring and editing of blogs,

> podcasts, and machinima about inworld activities and tasks. The learning that results would encompass storyboarding, the technical aspects of audio and video-editing, as well as the principles of literary critique and creative writing. (p. 9)

Learning by expressing refers to the knowledge that can be gained by struggling to articulate the benefits of Cypris and the Second Life environment. It is argued that this also includes demonstration of skills learned inworld to those outside the community.

Cypris members have promoted the group and language learning in Second Life in many ways. First, staff members, specifically Mike McKay, Feronymous, and myself, have often attempted to introduce the community to our offline university students. As mentioned earlier, McKay and I have given presentations discussing the group at EFL conferences in Japan and published our findings on the group in local journals (DuQuette, 2011). McKay also founded Cypris Society in 2009, an attempt to train interested educators in how to use Second Life and the Cypris community within the Kansai area of Japan. McKay also developed the exterior websites for Cypris as both a venue for writing practice and to establish a Cypris presence on the Internet. The Cypris Chat Facebook sites get frequent membership requests from parties who know nothing about Second Life but are interested in online, cost-free EFL practice. Cypris staff have in turn been enriched by discussions with other language teaching professionals considering the use of Second Life in their offline classrooms.

Regular members also promote Cypris and Second Life through creation of Facebook accounts linked not to their real identity, but to their Second Life names and

avatars. As of December 2016, 50 members have created Facebook accounts in their avatars' names and joined the Cypris Facebook site, which is in defiance of Facebook's own policy to link real names with real faces. This not only allows members to maintain anonymity while discussing Cypris matters offline, but represents a way in which members can advertise their Second Life identities and Cypris to different Facebook communities. Regular interaction on Facebook also exposes members to opportunities to read authentic reading materials provided by staff members in Facebook posts and provides members opportunities to express themselves in asynchronous text chat with comments and posts of their own.

Finally, Cypris members and staff have utilized this study and previous research projects to try to explain the benefits of the group to an outside audience. Several members have gone out of their way to vouch for the benefits of the group, even in unrelated discussion. For example, Honey mentioned that she is now able to communicate more effectively with her adult son who lives in the U.S. and primarily speaks English. QP is just happy that he does not have to spend as much money as he used to in order to practice English:

> What we can learn by free, no money, is amazing. It's a miracle. Before I came to Cypris, I went to language school in real life. I spent much money for them. To compare it, Cypris is miracle.
>
> QP, 8:00-10:00, Video 1, 2/18/16

Flo provides a similar testimonial for the group, explaining:

> there are many who first come to Cypris in hopes of getting over their shyness, especially around foreigners, then once they do, they'd go on to creating things and selling online. Cypris helps them build self confidence.
>
> Flo, Facebook Messenger Correspondence, 6/21/16

Although I am seen as staff, members are also well aware of my position as head researcher at Cypris, and are eager for me to share their positive experiences as Cypris members with the outside world.

In summary, Cypris members do learn through expressing. Staff members gain experience through promotion of the group on websites, at academic conferences, and in journals. Regular members advertise Second Life and Cypris through their avatar accounts on Facebook, while at the same time receiving additional reading and writing practice in the process. Finally, members see my own participation in the group as a window to the world outside Second Life and are often eager to share their positive experiences to others through me.

By examining the Cypris Chat learning community utilizing Lim's (2009) Six Learnings rubric for best practices in virtual world education, it is apparent that the environment and activities provided by staff and members fulfill most of Lim's recommendations. Examples were provided of learning by exploring, learning by collaborating, learning by being, learning by building, and learning by expressing. Only learning by championing was left underrepresented, specifically because of Cypris' rule

against political discussion. In the following section, I examine more of what participants have had to say about Cypris and their involvement in the group and delve into their backgrounds to see just what makes learning at Cypris attractive to them.

Interviews: Community Orientations

To further address the first research question regarding the reasons behind the longevity and appeal of the community, 21 Cypris members were interviewed (Tables 2 and 3). The data collected from these interviews, as well as notes from participant observation, were then coded for commonalities from a constructivist perspective (Hatch, 2002) as well as community orientations for digital habitats as posited by Wenger et al. (2009). Two main categories were defined: a common desire to create and maintain a space balancing socializing and formal activities and an Internet early adopter outlook among many members. Additionally, several minor categories are mentioned, including role-playing, convenience, and low cost of attendance.

The Importance of Socializing in Cypris

One of Cypris' defining characteristics is the unusually strong focus on socializing as a major part of language practice. In his interview, founder Mike McKay (Professor Merryman in Second Life) discussed his thoughts about his initial vision for the sim.

> (T)he whole point of Cypris is not that it should be a school at all. It's a park…It's a place where people come and they speak in English. Play.

> And…the non-native speakers are encouraged to become tutors, because teaching is the best way to learn.
>
> McKay, 9:00-11:00, Video 1, 3/30/16

This point underlines two of his initial assumptions about Cypris. First, he designed Cypris as a community center, not a a school, with fluid boundaries between the categories of *tutor* and *learner* and between *classmate* and *friend*. As a university instructor with a background in Japan's English conversation school industry, McKay also asserted he understood the importance of a sense of fun both during and outside of formal activities. In his discussion of what he learned at Japanese language schools, he recalled that his job was to

> entertain (students) (so) they're having a good time, they're not feeling too stressed, yet you're making them progress the way they're supposed to…you have to keep them motivated to keep them coming
>
> McKay, 2:30-3:00, Video 1, 3/30/16

This philosophy is applicable not only when it comes to English schools such as Berlitz (where McKay worked), but also in volunteer communities. Socializing between classes and getting together to play games such as Scrabble, Greedy, or Parcheesi or build objects in the Cypris sandbox are all ways that Cypris provided reasons to return to the group above and beyond the free classes offered.

Mystie, the manager of the group, concurred with the assertion that socializing is of primary importance. When asked whether or not she felt socializing was important for language development or group cohesion, she responded:

> Both…because that's where you actually learn. Because right now, I mean even including my activities, a lot of talking is done by the activity leader…so (learners) don't really get the chance to freely say something…
>
> Mystie, 6:00-7:00, Video 2, 6/10/16

Outside the class is where students could actually practice what they have learned. She bemoaned the fact that in recent years, those Cypris members she has known best in the East Asian time zones seem to have drifted away from this philosophy:

> Many years ago, we were always hanging out (at Cypris) and playing or just chatting. We used to have these different areas and people were just gathering in different groups…if we could bring that back it would be really awesome because that's how we, including me, really got to practice speaking and communicating with different people in English…Even though it's not like real school classes…that's the whole purpose! They should come and talk to each other in English.
>
> Mystie, 7:00-7:30, Video 2 6/10/16

It must be noted that the Second Life user base has been shrinking slowly but steadily in recent years and with it the stream of Cypris members new to Second Life. Some members who initially came to socialize in their native language, such as Dori and Flo, have decided to spend more of their time in Second Life relaxing in sims unrelated to education. Many have dropped out of Second Life altogether for reasons that are difficult to ascertain, because they are often unreachable through other channels. As the number of active participants has decreased, fewer people congregate between lessons. Despite the

relative popularity of tutor-led activities, Mystie sees this trend as a negative development.

> It's not about activities, right? It's not about attending activities and just leave after that. It's about coming and just communicating with each other. Making new friends. Socializing should be probably the most important part.
>
> Mystie, 13:00-14:00, Video 2, 6/10/16

In a sense, however, this viewpoint is at odds with what can later be seen as the most commonly held opinion among interviewees, that the one thing Cypris needs is more scheduled activities. Mystie did not necessarily disagree with this, but she wished that more members would volunteer some of their time as Cypris guides, to be available to chat with members or welcome new visitors.

Most other staff members were in agreement with the importance of socializing in the group for both language practice and for group cohesion. Kaede noted that members are more relaxed during informal discussion and play outside of activities, and that such behavior fosters trust and breaks down shyness. Power, the staff member with the most experience leading informal chats and unscheduled activities in Cypris, explained that it had to do with fulfilling the need to communicate.

> I used to teach other people basic English…I give them basically grammar and 10 meanings (vocabulary words) every week. The thing is, if they come the second day…after they finish the class, they go out. And they want to speak English. And if they don't (go) around and talk to so many

> people, they're not going to succeed…It's very important to talk after the class, to practice…it's like driving the car. If you're going to drive every day, you're going to become good and more professional.
>
> Power, 20:00-22:00, Video 1, 3/18/16

As a guide, Power does not lead a formal activity; instead he volunteered to remain online during hours when there were not any formal activities. He considered this volunteer work both a necessary element of his successful English practice and the thanks he gives the community for receiving said practice. "If you stop practicing," he said, "you're going to end up slipping backwards, not moving forwards" (Power, 22:00-22:10, Video 1, 3/18/16). Flo, another Cypris guide, sees socializing simply as "what people are there for" (Flo, 11:30-12:00, Video 1, 6/11/16); besides contributing to language learning and group cohesion, she finds that making friends with tutors and other members makes learning in Cypris a more valuable experience.

It should be noted that socialization in Cypris often has a unique characteristic. Pink, who shows a clear preference for Lim's (2009) learning through building, made a clear distinction between socializing in Second Life versus an offline classroom or Skype:

> Second Life to me is not just the socializing in the sense of sitting in one place and chatting for hours and hours. I like to DO things in Second Life. I like to build. I like to try to learn scripting. I like to explore. I like to play games, to visit fun, crazy places. It's not a life, but a world.
>
> Pink, 2:40-3:00, Video 2, 2/15/16

In Second Life, the message and the medium are often interrelated. Second Life is not simply chat with avatars. From what Wenger et al. termed "the platform perspective" (2009, p. 40), Second Life, as a collection of different interrelated tools, leverages its content creation capabilities to provide subject matter for discussion within chat. Topics such as building and scripting provide a common starting point for conversations, just as discussion of "lag and related technical problems have become the 'weather' of cyberspace," (Pearce, 2009, p. 221), the small talk of Second Life. Although such casual interactions and more serious discussion alike often involve discussion of offline issues and situations, activities within Second Life itself also provide opportunities and fuel for discussion.

Language learning was not the only perceived benefit to socializing within Cypris. Grama, who had spent several years in Second Life before coming to volunteer at Cypris, said she came to meet people "rather than go to a role-playing sim or going to other places or shopping." "Socializing with people develops a side of me," she continued. "To be honest, this environment helped me, and I think it helps people like me." (Grama, 00:30-1:00, Video 2, 2/1/16). This echoed one of Mystie's comments about socializing in Cypris as well.

> It worked for me, too. Although I lived in England for years…I never felt really confident talking to native speakers…the phone is always difficult…because I get nervous. It's not that I cannot speak, but I get very, very nervous. But after maybe three years of talking with you and the Professor (Merryman), I felt I got really more confident and relaxed

> talking in English…Because we are talking every day and also with people who have very strong accents from other countries, and I got used to that, too. So, it's really a great place.
>
> Mystie, 29:00-30:00,Video 2, 6/10/16

In essence, the practice Cypris provided in socializing in Second Life carried offline. Zen concurred, asserting that chatting in Cypris makes it easier to speak to people in real life. Computer-mediated communication has been shown to reduce shyness in some cases (Durkin, Conti-Ramsden, & Walker, 2010), and Second Life with its often anonymous, text chat heavy environment can facilitate communication, especially for non-native speakers with social anxiety. For some members, the voice chat environment of Cypris can act as a bridge between the safety of anonymous text chat and offline interactions using English.

Even staff members who do not believe socializing to be directly important to learning themselves grudgingly recognized the demand for it among most members. Feronymous, for example, is very much focused on classes and the academic side of Cypris, yet he sees the necessity of socializing to maintain group cohesion. He contended that in RL, students are often motivated to continue studying at a private school because they are paying for it, but because Cypris events are free, he posited that social events, and essentially "fun" are instrumental in keeping members returning. To Feronymous, however this is not an intrinsically positive situation. As an English as a foreign language instructor in Korea, he sometimes feels some students at Cypris are not motivated to work seriously to improve their language within activities. "The socializing is great, but I

think that's pretty much the focus," he said. "It's what people want…they want to do the fun stuff." (Feronymous, 2:40-2:50, Video 2, 12/30/15). Although he sees its importance for group cohesion, he does not necessarily think it should be central in language learning, which is in contrast to other Cypris staff members.

Cata and Takashi, two active members, concurred. Cata came to Cypris as a complete beginner, but over the course of several years, he became an advanced learner. In contrast to most other Cypris members, Cata found that socializing at Cypris was not productive.

> Some people feel pleasure. They like this kind of socializing. But my own opinion is it is losing time, and they have no results. They are just using "hi," "hello," "how are you." They are using very, very few words…It's not like real reading a book where you pickup new expressions, new word, new phrases. So I feel organized activities are much, much better.
>
> Cata, 1:00-2:00, Video 2, 2/13/16

This is not to say that Cata is antisocial. He is friendly, outspoken, and has friends both within Cypris and in the Virtlantis community. He has also attended events such as concerts and stand-up comedy shows in English within Second Life. However, he is focused on language development. "Socializing," Cata asserted, "is for nothing" (Cata, 2:00-2:10, Video 2, 2/13/16). For Cata, small talk was a waste of time. Both he and Feronymous saw the benefits of the more structured, traditional study in Cypris. "In an activity, (people) respect each other, they listen to each other (and) when somebody talk, everyone listen to him," he explained (Cata, 2:15:2:20, Video 2, 2/13/16). While chatting,

the conversation is often dominated by one or two talkative individuals, and such interaction does not provide sufficient practice according to Cata. Takashi, on the other hand, saw the importance of chat, but felt that conversation with other non-native speakers was not beneficial for speaking and listening practice. "Their pronunciation does not…enhance my skill," he asserted (Takashi, 15:05-15:15, Video 1, 6/5/16). When QP was asked to explain what Cypris is, he simply replied, "English school" (QP, Video 3, 1:05-1:15, 6/2/16). It seems that for some, socializing was seen as either frivolous or inferior to formal language practice with native speakers.

However, opinions such as these among members were in the minority. Hairo represented the opposite side of the spectrum. At first she attended activities regularly, but soon lost interest:

> I was coming to Cypris every day, but I hated activities. The lessons. And I tried to go (to) one and then another, but it was so boring for me. And I was like, "God, another school."
>
> Hairo, 8:00-9:00, Video 2, 1/24/16

A highly proficient speaker, Hairo seemed impatient with activities designed primarily for lower level learners. However, it became apparent that it was the formal atmosphere and not the class level that was onerous; socializing and making friends was paramount.

> The only reason I learn something, the only reason I became talking on voice is relationships between people, and if I didn't make friends, if I didn't feel interested in others, I just wouldn't come anymore. It's like my basic motivation to talk to people. If I don't find people to talk to, I don't

> need English anymore. Because I don't learn English for my career or something else.
>
> Hairo, 10:00-11:00, Video 2, 1/24/16

Although she understands that people have different reasons for joining Cypris, she feels that the people that Cypris is primarily designed for are the people willing to socialize. From her perspective, Cypris serves

> anyone who is eager to start learning English, and anyone who wants to have informal conversations outside their classes…I didn't have an opportunity to talk like this in real life. And on Skype, I couldn't find people I was interested in.
>
> Hairo, 15:00-16:00, Video 3, 1/24/16

For those who came specifically to make friends, the classes and activities could be seen as a magnet for attracting a unique international audience to chat with, but the activities were not intrinsically attractive in and of themselves. This point suggests that different members see activities as having different purposes.

Most members took a more balanced position, both praising activities and requesting new ones but acknowledging the importance of socializing within the group. Zen, for example, expressed her disdain for shallow 'girl talk' about fashion and shopping, but admitted that chatting about one's offline life in Cypris helped ground her in reality more than role-play in Second Life. Showshow had a slightly different focus, because he found communication with people from other countries as primary, while Dori expressed the majority opinion on socializing when she stated:

> I think it's the most important thing. Of course activities or lessons are very important, but using English is the most important to improve our English…Why do you learn English? To communicate with people.
>
> Dori, 1:00-2:00, Video 2, 6/3/16

For Dori, communication is the key, and indeed most of the members and staff reaffirmed that Cypris is best seen as a virtual park with regular events as opposed to a virtual school surrounded by a park.

To summarize, a desire to create and maintain a space balancing socializing and formal activities was one of the main commonalities among the 21 participants interviewed. Although one staff member and two regular members felt that formal learning activities were more important than socializing, the remaining participants either voiced their preference for socializing or felt a balance of formal activities and informal conversation was crucial for language learning and practice. The next commonality in group membership, however, is related more to the members' personal histories than educational philosophy.

Cypris: A Community Based on Internet Early Adopter Values

Participant age is tricky to measure within Second Life. It has proven difficult to know the average age of active Second Life users. However, it is commonly thought that the average Second Life residents are older than users of multiplayer online games such as World of Warcraft. A small survey by the Planet Postmoderna virtual worlds blog in 2014 found that 55% of 119 Second Life participants were 35 or over, with 80% being

users who have been residents for three years or over (58% responded they had been in Second Life for over 5 years) (Morgan, 2014). This is a conspicuously older demographic than is typically found among online gaming communities. However, Morgan's survey is small, and the nature of anonymity within Second Life makes definitive statistics unlikely

Nevertheless, when trying to determine why the Cypris community had an appeal to its members, a major factor to consider was age. Among the 21 active members and staff surveyed, only two were in in their 20s or younger, yet it seemed unlikely there was anything intrinsically attractive about the Second Life platform, that might appeal to older users looking to practice a second language. However, by looking into the history of staff and many of its members, an age-related commonality does become apparent: an early fascination with computers and an "early adopter" attitude towards online communication (Wells, 2008).

Before continuing, it is important to define three characteristics of a typical Internet early adopter. First, during the 80s and 90s, these were individuals that held an affinity towards computers somewhat atypical of their peers. They were interested in using social networking not to solidify real world relationships, but to connect with, and receive advice from, faraway colleagues and individuals outside their current social circle (Wellman & Gulia, 1995; Wells, 2008). Finally, they were predisposed to focus on the positive potential of the Internet, especially in regards to the benefits of anonymity. As Peter Steiner's well-known comic in the *New Yorker* put it, "On the Internet No One Knows You're a Dog" (Steiner, 1993). These three characteristics are in evidence among several key Cypris members.

Pink is a perfect exemplar. Pink was already excited about online chatting in 1980. “When you usually say online, (you) usually think of the Internet,” she said. “But I’ve been online since 1980 with Telex…I used to to chat on Telex” (Pink, 3:00-3:20, Video 1, 2/15/16). The personal use of Telex, a teleprinter service that was the forerunner of the fax machine (Roemisch, 1978) at Pink’s workplace was an indication of how motivated she was to connect with individuals outside of her social circle. She later recounted the excitement she felt when her company installed a “mini-computer,” a machine that took up most of a room:

> I was fascinated by the minute they installed it in the organization. And I got involved with it. I wasn’t asked. (I) just jumped in and started playing and helping and looking at manuals and trying to troubleshoot and things like that.
>
> Pink, 4:00-5:00, Video 1, 2/15/16

Pink later recalls her experience with BBS (bulletin board systems) in 1992. Her first experience with the World Wide Web was in 1997. She soon discovered chat platforms such as Mirabilis/AOL’s ICQ and John McAfee’s instant messenger predecessor PowWow. Whenever a new opportunity to connect to others with technology presented itself, Pink was willing to experiment with it.

> From the time I discovered the Internet in 1997, I’d been using it to communicate for language purposes and just play with everything that I could find online. Like applications and programs. I just loved to download things and try them. I tried to learn how to create sites. I had

> email on every single site…I was just going all over the place, trying anything and everything.
>
> Pink, 15:00-16:00, Video 1, 2/15,16

This learning through experimentation, much in line with Lim's (2009) concept of learning through exploring, derived from the desire to communicate with those outside her social circle. In 2009, after working with a partner to found her own business, Pink was looking for new safe and anonymous online platforms for education and came across Second Life. At an Second Life conference a few months later, she discovered Cypris. She has been active in the group ever since.

Other members shared similar stories about their atypically strong attraction to, and familiarity with, computers and online communication. QP remembers playing with the first IBM compatible PCs available in Japan and inputting short programs in machine language and BASIC that he found in computer magazines. Dori remembers chatting over BBS on her Mac in 1991. CEM had a Commodore 64 and remembered loading games by cassette. Mystie remembered her strong attraction to Cyan Inc.'s Myst in 1993, one of the first immersive 3D games available on early PCs. Before Mike McKay was interested in online education, he was designing websites. Zen was using IRC, before learning about the avatar-based chat of IMVU, and eventually Second Life. Phoenix admitted she learned to type and have an argument in AOL chat and was beta testing The Lacuna Expanse, an online strategy game, when she learned about Second Life and Cypris. Flo related how she and several other Japanese users had all migrated from

Yahoo! Chat to Second Life (in a story reminiscent of Pearce's (2008) Uru diaspora). In short, many Cypris members are older and atypically tech-savvy for their generation.

To summarize, the fact that key members of the Cypris community share characteristics with Internet early adopters seems to provide another explanation for their affinity for the group and their long-term participation. These characteristics include not only a fascination with new technology, but the willingness to experiment and the desire to socialize with those completely divorced from offline acquaintances. This explains why the group contains so many members in their 40s and 50s, a demographic not otherwise known for enthusiastic participation in online games or communities. Although a preference for mixing socializing with formal learning and a philosophical preference for Internet early adopter values were the two most notable commonalities found, there were others that bear mentioning.

Other Commonalities: Role-play, Rules and Free Classes

A history of role-play was less prevalent among Cypris members than might be expected. After all, Second Life is well-known for a wide variety of role-playing communities. In Second Life blogger Canary Beck's survey of 3,073 Second Life residents (Beck, 2015), she found that the top three interests of residents were role-playing (36%), socializing (36%), and traveling / exploring (35%); only 7% self-identified as educators. That is not to say that some staff and members did not have a history. Kaede was an active member at Combat Samurai Island, a sim dedicated to Japanese medieval role-play. Her interest in Japanese culture was kindled there, and it

was this interest that led her to Cypris Japan, to practice her Japanese, and then ultimately to Cypris Chat. Feronymous initially joined a community role-playing in a virtual replica of ancient Rome, but he felt that he "didn't fit in" and asserted that the combat was difficult to understand. Grama intimated that she had done role-playing before entering Cypris, but she considered the time she spends in Cypris as the most valuable. Only Zen, for a time a hostess at Frank's Jazz, a ballroom dancing sim within Second Life, continued to actively role-play. For everyone else, role-playing was something that they had tried but did not continue to actively pursue.

As counterintuitive as it might seem, Cypris' sometimes restrictive code of conduct was also attractive to some members. Of primary importance was the rule forbidding discussion of politics, religion and, implicitly, sex. Power appreciated these restrictions.

> Most people here are lovely, and they respect each other. (But) there are so many topic when you talk about it, like politic or religion…some people get offended on this. In Cypris there is no such topic about these thing. It's like I come to this world more than real life, because in real life, some people they argue, they talk about these things…In Cypris, there is no drama…
>
> Power, 8:00-9:00, Video 1, 3/18/16

Power felt that for a learning community to work, the students had to learn to respect each other first. Kaede explained that rules were necessary in such a community because

> this is not fake. There are real people here on the other computer. There is somebody behind the other screen. And you're not alone,and you don't have the right to be rude or take advantage of people anymore than you do in real life.
>
> Kaede, 2:00-4:00, Video 2, 1/6/16

Cata agreed as well, revealing his frustration with other more free-form communities and championed the classes where one is allowed to express one's ideas without interruption. No participants complained about the lack of freedom when it came to discussion, although one staff member left in the past because she felt had been unable to freely defend her religion and political affiliations from a griefer within the sim.

Perhaps surprisingly, the fact that Cypris offers free classes was not mentioned by many of the members interviewed. This fact is especially unusual considering how often I have heard it expressed in casual conversations with students. The ones who did were lower level students who primarily spent their time attending classes (as opposed to socializing). QP was amazed by this.

> What we can learn by free, no money, is amazing. Before I came to Cypris, I went to language school in real life. To compare it, Cypris is miracle.
>
> QP, 8:00-9:00, Video 2, 6/2/16

Takashi also asserted that Cypris' free lessons can enhance English skills, but implied that offline classes might be better but, although admitting "it's a free lesson, so I have no right to complain" (Takashi, 10:10-10:20, Video 1, 6/5/16). Feronymous actually saw the

downside of the sim being free, in that members have not paid, so they do not feel obligated to attend regularly; this was bothersome to him because he would like to teach classes as a series, not just one-off lessons.

Staff Meetings

Immediately following interviews, I discussed some of the above conclusions with Mystie, and after discussion, we ultimately decided that what I had initially intended to be focus groups would be framed as staff meetings. This shift was done primarily because one of the main findings of the interviews was a desire to have more meetings within Second Life. Accordingly, two weekend meetings were arranged, spaced 12 hours apart, June 11th and 12th, 2016 (also see Table 4). The first was an all staff meeting in the Second Life morning, the usual time for Cypris activities based in Asia; the second was scheduled 12 hours later and was open to all members, including staff that might not have been able to attend the previous meeting. Unfortunately, the meetings, which both included the manager, Mystie, were not well attended by the interviewees, but did include members who had not been previously been included in interviews.

