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Situated Learning through Social Networking Communities: The Development of Joint Enterprise, Mutual Engagement, and a Shared Repertoire

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ABSTRACT

Scholars praise social networking tools for their ability to engage and motivate *i*Generation students in meaningful communicative practice, content exchange, and collaboration (Greenhow, Robelia, & Hughes, 2009; Ziegler, 2007). To gain further insight about the nature of student participation, knowledge acquisition, and relationship development within social networking communities, situated learning theory was used as a lens to analyze the joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire experienced within the Facebook community of an intermediate French course. Participating students made connections to course content, developed identities through the enhancement of interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes of communication, and developed relationships through their participation in the online francophone community. Students' interactions, shared postings, and profiles were examined. Student feedback about the types and frequency of their Facebook interactions and their perceived value of this online social networking tool to learn about French language and culture were also explored.

KEYWORDS

Social Networking, Situated Learning Theory, Identity, Engagement, Community

INTRODUCTION

Immersed and raised in technology, the new generation of students is defined by their reliance on media, their technological multitasking capabilities, and their propensity toward all things new (Rosen, 2010). These young adults, born in the 1990s or later, are typically referred to as the *i*Generation for their consistent and simultaneous use of technology such as *i*Pods, *i*Phones, *i*Chat, and otherwise. With virtual communication and connections playing significant roles in their interactions, this group is characterized by their highly social attributes. Rosen suggests that they revere friendship (often virtual), consume large quantities of online information, and are the most communicative generation to date. In fact, *i*Geners are claimed to have redefined communication with their virtual communicative interactions via text messages, blogs, Twitter, and Facebook, and the representation of identity, expression, and connection play key roles in their navigation of the cyberworld.

Furthermore, Carlson (2005) suggests that the *i*Generation thrives in independent and autonomous learning contexts. Whereas previous generations typically acquired knowledge through authority figures, this group engages readily in autonomous learning environments due to their ingrained habits of seeking and retrieving information from various online sources

and media (Tapscott, 1998). Therefore, self-directed learning contexts incorporating interactive environments, various resources, and choice are claimed to be important toward the development of meaningful learning experiences for these students (Glenn, 2000).

Web 2.0 technologies in education offer the opportunity for such self-direction with their ability to restructure hierarchies, inform and reconfigure communication, and transform relationships with knowledge and people (Beer & Burrows, 2007). With their reorganization of knowledge acquisition and use, Lave and Wenger (1991) suggest that "these technologies are dramatically transforming the basic patterns of communication and knowledge interchange in society" and are redefining "what it means to know, understand, and … become a 'literate' or 'educated citizen'" (p. 12). Social networking tools have been praised for their educational value and potential and are heralded for their capacity to encourage student motivation and engagement (Thorne, Black, & Sykes, 2009; Ziegler, 2007). In discussing their pedagogical value, Ito (2008) suggests that "youth's participation in this networked world suggests new ways of thinking about the role of education" (p. 2). Research suggests that social networks allow for direct access and interaction with large numbers of people and communities, encourage collaboration and discussion of course material, and promote immediate sharing and development of written, audio, and visual content (Rosen, 2010). Barnes, Marateo, and Ferris (2007) suggest that such characteristics and the various modalities present within social networking will allow educators to more effectively connect with *i*Generation learners who flourish in environments where immediacy, collective reflection, and change are abundant.

Despite the many advantages identified by scholars, the dynamics of learners' participation in social networking communities is still unclear. How do learners facilitate dialogue and relationships in these communities? How are relationships among participants and online identities encouraged and transformed? How do learners acquire enhanced cultural understanding? To gain insight into the nature of student participation, knowledge acquisition, and relationship development within these communities, situated learning theory will be used here as a lens to analyze the joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and shared repertoire experienced within the social networking community of an intermediate-level French course.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The Social Turn in Second Language Acquisition

The concept of the social turn in second language acquisition (SLA) places the language learner in the role of a participating social agent in the language acquisition process (Block, 2003; Thorne & Payne, 2005). A key feature of this view, grounded within sociocultural theory, is that higher order functions develop out of social interactions. The examination of the social environment and the interactions in it is therefore of key importance in understanding an individual's cognitive development (Vygotsky, 1978). Activity theory, in particular, suggests that human behavior results from the "integration of socially and culturally constructed forms of mediation into human activity" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 18).

Such understandings also influenced SLA scholars' conception of the interface between second language use and identity. Davies and Harré (1999) suggest that social interactions and the consistent positioning of individuals within those interactions serve to develop and situate one's identity. The current conceptualization of poststructuralist identity in SLA research suggests that language learning needs to be conceptualized as both a social and cognitive process (Pavlenko, 2001). Pavlenko (2001) suggests that the relationship between language and identity, particularly found within language learners' personal narratives, are the "heart and soul of the second language socialization process" (p. 867). In place of simply producing

grammatically accurate speech, language socialization is a model of language development which suggests that interaction within speech communities and engagement with language in socially and pragmatically appropriate ways are essential to L2 development (Garrett, 2008; Thorne et al., 2009).

Online discussions and interactions may promote such language socialization in addition to the co-construction of knowledge and contextualized L2 interaction (Murphy & Loveless, 2005). Studies suggest that computer-mediated communication increases language production, encourages target language use, increases students' willingness to communicate, and decreases teacher dominance and language learner anxiety (Gilbert, Fiske, & Lindzey, 1998; Beauvois, 1998). Lam (2004) claims that students engage in varied communicative practices within online environments which allow them to adopt new identities through language. According to Thorne et al. (2009), online discussion occurring outside of the L2 classroom often "involves extended periods of language socialization, adaptation, and creative semiotic work that illustrate vibrant communicative practices" (p. 815). Although there is consensus that form-focused instruction is beneficial and necessary for L2 learners (Loewen, 2005; Russell & Spada, 2006), meaning-focused interaction, engagement, and discussion among L2 learners in such online environments may also be beneficial to SLA for the reasons mentioned above.