At the staff meeting, Mystie was most vocal, and the discussion centered on using what I had learned to further improve the group. One of the most common comments from Cypris members was the demand for more activities. There was general agreement that interviewees' requests for more activities were difficult to accommodate because of a lack of tutors. Mystie and those present agreed that regular members could volunteer more often and schedule times they would simply be in the sim to assist visitors and chat,

but Mystie had reservations that lower level learners would have the ability to introduce Cypris to potential members. She introduced the idea of using some sort of non-monetary compensation to motivate more people to volunteer; McKay had earlier introduced an achievements system at Cypris, but it was not popular enough to maintain member interest. I suggested having exclusive classes for guides only as a reward. The discussion then moved on to different ways of promoting the group. Yomi, who had been away for a year because she had gotten married and had a child, suggested that Cypris offer paid classes; she was taking paid offline classes.

Discussion of Lim's (2009) learning through championing at the staff meeting led to a discussion of Cypris' sometimes controversial policy of restricting conversation related to religion, politics, and sexually explicit topics. Power revealed that Cypris had initially 'lost' some members to the Meow Meow sim, another language learning community, because it allowed discussions of sex and politics. However, he conceded that he did not think language learning was actually the focus of conversations at Meow Meow. After I subsequently visited Meow Meow on several occasions, it became apparent that this was not necessarily true; classes teaching several different languages were being offered, but casual discussion there, often dominated by English native speakers, did not offer scaffolding of any sort. There was no move to change Cypris' policy in this regard.

The focus was on different matters in the all-member meeting. Discussion of socializing and formal activities led Jan to bring up her positive experiences with language practice while playing games with English at Cypris. She admitted that

speaking all the time was difficult, and she needed more time to think. “But doing something like playing game or something is good practice to speak,” she stated (All staff meeting, 15:50-16:00, Video 1, 6/12/16). Jan felt that tools were important to promote learning, and both unstructured chatting and classes were important. Kaede then discussed the regrets she felt leading such a teacher-centered lecture course with limited opportunities for members to practice speaking. She went on to discuss the botany class she was teaching at the time and expressed a desire to make it more participatory. The rest of the meeting was spent discussing advertising, griefers, and fund raising.

In the end, sharing my preliminary conclusions at staff meetings highlighted the issues that staff felt required improvement the most. These included the need for regular staff and all-member meetings, the demand for more activities and staff members on call and discussion of the relative importance of structured and unstructured activities. As Wenger et al. (2009) indicated, regular meetings with sufficient openness and flexibility to allow members to bring up various issues seem important to maintaining a sense of focus and ownership in the group. The inclusion of the staff and all-member meetings as a way to share some of my initial conclusions with the Cypris community resulted in a reevaluation of the importance of such meetings.

Conclusions

Data from interviews and participant observation of the Cypris community were examined from several different perspectives and two different rubrics to determine reasons behind Cypris’ appeal as a virtual world learning community. By using the signs

of life rubric for successful online communities as posited by Wenger et al. (2009), Cypris seemed to measure up well, providing satisfying relationships, differing levels of participation, community cultivation, and the serving of a well-defined context. It fell short in one category because of the recent lack of regular meetings, although it is clear that members see the need and demand for them. With these signs of life fulfilled, Cypris can be categorized as a healthy digital habitat, and this has undoubtedly contributed to the robust nature of the group.

Subsequently, a rubric more specifically tailored to judging the efficacy of virtual world learning communities, Lim's (2009) Six Learning's framework, was utilized to determine how well Cypris staff were able to take advantage of the Second Life environment for learning. Exemplars were available to show the extent to which Cypris fulfilled five of Lim's learning categories: learning by exploring, learning by collaborating, learning by being, learning by building, and learning by expressing. The remaining category, learning by championing, was not applicable because Cypris does not allow politically charged discussion or activities. With this exception, Cypris has utilized the Second Life environment to provide learning activities that take full advantage of the affordances available, and this is also likely to have contributed to its appeal among its members.

Finally, through a constructivist (Hatch, 2002) approach to data collected from interviews and participant observation, two common factors related to members were determined to have a noteworthy effect on continued interest in the group. First, a majority of those interviewed saw socializing as an important part of language practice,

and they saw Cypris as an ideal place to do that between formal, structured activities. Second, several key members were shown to exhibit tendencies common to Internet early adopters. These tendencies included a fearless and experimental attitude toward the adoption of new technology and the desire for making friends with those far outside their offline acquaintances. This attitude explains why so many Cypris members in their 40s-60s were atypically comfortable using the Second Life platform. Finally, other less prominent commonalities were discussed, including member interest in role-play, their appreciation of Cypris as an apolitical discussion zone and their happiness in finding a cost-free English learning community. These factors provide a clearer picture of the kind of individual that sees Cypris (and virtual language learning groups in general) as an attractive alternative to offline classes.

Finally, two special meetings were conducted that discussed the aforementioned conclusions with staff and regular members alike. Discussion of the lack of regular meetings, the need for more activities, the importance of informal socializing and games, and the possibility that Cypris was losing members because of its insistence to stay apolitical all verified the importance of these issues to Cypris staff and members. These meetings instead became not only a verification of my initial conclusions above, but a call to action to try to tackle some of the issues that Cypris is currently struggling to overcome.

CHAPTER 5

TEACHING AND LEARNING OBSERVATIONS

This chapter focuses on the second main research question: what sort of language teaching and learning take place at Cypris? It provides exemplars of teaching strategies and learning events from three types of classes: Kaede's Fantastic Science, Grama's reading circle and Mystie's Beginner's class. In addition, there is also a description of my Phrasal Verbs A-Z activity with feedback from learners over three consecutive weeks, and finally, three casual learning interactions in unstructured conversations outside of class. The goal of this chapter is not to exhaustively cover all teaching and learning styles possible within Cypris or virtual world classrooms, but to simply provide a sampling of the kinds of teaching strategies and learning events observed in the environment.

It is important here to note citation and transcription conventions. As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, transcription and quotes from these activities and interactions are cited using activity name, activity number, video recording number, the time stamp within that recording and the date. Line numbers provided are arbitrary and are provided simply for easy reference within discussion of individual passages and activities. A full list of observations can be found in Table 3 in Chapter 3. In the end, no special transcription conventions were deemed necessary to the analysis beyond numbering (as in Adger, 2001), although utterances crucial to discussion are marked on the right margin with ←. All utterances noted utilized voice unless specifically designated otherwise.

Teaching and Learning in Kaede's "Fantastic Science"

Kaede leads a weekly content-based lecture class at the main Cypris Chat Ring on Wednesdays (6 AM PDT) (Figure 6). As a biologist in RL, it is not surprising that she chooses to teach classes related to science. Unlike other Cypris tutors, rather than cover different topics weekly, she spent several weeks going over subjects in detail. During the six months in which recordings were allowed in her class, she covered two major themes. The first was a ten-week class on the history of climate change research. The second was a five-week course on how exoplanets are discovered and their significance.

Figure 6. Screenshot: Kaede's Fantastic Science class: Fragile Framework Lesson (12/30/2015).

Kaede used authentic materials exclusively. For her course on global warming research, for example, she utilized The Fragile Framework (Monastersky & Sousanis, 2015), a graphic novel style comic originally published in the journal *Nature* to commemorate the 2015 Paris Climate Talks. For her talks on exoplanets, she used various infographics culled from authentic science websites designed for native speakers. Although there is officially no recommended English level given for her classes, it is likely more appropriate for intermediate to advanced learners.

Based on 11 observations of lessons, her class generally progressed as follows. First, she greeted the participants, and they reviewed the previous lessons together; this involved asking comprehension questions to those learners she knew attended earlier lessons and explaining aspects of the topic again to newcomers. Then she lectured for approximately 30 minutes on the topic, slowly explaining the subject matter while introducing vocabulary she did not expect learners to know already. She then asked participants to recite key passages of the lecture, oftentimes in unison, in order to practice their speaking and pronunciation. Finally, she opened the group up for questions, whether about the material or about science in general. Each class lasted between 90-120 minutes.

As the content-based material Kaede covered was potentially challenging, even for native speakers, she fell back on several basic teaching strategies: use of visual aids, Second Life notecards, slow, clear enunciation, repetition, hyperlinks and text chat as a learning aid. In her first climate change class, for example, she projected the page of the graphic novel that the class would read and discuss in the class. The screen behind her was linked to an image display script that worked like Microsoft Powerpoint; by clicking

on the screen she could switch between slides each showing one page of the comic. She then made a notecard available to all in a special box in the center of the chat ring; that notecard included the full text of that day's comic, as well as a vocabulary list and relevant hyperlinks. An example of one of Kaede's notecards is found in Appendix H. In a later lesson related to exoplanets, she used a 3D model of the solar system in the center of the chat ring to better explain her points.

Kaede used text chat to emphasize the importance of certain words and concepts or provide spelling guidance for points she felt were particularly important as she lectured; this was necessary as her content-based approach emphasized concepts and vocabulary rather than grammar or other language features. This is not dissimilar to writing notes on a chalkboard, although it was accomplished with more speed. In the following excerpt, Kaede introduced a page from "The Fragile Framework." After explaining in voice, she repeated key passages in text; again, all utterances utilized voice unless tagged as text chat.

Excerpt 1

1- Kaede: The first three paragraphs in this page here are talking about the fact that, um, everyone was. Encouraged. About finding a solution. To climate change in 1987 because, er um, 1988, because they just talked about the ozone problem and all the countries came together and said, "Oh, good idea. Let's ban. Those chemicals. Let's Ban. Uh, Freon gas."

2-<Text chat: Kaede: let's ban Freon gas> ←

3-Kaede: For example. And everyone. Agreed.

4-<Text chat: Kaede: everyone agreed> ←

5-Kaede: And so everyone thought, “Oh! Climate change. We can solve that problem, too. Because we all just got together to solve the other problem.” But in the case of global warming, the problem is there’re so many things. That add up.

6-<Text chat: Kaede: in the case of global warming everyone has a hand in the problem because so many activities generate greenhouse gases.>

Kaede observation 1(1) , 22:41-23:52, 12.30.15

By repeating, “let’s ban Freon gas” in Line 2, and “everyone agreed” in Line 4, Kaede emphasized the difference between the relative ease with which countries came together to tackle the depletion of the ozone layer versus the difficulties faced in dealing with global warming. The repetition not only reinforced main points, it also provided a pause for students to consolidate what they have just heard. Only a few seconds later, she presented an example of how she uses repetition and hyperlinks to clarify the meaning of a vocabulary word. The word she attempted to teach was *infinitely*:

Excerpt 2

8-Kaede: So curbing greenhouse gas pollution is infinitely more difficult.>

And what does the word *infinite* mean?

9-<Two seconds of silence>

10-Kaede: What’s the word *infinite*?

11-QP: *Forever*. ←

12-Kaede: Ah, yes. Yeah. *Immeasurably great* or *forever*. I don’t know about *forever*, but it’s very big. Very big.

13-<Text chat: Kaede: very big!> ←

14-Kaede: So if you go to your dictionary. You can put that in.

15-<Text chat: Kaede: http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/infinite/s=t >

16-Kaede: And see it's "immeasurably great."

17--<Text chat: Kaya: endless?>

18-Kaede: Indefinitely or exceedingly great. Endlessly. Yeah, endlessly. So what they're saying is that the problem of greenhouse gasses is endlessly more difficult. Much. Much. More difficult.

19-<Text chat: Kaede: much much more difficult> ←

20-Kaede: To stop climate change.

21-<Text chat: Kaede: to solve climate change>

Kaede observation 1(1), 24:15-, 12.30.15

When QP volunteered the definition of *infinite* as *forever* in Line 11, Kaede realized that she had to spend extra time clarifying the meaning. Therefore, she emphasized simple synonyms in text such as "Very big!" from Line 13 in text chat, and provided a hyperlink to an online dictionary definition, and then she repeated "much much more difficult…to solve climate change" in Line 19 to emphasize the point further. This scaffolding allowed for multiple paths for learners to learn the meaning of *infinite*.

Above and beyond synonyms and hyperlinks, Kaede often cut and pasted online information into local text chat, often in response to learner questions or in anticipation of them. In the following excerpt, the class was discussing a multinational meeting to

discuss ways to combat man-made climate change. The concept of *developed nations* was introduced, but there was some confusion in regards to that concept:

Excerpt 3

22-Kaede: Good. Cool. So. At the Berlin meeting. They made the agreement. To have two years. To figure this out. Two years later. They would agree on emissions limits. For developed nations. So the smaller nations didn't have to worry about it yeah? But the bigger, richer countries would have to agree on emissions to limit them. What percentage were they trying to limit their emissions? And what would they agree to? In two more years? Hmm. Let's see. So now we can go to the next page next time. Yea, we got through number three!

23-QP: Thank you.

24-Kaede: Questions. Any questions so far on anything.

25-Mio: Okay, I have a question.

26-Kaede: Uh huh?

27-Mio: China is included in developed nations? ←

28-Kaede: Yes-

29-Mio: Or it's developing?

30-Kaede: It's a developed nation.

31-<Text chat: Kafes: I have to leave.>

32-Kaede: Bye Kafes.

33-Mio: Okay. Thank you.

34-Kaede: Yeah, I wonder whether there's a list of developed nations. <typing sound> Nations list…ah, definition…ah here we go.

35-Kaede: Here's a definition-

36-<Text chat: Kaede: Developed countries have post-industrial economies, meaning the service sector provides more wealth than the industrial sector. They are contrasted with developing countries, which are in the process of industrialization, or undeveloped countries, which are pre-industrial and almost entirely agrarian. ←

37-Kaede: It's kinda big.

Kaede observation 1(1), 24:15-26:00, 12.30.15

In Line 27, Kaede received a question from Mio at the end of her lesson regarding whether or not China is considered a developing or developed country. She answered that it is developed and then began a search in another window to find a list of developed countries. She failed in that search, but discovered a definition of "developed country" in Line 36 and then shared that with the class instead; after the exchange in Excerpt 3, Mio indicated the definition had been sufficient. Because of her focus on content in areas that were sometimes unfamiliar to her, Kaede utilized the affordances available through the Internet to supplement her own knowledge. This focus beyond dyadic interaction is described by Holzman (2010), a situation in which teachers (and learners) discover their own context-appropriate tools to qualitatively improve their learning environment (p. 27). Kaede is not only utilizing such tools, she is modeling it for the learners, and implicitly making them aware of the resources available at their fingertips.

Again, because Kaede's activities were content-based, instances of learning were often based on concepts and vocabulary rather than grammar or other language features; the following is an exemplar of such an instance. In the following interaction, Kaede was reviewing the previous lesson on exoplanets that might potentially harbor life, and she projected a diagram with our solar system on the screen behind her. Her goal was to elicit the term *Goldilocks Zone,* a term from the previous lesson related to an area within a star system capable of supporting life (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Screenshot: Kaede's Fantastic Science class: discussion on exoplanets (6/8/2016).

Excerpt 4

38-Kaede: So, what's that green circle. On this slide behind me. What is it called and what does it mean? Why is there a green…a green circle.

39-<Text chat: Kaede: green circle>

40-<Text chat: Kaede: what does that mean?>

41-<Text chat: Qwert: *life belt*> ←

42-Kaede: Yeah. It's the belt of life. Yeah, does anyone remember the two other names for it? That's where life can happen. ←

43-<Text chat: Kaede: where life can happen?> Because…

44-<Text chat: Kaede: because…> <two seconds of silence>

45-Kaede: It is called…can you type it? Can anyone type it? Do you remember what that green circle is? Around the sun? That's where the Earth is, and that's where Mars is.

46-<Text chat: Mystie: G..> ←

47-Kaede: G- ←

48-Phoenix: Goldilocks Zone ←

49-Kaede: Yes! Yea! Goldilocks Zone because this is after the, uh, childhood fairy tale

50-<Text Chat: Kaede: after the childhood fairy tale>

51-Kaede: Called Goldilocks…and the Three Bears

52-<Text chat: Kaede: called Goldilocks and the Three Bears>

Kaede observation 11(1), 3:00-5:00, 6/8/16

In Line 41, Qwert uses the term *life belt.* It is likely that he wanted to show that he understood what the green band represented, the zone in which life is most likely to exist in the solar system, and he was displaying his knowledge to Kaede. In Line 42, Kaede acknowledged that Qwert remembered the meaning, but attempted to elicit the exact terminology previously used. In Line 48, Phoenix showed that she had recalled the term *Goldilocks Zone* from the previous class, although it is unclear whether or not she would

have recalled it without Kaede and Mystie prompting her with "G", the first letter of the term, in text chat in Lines 46 and 47. Although the transcript above gives some indication that Phoenix had learned the term, as it is unlikely she would have learned that term outside of Kaede's class.

What is of greater potential interest is the interaction in Line 46, Mystie's prompting with the first letter of the correct response. Mystie's contribution in Line 46 is a reminder of her intense involvement in the group. Mystie makes an effort to be present for nearly every lesson that Kaede or I lead. She often sits on one of the blue observer's chairs and does not usually speak unless asked. What this interaction showed was that Mystie is not only an observer, but an assistant when she feels it is necessary. Mystie herself downplayed her participation in this way.

> When I'm too tired to actively participate, I'm listening only. But I'm quite ADD, so I cannot do just one thing when I'm just sitting and listening, so I will start doing other stuff as well…There are of course busy times and have to be multi-tasking. So you can say most of the time I am multi-tasking.
>
> Mystie, 21:00-22:00, Video 2, 6/10/16

Despite her protests, though, Mystie attended Kaede's class not only as a learner, but also as an assistant; as an advanced learner, she prompted other learners in class as part of her role. Mystie's participation in Phoenix's recollection, is more than just one advanced learner providing scaffolding to a less advanced one; it is representative of Mystie's

conscious decision to improve her own knowledge by participating as both learner and instructor when necessary.

This is an instance which illustrates the benefits of using Holzman's (2010) particular interpretation of Vygotskian learning theory. As "learning-leading-development is collective…and the ZPD is not exclusively or even primarily a dyadic relationship" (2010, p. 29), learning becomes not a one-to-one experience, but a situation in which a learner is "interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). In this case, Phoenix and Kaede did not have to depend solely on each other for learning to take place; other helpful interlocutors were available within an environment that supported such interactions.

Teaching and Learning in Grama's Reading Class

Grama leads a reading class for beginners on Saturdays. The lessons take place in the Reading Circle area of Cypris, an area surrounded by a wooden fence. Cushions are strewn on a plaid rug. There are two types of *pose balls* for participants, inworld objects that are used here to activate a sitting animation. Ones closer to the inner circle allow member avatars to sit and appear that they are reading. Ones on the outer edge are for observers and come complete with a meditation animation. Unlike most classes at Cypris, Grama's classes were convenient for members living in European time zones.

The three lessons observed began with greetings, and she then asked participants to click on the notecard box that rests beside her avatar. Grama's notecards were typically adapted from public domain Internet material and had three parts: a short story, a

vocabulary section, and several reading comprehension activities. An example can be found in Appendix I. Grama read the story first, and then each learner practiced reciting the story themselves. Grama then spent time fielding questions about the story, the learners made sentences using the vocabulary, and the reading comprehension activities were done together in voice chat. Finally, Grama initiated what she termed *the happy dance*, a synchronized dancing animation she shared with those present as a kind of reward for their participation.

Grama's teaching methodology focused on individual recitation as the starting point. Although she focused on 5-10 vocabulary items found within the readings, she otherwise did not specifically target language features unless specifically asked about them. This made her class uniquely dependent on student questions, but in the three classes observed, learners were uniformly proactive in this regard; this is in contrast to Kaede's activity and indeed all the other activities observed. When no questions were forthcoming, she would target individual learners and encourage them to ask.

This process was sometimes messy and often multimodal. For example, after Grama had answered Jan's question about the meaning of the target word lifelike, Grama tried to move on. However, Cata had another question about the term peacock:

Excerpt 5

1-Grama: In the first paragraph? Any other word, Jan? Or Elec or Cata? ←

2-<In text chat: Cata: peacock> ←

3-Grama: Peacock is an, um, bird. It's a bird. Let me find an image…they have those type of green, beautiful-

4-<In text chat: Elec: It's kinda tricky to use lifelike for a fiction thing ☺> ←

5-Grama: Okay, good. Do you still want an image of a peacock?

6-Cata: No, no, I can understand that.

7-Grama: Anybody else – I can open a window. Jan, do you know how a peacock looks like? Okay I'll open one-

8-Jan: Un-

9-Grama: they're very colorful-

10-<In text chat: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/indian peafowl

11-Grama: and the combination between the blue and the green is quite vivid.

Grama observation 1(1), 20:13-20:30, 12/19/15

In Excerpt 5, Line 1, Grama likely suspected that there were additional questions that people were reluctant to ask. In Line 2, Cata admitted that he did not know what a peacock was, and Grama attempted to explain, However, Elec had not finished commiserating with Jan over her earlier confusion about *lifelike*, and continued his thoughts about that in text chat in Line 4. In Line 5, Grama ignored Elec's comment and asked Cata if he needed an image, but Cata stated that it was unnecessary. Nevertheless, Grama found a hyperlink to Wikipedia to provide a suitable image to answer the question satisfactorily in Line 10. This kind of back and forth between Grama and her learners was not uncommon over vocabulary items, because sometimes she was unable to anticipate the English level of learners who might attend.

After recitation and definition of target vocabulary, Grama also required participants to create their own sentences and type them into local chat. She then asked

them one by one to read their sentences aloud, and she offered feedback and corrections. Finally, she provided them with an example of her own. This made it likely that participants were exposed to a wide variety of collocations and possible contexts in which to use (and not to use) the vocabulary they were practicing.

Also, because of the emphasis on reading within the class, Grama's classes showed a greater usage of text chat than other classes at Cypris. This included an acceptance of cross-chat not directed at the tutor, which was less prominent in other activities at Cypris. This was illustrated by Elec's comment in Line 4; although Grama had moved on, Elec still wanted to continue a previous discussion with Jan that was technically off topic. This kind of cross-chat is frowned upon in Mystie's activities (as well as my own), but here it could provide feedback and generate detours the lesson might take.

Because of her relatively small class size, with 4-5 learners during observations, Grama was also able to focus on pronunciation of some key vocabulary words. At the beginning of a class based on a reading related to the legend of St. Valentine, Grama took advantage of my presence to ask me to read the passage aloud and then assist the class with the pronunciation of one word.

Excerpt 6

12-Grama: So the word was…martyr. I'm not quite sure, did I say it right? Can you repeat it please- ←

13-Duke: Martyr. Martyr

14-<Text chat: Grama: martyr>

15-Grama: Martyr. Martyr.

16-Takashi: Martyr

17-Duke: Martyr. Martyr. Mar. Tyr. Like Mar-ta.

18-Grama: Oh perhaps we should repeat – oh but with a "t."

Grama observation 2(1), 11:30-12:00, 2/13/16

Grama's pronunciation is native-like, but she took advantage of my presence to introduce a word she knew was difficult for the students in Line 12. Then, the word was repeatedly utilized throughout the lesson. Jan, for example, heard it three times in the reading before she was asked to read it aloud herself. As one of the key vocabulary items Grama had chosen, each member, including myself and Grama, wrote and spoke our own sample sentences using *martyr* aloud. Finally, Jan said the word again during the matching exercises on the notecard. Here she was prompted to say the word again by reading her own sentences aloud.

Excerpt 7

19: <In text: Jan: Many priests explored all over the world and unfortunately became martyrs.>

20-Grama: Alright, Jan.

21-Jan: Many priests explored all over the world and unfortunately became martyr-

22-Grama: Martyrs-

22- Jan: Martyrs. Mar. Tyrs.

23-Grama: Yes. ←

Grama observation 2(2), 15:20-15:45, 2/13/16

Although Jan's pronunciation is still hesitant in Line 22, having repeated exposure appears to have helped her with the pronunciation of *martyr,* a difficult word for Japanese learners because of its repeated use of "r." This was the result of opportunities for exposure and imitation within multiple contexts present throughout the lesson.

Grama was also willing to let student feedback dictate the pace of the class. In the following example, Cata, has just finished reading the story, *Paper Dragon Fairy Tale* (Appendix I) aloud. Grama asked Jan what she thought of the story, and she explained that she had found it a little difficult.

Excerpt 8

24-Grama: (to the class) Um, how do you feel about the level of difficulty? Do you think it's very difficult? I think for you, your level of English, I think it's accessible. What do you think Jan?

25-Jan: Ah, this time this is not too difficult for me. But I cannot understand all of the sentences. I just grab, uh, word meaning. ←

26-Grama: Let's go for each paragraph, we can go over the vocabulary for each paragraph, or the meaning – we can discuss a little bit. And then, if we don't finish the activity, it's not – we'll see how much we can go. I think it was a bit too long. I cut it, but maybe not enough. Let's take a look at the first paragraph. Let's go around. ←

27-Grama: Jan, you can start and tell me a little bit which sentence or which word or which expression – and we can go around and you can explain – not only me, somebody else can explain to you. So go ahead.