Social Networking and Education

Social networking tools, in particular, encourage language socialization and engagement with language in socially and pragmatically appropriate ways. Social networking tools are web-based services through which individuals may maintain and develop social ties with people in their personal network in a multifaceted and multisensory environment (Jones & Bronack, 2008). Although some commentators express the dangers of online social interactions (Gutierrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009), other scholars praise these platforms for their informal, collaborative learning environments and their potential to enhance classroom education (Greenhow et al., 2009). In terms of pedagogical advantages, Rosen (2010) suggests that social networks offer opportunities for the exchange of rich multimedia information, microcontent of digestible length, collaboration, synchronous and asynchronous communication, social interaction, and personalization. In accordance with these advantages, Luckin, Clark, Graber, Logan, Mee, and Oliver (2009) suggest that the promise of these informal learning spaces is their ability to alter the role of school from "curricular gatekeeper to learning hub" (p. 102). With this reconfiguration, both teacher and students are placed in the role of continuous learner, and students now have the potential to "adopt the role of navigators of knowledge, content creators, producers, and publishers" (Luckin et al., 2009, p. 103). With this reformulation of knowledge acquisition as co-generated and collaboratively produced, scholars suggest that *i*Geners' interest, motivation, and engagement may by further encouraged within the school setting (Thorne et al., 2009; Eberhardt, 2007; Ziegler, 2007).

Social Networking, Identity, and Multimodal Literacy

In addition to the cultivation of motivation and engagement, some suggest that the development of online profiles within social networks has a direct influence on the reinforcement of an individual's identity (Greenhow et al, 2009; Rosen, 2007; Wiley & Sisson, 2006). Slater (2002) suggests that the expression of online identity is performative and that you essentially *become what you type*. Therefore, within new media spaces such as social networking communities, individuals may create and promulgate "dynamic and shifting constructions and presentations of self" (Coiro, Knobel, Lankshear, & Leu, 2008, p. 526). Pempek, Yermo-

layeva, and Calvert (2009) suggest that such identity development is encouraged as external feedback, is pervasive within such communities, and reinforces an individual's sense of self. Relationship development is also encouraged as an individual's disclosure fosters intimacy with online community members. Teens, in particular, may experience a sense of disinhibition and safety online that leads to increased self-disclosure and enhanced bonding (Rosen, 2007). danah boyd, a University of Southern California Fellow at the Annenberg Center for Communications, discusses the implications of the aforementioned expression and disclosure present within social networking communities, stating

> The way you develop your identity is to put things out there, get feedback, and adjust accordingly. You develop an internal model for yourself and balance this with reactions from other people…doing this online allows you to be more reflective about whom you are. On MySpace, for example, you have to write yourself into being; in other words, you have to craft an impression of yourself that stands on its own. For today's teens, it's just another step in the path of figuring out who you are. And figuring out who you are requires being social. (as cited in Rosen, 2007, p. 87)

Consistent with Slater's (2002) suggestion that you *become what you type*, boyd suggests that the social nature of social networking tools allows you to "write yourself into being" through shared postings, accompanied feedback from the community, and subsequent reflection and self-appraisal.

Moreover, there are a variety of ways in which individuals may express personal identity within online social communities. Students may represent their sense of self by posting and sharing various media preferences such as YouTube videos, articles, websites, and video and music podcasts (Pempek et al., 2009). As individuals synthesize multiple modes of communication, the exchange and interaction within social networking communities have developed distinctly new social formations that are markedly different from conventional print literacies (Thorne, 2008; Thorne et al., 2009). Thus, the notion of "text" has become ambiguous as a variety of expressive media are remixed, copied, and edited into new creations of identity and otherwise (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Gee (2005) describes this process of text and media remixing as "hybridizing" and mentions its prominence among youth in online environments. The National Council of Teachers of English suggest that hybridizing and multimodal literacy is essential to the success of our students as they are now expected to possess "fluency in a broad range of competencies; to consume and create texts in visual, audio, and written formats, to evaluate messages in a variety of mediums, and to gain social awareness and the ability to communicate and live in a diverse global society" (National Council of Teachers of English, 2007). Moreover, such remixing, creation, and consumption of multimodal texts are key elements of communication and expression within social networking communities.

Social Networking and Situated Learning Theory

The notion of "community" and the relationship among individual members within a community also plays an essential role in social networking dynamics. In their identification of theoretical frameworks that inform our understanding of e-learning, Mayes and de Freitas (2007) presented situated learning theory as a fundamental perspective to further discipline our understanding of learning in Web 2.0 environments. SLA theory, particularly sociocultural theory, suggests that social interaction with the people and cultural artifacts within one's environment plays a fundamental role in the process of L2 cognitive development. Situated learning theory similarly suggests that learning is experienced and mediated through rela-

tionships with community members or within a "community of practice." Within a community of practice, group members jointly share and develop practices, learn from their interactions with group members, and gain opportunities to develop personally, professionally, and/or intellectually (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Wenger (1998) suggests that the combination of a shared domain of interest, mutual engagement within the community, and a shared repertoire of resources and practices are three essential features that constitute a community of practice. A shared domain of interest implies that the community possesses common interests and collective goals. Mutual engagement suggests that members jointly engage in discussion, dialogue, and exchange by means of their physical co-presence and goal orientation. This engagement could include problem solving, requests for information, discussion of developments, information seeking and coordination, planning, or negotiation of meaning. The third element suggests that the community members develop a shared repertoire of resources. Such resources could include shared narratives, artifacts, discourse, and experiences. In combining these three elements, the activities and tasks do not occur in isolation within a community but instead are based on a multiplicity of relations. The individual learner is therefore defined by, as well as defines, these relationships within the community. As such, learning becomes embedded within a social context, and social membership, identity, and knowledge are mutually dependent.