Grama observation 1(1), 17:08-18:30, 12/19/15

Among the three students attending that particular lesson, Jan was likely the one with the lowest proficiency. When Jan made it clear that she was struggling in Line 25, Grama apologized in Line 26 and adjusted her lesson plan to spend more time reviewing the language in the text. Finally, Grama encouraged the other members to offer alternate explanations or interpretations of the readings. This strategy encouraged other learners to contribute actively in the teaching process.

In the following learning exemplar, Jan is seen struggling to get a better understanding of the meaning of the sentence, "Up the dragon lifted into the air." This is found in the *Paper Dragon Fairy Tale* reading in Appendix I. Grama asked if there were any questions about the third paragraph of the story, and Jan brought up the aforementioned phrase:

Excerpt 9

28- Grama: Okay, any other questions about paragraph four, or we stay here until tomorrow (laughing).

29- <In text: Jan: Up the dragon lifted into the air> ←

30- Grama: No, paragraph three, sorry (laughing)

31-Jan: Sorry, excuse me, uh, this is not a word but-

32-Grama: No.

33-Grama: It's an expression. Up the dragon lifted into the air. So in other words the dragon. Went up into the air. It's an expression. When you say, "up you fly" or "up you go"-

34-Jan: When, uh, the word "up"-

35-Grama: It's an expression. It's an idiomatic expression, I think we- ←

36-Jan: Uh-huh-

37-Grama: (inaudible) you go or (inaudible) many times-

38-Jan: Thank you-

39-Grama: Uh, gosh, I don't find it. One second, that's how I – like you'll go up- ←

40-<In text: Jan: I understand ty ☺> ←

41-Grama: Up you go or up you get. (clears throat) So in this situation, it's "up the dragon went"...right?

42-<eight seconds of silence> ←

Grama observation 1(1), 33:40-34:44, 12/19/15

In Line 29, Jan seemed to be wondering why *up* was used at the beginning of the sentence in this case and when this should be done. In Line 35 Grama explained that it was an idiomatic expression, but seemed to be struggling to find some reference online to explain it more clearly. It is unclear whether or not Jan actually understood how or why this structure was being used, but she seemed eager to calm Grama, who seemed a bit frantic around Line 39 when she couldn't find an online resources she had been looking for. The long silence at Line 42 perhaps indicated that Jan was still uncertain. Grama then tried to find different ways to explain the phrase.

Excerpt 10

43-Grama: I think it's also used in a cheerful manner. Oh, I don't find it right now. ←

44-<In text: Jan: up the dragon went up the air?> ←

45-Grama: Um. Yep. But it's also used as kind of a cheerful thing? Um, I don't know how to explain…sometimes when you would talk to kids, you would say "up you go," just to make them feel like it's not so hard to go up. ←

46-<two seconds of silence>

47-Grama: I don't find the, um, definition. Right now-

48-<In text: Jan: up the dragon went into the air?> ←

49-<two seconds of silence>

50-Grama: Should be. An idiom…oh, "off you go" or "up you go."

51-<four seconds of silence>

52-Grama: Off you go off the room, like…you leave the house

53-<two seconds of silence>

54-Grama: That's how the sentence is.

55-<In text: Jan: like ' up you get' ?> ←

56-<three seconds of silence>

57-Grama: Up you get. Yes.

58-<In text: Jan: I understand> ←

59-Grama: It all depends on your intonation. How you use it.

Grama observation 1(1), 34:40-36:00, 12/19/15

In Line 43, Grama struggled to recall the proper use of the expression, but she indicated that she was unable to find an online resource that explained it. In Line 44, she tentatively offered an incorrect usage, but in Line 45 it is unclear whether Grama had read it carefully, as Jan was explaining an alternate usage that she recalled. In Line 48, Jan self-

corrected her sentence, but did not receive any clear feedback from Grama who was continuing to give an explanation of the appropriate time the expression should be used. In Line 55, Jan asked whether the usage was similar to *up you get*, an expression she was already familiar with, and Grama answered in the affirmative. In Line 58, Jan again reiterated that she understood, and it seems that whether or not she knew the proper usage, she had a clearer idea than before. While it is uncertain at this point if Jan understood the usage or was simply being pragmatic, 40 minutes later, when asked to provide her own sentence using the word, *soar*, she typed, "Up a newspaper soared into the air," an acceptable usage.

Again, just as in Kaede's exemplars, Grama utilized online references, observers and other participants in the environment to go beyond a simple dyadic interaction. This example also illustrates several other characteristics of interaction within a Cypris class. First, there is the mix of voice and text, which allows for multiple threads of conversation to occur simultaneously. Effective communication is dependent on interlocutors pausing to look at local text chat messages. Second is the use of online resources. It is unclear whether Jan used additional online resources in this interaction, but, according to subsequent conversations with Grama, she was using Google to search for examples and explanations. Third, there is camaraderie between members and non-native tutors that can both hinder and support learning. In Line 40, Jan professed to understand and offered a reassuring, smiling emoticon, but it is unclear until later that she truly understands. However, when it became clear to Jan that Grama was continuing to attempt to give her a more accurate understanding of the expression, Jan pushed herself to continue struggling.

In the end, there seemed to be indications that Jan's desire not to see Grama lose face contributed to her motivation to gain a better understanding of the expression.

Teaching and Learning in Mystie's Beginner Listening and Reading Activity

Mystie led a class for beginners on Tuesdays. Although it is called the Beginner Listening and Reading Activity, there was an emphasis on speaking, pronunciation, and grammar pattern practice. The lessons took place in the Beginner's area of Cypris, an elevated wooden platform adjacent to the Reading Circle. Cushions were arranged in a circle, and there was a green translucent note card box in the center of the circle. To one side of the wooden platform was a row of four chairs; these were for observers. Mystie generally taught a 90-180 minute class from 4 or 5 AM PDT, evening for those in Japan, where a majority of students in this class are from.

After preliminary greetings and small talk, Mystie usually asked those present to try to recall what the group studied the previous week. She then instructed the class to take a notecard from the central box. The notecard typically contained a brief story or dialog, and several exercises (an example of of one of Mystie's notecards is found in Appendix J). Mystie read the sentences, and then students would repeat in chorus. Then, depending on the grammar point being practiced, learners would make their own questions and use them in transformation drills.

In the following excerpt, the learners made their own questions and answered them, and then framed them as negative questions and provided responses. This was done

after the original structures were modeled in a dialog. In Excerpt 11, Line 1 below, we find Mystie prompting QP to give his example sentences.

Excerpt 11

1-Mystie: Okay, let's read.

2-QP: Will she sit in a car?

3-Mystie: Um. And the answer is?

4-Qp: Yes, she will.

5-Mystie: Unh. Negative?

6-QP: No, she won't. She won't sit in a car.

Mystie observation 1(1), 10:00-10:30, 12/8/15

Although this pattern practice is decontextualized, the learners are allowed some creative choice, as they are allowed to choose the questions. This continued in a circle until each learner had contributed a question and demonstrated some understanding of the basic forms covered.

Despite the relatively small variety of material typically covered, Mystie's class often continued well beyond the official 90 minute time frame, sometimes stretching to 150 minutes or more. Sometimes this was due to student progress being slower than predicted; other times the question and answer period at the end of the class was exceedingly lengthy. As manager of Cypris, Mystie attempted to set an example for the other instructors by assisting learners well past her scheduled lesson times. This patience and willingness to spend extra time with learners, especially beginners, contributed to her popularity within the group.

Mystie's patience is on display in the next learning exemplar, in which Honey appeared to grasp the difference between the adjectives *confused* and *confusing*. In this example, the class was practicing the future tense by creating their own sentences, when in Line 11, Honey used *confused* incorrectly.

Excerpt 12

7- Honey: So this one? I will be at a party on New Year's Eve party?

8- Mystie: (laughs) You don't need party at the end because you already said-

9-Honey: Oh, right, so – "I will be at the party on New Year's Eve" then.

10- Mystie: Good, good, yes, yes.

11- Honey: Thank you. I confused.

12- Mystie:"I - I was confused."

13- Honey: I was confused-

14- Mystie: Be confused. Be confused. Okay?

15- Honey: Right ←

Mystie observation 1(3), 5:00-5:30, 12/8/15

As of Line 15, Mystie had corrected Honey, and Honey had imitated Mystie's utterance and asserted that she has has understood the distinction between *confused* and *confusing*. However, in Line 17, Mystie wanted to clarify by reminding her that they had studied this distinction the previous week.

Excerpt 13

16-Mystie: Confuse somebody. Confuse somebody else-

17-Honey: Right, exactly. I learned – we learned last last week. Ahhh. ←

18-Mystie: Yes. (laughs) I am confused. I was confused.

19-Honey: I was confused -

20-Mystie: Good, good.

Mystie observation 1(3), 5:31-5:35, 12/8/15

It is after Line 20, that Honey wanted to show that she understood by bringing up the distinction between *excited* and *exciting* that she remembered from the previous class.

Excerpt 14

21-Honey: I am – I am excited. ←

22-Mystie: Right. (laughs) Good. I am excited about this Chr-Christmas holiday. Christmas. Holiday. (laughs)

Mystie observation 1(3), 5:36-5:39, 12/8/15

Next, Honey showed that she was beginning to generalize the rule to other adjectives, and she mentioned the distinction between *scared* and *scary* in order to clarify this in Line 23.

Excerpt 15

23-Honey: How about scar-n scary. Same? I scared? ←

24-Mystie: I am – I am -

25-Honey: I am-

26-Mystie: Scare somebody.

27-Honey: I – I am scared.

28-Mystie: Yes.

29-Honey: Or I am scary?

30-Mystie: If you are scary you must be a monster.

31-Showshow: (laughs)

32-Honey: Oh, okay-

33-Mystie: I mean like -

34-Honey: I-

35-Mystie: (laughs) I scary means – I must be a really really scary person. I'm a-

36-Honey: Oh, okay-

37-Mystie: I am a mon-

38-Honey: I am scared.

39-Mystie: I am scared. (quietly) *Kowaii. Kowaii*. But if – I'm a scary person – I am scary means I must be really horrible -

40-Honey: I – I make scary.

41-Mystie: Yeah, you make somebody scared, yes. You make somebody scared. I am scared.

42-Honey: I am scared.

43-Mystie: Maybe I am-

44-Honey: Confused.

45-Mystie: I am confused. I get confused. I get confused sometimes. I get confused sometimes.

46-Honey: I get confused all the time. ←

47-Mystie: (laughs)

Mystie observation 1(3), 5:40-6:30, 12/8/15

Although Honey's mastery of *scared* vs. *scary* seems uncertain, in Line 46 she made a joke emphasizing that she has at least understood how to use *confused* correctly. She then apologized for having sidetracked the lesson.

Excerpt 16

48-Mystie: I get confused all the time. Right. It's confusing. It's confusing.

49-Honey: Thank you. Thank you for the time-

50-Mystie: It's okay. Simple and it's okay.

51-Honey: Thank you, thank you.

Mystie observation 1(3), 6:31-6:36, 12/8/15

Honey reflected on this negotiation of meaning over the confused/confusing distinction in a brief interview the following week. Despite her progress in understanding, she could not help but frame her own active participation as being pushy:

> There is lots of mistake I made. Although mistake – from the mistake I learned a lot. So probably that's good...but anxiously I worry about there is – I interrupt another people. Because I ask Mystie too much and it take her time a lot.

Honey, 3:00-3:15, Video 2, 6/4/16

It must be noted that although Honey worried that she spent too much time monopolizing Mystie's attention, her behavior is comparable to QP, Simon and other very proactive learners in the beginner's class. Although some learners such as Showshow and Maki did not deviate from Mystie's exercises, a majority used the beginner's class as an opportunity to bring up questions not directly related to the lesson at hand. In this lesson

alone, for example, QP also diverted the lesson to ask about the proper use of *either*, while Simon asked how to express, "She will get to learn to like that song." Learners in the beginner's class, more so than in other activities, did not appear to be reluctant to take maximum advantage of the presence of an English expert, even if it was not directly related to the structures scheduled to be practiced.

Honey's concerns about her perceived pushiness aside, this examplar demonstrated a dynamic oral, imitative process in which negotiation of meaning regarding an unfamiliar grammatical form was accomplished through questioning, imitation, generalization, humor and much trial and error. Although this process of imitation and completion is seen by Holzman (2010) as occurring more frequently outside of formal instruction (p. 37), it is seen here within a relatively traditional classroom format, although Honey's persistent learner driven interaction strategies are not necessarily the norm in offline classrooms. This is perhaps indicative of the flexibility Cypris tutors have in leading their lessons and their willingness to work with individual student issues during class time.

Teaching and Learning in Duke's Activity: Three Activities with Seven Learners

In this section, teaching and learning within one of my own activities is analyzed. I, DukeVan Acker in Second Life, lead the Phrasal Verbs A-Z activity on Mondays. The activity takes place at the Cypris Japan Chat Circle. This is unusual, as it is the only activity completely in English that takes place within Cypris Japan. The activity was designed as a bridge between the low level students in Cypris Japan and Cypris Chat

proper; after the activity, participants are encouraged to attend my Field Trip/Giving Directions activity, which begins almost immediately afterwards.

The activity was simple. Participants received a notecard after they clicked on a box in front of the activity leader's seat. An example notecard is found in Appendix K. It contained 8-10 phrasal verbs taken from the *Global ELT Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* (Manser, Turton, & Betsis, 2013), along with example sentences that illustrated the particular meaning for each verb that is covered. I then cut and paste each phrasal verb and its corresponding example into text chat, and asked for a participant to define it. After accepting possible definitions from participants, I used text and voice to clarify the definition and provide additional information or examples. Then I asked participants to provide example sentences of their own in text chat. I then read these aloud one by one, and I offered feedback and corrections as in the example below.

Excerpt 16

1-Duke: Okay the first one,"to poke about" or "poke around." For example, "Who has been poking around my desk? What do you think that means?

2-<In text: Hairo: To check out?>

3-Duke: Yeah, check out. It's not so-

4-<In text: Honey: Looking for>

5-Mystie: Nosy and looking around.

6-Duke: Right. You are looking for something. And you're being noisy –er, nosy.

7-Duke: (typing) And you are moving. Or disturbing things. While searching. For something. There you go.

8-<In text: Duke: moving or disturbing things while searching for something

9-<In text: Qwert: put his nose in my thighs>

10-Duke: “Put his nose in my thighs. ” What on earth are you talking about? (laughs)

11-Mystie: What? (laughs) What are you typing-

12-<In text: Qwert: thingd>

13-Duke: Hmm? Is this a different-

14-Hairo: Like “things.”

15-<In text: Qwert: things>

16-Duke: (laughs) Wow. Putting his nose in my things. I thought, wow, this is getting erotic! (laughs)

17-Mystie: (laughs)

18- Hairo: Hmm...

Duke observation 3(2), 3:31-4:31, 12/8/15

Once all phrasal verbs on the card had been covered, there was a brief, final question and answer period, and the activities ended.

For this study, 7 participants were followed over the course of three classes: Mystie, Hairo, Moni, Takashi, and Honey (who I earlier interviewed) as well two others, Kanon (Japanese) and Qwert (Russian). Besides their regular lesson, they were asked to give their impressions of each activity and fill out a notecard at the end of each lesson . Responses were collected regarding which phrasal verbs were new to the learners, which were the simplest to understand and use, and which were most difficult to understand and use. Finally, learners were asked to produce three new, original sentences using any three

of the eight phrasal verbs covered that lesson. Copies of the notecards were then handed to me, and feedback was given on each sentence. The notecard was returned the following week.

The following exemplar of language learning features Mystie's encounter with the phrasal verb *pore over*. As previous learning exemplars in formal activities have demonstrated, learning events were identified when participants demonstrably had not been exposed to the currect usage of a target beforehand and demonstrated some measure of familiarity with it by the end of the class. In the first of the three classes, *pore over* was introduced. From Mystie's reaction, it seemed she was confused, and I admitted that I myself had often mistaken *pour over* (meaning to douse with a liquid) for the phrasal verb *pore over*:

Excerpt 17

19-Duke: This one I was thinking was p-o-u-r-

20-Mystie: Is it – It's not?!? ←

21-Duke: Um, not in this book. It's a British book. (putting on a mocking British accent)

22- Mystie: It's a British book, yes, perhaps.

23-Mystie: Really?

24-Duke: Let me check – let me check on the – if you wanna Google it-

25-Mystie: Yeah, I did. I did. I just checked in a dictionary. It is this.

26-Duke: Oh thank goodness.

27-Mystie: Yeah, I didn't know. And there's another (inaudible) with "pour over," right? Meaning p-o-u-r has another- ←

28-Duke: Yeah, like pouring syrup over pancakes kind of thing. So what do you think that means.

29- Duke: (hums to himself, waiting for Mystie) Some work-

30- Hairo- To work? On? ←

31-<In text: Honey: think deeply> ←

32- Duke: But really. Like. Yeah. Thinking deeply about something. While you're working on it.

33-Hairo: Concentrate.

34-Duke: Yeah, yeah.

35- Hairo: To the highest level.

36- Duke: (typing) To. Study. Something. Carefully. Uh, I can't type.

37- <In text chat: Duke: To study something deeply and with great attention>

38- Duke: So to study something deeply and with great attention.

Duke observation 1(1), 2:00-3:00, 6/3/16

In the previous example, Mystie expressed her disbelief regarding the spelling of *pore over* in Line 20. However, after Googling it to be sure, she realized that this was simply an unfamiliar phrasal verb to her. She did not provide a definition afterwards, and Honey and Hairo stepped in from Lines 30 and 31 to give two definitions, so it is unclear in this excerpt whether or not she has become familiar with the phrase. However, after I provided several other examples and Hairo and Kanon also volunteered theirs, Mystie typed the following sentence: "I pored over the newspaper article on the coming election." This is the initial indication that Mystie has learned the correct usage.

Reviewing Mystie's notecard after the class, it was evident that she had been using the notecard to take more notes than required for the activity; extensive notetaking was also found in Hairo and Kanon's notecards.

Her entry for *pore over* read:

> 4. pore over (something): しげしげと見詰める,熟読 to study something carefully and with great attention
>
> I don't have time to pore over these reports, but I'll do it this weekend.
>
> I pored over the newspaper article on the upcoming election.
>
> Mystie, 6/13/16

Mystie had already used an online dictionary to check the spelling and copy a definition in her native language of Japanese. She had also included two sentences, only one of which she had volunteered to share during class time. As she stated that *pore over* was not known to her in Line 27, this is evidence that she had learned the phrase.

The trajectory of Mystie's learning event can be explained in the following terms. After noticing that *pore over* was not the spelling she had anticipated, Mystie waited for my oral explanation. Then, when she had determined that I had not made an error, she swiftly moved to an online English-Japanese learning resource and copied the translation into the notecard. She then created one sentence to share with the class, and another to be checked by me at the end; I contend this was "completion" by Holzman's (2010) definition of the Vygotskian, term indicating that she had indeed familiarized herself with the phrase.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the data gathered from post-activity discussion and notecards was of limited usefulness in pinpointing language learning events. Participants with relatively low language proficiency, specifically Takashi, Kanon, Qwert, and Honey, did not speak up in after-class discussion and were often unable to accurately use phrasal verbs in applicable contexts either in-class or after-class. Those with relatively high language proficiency, Mystie, Hairo, and Moni, had most likely encountered many of these phrasal verbs before in their studies, and correct usage was often not a clear indication that they had learned the verbs in my class; only Mystie's encounter with "pore over" presented itself as an obvious learning event. This did not mean the class was unpopular; in fact this particular format (with added discussion and writing practice in notecards distinguishing it from my usual phrasal verbs classes) was so popular, I continued using it for several weeks after the initial research was collected.

Learning Exemplars in Other Interactions:

Power's Ghost stories and Learning *Mirage*

As was emphasized in interviews with Cypris members, not all learning takes place within formal activities, and the following sections focus on language learning events witnessed within informal socializing at Cypris during participant observation. First, we examine an exemplar focussing on Power. As a Cypris guide, Power is not responsible for leading activities. Instead, he volunteers to stay online should visitors come to Cypris, and to encourage conversations should people come wanting to chat. The exemplar in the following excerpt occurred at the Cypris Welcome Area. The participants

were Power, Shelly, Friendly, Moni, and Jay (Figure 8). Participants were all sitting directly on the floor in a circle. Power had been leading a round of ghost story sharing, and he was finishing up when I arrived.

Figure 8. Screenshot: Power's ghost story at the Cypris Welcome Area (2/12/2016).

Excerpt 18

1-Power: He told like the police and everyone that he had lost his friend. The second day his friend visited him and they said. We didn't call you. We didn't even talk to you. We didn't even go after you. What are you talking about? And when he saw them, he shocked. He still one week in the bed. ←

2-Shelly: Wow.

3-Power: Yes.

4-Moni: Oh my gosh, I missed the story?

5-Sally: Yeah, the guy went to the desert to pee and shit. ←

6-Moni:Em-

7-Power: (protesting) No...

8-Moni: I heard that in the desert you will find demons if you just get lost. ←

9-Power: Listen. They said you will find demons. But actually if you are in the desert and if you are thirsty and lost, you will see like – I don't know how to say this word – (inaudible) with things inexistent- ←

10-Shelly: Duke is laughing over there.

11-Power: Because you are tired.

Conversation: Power's Ghost Stories, 00:22-1:25, 2/12/16

With Excerpt 18, Line 1, Power has finished his story, but the impact was then undercut by Shelly's joke about the point of the story in Line 5. Moni's mention of desert demons in Line 8 was likely a cue for Power to continue speaking despite this, but Power was unable to think of the word *mirage* to explain it to Moni; despite Shelly's joking, Power was still seriously trying to communicate, but in Line 9 he did not know the appropriate expression. Perhaps Sally, the native speaker, did not realize that Power was trying to think of a certain word, but she might have been teasing him playfully as well. While the others continued to chat for about 30 seconds, Power used an online translation website and found the word he was looking for in Line 12:

Excerpt 19

12-Power: Okay this is the word: you will see mirage. If you are lost, yeah? If you are thirsty you will see water, but there is no water. ←

13-Sally: Yeah, we know-

14-Moni: A mirage.

16-Sally: Yeah, I know what's a mirage.

Conversation: Power's Ghost Stories, 1:40-2:05, 2/12/16

In this case, Power tried to communicate his story, but his struggle to find the correct word had not been perceived by the other participants. Undaunted, he looked up the word on his own and shared it, making sure that his meaning was understood and checked with the other participants. The ease in which vocabulary can be searched for quickly using online resources and shared is again one of the benefits of teaching and learning in Second Life.

However, broader conclusions can be drawn here on how best to analyze learning events. In this example, dyadic learning is not necessarily the most useful framework for analysis of language learning that takes place within virtual worlds such as Second Life. It neither specifically includes affordances, including other learners and technological tools, nor examines motivation. Power was under social pressure to perform in this situation; he had taken the role of the storyteller in the activity, just as Moni had taken the role of an actively involved audience member and Sally a heckler. Finding the word *mirage* potentially became important to his pride. As will become apparent in subsequent exemplars, learning in informal contexts such as this in Cypris was often observed to be motivated by a social situation in which advantage can be had or embarrassment avoided through use of an unfamiliar word or phrase. It is this social pressure that sets the stage for learning events, Holzman's (2010) ZPD activities, in the following exemplars as well.

Learning Exemplars in Other Interactions: Hairo and *Brussels Sprouts*

Learning that takes place outside of formal activities is dependent on learners' interactions with each other and with the affordances of the Second Life environment. In the following example, we see an example of the playful conversation that goes on outside activities and how Hairo became familiarized with the term *brussels sprout*. The learning event ocurred within the seasonal park area of Cypris. Seven participants were sitting on the ground close to each other: Hairo, Bill, Shelly, Jenny, Friendly, Olaf, and Diane (Figure 9). Several things distinguished this group from those found in lessons. First, with the exception of Hairo, the other participants were not regular attendees of formal Cypris activities. Two participants (Shelly and Bill) were North American native speakers and actively speaking in voice chat, while three others (Olaf, Diane and Jenny) only used text chat. Many of the participants were using playful, non-human avatars; Bill and Friendly were dressed as kittens, Olaf was a zombie and Hairo represented herself as a headless, plucked turkey.

When I arrived, I found Shelly, Bill, and Hairo engaged in a playful mock argument about an incident we had witnessed in one of my classes. Shelly, a member of Meow Meow, a new language practice sim in Second Life, had joined one of my classes, and Hairo had at the time joked that she was a spy. At this point, Bill, in his kitten avatar, was attempting to 'punish' Hairo for her previous impoliteness by attempting to jump on her avatar, while Hairo playfully dodged. Shelly explained that this was just play, and

this the argument was not serious. This playful interaction with Bill led Hairo to look for a way to retaliate against him.

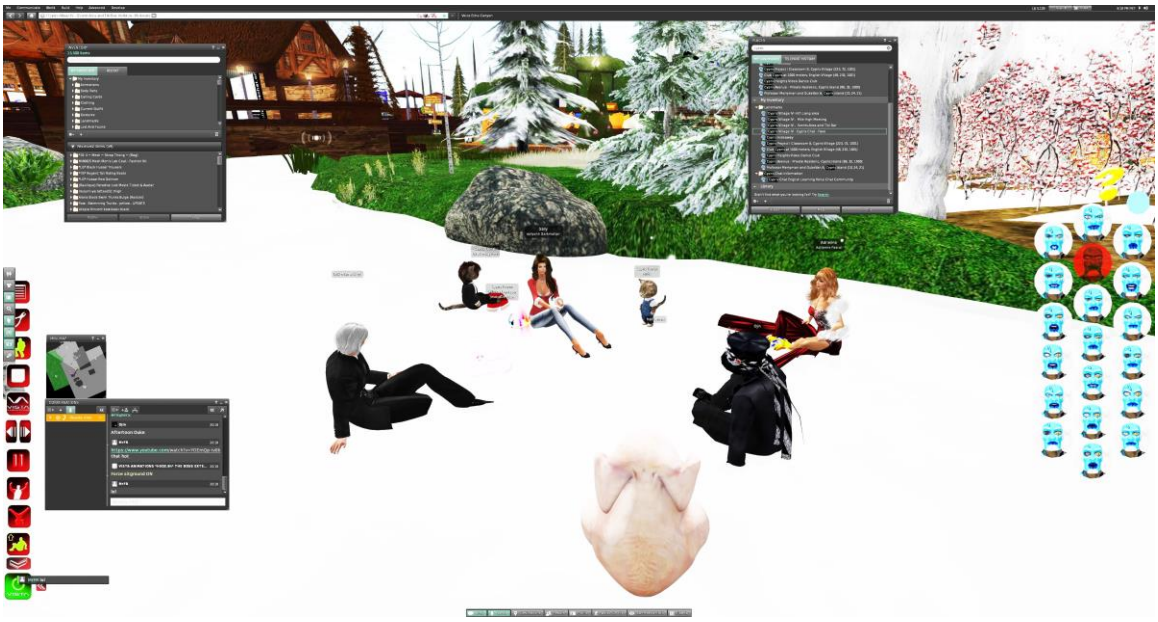

Figure 9. Screenshot: Hairo (as turkey) learning about brussels sprouts (12/18/2015).

Excerpt 20

1-Bill: Goodness. Piece of chicken.

2-Shelly: Yep.

3-Hairo: Are you talking to me? (Hairo repeatedly bumps up against Bill)

4-Bill: Yes -

5-Shelly: Push 'em. Push 'em. Bump him in the stomach. Bump him.

6-Hairo: (threateningly to Bill) Do you want to go outside?

7-Shelly: (laughs)

8-Bill: We are already outside. What are you talking about?

9-Hairo: You want to go inside?

10-Shelly: (laughs)

11-Bill: Yeah, and I'll go to sleep.

12-Hairo: (moves behind a small tree) Just go behind the tree.

13-Shelly: Hairo, jump on him.

14-Bill: No.

15-Shelly: He'll get lost in there (referring to the inside of the turkey avatar) (laughs)

16-Hairo: (laughs)

17-Jenny: (laughs)

18-Sally: I'm sorry, I'm laughing hard. I've got to mute myself.

19-Bill: Juicy (referring to Hairo's avatar as he jumps and lands on it)

Conversation: Hairo and brussels sprouts, 1:56-1:51, 12/18/15

Hairo was wearing Abranimations' XMAS Turkey Avatar (+brussels sprouts). Hairo had a separate throwable brussels sprout object in her inventory, but, as she admitted later, she was reluctant to use it because she did not know exactly what a *brussels sprout* was. It was then that Bill coincidentally mentions *brussels sprouts* in Line 22.

Excerpt 21

20-Hairo: You know I don't want to be stuffed as well.

21-Shelly: Who doesn't like turkey stuffing, c'mon.

22-Bill: Brussels sprouts? ←

23-Hairo: You want some?

24-Bill: No.

25-Hairo: Okay.

26-Bill: Not now, just – not now.

27-Hairo: Okay. Maybe later?

28-Bill: It's possible, yeah.

29-Sally: You know I never ate brussels sprouts all my life until last year. I saw them and I said, "Oh they're so cute," one day and I bought a whole - ←

30-Hairo: What is *brussels sprouts*? I mean I know what is Brussels, but I don't know what is "sprout."

31-Shelly: It's like a baby cabbage. Tiny, tiny, tiny one.

32-Bill: Yeah.

33-Hairo: So, "little cabbage" equals "sprout"?

34-Shelly: Yeah, it's like green and yellowish inside. But it's really tiny. Tiny ones. And they're strong flavor.

35-Hairo: So why don't they just call it a brussels cabbage? (brings a brussels sprout object into one of her turkey‘s stubs and begins throwing them at Bill) ←

36- Bill: (to Hairo) What is wrong with you? I turned in first person and saw the first brussels sprout on the ground. And I turn and you’re right there with a brussels sprout in your...stub.

37- Hairo: (whispers loudly and jokingly) I can’t help it.

Conversation: Hairo and brussels sprouts, 4:40-6:00, 12/18/15

Because Bill mentioned *brussels sprouts* in Line 22, discussion began about them, and Sally mentioned in Line 29 that she had not eaten one until recently. At this point, Hairo felt comfortable enough to directly ask for a definition; the following suppositions with Hairo were verified in informal conversation via Facebook with her the following week. Then in Line 35, once Hairo became confident that she understood what *brussels sprouts* were and what they looked like, pelting Bill with them became intrinsic to her goal, which was to irritate Bill. Hairo might not have felt the need to explore the items included with her turkey avatar earlier, but her interaction with Bill made it essential (from her perspective) to ask Shelly for a definition. The affordances of the Second Life environment, the *brussels sprout* in her inventory and the entertainment value that could be gotten by throwing it with her turkey avatar, combined with her interactions with the two native speakers present provided the impetus for the ZPD event. Subsequent discussion of this event a week later via Facebook, in which she joked about the incident, was a further indication that she had learned the word.

Holzman (2010) calls this sort of interaction "learning playfully," and describes it as something that often occurs naturally among young children:

> (It is) a synthesis of Vygotsky's ZPDs of learning-instruction and of play, not as spatio-temporal zones but as mundane creative activity...for, as in the free or pretend play of early childhood, the players (both students and instructors) are more directly the producers of their environment-activity, in charge of generating and coordinating the perceptual, cognitive, and emotional elements of their learning and playing.

(p. 37)

In Hairo and Bill's playful duel, they utilized not only text and voice chat, but also the affordances provided by their Second Life avatars to create an environment where learning became key to successful play, not the other way around. In this case, Hairo could participate more fully in her play with Bill only if she fully understood what *brussels sprouts* were. It was only when a situation naturally manifested that made the understanding of that target word intrinsically important to the interaction itself that Hairo became motivated to learn it.

Learning Exemplars in Other Interactions:

Jan and Legitimate Peripheral Participation

This final exemplar also spotlights the role that play can have in motivating learning, but this example occurred not within playful conversation but within the scripted rules of an inworld game. It demonstrated the way in which text chat can be utilized not only an intermediary step to full participation in Cypris, but as a form of legitimate peripheral participation in the group. This event occurred at the Parcheesi table near the Cypris Tiki Bar dance area (Figure 10). The participants were Duke (myself), More, Jan, and Lil, as well as Guy and Sandy (two non-members). When I arrived in the Cypris Welcome Area, Lil noticed me on the browser mini-map. Lil, More, and Guy were sitting at the table. Jan sat on the couch. Lil invited me to join their game in Line 1.

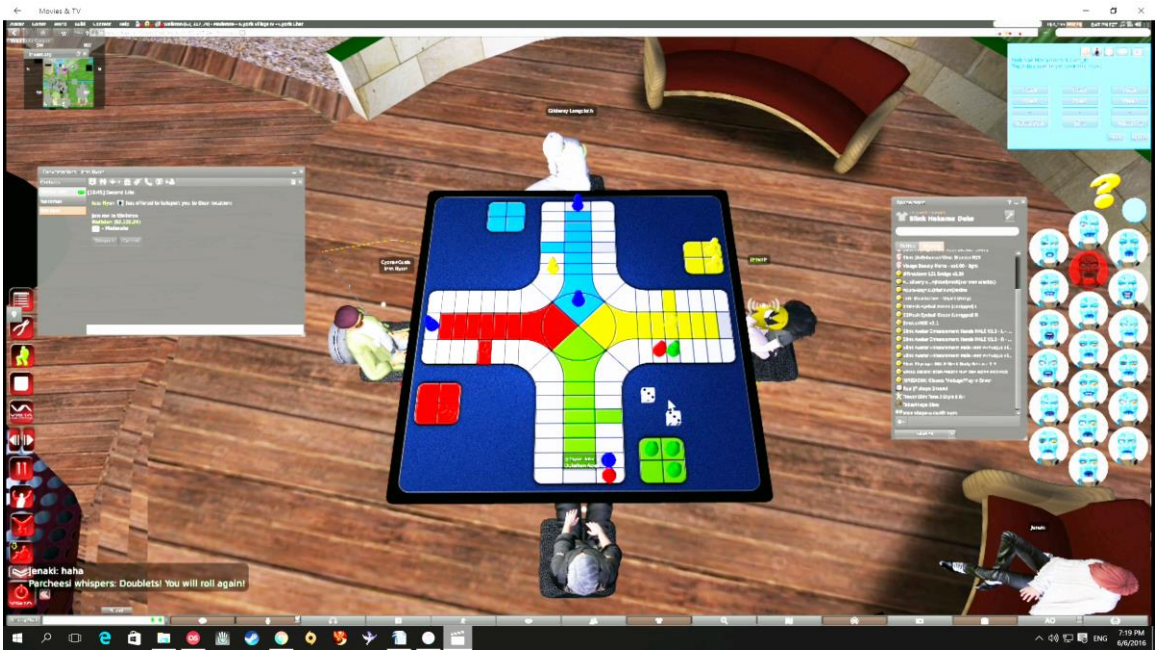

Figure 10. Screenshot: Duke and Jan learning at the Cypris Parcheesi table (3/5/2016).

Excerpt 22

1- Lil: Uh, do you want to play 'cheesi?

2-Duke: I...have never played it.

3-Lilt: Really, I don't believe this-

4-More: (inaudible) Try. Try. Try.

5-Duke: Why? I don't wanna.

6-Lil: (laughs) I'm gonna eat you, but you can try.

7-More: Of course.

8-<In text: Jan: try try!!> ←

9-Guy: I guess I should stay there.

10-Duke: I guess I can join you.

11-<In text: Jan: I want to see you lose :P> ←

12-Lil: Yes.

13-Duke: Okay, hold on, Jan wants to see me lose.

Conversation: Jan's Parcheesi, 1(1), 00:33-1:19, 3/5/16

What is notable about this exchange is Jan's contributions in Lines 8 and 11. Generally, Jan is a polite, soft-spoken member in voice chat. Yet her text chat here was uncharacteristically brash and playful. Jan later admitted in informal conversation that speaking all the time was difficult, and she generally needed more time to think. Playing a game allowed her to utilize text chat when she felt more comfortable with it than Voice.

Lil proceeded to help me get started playing. After a few rounds, More asked Jan if she could play in his stead; most likely there was some offline interference. Jan sat down in More's seat, and the game continued. Almost immediately, Lil informed me that I had an opportunity to remove one of Jan's pieces.

Excerpt 2

14-Guy: You can kill someone-

15-Lil: Oh, you can kill More, now.

16-Duke: With the green one?

17-Lil: Or Jan.

18-Lil: Yeah but the other one-

19-Guy: The other green.

20-<In text: Jan: omg> ←

21-Lil: You see if you count six, it lands on top of her?

22-Duke: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6-

23-Lil: And you can 20 and you can fly.

24-<In text: Jan: I like you Duke!!> ←

25-Duke: Alright...ah, there you go.

26-Lil: Now you get 20 points. In your-

27-Duke: Yeah.

28-<In text: Jan: !!!> ←

29-Duke: I like you too, Jan. Nothing personal.

30-Guy: (chuckles)

31-Lil: (giggles)

32-Duke: Lil told me to do it.

33-Lil: (laughs) Hey...it's not my fault. I'm just teaching.

Conversation: Jan's Parcheesi, 1(1), 5:17-5:54, 3/5/16

Jan, in Lines 20, 24 and 28, continued to be the only one exclusively to use text, although she was using it effectively, including Internet slang in Line 20 and humor in Line 24. However, on her next turn she began experiencing trouble with the game; no matter how often she clicked on a game piece, nothing seemed to happen.

Excerpt 24

34-<In text: Parcheesi whispers: Doublets! You will roll again!>

35-Lil: See? She got doubles now, so she will roll again.

36-Jan: I, uh, cannot circle- ←

37- Lil: Change the camera view, Jan. It's laggy.

38-Jan: Uh, no, I can't see, em yeah, I cannot change. The dice. Hmm.

39-Duke: Have you tried, um, yelling at the screen?

40-Jan: (laughs)

41-Lil: (laughs)

42-Duke: (lets out a humorous moan)

43-Jan: (laughs) Help me! I need to keep the temper I guess.

44-Duke: Alright, so what should we do then?

45-Jan: I cannot touch even the dice.

46-Guy: You know what worked for me, is I got the camera really close.

47-Jan: Ah! Oh, it worked. (counts to herself) 3...4...Okay.

Conversation: Jan's Parcheesi, 1(1), 7:52-9:24, 3/5/16

Before Line 36, it was unclear why Jan had been silent; many members sometimes opt not to use voice chat should they lack privacy or quiet. However, the situation within the game put pressure on her to respond quickly. Lil's advice to change the camera view in Line 37 was either not heard or not specific enough. However Guy's explanation used simpler language and was more specific in Line 46, and Jan demonstrated her understanding when the game advanced.

This situation illustrates two points. First, as in the case of Hairo and the *brussels sprouts*, the immediate need of the social context was the driving force behind the learning event. Jan's move to voice was likely done as much for speed as it was a gesture of understanding that she understood the gravity of the situation, and any reticence on her part would have led to delays in the game. It was only by explaining herself quickly in

voice and demonstrating her desire to keep the game moving that she managed to both avoid embarrassment and learn the technique necessary to overcome this minor glitch.

Second, Jan was taking advantage of a form of *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998, pp. 100-101). Wenger et al. (2009) considered this "a crucial process by which communities offer learning opportunities to those on the periphery" (p. 9). These silent members are primarily refered to as *lurkers,* community members who observe a forum or website but rarely post. However, in Cypris, a community focused on oral language practice, peripheral participation is text chat. Although voice chat is the preferred mode of communication, there is tacit acceptance of text chat among members outside of official activities. This allowance for interaction in text despite the emphasis on speaking within Cypris activities is a design characteristic that provides a bridge for those just starting to use voice and an accomodation to those who have always felt more comfortable expresing themselves in text.

This final exemplar differed from previous examples with Power and Hairo in three ways. First, it is the only example of learning that took place within an inworld game at Cypris. Games within Second Life do not necessarily require lengthy oral discussion to play; in fact this particular Parcheesi table—and most Second Life board games—could be played in complete silence. However, this is not the way Cypris members, who are participating in the community for language practice, choose to play. Second, there was no sense that exclusive use of text chat was in impropriety in this case. In Power and Hairo's examples, and in most of the formal class observations, with the exception of Phrasal Verbs A-Z, voice was the preferred mode of communication, and

text chat was used only as supplemental asides. Here, Jan communicated almost entirely in text, an example of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1999) until the moment where it became necessary to communicate quickly. Finally, Jan's learning was not related to the learning of a particular structure, but to a task to be completed. Adopting Long's (1985) definition of task, as any of the "hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play and in between," (p. 89), Jan's understanding of her problem with the Parcheesi board was essential to the continuation of the game. Her task was to keep the game moving. It was an implicit understanding of the urgency of this task that led to Jan's desperate foray into voice chat, and a consequent rephrasing of advice from Guy that led to a solution.

Summary of Teaching and Learning Observations

This chapter provided an extensive description of the teaching strategies employed by tutors and learning events among members in both formal and informal activities at Cypris. Teaching strategies employed by tutors reflected the structure and aims of the lessons. Kaede's content-based science lessons utilized challenging authentic materials, which made slow speech, repetition in voice and text, and the sharing of hyperlinks essential. She also made ample time at the end of class for freeform discussion of science topics. Grama, in her reading classes, utilized oral recitation and sentence creation because of her focus on pronunciation and vocabulary. Mystie, with her grammar-focused lesson, used transformation drills and offered extensive help during class answering related questions. I, in my phrasal verbs activity, focused specifically on

one particular lexical/grammatical feature, provided examples and elicited learner-created sentences as a way of exploring proper usage. It should be noted that only the use of text chat and hyperlinks represented pedagogical techniques unique to Second Life.

Learning exemplars were identified in both lessons and in informal interactions; there were distinct differences between exemplars in these two contexts. In formal contexts, these learning exemplars were all related to topics and structures being studied within the lessons. Mystie assisted Phoenix with the term *Goldilocks Zone* in Kaede's lesson. In the reading class, Grama helped explain the grammar behind "up the dragon went into the air." In Mystie's beginner's class, Honey learned the distinction between "confused" and "confusing." In my phrasal verbs activity, Mystie learned the correct spelling and usage of "pore over." Learner focus and motivation centered on learning points material presented within the class.

However, learning events identified in informal activities centered around the fulfillment of playful social roles. Power needed to learn how to say *mirage* in English to fulfill his role as storyteller. Hairo, in her role as a Thanksgiving turkey, needed to learn the meaning of *brussels sprouts* in order to continue her playful conversation with Bill. Finally, Jan needed to understand quickly how she could avoid delaying a game of Parcheesi. Informal learning occurred through social situations and play.

This sort of "learning playfully...a synthesis of Vygotsky's ZPD of learning-instruction and of play" (Holzman, 2010, p. 37) is not uncommon in virtual worlds. I experienced it myself in my own learning of the words *lag* and *sim* (Swain, Kinnear, & Steinman, 2011, pp. 142-145), in which pressure not to disrupt a Second Life fashion

show motivated me to ask for assistance in learning these key words. Similarly, Pearce (2009) mentioned witnessing "productive play" (p. 141), in which users were not motivated to learn language, but to learn building and programming skills in order to more fully participate in their play environment. In the informal interactions recorded at Cypris, just as is the case in other MUVEs and sandbox games in general, one goal is to play through socializing. Learning that enhances play is therefore important.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, Research Questions 1 and 2 are addressed. In answering Research Question 1, both Cypris' status as a digital habitat as defined by Wenger et al. (2009) and as a space for integration of Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework for virtual worlds are reviewed. Then, further conclusions derived from participant histories and participation preferences at Cypris are suggested. Research Question 2 is then addressed by looking at exemplars of teaching and learning through the prism of Holzman's (2010) take on sociocultural learning theory. Sections on the theoretical and practical implications of the study follow, as well as a summary of the contributions made by this study.

Research Question 1: The Appeal of Cypris Among its Participants

Research Question 1 asks: What factors lie behind the robust longevity and appeal of Cypris Chat as a language learning community? Cypris' appeal as a group is evaluated by exploring five characteristics of its organizational structure: meetings, relationships, participation, community cultivation, and the ability to serve a context. Then, it is evaluated in relation to its use of six categories of virtual world-specific learning and through interviews exploring participant histories and participation preferences.

Cypris: A Healthy Digital Habitat

After analyzing the interviews referenced in Chapter 4, it appears Cypris displays most characteristics of Wenger et al.'s (2009) definition of a healthy online community. However, the one characteristic in which Cypris has not met the requirements of a healthy digital habitat was the lack of meetings. Interviews showed that most staff regretted discontinuing them, and non-staff members as well expressed a desire to reinstate regular inworld meetings. However, as some interviewees had mentioned, scheduling meetings that would accommodate members from different time zones has always been a problem. As Cypris membership expanded beyond Eastern Asia, this became more and more problematic. To illustrate the point, the discussion groups that I advertised as general meetings in this study were poorly attended, despite the effort to schedule meeting times to accommodate members from different countries. This situation illustrates one of the most significant challenges of maintaining an international online community where synchronous communication is the norm. That said, those present at the meetings observed agreed to restart monthly meetings, and this time include not only staff, but all members.

In retrospect, one point here is noteworthy: an asynchronous method of communication was eventually chosen to replace meetings, but this forum lacked certain positive characteristics of meetings within Second Life. Although Cypris meetings were not technically face-to-face, many of the characteristics of in-person interaction were maintained. McEuen & Duffy (2010) outlined three situations in which synchronous

meetings are preferable: when a participant wants to capture attention, inspire a positive emotional climate, and build stronger relationships (p. 1). They found meetings especially valuable when trying to initiate new projects, and inspire and energize members (p. 3). Facebook has been invaluable as a way to remind members of events, to share photos, and warn of griefer attacks in much the same way Sobkowiak (2015) describes in his analysis of the Virtlantis learning group. However, since regular meetings have stopped, there have been no large-scale efforts to promote the group beyond word-of-mouth, and there have been fewer attempts to collaborate or experiment with new classes or activities among most teachers. The Cypris community is not as dynamic as it once was because of the lack of inworld meetings.

A second characteristic of healthy communities outlined by Wenger et al. (2009) is the strength of personal relationships in the group. Cypris provides opportunities for members to form close friendships, relationships that often spill over into other platforms such as Facebook and Skype as well as entirely offline interaction. This is in contrast to primarily anonymous groups within Second Life that restrict themselves to discussion of inworld events and personae. Developing close friendships is crucial to Cypris' survival, as socializing is one of the major goals of interaction in the group, especially outside of formal lessons.

Close relationships in Cypris are those in which members share information about their real lives. Krotoski (2009) came to similar conclusions in his psychological study of a Second Life community; the strength of a social network on the platform could be estimated in terms of how much offline information members shared with each other.

Krotoski examined trust and closeness through measures not applicable to Cypris members; for example, he measured trust by likelihood that one would allow another resident to freely modify one's avatar, or the likelihood one would become a Second Life *partner*, an online spouse, to another member (p. 19). These sort of relationships were relatively rare at Cypris, although two members have formed short-lived partnerships in the past. However, Krotoski's conclusions do suggest that strong communities are made in Second Life through the sharing of offline information, not by maintaining anonymity.

The third of Wenger et al.'s signs of life under investigation was the inclusion of participant preferences. Cypris allows members to participate in ways that suit their preferences, and this strengthens the community. In Chapter 4, is is seen that some members, such as Cata, regularly attend classes and primarily value Cypris as a free, convenient way to take online lessons. Others, like Hairo, simply use the space for socializing. For them, formal learning in classes does not engage their interest, and lessons are useful only in the sense that they attract members to the group and increase their possible circle of acquaintances. Most members participate actively in voice chat. This is a relatively unique feature within Second Life, as many other communities exclusively use text chat. Other members participate in classes or conversations primarily in text or as a lurker, and there are special seats reserved in all teaching areas within Cypris for these silent observers. It is unlikely the group would have grown as large it did if it had not been open to different participation styles. According to Wenger et al. (2009), "learning together is a complex achievement that weaves communal and individual engagement…yet while togetherness is a property of communities, it is

experienced by individual members in their own ways" (p. 58). This diversity in participation seems to have strengthened the group, and it is likely one of the reasons behind its longevity.

It is important to note that while options for peripheral participation strengthen community bonds on one hand, they might not necessarily foster positive learning outcomes for all members. In fact, it is unlikely that peripheral participation leads to outcomes equivalent to more active participation in online classes (Davies & Graff, 2005), although such participation has proven useful when conceptualized as a starting point or training (Mugar et al., 2014). Nevertheless, Cypris offers non-streamed activities open to all, and it is only through peripheral participation, through observation and in text chat, that less proficient members are able to participate. In any case, streaming has not necessarily proven useful in many contexts (Smyth & McCoy, 2011), and although peripheral participation might not provide equivalent benefits to all members in the short term, it does allow learners to stay active, show their interest, and interact with other more proficient learners at some level.

The fourth characteristic of healthy digital habitats examined in Chapter 4 was community cultivation, the extent to which staff members actively maintain focused engagement on the group and its goals. Cypris staff members are highly engaged. The community has so far been cultivated by dedicated volunteers that have both had experience with web design and a willingness to maintain an intimate understanding of the group by participating simultaneously as management, instructors, and learners/observers. Tutors observe each others' classes regularly. Guides socialize with

tourists between classes and instigate informal activities. Heckman et al. (2015) suggested that this sort of intense engagement with a community allows staff to discover emergent moments for *opportunistic instruction*, unscripted and unplanned teaching opportunities (p. 122). By engaging with learners between activities and regularly visiting other instructors' lessons, staff at Cypris foster opportunities for learning and maintain group cohesion. This intense engagement help align staff and member goals and keep enthusiasm levels within the group high.