Mayes and de Freitas (2007) outlined implications for both learning and teaching within communities of practice. Implications for learning include the acquisition of habits, attitudes, values, and skills in context and the development of identities and learning relationships. Implications for teaching in a community of practice include support for identity development, facilitation of learning dialogues and relationships, and the creation of safe environments for participation and authentic opportunities for learning.

In accordance with the abovementioned implications of the situative perspective of learning, this article will present how a Facebook project implemented in an intermediate-level French course allowed the participating students to gain information about French cultural products and make connections to course content. Further exploration will present how students developed identities through the enhancement of the interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes of communication and how students developed relationships and established roles via their participation in the online francophone community. Students' interactions, shared postings, written memoirs, and profiles will be examined. Student feedback about the types and frequency of their Facebook interactions and their perceived value, interest, and benefits of this online social networking tool to learn about French language and culture will also be presented. To examine engagement within this Facebook community, the three elements that constitute a community of practice will be explored: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire and practice (Wenger, 1998).

METHODS

The participants in the project consisted of 17 college students (5 male students and 12 female students) enrolled in a third-semester French course. Eight students were freshman, 5 students were sophomores, and 4 were juniors. The students were asked to develop Facebook profiles and interact three times weekly within the Facebook community. The students were also asked to complete a postproject survey at the end of the semester consisting of the following four open-ended questions:

1. How did you interact on Facebook during this course?
2. When posting on Facebook, did you pay attention to grammatical accuracy and vocabulary choice? Why or why not?
3. Did you enjoy using Facebook in this course? Why or why not?
4. Do you feel that the use of Facebook was a valuable French learning experience? How?

All participants' online Facebook interactions and postings were reviewed line by line and categories and labels using inductive coding techniques assisted in the discovery of patterns and themes within the data. Responses from the postproject survey were tabulated and also reviewed for patterns through the use of codes, categories, and labels. The postproject survey was used as a source of triangulation with the online Facebook interactions and postings.

JOINT ENTERPRISE

Recall that a shared domain of interest and joint enterprise implies that the community possesses common interests and collective goals. Membership involves a commitment to an endeavor that is considered relevant to all members of the community, and mutual accountability becomes an integral part of the practice (Wenger, 1998). The current Facebook project was embedded within a global simulation curriculum. In a global simulation, students create a fictive yet culturally grounded world, assume the role of a self-developed character, and collaborate with fellow community members (Magnin, 1997).[1] Within this curriculum, the students created French or francophone characters that lived virtually in the same Parisian building (*immeuble*) and wrote in the first person about their experiences in their memoirs. The course content centered on Paris, and weekly themes included, among others, Parisian artists, lodging in Paris, the Montmartre quarter, Parisian cuisine, love stories, and murder mysteries. Designed around the weekly themes and the grammatical, linguistic, and cultural objectives of the course, the global simulation course context served as the framework for a common goal within the classroom community. The memoir scenarios for the writing assignments included a character self-portrait and description of the Montmartre quarter, a description of a neighbor's apartment, a memorable meal and dialogue among *immeuble* residents at a Parisian restaurant, and a narrative describing a murder mystery in the building. The collective storyline from the *immeuble* context was then integrated into the classroom via role plays, weekly resident meetings, oral exams, and a final skit in which students performed the concluding chapter of life in the *immeuble* (Mills & Péron, 2008).

Doyle and Carter (2003) argue that humans have "a universal predisposition to 'story' their experience, that is to impose a narrative interpretation on information and experience and that stories capture nuance, indeterminacy, and interconnectedness in ways that … expand the possibilities for interpretation and understanding" (p. 130). The development of and engagement with such narratives, therefore, is a way to organize, interpret, and give coherence to experiences (Cortazzi, Jin, Wall, & Cavendish, 2001). To organize and provide further coherence to this collective *immeuble* narrative, the students were asked to become a part of a joint enterprise: a social networking community. The students developed Facebook accounts and profiles for their *immeuble* characters and became Facebook friends with all of the building "tenants" (see Figure 1).

Figure 1
Sample Facebook Profile for an *Immeuble* Character

Among others, Facebook characters included French or francophone street performers, art-ists, actors, chefs, criminals, and journalists of various ages. Character profiles typically incor-porated profile photos and information about origin, birthday, political opinions, relationship status, and preferences in music, television, films, books, and activities. The profiles also included "walls" where fellow community members could post messages or share various media. The students signed user conduct agreements to confirm that they would only accept friend requests from their instructor and fellow classmates and would not misrepresent them-selves as other people outside of their fictional character.

To further enhance the collective narrative, students were asked to post their revised memoirs as "notes" or shared written entries in Facebook (see Figure 2).