The most crucial aspect of community cultivation within Cypris is related to the fluid, changeable roles of tourists, guides and tutors. These can be examined through what Akkerman and Bakker (2011) term *boundary theory*. In their look at unusually fluid internship situations, in which the line between teachers and students, trainers and trainees, are allowed to blur, they posited that the crossing of sociocultural barriers requires members to reformulate their assumptions about social roles, creating unique opportunities for learning. This is also very much in line with the conclusions of Thackray, Good, and Howland (2010). Blurring distinctions between different roles in the group increased camaraderie and gave tourists the confidence to try out new a new roles as staff. Since 2009, all staff members have been recruited from the ranks of regular members.

The fifth and final sign of life as described by Wenger et al. (2009) is a group's successful serving of its membership. As demonstrated by the overwhelmingly positive comments found in interviews in Chapter 4, Cypris appears to serve its context. Although those members who preferred traditional classes to socializing clamored for more formal

activities, and those who preferred socializing wished that there were more members around to chat with between classes, a majority of participants felt that the needs of the group were being met with a balance of formal and informal interaction opportunities. The balance of language learning and practice is a key factor in Cypris' appeal.

To summarize, from an organizational perspective, Cypris exhibits many of the characteristics of a healthy digital habitat as proposed by Wenger et al. (2009). It has not recently had regular meetings, despite an underlying demand for them, and this is seen by most members as an unfortunate development. However, it provides opportunities for meaningful relationships. It allows members to use whichever mode of communication they prefer. It is run by volunteer staff who cultivate the community through their regular engagement in class observations and activities. Finally, it meets the needs of its community by providing a balance of formal and informal language practice. Cypris fits Wenger et al.'s (2009) definition of a robust online community.

Cypris and Lim's Framework for Learning in Virtual Worlds

Another way to determine how robust a Second Life learning community is by looking at how effectively it utilizes the unique virtual world environment. Through analysis of participant observation notes, interviews, and informal interactions with Cypris staff and members, it appears the group has taken advantage of five out of six components of Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework, which might indicate they have effectively utilized environmental affordances within formal activities and informal interactions alike. These components are not just interpreted as a list of best practices, but

can also be seen as one way in which the group maintains an interested and active participant base.

As seen in Chapter 4, there are 5 types of learning that Cypris staff and members participate in. First, learning by exploring takes place in activities that involve movement about the virtual geography of the sim and lessons focusing on questing and giving directions outside of Cypris. These activities provide language learning opportunities and simulations related to spatial navigation and description that go above and beyond traditional map-reading activities. They also expose learners to the artistic designs and creations of builders outside the Cypris community. In another sense, Cypris activities have encouraged members to explore their understanding of the Second Life browser, including shopping mechanisms, teleportation and even Second Life scripting.

The usage of virtual worlds to practice learning tasks related to exploration and giving directions, as seen in my field trip activities and in DuQuette and Hann (2010), can be related to theories of spatial learning alluded to in Chapter 2. A conceptual blurring of *perceptual space* and *cognitive space* can occur in virtual environments. Couclelis and Gale (1986) defined perceptual space as "that which can be seen or sensed at one place and at one time," and they define cognitive space as "the large-scale space beyond the sensory horizon about which information must be mentally organized, stored, and recalled" (p. 2). Saunders et al. (2011) theorized that virtual worlds offer a sense of place through interaction with objects, simulated motion in three-dimensional space, and adaptation to new physical constraints. This sense of physical presence as immersion, the extent to which participants feel part of a virtual world (Biocca & Levy, 1995), provides

a visceral understanding of spatial concepts that two-dimensional simulations do not offer; through a greater sense of perceptual space, it is possible that cognitive space can be more efficiently developed. This supports Lim's (2009) contention that learning in Second Life should take advantage of the platform's spatial affordances.

Learning by collaborating takes place at Cypris when special projects are involved that require individuals with different skill sets to work together. For example, in Chapter 4 this is shown to occur during seasonal decoration, when volunteers must work together to both plan and create new environments within the sim. However, it must be noted that some opportunities to collaborate were not taken, specifically collaborations that might improve existing activities or develop new ones. This sort of collaboration proved difficult, as tutors often choose to teach disparate content in disparate ways and because of issues with different member time zones.

Synchronous collaboration in online environments has proven challenging. Robert and Gingras (2007) explored the different challenges inherent in both asynchronous and synchronous collaboration on educational materials design. They concluded only that, especially in synchronous collaboration, the utilization of "convergent technologies or a combination of collaborative tools" (p. 227) is essential when working together online. Tang et al. (2011) concur, but when it comes to difficulties created by time zone differences, they do not offer simple solutions. It is unlikely there are any.

Learning by being, Lim's (2009) third category of virtual worlds education, is related to online identity. It has been accomplished at Cypris in three ways. First, it has been done through activities questioning gender identity and roles, like my own "gender

bender" lesson, and through individuals' own representation of self, including QP and Hairo's use of differently gendered or androgynous avatars. Cypris members are free to represent themselves through avatars of any gender or species, and they are not discriminated against on the basis of their avatar appearance. Secondly, members are free to explore an international identity. Restrictions on discussion of religion or politics technically restricts free speech, but said restrictions work to normalize interactions between members of different cultures. Finally, members can break out of their potentially passive roles as learners by volunteering to act as guide or tutor. All non-native speaker tutors and guides were once tourists or villagers, regular members, at one point. Yet demand and encouragement from fellow members encouraged these members to adopt new identities as community and language experts. In this study, this learning feature is also related to Wenger et al.'s (2009) conception of community cultivation.

Exploration of gender identity through use of an avatar (Hillis, 2009) and the breaking down of boundaries between teachers and learners (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) are important aspects of learning by being; however, the perception that members at Cypris are fostering an international identity as a language learner is also noteworthy. A language learning group can be seen a site of identity construction (Block, 2003). The language learner creates a metaphor for their relationship with a foreign language, as an adventurer, ambassador, or marathon runner, for example, and uses that metaphor as focus for their development in learning (Huang, 2011). I posit that similarly a learners' avatar and identity within a Second Life community such as Cypris act as metaphor for their aspirations. In the case of Cypris, those aspirations become uniquely tied to their

avatar and to their identity as representative of an international educational group. A Cypris guide, for example, becomes a representative of the group regardless of their country of origin, and through their interactions with learners, including their choice of avatar, they explore an identity at least somewhat distinct from their offline one.

By Lim's (2009) definition, learning by building primarily takes place among members gifted in 3D modeling and programming. Although some classes at Cypris have centered around basic building or programming for beginners, participation by building is routinely done only by those members already talented in these field. A few members, such as Mystie and Hairo, have created virtual objects, environments, and clothing to promote the group. However, a majority of Cypris members do not participate in building activities.

Practicing a language through design work is one way that those with certain skill sets can take advantage of what they already know to practice a language. Whether it be collaborative web design projects (Barson & Debski, 1996) or designing virtual goods or environments, groups can leverage their members' talents to help them practice English in new ways if they remain flexible and open to the possibility. There appear to be more learning opportunities for individualized design projects within virtual world groups than in brick and mortar classroom environments.

The next of Lim's (2009) Six Learnings, learning by championing social causes, was in a sense incompatible with Cypris' philosophy of political neutrality. Cypris activities have never focused on affecting political change in the real world. This does not mean that all potentially politically charged topics are not discussed; Kaede's science

classes in Chapter 5, for example, introduced topics that some might find controversial. However, tutors do not use their position within the group to lead detailed plans of action for online or offline political activism. The goal of inclusion for those of varied backgrounds and political ideologies within the group discourages using activities to promote political action.

A case can be made for critical pedagogy (Freire, 1996) in the virtual classroom, education that links social justice and teacher activism to class discussion. Certainly English language educators should be particularly aware of concerns about aspects of their own positionality as instructors and their ability to influence their students. Virtlantis (Subkowiak, 2015), a similar language learning community does not shy away from controversy as Cypris does. Yet the consensus among participants was overwhelmingly supportive of Cypris' apolitical stance.

Finally, the last of Lim's Six Learnings, learning by expressing, was represented in Cypris. This was essentially accomplished through promotion of Cypris and its unique virtual environment to non-members and was accomplished in several ways. First, senior staff shared what they had learned about teaching in Second Life through journal articles (e.g., DuQuette, 2011), local presentations, and the Japan-based Cypris Society. Second, the Facebook group and affiliate website acted not only as a way for members to keep in touch outside of Second Life, but also as promotional tools. Finally, members have used my research and this study itself as a way to recommend the Cypris Chat community to an academic readership.

The concept of learning by expressing is similar to championing in that it values social benefits as well as individual ones. Teachers and learners are in a sense obligated to share unique perspectives and environments that might contribute to learning. Hung and Chen (2008) describe it in the this way:

> [T]echnologies—at the cognitive, emotive, and social levels—can be used to allow learners to articulate their understanding by externalizing. When meanings are made overt through multi-modal forms of expressions, these constructions can be brought into the open for individual and social reflection and knowledge is built upon by others (p. 92).

In other words, learners are not just encouraged but obligated to share what they know about their virtual learning environment through machinima, blogs, social media, and word of mouth. This harks back to the Cypris mission statement which requires members to share ideas and items to promote communication. It is only through the presentation of the learning possibilities inherent in virtual worlds to those outside the community that members can fulfill their social obligation to the greater community of teachers and learners.

In summary, five out of six of Lim's (2009) Six Learnings have been identified within Cypris: learning by exploring, learning by collaborating, learning by being, learning by building, and learning by expressing. Only learning by championing was not possible, because of Cypris' intrinsically inclusive, apolitical nature. I contend this is yet another reason Cypris has thrived. It has taken advantage of environmental affordances,

site-specific teaching, and learning strategies to make a community difficult to replicate in offline circumstances.

Commonalities in Participant Histories

Research Question 1 asked, "What lies behind the robust longevity and appeal of Cypris?" Through exploration of 21 participant backgrounds explored during interviews conducted from a constructivist perspective (Hatch, 2002, p. 15), the commonality most encountered was participants' history with technology, more specifically, their experiences as computer and Internet early adopters. This predisposition for experimentation with new technology explains why these individuals were not discouraged by the learning curve required to master use of the Second Life browser. Early adopters also often share a characteristic willingness to communicate with others far outside their offline social circles, another characteristic of Cypris members.

This situation suggests that familiarity with, and an affinity for, computers and computer mediated communication predisposes one towards learning in these environments. As global computer literacy and Internet usage increases, so too might the number of individuals who have an affinity for learning in online virtual worlds. In previous language learning research in Second Life there has been an emphasis on surveys attempting to measure the appeal of virtual world learning with participants who might not have been computer savvy nor predisposed towards communicating with strangers on the Internet (e.g., Peterson, 2012). If supplementary usage, in say, a university context is one's primary interest, than understanding how typical students are

likely to react in virtual world environments is of great utility. However, if one is interested in how long-term educational communities can function within virtual worlds, research might sometimes be best accomplished by studying those already comfortable with this environment.

There were few other commonalities related to personal histories of computer use worth mentioning. Several members described their experiences with video games, but most of these were in reference to offline console games. Only two mentioned playing online multiplayer games, Counter-Strike (Valve, 2000) and World of Warcraft (Blizzard, 2004), that in any way resemble Second Life in terms of controls or potential to socialize. Additionally, only two admitted to have expressed interest in role-playing within Second Life. An interest in gaming or role-playing among Cypris members does not necessarily correlate with the appeal of the group.

Commonalities in Participation Preferences

Moving from personal histories to specific reasons for which members gave for participating in the community, the ability to socialize between activities was seen as paramount by nearly every interviewee in Chapter 4. Cypris members on the whole live in areas where English speakers are not readily available to practice with; this provides unique benefits for membership. Above and beyond language practice, socializing at Cypris—in both voice and text chat—was also seen by many as an opportunity to overcome shyness and reluctance to speak with strangers in English. It was also deemed a valuable way to make online friends abroad, of special importance to those not studying

English for extrinsic reasons. This is not to say that activities were not appreciated; in fact, "more activities" was the most common request for improvements at Cypris. The pairing of both is important to the group's appeal.

Before moving on, a factor that was rarely mentioned in participant interviews was a preference for online interactions featuring telepresence (Hillis, 2009). It is tempting to explain this away by positing that appreciation of telepresence is a given, and this aspect of interaction is such an intrinsic part of the Second Life experience for long-time residents that they do not realize its importance to their enjoyment of the environment; "fish don't know they're in water" (Wallace, 2008). However, key participants' histories as Internet early adopters demonstrate that their desire to socialize with individuals not in their offline circle of acquaintances, whether it be in text or even teletype in Pink's case, was of more importance than a sense of being physically present among other members.

In short, Cypris adheres to many of the community design principles for digital habitats proposed by Wenger et al. (2009). Cypris members utilize five out of six of Lim's (2009) best practices in virtual education. Finally, members often share a love of computer mediated communication as a way to meet people outside of their offline social circles, and appreciate the community's balance of both formal activities and the informal language practice they can receive chatting, playing games and interacting between scheduled classes. All of these factors contributed to the the health of Cypris as an online community.

Research Question 2: Teaching and Learning within Cypris Activities

Research Question 2 asks: What sort of language teaching and learning, if any, takes places at Cypris? This section utilizes discourse analysis of recorded interactions at Cypris. First, it describes teaching strategies of Cypris tutors in four different classes. Then it discusses possible learning exemplars in each of the four contexts. Finally, it examines three informal social interactions and learning exemplars within those conversations. Possible learning events in both formal and informal situations were then identified using Holzman's (2010) conception of sociocultural theory as a guide.

Teaching Techniques and Strategies

Tutors and activity leaders utilized four types of teaching methods and strategies to accommodate different levels of English proficiency, and to utilize affordances of the Second Life platform. These were strategies that took advantage of the Second Life browser, those that took advantage of the proximity of other Internet resources, those targeting specific social aspects of Second Life, and those specifically aimed at accommodating small group classes of members with uncertain (and unstreamed) English proficiency.

In Chapter 5, four strategies were observed that utilized different affordances available in Second Life. Strategies that took advantage of the Second Life browser included mirroring of voice chat with text chat as scaffolding, as in Excerpts 1 and 2 from Kaede's Fantastic Science lessons, and the use of 2D and 3D visual aids, also fundamental to all of Kaede's lessons. This provided assistance for material that

otherwise might be too difficult for most learners in attendance. Other strategies took advantage of other Internet resources, included the sharing of hyperlinks to help define vocabulary, in Excerpt 5 in Grama's Reading Class, as well as cutting and pasting from websites to include as impromptu supplementary materials, as seen in Excerpt 3 in Kaede's Fantastic Science lessons. Strategies that involved social aspects of Second Life involved the sharing of dance animations, and dancing itself, as a reward for participation, as in Marga's Reading Class; dancing and sharing of objects and animations are both very much part of Second Life culture (Boellstorff, 2008). Strategies that were aimed at small groups of uncertain English proficiency included individual recitation of long passages as in Marga's Reading Class, and frequent repetition present in every formal activity. Additionally, Kaede's content-based science classes featured authentic materials from the Internet designed for native speakers despite her students' wildly variable English proficiency, thus necessitating frequent mirroring of voice chat in text chat. This along with repetition and visual aids provided scaffolding for material that otherwise might have been too difficult for most of the learners.

Learning Exemplars

Exemplars of how learning within Cypris, as seen in Chapter 5, can be separated into two categories: those not unique to Second Life or Cypris and those that are. First, those not unique to Second Life are identified. In Kaede's class, it is likely that Phoenix learned the term *Goldilocks Zone* from the previous lesson, although she is given a hint by Mystie (who showed that she too remembers the term). In Grama's Reading Class,

Jan, after a lengthy conversation with Grama, appears to have learned the proper usage of *up something goes,* and demonstrated her understanding by using the structure in her own example 40 minutes later in the class. Similarly, Honey suggested she has understood the difference between the participial adjectives *confused* and *confusing* by leading the discussion, admittedly off-topic, into discussion of *excited* and *exciting.* Finally Mystie, demonstrated that she had gained a better understanding of the usage of the phrasal verb *pore over* by using it correctly twice, once at the beginning of class, and once at the end.

There are few noteworthy commonalities within these examples of teaching and learning that reflect situations unique to Second Life. Phoenix and Honey displayed their understanding of material covered in previous classes. Jan and Mystie, on the other hand encountered unfamiliar words for the first time. All exemplars involved were related to the study of or differentiation of lexical items, although their learning contexts were different: within a content based class, grammar activity, a reading class, and a vocabulary learning activity. Rather than demonstrate techniques specific to virtual worlds pedagogy, the tutors in these examples utilized teaching strategies that would be applicable in small group activities in offline classroom settings. In fact, this is the main distinction to be made between instruction in these Cypris classes and the typical language classroom: class size. With classes typically ranging from 4-10 members, tutors were able to provide individual attention to members. I argue that this factor was most responsible for fostering the learning opportunities within the classes observed. Smaller classes, in general, tend to lead to more satisfactory learning outcomes (Mathis, 2016),

and this seems especially the case in the language classroom in which in-class practice plays a major part (Yi, 2008).

On the other hand, there were exemplars in which online affordances contributed greatly, and these were witnessed within informal, unscheduled interactions. Power was able to use an online dictionary quickly to produce *mirage*, a concept important to the ghost story he was then leading. Hairo's comprehension of *brussels sprouts* was brought about through the desire to learn how to use the throwable item that came with her avatar, a social situation unique to the Second Life environment. Jan was able to communicate comfortably in text chat while playing Parcheesi, until lag within the object forced her to search for solutions quickly in voice in order to successfully continue the game. These scenarios can be viewed as *cultural scaffolding* (Salomon & Perkins, 1998), in which learners are greatly assisted in their learning by cultural artifacts and tools, in this case the online affordances present in the learning environment. However, this explains the mechanism, but ignores the motivation.

Play seemed to be the primary force behind all three informal learning exemplars in Chapter 5. Power needed to learn *oasis* to fulfill his role as storyteller. Hairo needed to know what a *brussels sprout* was so she could wreak playful revenge on her friend. Jan broke into voice chat in order to prevent delays in a game of Parcheesi. This does not resemble Pearce's (2009) examples of social play, such as can be found in science-fiction fan communities. Neither is this rule-based play as in Gee (2005), nor role-play in the immersionist sense of developing a separate character. It is more in line with Holzman's (2010) definition of play that she found in informal extracurricular activities among

students, in which the "learning-leading-development (was) methodologically analogous to early childhood ZPDs in a manner appropriate to school-aged children and adolescents" (p. 37). On a macro level, this 'fooling around' can be seen as reflective of the irreverent Second Life culture, but at the level of group dynamics, this sort of creative play builds culture among its members (p. 37). Participants in these exemplars learned so that they could play, and that play potentially strengthened bonds between Cypris members, encouraging further involvement in the group.

Instructors at Cypris Chat used a wide variety of language teaching techniques, some general ones adapted from offline classrooms, and some that took advantage of the unique affordances of the Second Life environment and other online resources. Seen through the neo-Vygotskian perspective offered by Holzman (2010), ZPD events resulting in learning were witnessed not only in formal classwork, but in informal interactions instigated by creative play. Additionally, in informal contexts, learning seems to have taken place as a result of a desire to negotiate meaning between two or more individuals attempting to communicate or play without primary regard for language learning as an outcome.

Theoretical Implications of the Study

In the following section, the three primary theoretical frameworks utilized in this study are reviewed: Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats paradigm, Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework, and Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural theory. The

use of each framework is assessed in relation to its appropriateness in this study and its applicability elsewhere.

Digital Habitats: A Practical Rubric

Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats framework appears to have provided a useful rubric for pinpointing some of the organizational factors responsible for Cypris' continued existence. By using its signs of life as a checklist, I was able to pinpoint organizational strengths of the group, such as its emphasis on strong personal relationships and allowance for different levels of participation, as well as its main weakness, the lack of motivation to maintain regular meetings that have energized the staff in the past.

Although the digital habitats rubric springs conceptually from Wenger's (1998) communities of practice, it actually shares more in common with Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder's (2002) business-oriented interpretation of the CoP. In this more prescriptive model, a community of practice is not simply a group of like-minded individuals with similar goals, but a model of a successful organization. This prescriptive interpretation is also found in Wenger et al. (2009), which is in a sense both a blessing and a curse. If, as in this study, the researcher is attempting to distinguish what characteristics of a group contribute to its healthy existence, then the digital habitats framework provides a practical rubric that can be used across a wide spectrum of online groups. However, for more exploratory research of online communities, it might lack flexibility.

Lim's Six Learning Framework: Affordances and Obligations

Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework provided a very specific set of primarily affordance-based types of learning specific to virtual worlds environments. It emphasized aspects of the Second Life environment that should not be ignored by educators: spatial exploration, identity play, collaboration and creation of virtual objects. These aspects of learning are present at Cypris, some more frequently than others, and this framework is a powerful reminder of the possibilities for learning inherent in virtual worlds.

However, Lim's (2009) inclusion of learning by expressing and championing seem somewhat out of place. Both consider social obligation, not virtual affordances. It is arguably laudable to recommend that members share enthusiasm about virtual learning environments with others. However, I would posit this is not essential. Likewise, the promotion of social activism through real world political discussion might be appropriate for some learning communities. However, groups such as Cypris value inclusion and perceive political argument as disruptive to the personal relationships that help maintain group cohesion.

Lim's (2009) framework is not exhaustive, and Lim does not assert it is. As part of a larger overview of a learning group, or as a set of possibilities to be explored, it offers reminders of what sorts of activities are uniquely suited to the environment. Learning groups that do not take advantage of the affordances of the environment are missing opportunities that might increase the variety of learning opportunities available to them and strengthen their communities.

Holzman's Sociocultural Theory: The ZPD as Activity

Holzman's (2010) unique interpretation of the ZPD as an activity was essential to the operationalization and identification of learning events in this study. Additionally, her focus on naturally occurring ZPDs between colleagues and on play were useful in the analysis of learning at Cypris, especially in regards to the analysis of Power, Hairo, and Jan's exemplars.

However, it is worth noting that the learning exemplars in this study illustrate that Holzman's (2010) take on sociocultural theory seems just as useful in identifying ZPD activities in formal settings as informal ones, despite potential protests to the contrary. Holzman argued that creative play more readily leads to imitation that traditional classroom interaction (Holzman, pp. 34-38). She asserted that the ZPD activity is more likely to occur in informal situations in which the learning-leading-development springs organically from the context, (Holzman, 2010, p. 30). She deemphasized the distinction between "play-development" and the "instruction-development" relationships that form the basis of Vygotsky's conception of the ZPD (Vygtosky, 1978, pp. 102-103), and stated that a continuum most likely exists between play-oriented and learning-oriented activities that Vygotsky might have overlooked because of his focus on laboratory-based research for formalized schooling (p. 36). The contention that learning can occur through play was supported in Chapter 5 by the exemplars of Power, Hairo, and Jan. This perspective seems especially relevant in adult-oriented free play spaces such as Second Life, and specifically in communities such as Cypris that mix socializing with formal learning activities.

However, Holzman's (2010) pessimistic take on the creation of ZPD events within formal educational contexts seemed less applicable to Cypris classes; in fact, although her conception of the ZPD as an activity is compelling, her emphasis on learning primarily through play might be overly ambitious. In Chapter 5, examples of language learning through play were evident, such as Hairo's encounter with *brussels sprouts,* yet examples of straightforward, in-class introduction, repetition and completion, such as Mystie's encounter with *pore over*, were also present. While Cypris is not representative of a traditional classroom environment, it seems likely that not all ZPD activities witnessed had elements of creative play, unless one radically redefines the term.

In the final analysis, Holzman's (2010) conception of the ZPD and her nuanced interpretation of play, creative imitation, and completion through utterance provide a practical and flexible interpretation of Vygotskian theory. Despite Holzman's disdain for traditional schooling that she felt relieves students of their freedom from knowing (p. 36) and substitutes it with anxiety, this study suggests her perspective is useful in both unstructured and some more traditionally structured contexts as well.

Practical Implications of the Study

The implications of the study can be placed into two broad categories: implications for language learners and educators and implications for researchers. First, the former is explored. Second Life is not necessarily an environment that appeals to all language learners. Cypris provides opportunities to learn English in formal classes and practice it through informal socializing and play, similar to other language learning

communities such as Virtlantis (Sobkowiak, 2015). However, the personal histories and preferences of key participants at Cypris suggest that it is most appealing to Internet first adopters or those who share the same adventurous, tech-savvy philosophy. The predominance of older Cypris Members in their 40s, and 50s also does not suggest that Second Life is intrinsically appealing to young adults. This should not imply that utilizing Second Life within university coursework, for example, is inadvisable in all cases. Peterson (2012) reports generally positive feedback from the Japanese university students he brought in to Second Life. However, it is naive to assume that an environment that looks like a video game necessarily appeals to younger learners.