Figure 2
Sample Memoir Shared through Facebook Notes

User minifeeds within social networking tools allow members to track stories and information about both themselves and their community members (Pempek et al., 2009). When posting memoirs within this project, therefore, "tagging" or identifying other *immeuble* tenants was encouraged. By tagging others in their memoirs, fellow tenants would be alerted through their personal minifeed of their character's involvement in the evolving storyline. This movement between the students' written assignments and the exchanges shared within this Facebook community served to enhance a strong sense of ownership in the collective story and their characters' identity and relationships. The development of a joint enterprise with common interests and goals could thus be further encouraged within this virtual community.

MUTUAL ENGAGEMENT

In addition to the development of a joint enterprise with common interests, situated learning theory suggests that mutual engagement is a fundamental characteristic of a community of practice. Membership is therefore developed through shared engagement in discussion, negotiation, and exchange. Mutual engagement creates relationships among people; however, mutual support and interpersonal allegiance cannot always be assumed. Conflict, disagreement, and challenge can often be typical forms of engagement within a community of practice. Wenger (1998) suggests that "as a form of participation, rebellion often reveals a greater commitment than does passive conformity" (p. 77). As such, the multiplicity of relations within a community of practice is diverse and complex. Among others, mutual relations could include those of expertise and helplessness, ease and struggle, resistance and compliance, and trust and suspicion (Wenger, 1998).

To encourage mutual engagement within the global simulation community, students were asked to be active within Facebook at least three times per week as part of their participation and homework grade. Although it was required that exchanges and posts be in French, students were given the liberty to decide the type and scope of their interactions and shared postings. Whereas in-class activities, quizzes, and compositions were often form focused, the goal of the Facebook interactions was to promote meaning-focused discussion, creative exchange, and language socialization. In a survey requesting student feedback about the type and frequency of their Facebook participation, the 17 students described their most common Facebook postings as notes (15 students), wall postings (14 students), status updates (13 students), photos (12 students), new stories (8 students), video (6 students), group pages (4 students), music (1 student), and Facebook chat (1 student). Although not mentioned in the survey, students also communicated readily on Facebook by adding comments to the above-mentioned postings of their fellow community members.

Through their co-presence within the Facebook community, learners mutually engaged in the creation of online personas and relationships. Characters' identities were affirmed via interpersonal communication with community members in wall posting interactions and in status updates and accompanied commentary. Wenger (1998) claims that "talking about identity in social terms is not denying individuality, but viewing the very definition of individuality as something that is part of the practices of specific communities" (p. 147). In situative learning theory, identity is therefore viewed as the intersection between the social and the individual. Within this Facebook community, two characters named Zoé and André wrote their characters into being through social interactions. The character of the young and hip Zoé was described in her written memoirs as *une jeune femme rousse avec les yeux verts, un nez retroussée, un visage rond, et un tatouage d'un elephant sur le dos* 'a young redhead with green eyes, a turned up nose, a round face, and a tattoo of an elephant on her back.' The character of André, on the contrary, presented himself within the Information tab of his Facebook profile as having apathetic political views and the belief that God never existed [*Opinions politiques: Apathique; Religion: Dieu n'a jamais existé pour moi*]. Zoé asserted her young and trendy identity within the community by posting a message on André's wall using SMS language, introducing herself and requesting help to find her lost key. In response to Zoé's message which was riddled with texting language, André asserted the image of his character as apathetic and discontented with the following wall response: *Je ne parle pas votre langue, mademoiselle … Et je n'apprécie pas ce dérangement très impoli!* 'I don't speak your language mademoiselle … and I don't appreciate this very impolite disruption!' (see Figure 3)

Figure 3
Mutual Exchange and Identity Development: Wall Postings

Andre Manasse Je ne parle pas votre langue, mademoiselle... Et je n'apprécie pas ce dérangement très impoli!
27 janvier, à 21:36 · Commenter · J'aime

Zoe Vasser Bjr Andre! Cav? Jj'aBIT pres de toi. Est'ce que tu m'e'D trouver mon cle stp? J'tapLDkej'pE! Rstp!
27 janvier, à 11:46 · Commenter · J'aime

The commentaries within this exchange, both the initiation and the reaction, appear to be selectively crafted by the students in an effort to performatively express their characters' traits and individuality. André exhibits his character's persona in a nonparticipatory fashion by thwarting Zoe's attempts to establish a relationship, whereas Zoe sets forth her character's identity through participatory initiation and carefully selected language.

Identity was also asserted through self-disclosure in status updates. Within one semester, the "characters" had collectively posted 49 opinions through status updates. Such expression of opinions, beliefs, and feelings included updates such as *Zoé Vassar apprécie la pluie du printemps* 'Zoé appreciates the spring rain' or *Renée Clément n'aime pas le nouveau face-book* 'Renée doesn't like the new Facebook.' However, it was often through the interpersonal exchange among community members in comments on status updates that identities were reinforced. Conflict within social interactions, in particular, often confirmed and enhanced individuality (Wenger, 1998). The eccentric character of Henriette Russo, for example, expressed in her memoirs that she did not like the people in the building. She further asserted her aversion to *immeuble* tenants by humorously responding to a neighbor's wall posting with the statement: *Oui, je n'aime pas les gens. S'il vous plaît, ne parle pas à moi … sauf si elle est d'une certaine importance. Merci* 'Yes, I don't like people. Please, don't speak to me … unless it is of the utmost importance. Thanks.' By choosing this nonparticipatory role in the *immeuble* community, Henriette was indeed carving a role of belonging and establishing her sense of individuality.

A fellow tenant Jonathan, on the contrary, described his passion for his profession of street performance in his first written memoir.

> *Quand j'étais jeune, je me promenais et j'ai vu un homme avec un nez rouge et de grands pieds. Il jonglait deux balles et une pomme. Bientôt il a mangé un morceau de pomme, et peu après il a mangé la pomme entière. Je me rappelle de son pancarte : « J'ai besoin de l'argent pour une autre pomme S.V.P. » Ainsi début ma passion pour les tours magiques, le jongle, et le commencement de mon désir pour mon cirque. Comme cet homme, maintenant je suis baladin, et je traîne dans les rues avec mes balles et mes pommes.*

> 'When I was young, I was taking a walk and saw a man with a red nose and big feet. He was juggling two balls and an apple. Soon, he ate a piece of the apple and then later, he ate the entire apple. I remember his sign: "I need money for another apple, please." And this is how it all started: my passion for magic, juggling, and the beginning of my interest in the circus. Like this man, I am a street artist and I spend time in the streets with balls and apples.'

With knowledge of this character's passion and enthusiasm for street performance through the public nature of the memoirs shared via Facebook notes, the eccentric Henriette posted a status update expressing her disdain for her fellow neighbor Jonathan. In this status, she stated with joy that she loved calling the police when Jonathan carried out his juggling performance in the street (See Figure 4).

Figure 4
Mutual Exchange and Identity Development: Status Updates

The status update then incited a heated exchange between Jonathan and Henriette. Jonathan expressed his frustration by commenting on her status, asking why she would react in such a manner. Affirming her online identity as one of a cantankerous character, Henriette stated, *Oui. C'était moi qui a été appelé. Pourquoi? Parce qu'il est amusant. Je suis désolée, jeune homme. Mais il n'est pas de ma faute si vous n'avez pas un emploi réel* 'Yes, it was me that called. Why? Because it was funny. I am sorry, young man. But, it's not my fault that you don't have a real job.'

Presentational communication was an additional means by which students represented their characters' identities and exchanged information with other community members. The student who developed the character of Rémy Matisse, for example, wrote a poem to reinforce his character's distinctive qualities. Although self-proclaimed as an eternal bachelor, the last line of Rémy's first written memoir revealed the complexity of his character's association with love and relationships. He stated, *Qui sait? Peut-être je rencontrerai l'amour de ma vie dans l'immeuble* 'Who knows? Maybe I will meet the love of my life in the building.' After three or four weeks in the course, the student who played the role of Rémy needed to drop the course for personal reasons. Because of his connection to the *immeuble* community, however, he chose to continue to interact within the Facebook community as the *fantôme de l'immeuble* 'phantom of the building.' To cultivate his own character's identity and a romantic role in the evolving narrative, the phantom wrote and posted a poem as a shared Facebook note in which he disclosed his love and devotion for a fellow neighbor. The neighbor's name was not revealed; however, three female characters were mysteriously tagged in the note (see Figure 5). Through Rémy's carefully selected performative exchange with the community members, a clear attempt was made to forge an identity and establish a noteworthy role in the interconnected narrative.

Figure 5
Mutual Exchange and Identity Development: Facebook Notes

In response to Rémy's shared poetry and self-proclaimed phantom status, another student engaged in Rémy's storyline by developing a Facebook group page dedicated to finding answers to the inexplicable mystery of Rémy's death. Sixteen of the 17 *immeuble* characters joined this group, and 5 students exchanged commentary on the group page about the missing Rémy and the moments in which he was last seen. Through the development of this subcommunity, the students mutually engaged in problem solving, requests for information, discussion of developments, and information seeking (Wenger, 1998).

In addition to the relationships created through the status update interactions, notes, and group pages, relationships were also fostered through wall postings. During the semester, the students collectively exchanged 119 questions and 37 invitations for plans with other building tenants. Characters also maintained relationships with independently chosen characters throughout the semester. The character of Maryse Pineau, a palm reader, and Jeanne Piaf, the granddaughter of the great Edith Piaf, introduced themselves to each other at the beginning of the semester and developed a lasting relationship within the *immeuble* community. Their initial introduction began with Jeanne's post on Maryse's wall requesting help with running water in her apartment and Maryse's enthusiastic agreement to assist (see Figure 6). Thereafter, their relationship was cultivated with continued wall posting exchanges. Such interactions included additional requests for help, expressions of appreciation, requests for collaboration, and discussion of Parisian art.

Figure 6
Mutual Engagement and Relationship Development

Maryse Pineau Jeanne! Certainement, je t'aiderai avec ce problème. Nous habitons ni deux semaines dans l'appartement et il a transformé en un désastre. Ma toilette ne fonctionne pas non plus! À quelle heure est que vous arrivez a l'immeuble?
29 janvier, à 00:55 · Commenter · J'aime

Jeanne Piaf Bonjour Maryse,
Je m'appelle Jeanne Piaf. Je pense que nous habitons dans le même immeuble.
Je suis nouvelle ici – je ne sais pas faire couler l'eau à ma chambre de bonne! M'aiderez–vous, s'il vous plaît!
Merci,
Jeanne Piaf
28 janvier, à 01:04 · Commenter · J'aime

In a survey assessing the students' perceived value of the Facebook project, 6 of the 17 students claimed that they valued the project for the ways in which mutual engagement enhanced relationships within the community. One student made the claim, "I had a blast with it. I was able to share ideas and interact with others." Others expressed similar appreciation of the interpersonal nature of the project with comments such as "I was able to learn about other people's lives and hobbies" or "we were able to practice our French and learn about other people's opinions and ideas."