For educators in tertiary institutions who are considering a virtual world component to their language class, it is also important to consider that the most praised affordance of the Cypris environment was not the ability to use text chat to clarify interaction, the use of an avatar, or a sense of the immersion, but the ability to practice their language through socializing with individuals outside of their offline circle of acquaintances. Instructors who want to take advantage of this powerful affordance for language practice would be well advised to coordinate with a Second Life learning community such as Cypris or risk exposing their students to potentially negative interactions with unvetted, potentially disruptive Second Life residents.

For educators outside of the university context willing to take on a role as technology steward for a group like Cypris, it is also important to understand how crucial socializing is seen for language practice. However, as was demonstrated in Cypris, simply chatting is not enough. There were indications that traditional classroom activities

and lessons taken out of the stultifying, competitive traditional learning context that Holzman (2010) so derides can be surprisingly effective and appealing. Being a technology steward or educator in virtual worlds does not necessarily mean reinventing the wheel when it comes to providing learning activities, as even traditional language classroom activities such as decontextualized grammar practice or methodical introduction of phrasal verbs can stimulate learning within small groups in the Second Life context.

For educators involved in lifelong learning, Cypris might provide a preview of what is to come in their field. Membership in Cypris skews towards older participants, individuals in their 40s and 50s. Granted, they represent the online spearhead of a generation that did not go through adolescence surrounded by computers and social media. However, as their children reach maturity in the next decade, it seems likely the numbers of middle-aged and senior citizens involved in virtual social platforms will only increase. It also seems probable that with the convenience and low cost of participation in volunteer learning communities online, at least in developed countries where computer ownership is becoming ubiquitous, those interested in lifelong learning opportunities might choose to join a group like Cypris, rather than take classes at their local community center or private language school.

For media studies scholars, Cypris demonstrates that virtual world communities based on synchronous interaction have more in common with offline groups than online communities that use asynchronous interaction. Admittedly, using select categories of Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats rubric was useful in examination of a virtual world

group. However, the technology steward in a Second Life group that uses multimodal communication, requires not only technical and organizational knowledge, but also the ability to project themselves as charismatic and engaged in ways that are more typically found in managerial norms of brick and mortar schools and workplaces. Because the digital habitats framework is specifically designed for online contexts, primarily asynchronous websites and forums, in some cases Wenger et al.'s signs of life were better conceived in terms of their synchronous real world equivalents. For example, engagement and community cultivation in virtual world environments require different skills and strategies than those important in more static online communities.

Finally, the main implication for researchers of virtual world communities is this: qualitative research methods, particularly ethnographic participant observation, can provide an understanding of context difficult to otherwise obtain. Community studies involving anonymous members are best observed through a methodology that takes into account the importance of developing trust as a prerequisite to data collection. Unlike research on online gaming, in which data mining of user statistics using specialized software is possible (Bell, Sheth, & Kaiser, 2013), communities like Cypris require researchers to gain the trust of their participants by engaging in the community themselves. This does not necessarily mean a researcher needs to blend in. Nardi (2008) studied IBM's meetings within Second Life identified by a halo over her avatar (p. 35), and I was well known by other members as the in-house researcher at Cypris since its inception in December, 2008. Quantitative data is available in Second Life. Through *secondary analysis* (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008), information such as an avatar's Second

Life birthday or a count of how many avatars visit a sim in a given month can be obtained and used to draw conclusions about a community. However, interpreting such data without an intimate knowledge of the context could potentially foster mistaken interpretations. This underlines the importance of ethnographic case study methods in virtual world communities, a valuable research methodology in its own right, and a precondition for data gathering for other research methods.

Contributions of the Study

Despite calls from Sadler (2012) and Kang and Burton (2013), empirical studies of language learning and language learning communities in online virtual worlds like Second Life have been few and of limited scale. Previous research on language teaching on the platform (e.g. Peterson, 2012) was potentially problematized by participants, primarily university students, unfamiliar with interaction in virtual worlds. Studies also focused on learning through text as opposed to multimodal interaction now available (Peterson, 2008; Zheng et al., 2009). Sobkowiak (2015) examined the Virtlantis learning community, a Second Life resident group, but focused primarily on its use of Facebook to maintain communication outside of Second Life.

This study goes much further by presenting a more comprehensive look at another language learning group, Cypris Chat, including its history, structure and management philosophy. It covers the personal histories of 21 staff members and learners and explores their motivation for participation. It provides an in-depth look at how teachers teach and learners learn in an environment that makes full use of Second Life's voice chat feature,

in both formal classes as well as informal interactions outside of class. It eliminates participant motivation and unfamiliarity with computers as potential obstacles to analysis. Finally, it provides evidence that three theoretical frameworks, Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats, Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework, and Holzman's (2010) interpretation of sociocultural theory have utility in analyzing the strengths of online learning communities and identifying learning events within them. This research contributes to our increasing understanding of both the limitations and the educational potential inherent in virtual worlds, a field distinct from both asynchronous online groups and offline schools and volunteer learning groups.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This chapter is focused on final comments related to this study. First, a final overview of the study is provided. Then some limitations of the study are examined, and possible directions for future research are explored. Lastly, I provide final thoughts on the study and suggest some historical context for Cypris as the conceptual descendant of alternative learning paradigms of Illich (1970) and Holt (1976), and explain why the study of virtual world communities today is important.

Overview of the Study

I began this study by introducing the Cypris Chat English language learning community within the online virtual world of Second Life. I asked two research questions: What factors lie behind the robust longevity and appeal of Cypris Chat as a language learning community? What sort of language teaching and learning, if any, takes places at Cypris?

The main purposes were to provide an in-depth look at a working online learning community, not simply an exercise in theoretical best practices. Second, I sought to find the reasons why the Cypris community has been active since December, 2008, and focused on a group of tech savvy participants, Second Life residents who were already familiar with the virtual world they are interacting in. Third, this study explored the role socializing has had in both maintaining group cohesion and in language practice and

learning in the group. It also provided a brief historical and structural analysis of Cypris and the personalities involved within this active online language learning group and gave examples of how multimodal teaching and learning takes place within formal and informal activities.

From a different perspective, this study also made use of three theoretical frameworks in its analysis. It utilized Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats framework to explore possible organizational explanations for the enthusiastic Cypris community; data for this framework was accumulated through discourse analysis of semi-structured interviews with 21 Cypris members and staff. It utilized Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework for best practices in virtual worlds learning groups, with data for this framework taken from my eight years of participant observation with the group and from interviews. Finally, it utilized Holzman's (2010) interpretation of Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory to examine teaching and learning within video recorded discourse of Cypris activities.

Results suggested that several factors have contributed to Cypris' longevity and appeal. First, it exhibited several characteristics of a successful digital habitat (Wenger et al., 2009). Friendships were fostered, members were allowed to participate as they wished, and the staff were well organized, active and never lost sight of their original goals as a community. Second, Cypris has taken advantage of the different types of learning possible in virtual environments (Lim, 2009), including learning through exploration, collaborating, identity exploration, creation of objects or programming within Second Life, and promotion of virtual world learning to those unfamiliar with the

platform. Third, key participants found they enjoyed participating in Cypris, as it both represented Internet early adopter values and it provide opportunities for socializing between formal activities.

In regards to the type of teaching and learning taking place at Cypris, multiple recordings of 4 weekly activities were made. Discourse analysis suggested ZPD learning activities (Holzman, 2010) were identified in relation to the learning of nouns, idiomatic expressions, adjectives and phrasal verbs in formal activities, as well as vocabulary learning and task-based learning during informal language practice and play.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations and missed opportunities within this study. The first, and perhaps, most frustrating, was the difficulty in outlining how Cypris could be quantifiably defined as a robust, successful community in the first place, the assumption that drives Research Question 1. During Cypris' most active period, from 2010-2012, as estimated by Mystie and McKay, membership was capped at 500 members, with inactive ones routinely kicked from the group in line with Cypris policy regarding active participation; since 2015, this policy was abandoned, so despite appearances of a large membership, this does not necessarily reflect active participation. A count of how many avatars visited the sim on a daily basis would also not have been an accurate measure of member engagement, as many prospective members have likely visited the sim once and did not return, especially if there was not a guide or tutor present to assist them. The size of the Cypris sim itself is also not an indication of member activity, as disproportionately

generous donations from individuals have been the factor most related to how much virtual land was available to the group at any one time in the past. This underlines the problems facing research of all Second Life communities, in that anonymity and a lack of quantifiable measures make it difficult to measure many aspects of group membership. I argue, however, that qualitative measures analysis of interview data and participant observation were able to sufficiently gauge enthusiasm and how effectively the group was serving its members.

Also, although this study provided a detailed look at 21 Cypris members through interviews and observed the behavior of more during recordings of activities and interactions, there is some concern that a wider cross section of Cypris membership might have been sampled using a different approach. Members in different time zones potentially experience Cypris in different ways. Utilizing a survey delivered through the Cypris Chat group messaging system might have been able to take into account input from those members on sim while the majority of staff are sleeping or at work offline.

The way in which focus groups evolved into staff meetings, and then poorly attended by those actually interviewed was a disappointment. In a sense, it underlined the problem Cypris has had with meeting attendance; in an international group, scheduling meetings is difficult. Perhaps multiple staff meetings could have been arranged from the very beginning to give members more opportunities to voice their opinions regarding their involvement in the group. Indeed, it is unfortunate that focus groups needed to be framed as meetings in the first place, as that was not my original intent; however, this was not to be a situation I was able to negotiate with Cypris staff.

The lack of feedback received from participants within my phrasal verbs activity in Chapter 5 was also disappointing. As explained in Chapter 3, post-activity interviews of the seven participants occurred directly after each lesson related to self-reported learning and their general impressions of each lesson. None of these informal discussions yielded usable data. The problems were twofold. First, lower proficiency learners were reluctant, or perhaps unable, to provide anything besides thanks to me for teaching the lessons. Second, it is possible the simplicity of the activity just did not lead to fruitful discussion; after all, the activity simply consisted of introducing phrasal verbs, eliciting sample sentences from learners and discussing the contextual acceptability of said sentences. I had previously taught this class for several months, and regular attendees obviously valued it or they would nor attend, so participants had little critique to share about lesson content. Whatever the case, participants did not provide substantial critical analyses of their participation or the class itself. Perhaps analysis of my weekly theme-based lessons aimed at intermediate to advanced learners would have provided more useful feedback, but those classes were not typically attended by the same group of learners as the phrasal verbs class.

Additionally, moving to a more general critique, pinpointing exactly when and where learning took place was always contentious within the data presented in Chapter 6. Although my definition of learning as use of a previously unknown structure or item through both utterance and repetition some time afterward is both practical and reflective of Holzman's neo-Vygotskian interpretation of learning (2010), it is by no means a perfect indication that long-term acquisition has occurred. However, given the fact that

attendance in Cypris classes is not mandatory, and that learning events were often based on individual student questions, it would have been unfeasible to develop tools to measure long-term acquisition within the group without transforming it from an ethnographic case study to a pseudo-experimental one.

Directions for Future Research

Cypris members choose to participate in the group for many different reasons, but in some cases they do so because of extreme circumstances. These include individuals who find it difficult or painful to learn in traditional offline settings, individuals with physical or mental disabilities, and people unable to leave their homes because of family circumstances or religious restrictions. It was not within the scope of this research project to focus on these potentially sensitive reasons for participation in Cypris if the participants themselves did not feel comfortable discussing them. However, virtual world environments represent a way in which individuals with physical or mental disabilities or other factors that limit their social interactions offline can learn and socialize. Bernhard Drax (2014b) in his YouTube series has highlighted this aspect of virtual worlds, as have Gorini, Gaggioli, Vigna, and Riva (2008) in their study on Second Life and eHealth. Studies in this area might shed new light on how virtual worlds and avatar use translate into inclusive and therapeutic online communities.

There is still much to learn about other Second Life learning communities. Although Cypris is perhaps the best known English language education sim within Second Life, there are other volunteer-run educational communities on the platform

worth exploring that might shed further light on learner motivation and learning and teaching strategies within Second Life. Virtlantis, for example, allows members to lead classes in any language, and many learners, and some staff, from Cypris frequently bounce back and forth between the two groups. Additionally, the Meow Meow EFL community focuses primarily on unrestricted conversation, in contrast to Cypris' prohibition of topics related to politics, religion, and explicit sex. As there is significant crossover in membership with Cypris, further qualitative research could be undertaken within these communities to contrast them with Cypris and determine their particular appeal.

Future research might also focus on the nexus of role-play and education within Second Life. Several Cypris members continue to be involved in role-play groups outside Cypris, using the interactions there to hone their English skills. Additionally, role-play sims such as the Firefly Companion's Guild (The Firefly Companion's Guild, n.d.) integrate seminars on topics such as philosophy, psychology, art history and creative writing as part of the group's ranking system. Groups that integrate education, socializing and role-play within Second Life might provide a different perspective on learning through games, as learners are explicitly motivated to study and subsequently increase their ranking and standing within the community.

Another potential area for exploration in virtual world education might be the creation of a rubric for modal best practices. In other words, a framework could be developed to determine which activities are best suited for text chat and which for oral communication. It was remarked in Chapter 2 how previous research on affordances by

Peterson (2001, 2006, 2008) and Zheng et al. (2009) focused on communication as text-based and how Cypris was relatively unique with its emphasis on voice chat. Yet different formal and informal activities at Cypris made use of text in varying degrees, as did learners of different proficiency and confidence levels. The only conclusions to be drawn from this study reflect support for the idea that voice affordances do not replace text in multimodal communication, but rather supplement it. Future research in this area might be used to determine what curricular goals and learner characteristics must be taken into account when designing multimodal courses in virtual world environments.

Additionally, Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats framework could be further explored for use in virtual world communities, especially in regards to the role of technology stewards as group leaders. Wenger et al. (2009) tacitly assumed that technology stewards are the primary designers and managers of the groups they assist. This is a common assumption (Zhou, 2011), but it does not necessarily follow that more emergent volunteer communities in virtual worlds, including gaming groups, as in Pearce (2009) and indeed Cypris itself, can always be studied in the same way. Research on the distinction between web designers and virtual community leaders in the digital habitats framework might be undertaken.

Finally, in 2017, although there has been a surge in popular interest in virtual reality hardware and virtual environments, there is still no consensus among researchers and educators regarding how to effectively analyze virtual communities in context. If there are to be more studies within virtual world environments, a standard for multimodal transcription specifically suited to these environments could prove useful. Just as

Newgarden and Zhang (2016) are currently exploring multimodal analysis of interactions within massively multiplayer online role-playing games, a common framework for analysis of open-ended online virtual worlds such as Second Life might allow researchers to better categorize the sorts of interactions that take place in the future within these environments.

Final Thoughts

This study provided an in-depth look at a unique English language learning community within the online virtual world of Second Life. It allowed for the exploration of the backgrounds of the community members involved and the opportunity to observe teaching and learning within the group, both inside and outside formal activities. It was observed that an appreciation of the value of socializing to reinforce learning and an optimistic, adventurous attitude towards meeting strangers online were common characteristics among learners. Cypris was shown to conform to two prescriptive paradigms of successful online communities. Finally, it was observed how teaching and learning took place within Cypris, through situations both similar to ones we might find in the offline classroom and in situations uniquely fostered by affordances in the Second Life environment.

Additionally, just as Question 1 regarding Cypris' status as a robust Second Life learning community was answered through Wenger et al.'s (2009) digital habitats rubric and Lim's (2009) Six Learnings framework for best practices in virtual worlds learning communities, so these frameworks have been proven to be effective metrics in analyses

of a group such as Cypris. In fact, used together, these two frameworks shore up each other's deficiencies in analysis of virtual worlds learning groups. Wenger et al. provided a robust organizational checklist usable in analysis of a variety of online contexts, but do not focus specifically on education. Conversely, Lim is unconcerned with group management, but has specific knowledge of the affordances and potential of virtual world learning environments. Together they provide a balanced overview of the strengths and weaknesses of learning communities in virtual environments.

Was Holzman's (2010) unique neo-Vygotskian perspective equally useful in answering Question 2? There is no question that Holzman's conception of a the ZPD as an observable activity made manifest in spoken or written production makes it attractive to researchers attempting to pinpoint learning events in discourse. However, as was alluded to in Chapter 6, she is highly critical of traditional classroom dynamics, so much so that future researchers wishing to make use of her interpretation of sociocultural learning theory in traditional classroom settings must carefully consider the characteristics of their learning context beforehand.

Furthermore, although my participant observation within Cypris is rarely referenced directly, my extended involvement in the group directly informed and aided many aspects of the study. Research design, selection of theoretical frameworks, methodologies, interview questions, and indeed the research questions themselves were all informed by my experience teaching and interacting in the community. From the perspective of access to data, it is doubtful I would have received permission to observe classes and informal interactions with as much freedom as I did without the trust I had

gained from Cypris members. To my knowledge, several university students have come to Cypris working on their own projects on learning in Second Life, but inevitably their participation never lasted more than a few weeks and their questions often reflected a lack of contextual knowledge about the community. The groundwork laid by participant observation in this study provided an intimate knowledge of the context and the sensitivities of participants. In future research of virtual world communities, especially ones that are ostensibly anonymous, a foundation in longitudinal ethnographic study is an important way to gauge what questions should be asked and how.

It is illustrative at this point to note the historical context within which Cypris finds itself. The Cypris model, if one were name to frame it in that way, did not manifest without precedent. In fact, its development can be viewed as a manifestation of alternative education paradigms harking back to the 1970s. Many years before the Internet became available to most individuals, Ivan Illich (1970) was calling for "research on the possible use of technology to create institutions which serve personal, creative, and autonomous interaction and the emergence of values that cannot be substantially controlled by technocrats " (p. 2). Later, John Holt (1976), another proponent of radical educational options, praised the beauty and simplicity of the Beacon Hill Free School when he said, "since it charges no money, it does not need to guarantee anything to its students…since students don't pay, and teachers aren't paid the school does not need to keep elaborate books" (p. 31). Nearly everything he praised about Beacon Hill could be equally descriptive of Cypris management. Cypris represents a low-cost learning environment for independent learners. It does not replace traditional school, as Illich and

Holt might have hoped, but it does allow for opportunities for continuing education and lifelong learning that borrow from the same wellspring of dissatisfaction, schools with large classes of passive students paying high tuition for classes they are often not engaged in. When seen through the lens of these counterculture perspectives, Cypris can be seen as more than a tiny online learning group, but as a deceptively radical, even subversive organization.

The dearth of longitudinal research on volunteer-led, virtual world learning communities such as Cypris is in a sense understandable. The rapid pace of technological advance can sometimes leave researchers worried that focus on any one platform or group can render studies obsolete before they are even published. Additionally, focus on any context beyond the university might be worrisome to language learning researchers, who might fear the lessons they learn will not be applicable to typical language classrooms. However, it is only through testing the paradigms found in theoretical arguments of best practices that their worth can be determined. It is only by looking at community members already comfortable with virtual platforms that conclusions can be drawn about the efficacy of education in such environments. Finally, it behooves researchers to look beyond the university context to models for learning, because to do otherwise would disenfranchise entire populations of learners who are either unable to engage in traditional offline learning or who simply find online communities such as Cypris intrinsically more appealing.

As a platform for online communities—educational and otherwise—Second Life is slowly but steadily shrinking. In 2013, Linden Labs estimated that around 1,000,000

users accessed the platform monthly (Linden Lab, 2013), but that has shrunk to 900,000 in 2016 (Malberg, 2016). As of this writing, Second Life is celebrating its 13th year of existence, an impressive lifespan for an online platform and community. However, Linden Lab is currently beta testing Sansar, a sleeker, but in some ways less flexible successor to Second Life. Although it might not provide all of the same affordances as its predecessor, many Second Life residents and communities might migrate to the new platform. Some groups, however, will simply cease to exist with the inevitable death of Second Life. It is imperative that researchers take advantage of opportunities to study communities within Second Life and other such unique online environments while they exist, not only because they might soon disappear, but because there are seminal moments within the history of online, avatar-based education that will otherwise go unrecorded.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

DIGITAL HABITAT SIGNS OF LIFE AND KEY SUCCESS FACTORS

Adapted from Wenger, White, and Smith (2009)

1. **Meetings**: Regular, well-attended meetings, with enthusiasm to participate, connection with others and useful incomes.
    a. An appropriate rhythm of meetings over time with a frequency and schedule that fit the lives of the members.
    b. Attention to the experience of individual members' participation, regardless of the medium.
2. **Relationships**: Networking, bonding friendship, references to personal lives in conversations.
    a. Ways for people to get to know each other and build their identities.
    b. Opportunities to connect informally beyond participation in organized community events.
    c. Networkers acting as connectors with other people.
    d. Having individual control over personal exposure and disclosure
3. **Individual participation**: Members develop their own style of participation and are aware that other people develop their own styles.
    a. Diversity is explicitly valued.
    b. Different levels and modes of participation are supported and facilitated.
    c. Practices and tools are used to bridge between interaction modes (audio, text, video, synchronous, asynchronous, face-to-face, online).

4. **Community cultivation:** The community's activities are well planned, its reference materials are well produced and well organized, and members find that someone is always very responsive to their requests, contributions and changing needs.
    a. Efforts made to support the community by members are appreciated by other members.
    b. The personality skills, leadership, and reputation of those who take on cultivation roles in the community.
5. **Serving a context**: Community members are fully engaged in the mission defined by their context.
    a. Clarity on the community context and its implications

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT REQUEST FORM—ACTIVITIES

Hello! You might know that I teach here, but I am also doing research on how people are learning at Cypris. To do that, I am video recording classes and activities. I hope knowing more about Cypris will help us understand this community better, and I want to introduce more people to Cypris Chat.

You do not have to do anything special. I will simply observe the class. I might ask you questions about the activity after it is over, but you do not have to answer if you do not want to.

Your privacy is important to me. I will not publish your avatar's name without permission. There should be no risk to you.

If you feel uncomfortable being recorded, please tell me or the activity leader, and I will wait for another opportunity. I will not record the class if you feel uncomfortable. If you are comfortable being recorded please fill out the attached form informed consent request form. If you have any problems understanding these notecards, please talk to me immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you want more information about my research please contact me below:
Second Life: DukeVan Acker
Email: djgizmoe@yahoo.com

Jean-Paul DuQuette

Associate Professor
Kansai Gaidai University
Osaka Japan

Again, please return a copy of the attached form to me when you have given me your answer.

DATED: _____

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT REQUEST FORM—INTERVIEWS

Hello! You might know that I teach here, but I am also doing research on how people are learning at Cypris. To do that, I am doing interviews with Cypris staff and members. I hope knowing more about Cypris will help us understand this community better, and I want to introduce more people to Cypris Chat.

I would like to do two one-hour interviews with you in Second Life. Both interviews will be in private Voice Chat and will take place at my virtual home or at a place you choose. In the first one, we will talk about your past. For example, I might ask you about your experience with English learning, your experience with computers and gaming before you came into Second Life. In the second interview, which will happen about a week later, I want to talk about your experiences in Second Life and at Cypris. I will record these interviews. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

Your privacy is very important to me. I will not publish your avatar's name without permission. Before I publish my research, I will send you a copy. If you are uncomfortable with what I have written, or disagree with it, please contact me and we will review the paper together. There should be no risk to you.

If you feel uncomfortable at any time or inadvertently say something you would not want published, the interview can be edited or canceled altogether. If you are comfortable being interviewed and recorded ,please fill out a copy of the attached informed consent request form. If you have any problems understanding these notecards, please talk to me immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.

If you want more information about my research please contact me below:
Second Life: DukeVan Acker
Email: djgizmoe@yahoo.com

Jean-Paul DuQuette

Associate Professor
Kansai Gaidai University
Osaka Japan

Again, please return a copy of the attached form to me when you have given me your answer.
DATED: _____

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick box as appropriate):

1.	I have read and understood the information about the project, as provided in the Information Sheet dated _____.	☐
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	☐
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	☐
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalized for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	☐
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymization of data, etc.) to me.	☐
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	☐
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	☐
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	☐
9.	Select only **one** of the following: • I would like my avatar name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised. • I do not want my avatar name used in this project.	☐ ☐
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	☐

Participant:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date

Researcher:

_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE INTERVIEW—MYSTIE

Notes: In the following interviews conducted on 6/28/13 and 6/10/15 responses related to the interviewee's possible predisposition towards learning with in the Cypris group were highlighted in **bold**, with attendant notes **underlined**. I am DA (DukeVan Acker, my avatar's name) and Mystie is MS. Prompts in text chat were also given and noted.

Part 1

DA: What was your first experience with English? (text: first English experience)

MS: My first experience? Ah…yes, yes I remember. My father used to be the manager of a petrol station, and I used to go there to play when I was small. And there were American forces—how do you call that? —base camp nearby. And often we had customers—American customers—**f**rom there. And one time some Americans came, and while they were waiting for the service, one of them just walked up to me while I was playing outside. He came up to me and said something to me. And I felt that he was asking me about something but in my child's mind, I just tried to imagine what he could be asking me in this foreign language, and I thought, "Ah, he must be asking me for the toilet." Where the toilet is. So I just pointed that way (laugh), I just pointed that direction and he understood, and I think that's my first experience with foreigners. And it (sic) was kind of proud that I understood what he was trying to say. I don't remember what he said (laughter) .