SHARED REPERTOIRE

Similar to sociocultural theory describing humans' use of symbolic or cultural artifacts to mediate the relationship between themselves and the world, the third dimension of situated learning is the creation of a community in which members develop a shared repertoire of resources. Such resources could include shared artifacts, discourse, narratives, and points of reference. As a result of the continued maintenance and development of a shared repertoire, Wenger (1998) suggests that the members are given a sense of identity, shared membership, and belonging within a community. Within this Facebook project, the participating students independently selected and shared French cultural products within Facebook which enhanced both identity formation and community development. In the survey assessing the students' perceived value of the Facebook project, one student claimed to value the project because of the access it provided to shared cultural products. The student stated: "we were able to visit French websites, listen to French music groups, and watch French TV shows." Voluntary cultural products shared within this community included images of Paris, paintings by French artists, music videos, sports videos, videos of theater performances, news articles, and images of caricatures.

A character named Renée Clément, for example, affirmed her identity through shared images. In her first written memoir, the character of Renée was described as a caricaturist with a passion for song. In her self-portrait, she noted

> Je voudrais être chanteuse mais maintenant je suis artiste sur la Place du Tertre le jour et le soir; je suis une serveuse dans un petit restaurant célèbre – Le Patachou. Je le fais parce que j'ai besoin d'argent. Quel type d'artiste ? Je pense que c'est évident – je fais des caricatures. Je suis très douée, et les touristes m'adorent. Mais ma passion, c'est de chanter

> 'I would like to be a singer but for now, I am an artist at 7, Place du Tertre dur-
> ing the day. By night, I am a waitress in a small well-known restaurant – Le
> Patachou. I do it because I need money. What type of artist? I think that it's
> evident – I do caricatures. I am very talented and the tourists adore me. But,
> my passion is singing'

Although she had asserted her caricaturist persona in her memoirs, she reaffirmed this iden-
tity with the presentation of her personal caricatures as uploaded images on her Facebook
profile (see Figure 7).

Figure 7
Shared Repertoire and Identify Development: Images

The shared images included caricatures of political figures and celebrities propped on an easel
as they would in *La Place du Tertre*, the artists' square in the Montmartre quarter of Paris. In
addition to establishing her identity within the *immeuble* community, these images played the
dual role of presenting a shared Parisian cultural product and, as such, reaffirmed her charac-
ters' sense of belonging within the Parisian culture and community.

In addition, the instructor played the role of a character named Lou Apollinaire, a struggling
singer-songwriter with a quirky personality who was widely known for her love for a fellow
neighbor. In an effort to share cultural products, reaffirm the character's identity, and further
establish her role in the evolving narrative, the instructor posted several YouTube music vid-
eos accompanied by witty captions. To accompany a Benjamin Biolay music video, Lou wrote
*Ah, mon chanteur préféré. Comme il est beau, n'est-ce pas? En fait, il ressemble à un de
mes voisins* 'Ah, my favorite singer. Isn't he handsome? In fact, he looks a bit like one of my
neighbors.' To accompany a Carla Bruni video, Lou sarcastically commented, *Voilà une vidéo
de Carla Bruni. Je la déteste parce qu'elle est trop jolie et elle chante mieux que moi* 'Here is
a video from Carla Bruni. I hate her because she is too pretty and sings better than I do.' The
character of Renée, earlier described as having a passion for music, expressed her apprecia-
tion of the music videos and reaffirmed her character's persona by imitating Lou and posting
an additional song by Carla Bruni.

Identity was further negotiated within the community through shared cultural products. The

character of Henriette Russo, for example, further expressed her eccentric qualities in her written memoirs with the sarcastic claim *Malheureusement Vittorio est mort, comme mes autres quatre maris. Je les ai aimés tous et chacun est mort mystérieusement. Quel dommage* 'Now, Vittorio is dead, like my four other husbands. I loved them all and each of them died mysteriously. What a shame.' To provide a visual understanding of her peculiar past, the character of Henriette posted a photo album humorously entitled *La belle Henriette Russo et (mes maris morts)* 'the beautiful Henriette Russo (and my dead husbands)' (see Figure 8).

Figure 8
Shared Repertoire and Identity Development: Images

Photos de Henriette Russo – La belle Henriette Russo (Et mes maris morts…)
Photo 4 sur 8   Retour à l'album · Photos de Henriette · Profil de Henriette   Préc. Suiv.

L'acteur: Un rideau est tombé sur sa tête…

De l'album :
La belle Henriette Russo (Et mes maris morts…) par Henriette Russo

Within this album she incorporated photos of her former husbands and entertaining captions including *L'acteur: Un rideau est tombé sur sa tête* 'The actor: A curtain fell on his head' or *L'écrivain: Il a été poignardé avec un stylo* 'The writer: He was stabbed with a pen.' Other characters interacted with Henriette's shared products by commenting on the photos. Below the photo of the man presented as "the one who got away," several female characters commented that he was handsome, requested his phone number, and reminded Henriette of her excellent taste. In an attempt to affirm her individuality within this social exchange, Henriette posted the following response:

> Oui, il a été une bonne prise, Lou, mais il a brisé mon coeur
> Renée … ne pas être négligent avec vos commentaires ! Vous ne pouvez pas avoir son numéro. Je ne le sais pas et il était mon amour, pas vôtre.

> 'Yes, he was a good catch, Lou, but he broke my heart.
> Renée … don't be negligent with your comments! You can't have his number. I don't know it and he was my love, not yours.'

The characters' comments on the shared imagery and Henriette's reaction incited a playful conflict among characters that both enhanced our understanding of Henriette's persona and further defined her individuality as one that is socially constructed.