DA: How old were you? (text: How old were you?)

MS: I think I was probably about 7. 7 or 8, yeah, and, uh, and then soon after that, I made friends with a (sic) neighbor's. They were a Philippine family and they had two children about the same age as me and they found us and we became friends and they spoke Japanese fluently but when I

went to their house and played with them, they had – because they used to go to those American schools – how you call it? – we used to call it American school – they used to attend those special schools for foreigners and they had several foreigner friends there. And also they were watching Sesame Street, so that was the very first time I watched Sesame Street on TV, and it was very, very interesting.

DA: You went to the base? (text: You went to the base?)

MS: No, no not to the base. They were separate. These were a family working for the Philippine embassy or something, yeah, and uh, yes they were about the same age and we played a lot and we usually just talked in Japanese but sometimes they speak, you know like "half-gaijin" (laughs) accents or some words, some vocabulary was in English, and so I kinda got more interested in learning English. Yes, when I was 8 or 9 years old.

DA: Could you watch English programs on TV?

MS: At that time, we didn't have any programs broadcasted in English, other than Sesame Street. And we didn't have that stereo with bilingual system. So Sesame Street was the only program I watched.

DA: At that time was it only in English?

MS: At that time, yes, completely in English, and sometimes maybe with some subtitles. But it wasn't translated, totally. Subtitles, most of the time.

DA: Can you talk a little about your first impressions of English at school? (text)

MS: Ah school, eh, um. As English, not as, we learn romaji at elementary school, maybe 5th grade or so

DA: The alphabet?

MS: Yes, alphabet. To read as Japanese, in romaji. To write Japanese in alphabet. But as English language, uh, we started in junior high school, at school. But I started to go to those little—it's

not cram school, but private—how do you call those—juku? (laughs) Private, yes, small juku, small like only few people in the class. I went to those when I was in, uh, fifth grade.

DA: Early.

MS: Yes. My parents wanted me to go to juku because everyone else was going, and I didn't like math or any other subjects, so, "Okay, okay I'll go to study English." I just chose it, yes. (laughs) If you have to choose…

DA: So you first started at junior high school…(text:

MS: Yes, at school, right.

DA: Do you remember your first English teacher?

MS: Yes, my homeroom teacher was my first English teacher.

DA: What was he or she like?

MS: He was a very very nice person, kind and funny, so it was fun, and I went to junior high school that also had a high school, a private school. So they had a like, uh, uh, English teacher from England, British teacher sometimes. Yeah…

DA: Like an ALT?

MS: Yes, yes, like that. They didn't call them that way. They—how do you say—they do it together. Like partners in the classroom. But not really much

DA: Team teaching?

MS: Yes, team teaching. But most of the time the native speaker was just there to support like most of the time, because he didn't speak any Japanese and he wasn't there all the time. Yeah. So because English was the only language I liked, in studying any, anything in school (laughs), so it was fun.

DA: Why did you like it?

MS: English? That's a very interesting question because I always ask myself why I like English. Uh…I don't know. (laughs) Uh, can I skip the years along much later because there's an incident when I first visited England, I arrived at the airport—well, it wasn't the first time—but when I first visited privately when I was at the airport and London Heathrow airport, you have to go through all these, you know, customs and immigration. At the immigration, uh, office they, no not the office—this officer, they have to, you know, they have to ask you a lot of questions—and—silly questions—and they asked me why I came to England. I said to study English. He asked me, "Why did you want to study English?" So I said, "Because I like English." And he asked me, "Why do you like English?" And then I, I, didn't know what to say. Wha- You like something. Do you need to have a reason? If I could answer that question, yeah, it's all in my head. If I can answer that question in English, I wouldn't be here. (laughs)

DA: (laughs)

MS: I don't need to come all the way, you know, to England to study if I can answer that. I just like it! What's wrong with that! They didn't really ask anymore so…

DA: How did you feel in 9th grade?

MS: Kokko sannensei? Chugakko sannensei? Uh, at that time I was uh, I think because they already have the high school, you just go, 'escalate' like escalator, so I really didn't have that much to worry about.

DA: You didn't have to take the exam?

MS: No, we did need to take the exam. Uh, but really didn't need to worry about it. Uh there was a—I don't know if it was second grade or third grade at the end of the year we took a test—no, it wasn't the end of the year…well, my teacher, my English teacher gave us an assignment for the summer, for summer holiday and somehow—maybe I was rebellious in some way—but I just didn't want to do it. (laughs) I didn't—I don't know why I didn't but I just didn't do it—and I

couldn't hand the homework to the teacher when the second semester started. But then I had forgotten about it, you know. And then at the end of the year, my teacher said, "Hey , you cannot go to the next grade, because you didn't give the homework (laughs). So "Oh no! Please don't do that!" (laughs)

DA: Nightmare.

MS: So, uh, I think he gave me something or…then he just gave me a bad grade that year. Of course it's junior high school, they cannot fail us at the junior high school because, uh, so they just gave me like the "1, 2, 3, 4, 5 grades." For the scores. At the end of the year. "1" is the lowest and "5" is the highest. Yeah, I usually get at least "4" or "5"for English (laughs) but I got "1." (laughs)

DA: Nooo!

MS: (laughs)

DA: Do you have any other memories?

MS: Well, that was the scariest incident for about English in school, I think.

DA: (inaudible)

MS: Well, since I didn't like studying in general, I didn't like studying a lot of things, and I didn't like exams, so I didn't want to go to university or colleges but instead I went to this, uh, vocational, like senmon gakko (laughs). For tourist guide or interpreter. (inaudible) Yes. Cause I was wondering whether I could be come an interpreter or translator or something like that. I didn't think that I would be a tourist guide because you have to study a lot of things like history and geography (laughs) (inaudible) things. Yeah. But when I went to that school, we were just out from high school and there were lots of people had already got experience from around the world and they come back to get their certificate or –

DA: (inaudible)

MS: And we were just the lowest, I mean almost the lowest, because we had just graduate from high school. And it was…fun. And it was more like business English at first.

DA: (typed) audio trouble hold on

END OF FILE 1

DA: How did you study English?

MS: How did I study English…Since the beginning, at the time when I began studying English, there were talks about usual method, um, I mean like studying grammar, I mean not as important as learning to communicate and speak, learn to speak. That kind of thing just started to get popular, and I totally agreed because I didn't like grammar (laughs) , uh, so I tried to, uh, just learn the way with more conversational , uh, more realistic, more conversational English, and I, uh, tried to listen to, well, when I was in junior high school the first transmission of bilingual broadcasts started and at that time the machine was really terrible and small and sound quality was very bad but NHK—yeah maybe NHK – and few others too they just started only a few programs are available at that time bilingual and I, I bought the small machine that you just attach to the side of the TV and you put the – you just attach the antenna at the side of the TV – Yeah, just get the -

DA: Hi-tech.

MS: (laughs) Yeah very hi-tech. Just pick up the signal I think of the, there's no connection you can do with the TV, just some aerial or something that you attach to –stick it to the side of the TV to get the signal. Programs, yes, movies, American TV programs like maybe, uh, (inaudible). That very popular American TV program. CHIPS? California highway patrol? Are you there?

DA: Yeah, CHIPS.

MS: And a few others. Yes, a few other TV programs. And I started to watch in English. When I could. Yes, uh, uh, yes.

DA: What was your first experience going abroad?

MS: Well, my first experience going abroad was in junior high school. The school organized like a short two weeks half study half travel kind of thing. For second grade and third grade. I think it was second grade. And so I went with those groups to visit England and Europe so we stayed two weeks in England, we homestayed and went to school. A local school there, for two weeks then the last week we just toured around in Europe. So that was my first experience. And I just had to go back (inaudible). And then I just decided that someday I had to go back to England, then. So when I left high school I wanted to go soon because my friend was going to England soon after she graduated. But my parents told me to go to school first (laughs). So I just went to two years vocational school. And then, when I graduated they allowed me to go to England at the time because I was going to the school in England - not universities or colleges but to learn English—uh, they thought it was just an investment, do like the same as sending your child to university—it costs as much, or something. So, yeah, so they allowed me to go to England at the time.

DA: How long were you there?

MS: In England? Um, maybe two years. Yeah, about two years, two and a half years.

DA: In London?

MS: In London, yes. **I changed schools in the middle, but the first one was very good, very good school, very small and cozy, but very good teachers, very experienced, and the area was very, I mean, nice. Uh, with hills and little animals and a big park. Really very nice (laughs). Not like around here where I live. (Reminiscent of Cypris. Does this and Mystie's garden represent the desire to study/reside in an idyllic landscape?)**

MS: Yeah, I once rescued a pigeon which was drowning. And while we were having lunch with my friends in the park nearby, a squirrel barked at us (laughs). Yeah, there were many squirrels round in those trees. They were picking something (inaudible) on the ground (laughs). And one of

them just barked at us (laughs). But they come to take something from your hands. It was cute. Yeah. It was really nice.

DA: How did you feel when you had to go back?

MS: Ah. Hmm. By that time, there were a lot of things going on around me. **And I was kind of glad to go back home, though I missed already the air of England, London and friends, uh because I didn't know when I could go back again. So in my mind I didn't want to go, I didn't want to go home, but I was glad to go home (laughs). Complicated, yeah. Very complicated. (Cypris being able to recapture the feeling of living in England while remaining comfortable at home)**

DA: (inaudible)

MS: (laughs) Yeah, not yet.

DA: Since you've been back, how've you been using English?

MS: The first…in the middle of Second Life and the first stay in England, I also stayed another 2 ½ years in Ireland, England and Ireland, and that was the time I had my son. In Ireland. So there are a lot of things. But in Japan when I was working (notices PM running by) —oh the Professor's running (laughs). When I was working in Japan, first time, when I started working in a company, I was helping with foreigners employees, uh, because they were doing some, a little English classes for members. And so I was able to use my English for work. But after that, especially when I changed to this job, I really 99.8% I don't need English (laughs) and only very very rarely some tourist comes to rent or buy a motorcycle or something but these days because of the economic crisis, no foreigners come to buy motorcycles (laughs). Or ask about. So yeah.

DA: So you sell motorcycles?

MS: Well our major business is to sell, but we also did some rental motorcycles, too. But not now. We did until a couple of years ago. And we had several people from other countries reserve a motorcycles and then come here to rent.

DA: Like Red Baron?

MS: Yeah, yeah, like…they're huge. Like Red Baron, but we were the first. We were the first one to start doing rental bikes in Japan. Kinda. As a private, you know, small company, and now a lot of big companies have started using the system we made. So, business was too small to keep doing it, so we stopped, but, uh, yeah, so, at that time we have many many customers to rent motorcycles. And also from foreigners. And sometimes we get phone calls from other countries asking for some business or—sometimes very strange phone calls—yeah, that's about all, usually I don't need to use English at all.

DA: (inaudible)

MS: University? Really? Oh really?

DA: I'd like to talk about your first encounter with computers.

MS: Well, I never, I never learned any programming because I wasn't that interested in doing that cause I don't even like grammar in English (laughs). But I like using, I mean touching the machines, and those things so—and, uh, I learned typewriting. At that time there were only typewriters or word processors. In Japan, word processors were really popular, and they weren't ordinary (inaudible) house, small computers. And then first experience with a real computer was when I was working at one of the companies. Uh they had simple data base kind of thing so. Yeah, computer was just a database for customers…something with the business. Just putting in the address and names and those information. That was my first encounter.

DA: What about the Internet?

MS: No, the first, the company I work for now, they started using Internet, uh, 1980, uh,1983 or 4? No, no, no sorry, 1993 or 4, before, uh, before Windows 95. They started, they were having computers, so I was using the computer there. And when Windows 95 came, uh, just before that the Internet was suddenly becoming very popular. But still not so much. Still almost nobody was using Internet around me in the company around me. Especially motorcycle people don't use computers. But I was interested in Internet and I told them to do it, since we had a computer. So we had experience installing a LAN system within the company, with other group companies and like that, but not like those open Internet, uh, thing. Then when Windows 95 came, I insisted that we had to have that. (laughs) Because I was interested (laughs).

DA: Why were you interested?

MS: I just wanted to go….because that was the only place to connect me with another world. You know, other countries, and,oh, almost all of the information was in English. I expect yes so…I wanted to…I heard in that area you could get a lot of information to search but not like now, it was really, really primitive at the time. Most of the things you couldn't find on the net at that time yet (laughs) so when you find something, it was really like happy, I was happy to find something I wanted (laughs) because it was so rare. Yes it was a big deal.

DA: (inaudible)

MS: Yes, Windows 3.1 was the first one. So then I bought my own computer when almost Windows 95 came out, I bought the 3.1 which had an upgrade service to '95. So I started my Internet service at that time. At home.

DA: What did you use your computer for?

MS: Uh, yeah except for making (inaudible) stuff (laughs) and address book and all that (inaudible) and then I wanted to get more information and looked for the people I can talk to, but I really wasn't interested in communicating with any, you know, people in person, but I wanted to

see what the world has to say…about the things I want to know about. At the time, I was reading the book Celestine Prophesy – do you know the book Celestine Prophesy? James Redfield…

DA: Like new age?

MS: Yes, that's right. And I was so intrigued by that book so I wanted to know more about so I found a group, at this time it was a mailing list

DA: For the Celestine Prophesies.

MS: Yes, the Celestine Prophesies, I found several mailing lists but I found one, I joined one – many good people there, and then one of them is still my good friend he is Dutch, living in Holland, he is much older than myself and he is still a good friend and I invited him to Second Life, too (laughs). So he joined Second Life, but he just sometimes comes in.

DA: What about games?

MS: Ah yes, sometimes. Not so much. Games. My son told me about some games, so I joined several, but I never really did much with online games. Because when you do online games, it's more like you are competing with other people. (laughs) I didn't like that. Some other, some cute games where you just dig up a hole and find some treasure or something– so cute – and I tried some of those but, uh, I didn't do Internet games. More like the software you buy to play on the computer. Like…

DA: Like Famicon?

MS: No, not like Famicon games. No, no,not those. Not that kind. Ah, really computer type 3D?

DA: (inaudible)

MS: No, no, no. Atlantis was one of them. Do you know Atlantis? And like that similar type atmosphere and nobody's around –

DA: Myst?

MS: Yes! Myst! Yes, I bought Myst! (laughs) In Atlantis I got sick while moving around (laughs).

DA: (inaudible stretch)

MS: Oh, really? Well, with Myst when I was playing it was too lonely. (laughs) Yeah, because there's nobody, and it's so dark and quiet (laughs), yes. You play once, and I don't want to go back anymore. (laughs). Yeah.

DA: Okay, that's the interview.

MS: What? No, I want to talk more about me! More! More! (laughs)

END OF FIRST INTERVIEW (End of second file)

Part Two

DA: What was your first introduction to Second Life? Hello?

MS: I can't…your voice is breaking up, too. How did I find Second Life? I don't know. I think it's been on the news or on magazines. Uh, I think. About new virtual world, and I didn't know anything about what it was like. And I got interested in it because I was interested in all the Internet things. (laughs) I want to try out what it's like.

DA: Did you try others before SL (Second Life)?

MS: No, I played some online games, but not much like this one. So this –

DA: What's your first impression?

MS: The only thing I remember about really—uh, how you say—very surprised or impressed about that you can fly (laughs). That you can fly, that was the first "Oh, this is great!" kind of experience. And I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. I didn't really have any purpose to be here. I just wanted to see what it was like. So I just hopped around. And at that time, I don't think there were as many places as now. Lot of things were still more primitive than now. And so I was looking around in like magazines, Second Life magazines, or some virtual world magazines

explaining or introducing some interesting places in Second Life, so I visited those. Mainly famous, uh, companies, they had some shops or their works. Hold on I need to close for now. Can you stop the camera for now?

SECOND FILE

MS: Where were we?

DA: What you were doing in Second Life. Shopping around…

MS: Ah yes, well I wasn't really shopping around. I didn't think of spending any money in Second Life. And because I didn't have any land or anything—didn't even have any friends—uh, so, just look around some places and mostly it was dancing places and then that was all, and I lost interest very quickly. At that time. And so I just left, left this Second Life here. For about six months. Then I saw on the news—think it was about Christmas time two years ago that there was a news that you can actually make money in Second Life and "Oh, what's this all about?" (laughs) And I came in and found out about the camps and that, and so I started camping in, uh, lots of different places. Well, uh, most of the places you just leave your avatar dancing or staying in one place

DA: Could you camp at work?

MS: No, not at first. I didn't do it at first. After that, I started doing it at work (laughs). So I was able to leave it there, in the corner of my computer, uh, screen.

DA: What did you do with the money?

MS: Ah, it was really not that√you can't really call it, call it money, because it was like 10-20 Lindens per half an hour or something it was just making a little Lindens so I found you can buy some clothes or something. I didn't really think—maybe I thought if we could make a lot of money like some day change it to real life money? (laughs) Yeah, then after awhile I found that

the exchanging rate is not that good. Yeah it costs a lot to change the money—to convert the money—so I don't really think about that now but at that time I came for awhile, and I found you can actually work in Second Life. That there are some jobs available and then I found out that most people are dancers in clubs or escorts (laughs) or things like that so it isn't very good. Then I found ChaChat, and so I went there, and they hired me even though and I'm sure they thought I could be a spy from somewhere (laughs) or something, but they hired me anyway (laughs).

DA: What was your experience at ChaChat?

MS: Ah, it was (laughs), well, the good thing was I was able to talk to native speakers who teach, and also I was able to help some beginners and people who were looking for places to practice their English or actually study English, and it was so much better than just camping. Uh, the way that you know what you're doing and you know what they expect, and it was more comfortable. And, um, I was able to—and at that time I was never able to use voice chat before, and I never wanted to use voice until but they insisted I use voice there so I gradually started so then it became much easier. And their classes offer voice chat lessons. But now it's like nothing special (laughs).

DA: Did you ever use Skype in SL?

MS: No, I never used Skype. Uh, I used some Windows Messenger or something but only for text chat. Talking to a computer like on the telephone, well telephone is okay because everyone knows you're talking to someone there, but if you're talking to a machine, I thought you would look like a freak (laughs). People would think you were crazy, I thought (laughs). So I was really self-conscious about that. At the beginning. But now I don't really care who's in the room. I talk really loudly until very late at night. Well, working at ChaChat, it was like 2 or 3 times a week, and about three hours a night. And well, most of the time if I was just waiting for someone to come in, and then explain what we're doing, it was—it became boring (laughs). Somehow.

Because it wasn't so—when there was no class or everybody's gone to the classrooms, nobody's really there and you can't really leave, you know, in front of the computer

DA: You were just a receptionist.

MS: Yes, I was just a receptionist. But it became rather tiresome. But they still—even a little—they paid me and so, it's better than just dancing like a stupid girl (laughs).

DA: Did you go to ALC or other groups?

MS: Um, I didn't really go to other language learning places until somebody else told me about those places and took me there. Like Showshow and Goemon, they took me to, I think they introduced me to ALC, and so I went there maybe twice, and then Showshow and Goemon introduced me to English Village. So, I've never been really interested in going to study in Second Life myself, until I met you guys (laughs) it became more interesting because

DA: Wait, you met Showshow at ChaChat?

MS: Yes, Showshow came to ChaChat. He wasn't interested in studying. He just came in to chat. He was only looking for place he could, you know, chat in English, voice chat in English, so he came to the place often and chatted and chatted. So, yeah. He introduced me to all these voice chat places.

DA: So how did you first meet Mike?

MS: In English Village, when Showshow and Goemon took me there one day. When, he, there was a class. And that was May. April, May two years ago. About one and a half years ago. Yeah.

DA: What was he doing there?

MS: Uh, he had some, uh, real life students at the time.

DA: Yeah.

MS: Yes, and he brought them to—Ruka, Ruka was there. And he was going, he was trying to make her a resident, really a resident in Second Life, so he went looking for her to find a place for

her to live (laughs). Like he went to buy a house for her, and we were all interested in looking for houses and, "Oh there are such beautiful houses in Second Life you can buy and land you can buy and TV sets you can buy (laughs). So he bought all these stuff for her and put –and bought the house they she chose and put it on a small piece of land. And, yeah, yeah, yeah, it was really interesting. I could do all the things. And I'd never been to anyone's private houses before (laughs) so yeah, I think it was the first time I visited someone's house. I mean building the house or putting the house. Yeah.

DA: How did you get your house?

MS: Oh, which? Ah…that was…I don't know maybe in…around that time or a little later then, the summer, uh, early summer, I first decided to buy a land.

DA: Why?

MS: Why? I don't know. I don't remember why I decided to buy a land. Because at the time I was making money from ChaChat, and I thought I was able to afford, also from the money I was making camping as well, because I was still doing some campings. And, so I though maybe it could be something interesting. And I found this corner land—well it wasn't in a corner, it was the seaside, sort of, it wasn't so expensive and I tried to put this house there. And I'll just try for a couple of weeks or months, and if I thought it was just too boring and I didn't want anything, it was okay. I just wanted, I think I wanted a place where I could set myself like a home to come in—when you come in land—in world—I wanted to come home. But unless you have somewhere, it will be the original default place (laughs). So I just wanted a place to set home.

DA: Did you know anyone else who had a house?

MS: Uh, I think around that time, Himiko came into my life. (laughs) And she was talking about buying a land or renting a land from someone. And…

DA: How did you meet her?

MS: She came to ChaChat. Yes, she started coming to ChaChat as a learner. I mean—did she attend the lessons? She—to chat, or something. Uh maybe, she wasn't, was she a student actually. I don't remember (laughs). Uh, she came to ChaChat and she started to talk a little. And then she came to English Village as well.

DA: (inaudible)

MS: And you were with your students as well. You had lots of—yeah—you had lots of students.

DA: I did.

MS: (laughs) You often had separate classes or something there. Right? Your groups. Of students and you were doing your own thing.

DA: (inaudible)

MS: (laughs) Ah.

DA: You offered your house to us…

MS: I was having a lot of friend with you and the Professor and the sessions and lessons and everything, and seemed like a, well I was not going to move to somewhere else—I mean I found somewhere cheaper (laughs). But it was my first land, it was such a lovely little corner of the land, I didn't want to give up and I thought it was a good deal so I talked with the Professor, Mike, about "Would you like to take over this land?" At first, he wasn't interested. He said, he said he wasn't interested in spending any money on like any land or anything. He wasn't interested, he didn't want to pay anything. He thought he couldn't afford anything. I can't believe his words compared to now, what he's doing (laughs).

DA: (inaudible) He went crazy.

MS: Yeah, how many does he have now? But at anyway at first he said so and I kinda understood that maybe he wasn't so interested but he wasn't really paying attention to what I was saying, at the time, I thought.

DA: Probably not.

MS: Then probably after a week or two, I told him again, “Hey, I’m not really asking for money for that land, I can you for one Linden and you can buy the land from me, and after that you have to buy the tier, but you can buy the land for one Linden.” And then suddenly he said, “Oh really? Let’s go check it out.” (laughs). But even it’s a small piece of land you can do whatever you want. Though the prim numbers were limited but I think it was quite nice. It was really a small piece of corner. But it was nice. We started out small. Then he suddenly, the Professor started suddenly to extend the land (laughs). And more and more. (laughs)

DA: He’s starting to scare me.

MS: (laughs) No one can stop him now.

DA: What do you feel is your role at Cypris?

MS: Well people ask me, sometimes new people come in and ask me, “What are you doing here?” And “What do you do?” and like that. So, I just say, “I help people.” (laughs) Yeah, I’m a learner, but I’m also help people here. So that’s the main thing I’m doing right now. Uh, yeah. Many people come here to learn or practice their English, and I meet people and they want to talk and check out the place. And it’s really interesting to find all these people from everywhere. And so it’s a really fun place to be and if they ask you for something and I can help them with what they want. Uh, I think it’s a good thing.

DA: How do you feel about the informal nature of all the classes? (inaudible) No curriculum.

MS: Ah, that’s true. **But if we have, uh, more fixed curriculums and systems it will really be a school and its going to be difficult for people to just come in at their own convenience. And like you can come in here but you can’t come in next week you can join any time again and that’s the way it is now. So I think it’s easier for many people. You have no obligation. They don’t have to pay now so it’s easier for them to come or go (laughs).** I think it’s difficult for

teachers to organize or uh the people's levels and the classes because you can't have much lessons in, how you say, sequence. Yes. But I think the Professor's doing that with lower levels. And I think it's okay to do it. If you want to do it then you can do it. And there are always some people are always the same. You know, repeaters. I think you can do that but its—I think any tutors—different tutors can teach in different ways. **And they can experiment with their own methods, any of their new ideas and its interesting for us too. We don't know what will happen until maybe the day before (laughs).** What's going to happen? (laughs) Or that same day, some hours ago. So it's really fun to wait and see the notice. Sometimes when I have to explain to new people, "What kind of lessons will there be next week?" Or tomorrow. Or the day after tomorrow. I have to say, "I don't know." (laughs) "You have to wait for the notice to come." (laughs) But I can say that because we're not a school and we don't have a curriculum and I can just say that that's the way I do." And you don't have to worry about the making the schedule board with all these lessons like some other schools, like they do. Yeah. It's interesting, interesting this way. If it's okay with the tutors.