Wenger (1998) suggests that through the cultivation of a shared repertoire, members are also given a sense of belonging within the community of practice. Within this Facebook project, the learners expressed several interconnected levels of community membership: membership to the Parisian community, the *immeuble* community, and the classroom community. To emphasize membership within the Parisian or French community, the students shared various cultural products and artifacts including photos of Parisian sites and the Montmartre quarter, videos of soccer games in Parisian stadiums, French music videos, French articles about political events, French television shows and commercials, and paintings by artists from the Montmartre quarter. In the survey that asked students to comment on the perceived value of the Facebook project, two students commented on their appreciation of their membership within the simulated French community. One stated, "it gives a glimpse of how 'real life' in France is" and another claimed, "we could learn about Montmartre from our friend's shared notes."

The characters of Jeanne and Maryse, in particular, further cultivated their amicable relationship by sharing and discussing paintings of their preferred Parisian artists. After the character of Maryse posted a painting by Henri Matisse, Jeanne interacted with both Maryse and the shared cultural product by posting the comment *Un peinture de Matisse n'est-ce pas? Les couleurs et le sujet de ce peinture sont vibrantes et provocatrices. Parfait pour votre salle de séjour.Ce captiver le manière de fauvism, et vous, mon amie!* 'A painting by Matisse, right? The colors and the subject of the painting are vibrant and provocative! Perfect for your living room. This captures the fauvism style, and you, my friend!' (see Figure 9).

Figure 9
Shared Repertoire and Community Development: Images

After commenting on Maryse's photo, Jeanne then posted her own preferred painting by the Parisian artist, Auguste Renoir and Maryse commented *c'est beau! le mélange de couleurs amène un air de tranquilité dans ce tableau. Ce que j'aime, c'est le ciel. Ouahh!* 'it's beautiful! The mix of colors brings a tranquil air to the painting. What I love is the sky. Ouah!' This interaction encouraged discussion and analysis of Parisian cultural products while grounding the two characters within the Parisian context.

In addition to the Parisian community, students also claimed membership within the *immeuble* community by sharing products and experiences associated with their collective life in the building. To accompany the group page attributed to solving the mystery of Rémy Matisse, three other group pages were developed by the characters in an effort to organize parties for *immeuble* characters. At the beginning of the semester, a character named Mamadou devoted a group page to a mixer on the fourth floor of the building. In an effort to encourage relationships among the characters and to solidify relations within the *immeuble* community, this character wrote *Nous habitons dans la meme immeuble et nous n'avons fait un fete? C'est incroyable!* 'We live in the same building and we haven't had a party? It's incredible!' (see Figure 10).

Figure 10
Shared Repertoire and Community Development: Group Pages

Eight characters agreed to attend this mixer. Another character named Arnaud humorously developed a group page to celebrate his birthday because no one remembered it, and an additional character developed a group page for a party named *Le Déjeuner des Canotiers*, the title of a Renoir painting.

The shared resources within the Facebook project also grounded students within the classroom community. In student feedback associated with the perceived value of the project, 6 students commented on their appreciation of their enhanced connection to their fellow students and to the classroom environment. Ten students made the claim that the use of Facebook was a valuable French learning experience. One student claimed that the Facebook project was "culturally relevant and made the class more fun and applicable and it was a great way to get to know the rest of the people in the building and in the class." Another student

offered that the Facebook project was less useful: "it was fun but it was limited as far as it helped with French skills." Because the focus of the Facebook interactions was on meaningful communication in context, focus on form and grammar review occurred in other in-class activities and course assignments. To further unite the classroom community, students made references to course content through shared resources and cultural products. For example, after having seen the film *Amélie* for the course, a student made reference to the film by quoting a character from the film, the struggling writer Hippolito, in a status update. Furthermore, during class discussions of the film, the song *La vie en rose* by Edith Piaf was analyzed to further emphasize Amélie's rose-colored vision of relationships. Following this class discussion, a student posted an additional song by Edith Piaf entitled *Je ne regrette rien* expressing her personal appreciation of the song and a recommendation to the others to watch the French film narrating the life of Edith Piaf (see Figure 11). Two characters interacted with this cultural product by claiming that they "liked" the posted video, and another character responded that she too appreciated the shared song.

Figure 11
Shared Repertoire and Community Development: Videos

In further discussions of the film, the literary term *mise-en-abyme* was discussed to further examine a storyline between the film characters of Amélie and Raymond. To examine this subtext, images incorporating *mise-en-abyme* or mirrored imagery were presented to the class. Following this presentation and discussion, a similar connection was made to the course content when a student shared an image with the Facebook community which incorporated *mise-en-abym*e imagery (see Figure 12).

Figure 12
Shared Repertoire and Community Development: Images

Although this image featured an American figure, it was clear that the student was making connections between the course content and his own cultural references. Another student then quickly commented on the image by stating, *c'est un bon exemple de la mise en abyme, non?* 'this is a good example of mise-en-abyme isn't it?' and it became apparent that this student also understood the significance of the shared post and its associated connection to the classroom community.