DA: Can you tell us about what you thing are some good and bad points of the lessons?

MS: **The good thing is that anyone can just come in or go at anytime. And they can choose to join in or just observe. You can talk to people from different, ah, levels.** That's also interesting. **And we can help each other** especially during those small group lessons, during the lesson. (inaudible) We can help each other. That's a good thing, too. Bad thing, I think, is the same thing from a different point of view. That you don't know what to expect and levels are mixed too much. So some people talk to too much, and some people don't get enough opportunities to talk at all. Or it is difficult for some people to talk, unless you are talked to. So, uh, I think it's better if we could really separate the levels of people more. Depending on the lessons. That, uh…observers are okay, but when they sit in the active speaker's seat, if you can

separate them a little. I mean "today we only have intermediate or advanced learners here" or "intermediate and beginners" something like that. Right now if we have lower level lessons – supposedly lower level lessons – we always have more advanced learners just sitting there and talk. So the lesson level just goes up automatically, because people talk more. I'm sure it is already sure for lower levels to understand, but they have to just follow. And they can't even—even if they don't understand it they just have to be quiet and listening. So…uh…yeah…I guess…

DA: Do you think it's hard to know when it's your turn to talk?

MS: Ah, yes, you can't see eye contacts (laughs) so—or no body languages so it's kind of difficult to know what the other person is thinking of, if it's directed at you. Unless you're called. Uh…

DA: How did you get used to interacting here?

MS: Well, you just have to talk. And listen. Uh, a lot. And find a…cue (laughs). But it's okay to talk. But I don't know, maybe if you're making mistakes, you know, when you should be talking and when you shouldn't be talking. And maybe I'm still talking at the wrong time—unless somebody tells me, "Hey, it's not your turn," (laughs) you don't know. Yeah, yeah, it happens a lot I think. "Hey, you're talking too much…"

DA: Some of the new learners…

MS: (laughs) Or Ana (laughs).

DA: Yeah, it's Ana vs. the Chinese girls.

MS: Yeah, even some of the Chinese boys, they want to talk a lot—I mean it's not only about Chinese people—but, many people who are really interested in talking—they just have to talk (laughs). Even when you're supposed to be quiet or waiting for someone else to talk, you just can't stop. (laughs) It's good to have someone talking, I mean, because we're supposed to talk

here, but sometimes just talk too much for something that's not relevant to the lessons or just too much of those – how do you say – those *aizuchi* kind of – if you are talking in person it's okay but if you're talking in groups and it's not particularly directed at you—or—not about you—some people just keep saying, "Oh yeah, uh huh, uh huh" (laughs) all those things so it gets kind of annoying sometimes (laughs).

DA: What do you think of all the toys and changing scenery? How important is it?

MS: In Cypris?

DA: Yeah.

MS: Well, uh, I think it's good. **Although it's nice in warm summer green atmosphere, since we do have different seasons in real life it gives more uh feelings to what we actually have. Because if it's always the same every time you come here, it's nothing special. And you will lose interest. So I think it's good to have something different every once in awhile. We don't have to keep changing or adding too many things at a time but scenery change sometimes is a good thing.** According to the seasons. Well, seasons are different according to the part of the world, but it's a good experience for the people from the places where they never have season change. So, I think its fun. **And also I thinks it's fun for us to do something about it—with it—to create or add some things or play with the toys of the season.**

DA: Sleds. Are you curious about people's "real lives"?

MS: Uh..it depends, I'm not that interested. I mean in general just to find out what these people are, like "Are you a student?" or "Are you working?" **Just general surface things. I don't really want to know too much about them—really, really personal, uh, details of how good or bad their lives are—things like that.**

DA: Don't go to my Facebook.

MS: (laughs) Yes, always complaining about your family members (laughs). I don't really go asking about—unless they want to talk about it I don't really want to go ask about people's lives. Especially when they are feeling miserable, I don't want to go ask about that (laughs). **It's a place, I mean when they're in here, they shouldn't feel, they should be feeling happier, they should change, changing their feelings, or, you know, they should have something good from here, so, that they can feel better (laughs).** And so maybe when I ask, I just want to make good conversation and find a topic they can find interest in each others'…something. (laughs) Just to break the ice or something. So I don't really care that much about what they do. And I don't like people bringing in too much of their personal lives. Because if you do, if you find out more, it feels like you're getting involved too much, uh. It gets tiresome (laughs).

APPENDIX F

CODING NOTES SAMPLE: FERONYMOUS

Coding of interview data followed the following format was colored. Discrete units of information were numbered as they appeared in the interview. To represent highlighted themes in this appendix, the appropriate color code will be spelled out before each highlighted utterance and that utterance underlined.

RED- Socialization in Cypris

GREEN-Cypris as school

PINK: First adopter history

ORANGE: History of role-play

BROWN: Teaching/pedagogy related

MUSTARD: Rules/safety/politeness

BLUE: Cypris as Cost-free

DARK RED: Otherwise interesting quotes

Feronymous

Interview Date: First section 12/17/2015

Background: American-born, but living in Korea, University instructor. Feronymous is a long-time teacher/staff member. Although he was inactive for awhile, he has returned to teach a reading circle class.

First computer exposure 1:03

1. 1988 Apple II-E, just for Word Processing; he worked at a church and he used it to write his sermons

2. Kids in the church were using it for games.

3. 1997 San Francisco was his first time on the Internet (He had no idea there even was an Internet before then. 3:20

4. After he finished his TESOL certificate, he was asked for his email, and that's when he learned about the net.

5. A month later he found his first job in Korea online (New World Teachers).

6. "I saw that there were all these jobs available to teach English and I said, "Oh Korea looks very popular," and she tried to talk me out of it because Korea had a very bad reputation at the time. And I thought, well it would only be for a short time so it wouldn't matter if it was a bad situation, it would just be a good experience. And so I picked...some kind of recruiter... it was kind of like throwing a dart in the dark. Wherever it landed...I'm not the kind of person who's picky about those kinds of things, 'cause I'm more interested in the experience. How things are going to play out. Rather than try to manipulate the endgame I just kind of want to jump in and see where it goes. And I've been like that all my life." 5:10

7. Got his first computer in Korea. His coworker helped.

8. 1998, At first he just wanted to play Age of Empires. "I didn't even think about the Internet." 8:33

9. Then the next year he moved into a university dorm with free Internet and he was hooked. "When I realized that I could have my own private access to the universe, right there on my desk, I was hooked." 9:09

First thoughts on teaching 12:30

10. Post-Army, he went to seminary to become an Episcopal Priest.

11. Took a job in the West Indies as a priest, but was having doubts about continuing when he returned to Georgia.

12. Teaching came up. "I don't mind getting up in front of people, and if I feel confident in a subject, I will gladly share what I know with people." 13:43

13. Then he had a crisis of faith and decided to abandon the priesthood altogether. 14:20

14. He started with substitute teaching in public schools 15:01

15. Then he saw that ad for the TESOL certificate in SF.

16. He was told he had a flare for it by the trainers. 15:35

17. He actually wanted to go to Russia, because he speaks Russian. 16:08

18. Long story of IMF crisis

19. He started teaching at a Hogwan (cram school) 6AM-10 PM (with a 4 hour break for lunch) 19:22

20. Got his first university gig through one of his adult students 21:26

21. Can you chose textbooks in Korea?

“Not at Hogwans. It depends.”

22. Did you have an inspirational teacher? 27:00

Colonel Clarence Olsen, French teacher, had a fascinating lifestyle. No nonsense guy. He just wanted you to learn French. "I admired how he taught. He was not stern, but he had expectations of us... (DARK RED) He didn't just teach a class and vanish. He was always around."

Feronymous Second Section -12/30/15

23. First thoughts on Second Life 00:30

24. Started with his original avatar in September 11, 2006 1:33

25. Clicked on a banner 3:00

26. Discussed his experiences in OpenSim

First impressions of Second Life 7:00

27. Was not impressed at all with his first experience. Chaotic welcome area. Thought it was stupid.

28. "Feronymous is fading. I spend more time in Second Life with my original avatar than I do with Feronymous" 8:45

29. He uses it for “street cred,” because the avatar is 3 years older than Feronymous

Discussion of Roman RP sim he belonged to 10:20

30. (ORANGE) "I didn't really fit in. I did some combats, but it was hard to figure out the combat stuff."10:45

How did you wind up at Cypris 13:22

31. Did a Search for English teaching, and then wound up at English Village. Then he found Cypris.

32. He met Prof. Merryman and Mystie. "We chatted about the purpose of Cypris Chat. What they did. And he invited me to come...I thought it was really good. Because...my training is in TESOL. And TESOL was small groups focusing on skills and fluency and Cypris Chat was doing exactly what I had been trained to do." 15:00

33.. Description of first class. 15:40

Meetings 17:25

34. "They were always so late."

Sunday evening would have been better.

35. Discussion of Facebook as replacement for meetings

36. Goes to the website about once a week.

37. He was considering leaving FB (which he did, but then returned), since he didn't like using it for communication with Cypris members.

Relationships 20:40

38. In regards to socializing: " (LIGHT BLUE) Because of the nature of Cypris Chat – it's a free service – so there's not financial bonding. People don't pay and then feel obligated to participate. People at Cypris have to want to participate. (RED) And I think maybe the social events take the place of the financial connection. They can get their English practice in. And it's fun. I'm not...a social butterfly. I will go to Cypris when it's convenient for me, and there will often be one or two people there. People that can't come to the chat circle because of their particular time zone..."22:10

How do you see your role at Cypris? 23:50

39. "I'm the stand-by. If something happens and they need an English teacher...I can step in and do a little chat ring activity. I'm not sure the students are all that comfortable with me. I never get feedback about what I do in Cypris. I never have. So I don't know what people think." 26:10

40. Discussed difficulties with his last set of listening classes he led. "(Red) People who are attracted to Cypris want more of a social group where the central activity is not really central...If I do another activity in Cypris like the book club, it'll be more of a cliquish group that gets around to talking about books." 26:30

41. "(DARK RED) I wonder if anyone has ever done a profile of people who regularly come into Second Life, who enjoy Second Life. Maybe it's just a certain kind of person who would do this. We should maybe tailor our language lessons to that kind of person." 27:20

42. Discussion of the interviewers unenthusiastic RL (real life) university students

43. Discussion of Feronymous' own students' 28:22

44. None of our students had ever returned to SL after classes were over.

Discussion of Voice in Cypris 31:00

45. "The voice thing was new to me. The first time I was in Second Life, I heard people talking that I didn't know, but I didn't have a headset or anything. I didn't know how to do that."

46. Discussion of a YouTube video in with a headset.

47. Discussion of problems of voice. "I had struggled with my university to get this Second Life property, and I had built a model of our campus in Second Life, painstakingly detailed. And my very first class, my voice wouldn't work." 34:50

48. Problems with how universities used SL. " (DARK RED) They would set up their classes in the same way they would do it in the real world classes. And you know that's not very fun. It's not unique...I think it's a good idea. Universities could still have classes if they would just think outside the box." 37:40

Too many personal questions at Cypris 39:00

49. No. "I can understand some people would be uncomfortable with personal questions, but I absolutely have so few boundaries. People find that very hard to believe, because I'm a very reserved person in real life." 39:10

Individual participation 41:15

50. Thinks he was allowed to participate in the way he wanted.

"The conditions, the situation of Cypris, I've always taken that into consideration when I though of possible things to do. So I wouldn't try something that was completely out of character with the group." The 41:58

51. Discussion of legitimate peripheral participation

52. Listening is important for beginners before speaking 44:20

Is Cypris management responsive to your needs? 46:45

53. Has no complaints about getting notices, etc. In a a timely manner

54. "Mystie's done a good job doing that. She coordinates things, she answers questions, ,and she also teaches. So I think that helps her management right there. She's on both sides. She's a teacher, and she's running the group." 47:19

A**re Cypris members adhering to the Cypris mission statement? 48:48**

55. Most are.

"There's not always an activity at a proper time for everybody. So not everybody can participate, participate, participate." 50:35

Discussion of chatting groups outside of activities

Should Cypris be doing anything else? 54:38

46. "(GREEN) I'm more interested in educational aspects than in the social aspects. So what would make me more comfortable at Cypris would be a regular schedule of TESOL. Of English teaching. (RED) The socializing is great, but I think that's pretty much the focus...that's not the right word...it's what people want...they want to do the fun stuff. Like when we used to all go on trips after the chat circle. I remember there were people who would come really late to the Chat Circle just so they could go on the little trips. Or the dance. People like to watch the avatars move on the screen. And people like to tweak their avatars. And the haunted house was nice. The snow stuff. I remember Mike (Prof. Merryman) loved snow and a lot of people enjoyed that. They liked seeing the terrain change...and that's all fine, but I look at other places in Second Life that are doing classes. English learning classes. (BLUE) And they charge money for it. And we don't. But I would like to see us kind of doing that more than what we're doing now. I don't want to take the fun away, but..." 54:48

So you'd like students to dedicate themselves to as set of classes? 57:58

47. "(GREEN) That is the problem. The nature of our group doesn't lend itself to that...When you're learning a language, a lot of people who are learning English...I think they would be afraid of just a free-for-all. Like me. I majored in French in college, and if I was thrown into the middle of Paris, I could get around, but by no means am I fluent. But was it Cem who was doing the French classes (at Virtlantis)...I did go to a couple of the French – it was beginning French and it was just kind of throwing you out there the way we do with learning English. And it's kind of frightening when you have to speak 100% in a foreign language and you don't really know what you're doing and you feel people are waiting on you to find the right word. And it's embarrassing. I think what we can do, what's nice about a class is that it's a safe place. It's not a free-for-all. The teacher has told you what you're going to do today. And you can work on that skill, and you don't have to produce anything suddenly out of the blue. You can do that on the social time, but in a class, it's a safe time and you don't have that same fear. Language learning can be frightening, because you have so much you want to say. You're a human being with this wonderful life story and you cannot communicate it. But you want to communicate it. That's what I see. If we had safe times for real learners, then I would feel more comfortable.1:00:00

APPENDIX G

DUKE'S FIELD TRIP: STUDENT HANDOUT AND NOTES

7/7/2013

Student Handout

Vocabulary

1. altar - a table used in religious ceremonies

Ex. The altar at the church was in the front.

2. sarcophagus - something like a box that holds a dead body, like a coffin, but displayed above ground and often carved or decorated

Ex. King Tut was found in a colorful sarcophagus

3. catacombs - underground passageways or chambers in which people are buried

Ex. The Romans built catacombs under several cites.

4. gargoyle - a winged demon, often a stone statue

5. ruined - destroyed; abandoned

Ex. The ruined city was forgotten for years.

6. amphitheater - an outdoor theater

Ex. The Greeks were the first to build amphitheaters for plays.

Instructions

1. First, everyone must get into Cypris Chat Group Call.

Communicate -> Groups -> Cypris Chat -> (right click) Call

2. I will teleport to the sim we will visit.

3. Keep Group Chat open. I will post the SLurl for the location.

4. Everyone search for the clues I read. If you find one of the things I describe, call out and give everyone directions to the place. When most people have found their way there, I will give you a new clue.

5. No teleporting! No flying, please (at least until instructed).

6. You will not need to change clothes before during this activity.

7. Please be kind and courteous to any residents we might meet. We do not want to be "those annoying tourists from Cypris."

Teacher's notes – Field trip directions

1. Go through the gate, and have a swing on the roof.

2. Find the altar near the six sarcophagi.

3. Find the sarcophagus of Logan and Sylvia.

4. Go through the double doors, down into the catacombs. Have fun in the stocks and in the cage.

5. Find the room of skulls.

6. Leave the graveyard and head southeast. Fly till you see the three gargoyle statues and land there.

7. Walk to the ruined amphitheater.

8. Fly far to the north, then land near the fountain of blood.

9. There is another cemetery nearby. Go inside and have a rest inside the coffin.

10. Walk over to the old chapel and take a pic in front of the cross.

APPENDIX H

KAEDE'S FRAGILE FRAMEWORK: LESSON 1

12/16/15

THE FRAGILE FRAMEWORK:
A Nature comic examines the 25-year quest for a climate treaty. Can nations unite to save Earth's climate?
Richard Monastersky & Nick Sousanis
24 November 2015
Download pdf here:
http://www.nature.com/news/the-fragile-framework-1.18861

COVER PAGE

The Fragile Framework
Can nations unite to save Earth's climate?
A comic by Richard Monastersky
and Nick Sousanis
Paris Climate Talks
A Nature Special Issue
nature.com/parisclimate

PAGE 1

When the world's nations gather in Paris this December to negotiate a climate treaty, their efforts will cap a 25-year-long journey plagued by detours and dead ends.

The quest started in 1990 when the United Nations launched talks aimed at producing the first global climate agreement. In June 1992, more than 170 nations gathered for the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

In Rio, they adopted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), which declared: "The ultimate objective of this Convention … is to achieve … stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system."

The Rio convention was a historic step, but it contained no binding commitments to slow global warming. Would the world act in time?

"We don't have another 20 years to squander," said Maurice Strong, organizer of the Rio summit. More than 20 years later, greenhouse-gas emissions continue their relentless rise.

Vocabulary
---
adopted
anthropogenic
binding
commitments
greenhouse gas
launched
negotiate
quest
relentless
squander
stabilization

Links to more information

United Nations timeline
http://unfccc.int/timeline/
Infographics
http://unfccc.int/timeline/#infographics
Stories about Climate Change
http://www.npr.org/tags/125938077/climate-change

APPENDIX I

GRAMA'S READING CLASS NOTECARD

12/19/15
Adapted from: https://www.ncsu.edu/project/lancet/fifth_grade/paperdragon5.pdf
Dec 18th , 2015 Reading #80

Instructions: Please read aloud the short story below and look at the requirements that follow it. Each of you reads the story once. In this reading comprehension activity there are three parts; each part has its own instructions.

Paper Dragon Fairy Tale
Once upon a time, on a wall in a little house in a country far away, there hung a beautiful paper dragon. It was carefully folded and looked almost lifelike. The dragon was painted the colors of the rainbow, and its tail was spread wide like the tail of a peacock. Many years went by, and the people who lived in the house enjoyed the picture of the colorful dragon. People who came to visit the house stopped to see the brightly-colored dragon, but no one ever asked about where it had come from.

A couple of times, someone took it down from the wall, only to put it on another wall in the little house, and arrange the tail slightly differently. Doing this, they felt a feeling of energy and of life. Something about holding the paper dragon made them feel free.

Once, a stranger on his journey passed by the house and happened to see the beautiful dragon hanging on the wall. Impressed by its beauty he stared closely at the dragon. Without asking permission, he lifted down the dragon from the wall. He hung it over his arm and went out into the yard. With skilled fingers he tied a string around the dragon's body and quickly went to an open place. As a breeze began, the stranger carefully let out the string and ran into the wind. Up the dragon lifted into the air and it soared high above like a kite. The people who lived in the house were surprised to see their beautiful paper dragon flying above them, brightly colored and with its long tail flowing behind it. They began to think that, maybe, there was something about this dragon that they had not noticed before.

As the wind blew, the dragon happily danced in the air above. Without warning, the string broke, and the dragon flew higher and further away from them. Suddenly the little paper dragon began growing; its paper wings stretched wide and long. Its paper body began to change and the small creature flew higher and higher. The people below looked in amazement as the dragon came to life and flew away. Turning to them, the stranger said, "Some things are just meant to be free."
*** The End ***

Part A: Put these story events in correct sequence.

1. The dragon came to life.
2. The stranger said to the people of the house "Some things are just meant to be free."
3. People holding the dragon made them feel free
4. A beautiful dragon hung on the wall of a house
5. Stranger tied a string to the dragon and flew him like a kite.
6. The string broke and the dragon was let free
7. A stranger took the paper dragon down off the wall and outside.

Part B: Vocabulary: Please see the list of expressions/words below and try to understand the meaning from the context . After you understand the meaning , please make up your own sentence for each word, write it in the public chat and share it with the group.

· lifelike (adj) : very similar to the person or thing represented. Synonyms: realistic, true to life, representational, faithful, exact, precise, detailed, vivid, graphic, natural, naturalistic

· rainbow (n): an arc or circle that exhibits in concentric bands the colors of the spectrum and that is formed opposite the sun by the refraction and reflection of the sun's rays in raindrops, spray, or mist

· be impressed by/with someone or something: is used to express amazement for a person's doing. "Impressed" describes the feeling of being happily surprised by how good something is. You say that you "are impressed" when someone or something is better than you expected it to be.
· to stare (v): to look directly, fixedly, or vacantly, often with a wide-eyed gaze
· breeze(n) : a light current of air; a gentle wind.
· to soar (v): to rise or fly into the air
· amazement (n): a state of extreme surprise or wonder; astonishment.

Part B: Reading Comprehension (Multiple Choice): Please answer the following questions .
1.) How did the dragon end up outside flying in the air?
A. The people who lived in the house took it outside.
B. The dragon was so lifelike that it flew out the window.
C. The stranger took it outside and flew it like a kite.
D. A breeze blew the dragon out the window.

2.) The word amazement as it is used in the story means
A. Wonder and surprise.
B. Anger and shock.
C. Confused and upset.
D. Content and happy.

3.) What would be another good title for this passage?
A. How to Make a Paper Dragon.
B. The Paper Dragon Flies Free.
C. The History of the Paper Dragon.

D. The Stranger and the Dragon

4.) Why did the stranger take the paper dragon outside without permission?
A. He was going to show it to a friend.
B. He did not think the family would mind.
C. He wanted to steal the dragon from the family.
D. He thought the dragon was special and needed to be free.

5.) How did people feel after holding the paper dragon?
A. Tired from lifting the dragon off the wall.
B. Energized and alive.
C. Shocked and amazed.
D. Sad because they had to put the colorful dragon back.
*** Thank you for being here with us for this activity. Hope you had fun ! ***
TIME FOR THE HAPPY DANCE!

APPENDIX J

MYSTIE'S BEGINNER'S CLASS NOTECARD

1/19/16

= "The Last Photo" by Berners Smith = - Part1
1) It is Saturday afternoon. Martin and his sister Pam are in Cambridge for the day. They are looking at the beautiful old buildings of this University City.
Pam has a camera with her. She likes taking photos and sometimes they are very good. But sometimes they are not very good and Martin laughs at them.

2) It is five o'clock. Pam and Martin are going home now.
They are tired after their long day. They are in the garden near the bus station. " Let's have a last photo of you," says Pam.
"Oh no, not again," says Martin.
"Come on," says Pam. "It's the last one. I want to finish the film in my camera."

3) "Oh, all right," says Martin.
He stands in front of the flowers.
"Look at me," says Pam and takes a photo. A man with a big rucksack on his back walks between Pam and Martin.
"Oh no," says Pam. "Now I've got a picture of that man, not of you, Martin."

==== QUESTIONS 1-3 =====

1 Choose the right word and fill in the blanks.
(taking / between / of / sister / tired / at / in / day / front / with)

1) Martin and his _____ Pam are in Cambridge for the ____.
2) Pam has a camera ____ her.
3) She likes _____ photos.
4) Martin laughs ____ them.
5) They are _____ after their long day.
6) Let's have a last photo ____ you
7) I want to finish the film ____ my camera.
8) He stands in _____ of the flowers.
9) A man walks _____ Pam and Martin.
10) "____ at me" says Pam.

---

2 Answer these question.

1) Which city are they in?
2) What are Martin and Pam doing there?
3) Why does Pam have a camera?
4) What time are they going home?
5) What does Martin say when Pam asks to take a last photo?

Mystie
Cypris Chat English

APPENDIX K

DUKE'S PHRASAL VERBS A-Z NOTECARD

1/19/16
1. pull through
He was very sick, but he pulled through.
2. push around/about
She is smaller than me, so she can't push me around.
3. push ahead/forward/on
There were many problems with the production of the play, but we just had to push on anyway.
4. push for
The union is always pushing for more benefits.
5. put aside
He puts aside $50 each month for his son's college fund.
We have to put aside our differences and work together.
6. put down
She's always putting him down because he gets bad grades.
7. put in
I put in a request for a loan at the bank.
8. put off
I put off my trip until after my meetings.

Now please write your answers to these questions.
1. Which phrasal verbs were NEW to you? (Ex. 1,5, 6)

2. Which phrasal verbs did you think were easy to use? (Ex. 1 & 5)

3. Which phrasal verb did you think was the most difficult to use? (Ex. 4, 5 & 8)

4. Please write THREE sentences using the phrasal verbs that you found were easiest to use. Don't use the Internet for clues. ;)
a.
b.
c.
If you want to write MORE sentences, please write them here.

Now Rename this notecard and put your Avatar name where it says <YOUR NAME HERE>, and send me a copy.
Please come back to the class next week, and I will tell you how you did!
Note: Again, I am recording this class ONLY for my own notes. It will not be broadcast.