DISCUSSION

To gain insight into the nature of student participation, relationship formation, and identity and community development within social networking communities, the three elements that constitute a community of practice within situated learning theory were examined within the Facebook community of an intermediate-level French course: joint enterprise, mutual engagement, and a shared repertoire. For this particular Facebook community, the joint enterprise was participation, engagement, and mutual accountability in a global simulation context centered on Parisian life. A collective narrative was developed as students created online profiles for their characters, interacted with fellow community members, and posted their written memoirs as shared notes on Facebook. This collective storyline was enhanced as the students engaged in a meaningful online community that allowed them to organize, interpret, and give coherence to their experiences (Cortazzi et al., 2001). This self-directed learning context served as a complement to the classroom environment and established an interactive community where various resources and choices were readily available, and collective reflection,

immediacy, and interaction were encouraged. Scholars have heralded such characteristics of independent and computer-mediated learning contexts for their ability to motivate *i*Generation learners (Barnes et al., 2007; Carlson, 2005; Glenn, 2000), and this project engaged a variety of students in these types of meaningful learning experiences and contextualized interactions (Murphy & Loveless, 2005).

Similar to SLA's positioning of the language learner as a participating social agent in the language acquisition process, this Facebook project allowed learners to reconfigure standard communication patterns and transform relationships with knowledge and people (Beer & Burrows, 2007; Block, 2003; Thorne & Payne, 2005). Their mutual engagement in problem solving, requests for information and assistance, and collaboration allowed the learners to foster relationships with fellow community members and reinforce their character's identity. Interpersonal communication and social interactions among members occurred through wall postings, status updates, shared media, and accompanied commentary. An individual's disclosure often fostered intimacy with online community members, and relationships readily developed (Rosen, 2007). As suggested by Wenger (1998) in his discussion of situated learning theory and Pavlenko (2001) in her conceptualization of the development of L2 identity, identity is often negotiated, expressed, and crafted through social interactions. Responses to external feedback in the online Facebook community allowed the characters to reinforce their sense of self and establish a noteworthy role in the interconnected narrative. It was often at the intersection between the social and the individual that characters were able to write themselves into being. As suggested by Wenger (1998), interrelations within the community did not always arise out of mutual support and interpersonal allegiance, but sometimes through conflict, disagreement, and challenge. The playful dynamics within the community relations ranged from mixtures of expertise and helplessness, ease and struggle, resistance and compliance, trust and suspicion, and friendship and hatred. Wenger (1998) suggests that our relations within a community of practice involve both participation and nonparticipation, and individuals often carefully select to participate or not in a performative effort to express their character's traits and individuality.

A third key element of a community of practice is a shared repertoire of resources such as artifacts, narrative, or points of reference. Within this project, the participants shared a variety of French cultural products within the Facebook community. Similar to Rosen's (2010) description of the pedagogical advantages associated with social networking tools, students consumed and shared visual, audio, and written content, collaborated and discussed course material, and had direct access and interaction with members of the classroom community. As suggested by Pempek et al. (2009), students often chose to reaffirm their character's identity and further establish their role in the collective narrative by posting and sharing media preferences including YouTube videos, articles, and images. Learners additionally expressed membership within interconnected levels of community by sharing cultural products and artifacts. Membership within the Parisian or French community was emphasized through the exchange of photos, music videos, newspaper articles, television shows, and paintings. Students also claimed membership within the *immeuble* community through the development of Facebook Group Pages that commemorated collective building events and celebrations. The project similarly grounded learners within the classroom community by providing an independent, yet collectively constructed, online environment where students could share cultural products that expanded on class themes and discussions. Thus, it was through membership within a social networking environment that students were able to cultivate a sense of belonging within the various interconnected levels of community (Wenger, 1998).

Despite the various benefits afforded from this interactive online environment, the current Facebook project possesses limitations associated with its lack of emphasis on the focus on form. Although particular classroom activities, compositions, and homework assignments fo-

cused on the promotion of grammatical accuracy, this project aimed to encourage meaningful social interactions, the development of community membership, and shared cultural products. Error correction, outside of clarification and negotiation of meaning, did not occur in the Facebook context. Nevertheless when students were asked if they paid attention to grammatical accuracy and vocabulary choice in the postproject survey, 12 out of the 17 students responded affirmatively. Students claimed that they focused on grammatical accuracy to make their message clear (2 students) or because interactions were publicly visible (2 students) or because it was a class assignment (2 students). One student commented that grammatical accuracy "fit the personality" of her character.

Language socialization research suggests that interaction within speech communities and engagement with language in socially and pragmatically appropriate ways are essential to L2 development. Current poststructuralist identity research in the field of SLA also suggests that L2 learning needs to be conceptualized as both a social and cognitive process. Social interactions, in essence, help to shape, form, and position one's identity (Pavlenko, 2001). Situated learning theory similarly suggests that learning is embedded within a social context and that social membership, identity, and knowledge are mutually dependent (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Social networking tools, in particular, provide a virtual environment where students can engage within the social context of a community of practice. Opportunities for exchange of cultural multimedia, engagement in communication at the interpretive, interpersonal, and presentational modes, and self-direction in an autonomous yet collaborative learning environment allow instructors to exploit the potential of social interactions and exchanges available through Web 2.0 technology. Furthermore, because the construction of identity and relationships play important roles in the *i*Generation's navigation of the cyberworld, social networking communities may provide instructors with the tools necessary to facilitate learning dialogues and relationships, create authentic opportunities for learning, and foster multimodal literacy among the most communicative generation of learners to date.

NOTE

[1] A thorough overview of this global simulation project may be found in Mills and Péron's (2008) article. To summarize, for this global simulation project, the students created French or francophone characters that lived virtually in the same Parisian building and recorded their eventful lives in their memoirs and interacted in the online Facebook community. The linguistic objectives of the compositions were for the students to improve their writing skills by broadening their vocabulary, refining their style, learning how to use a dictionary sensibly, mastering different tenses, and recognizing and using idiomatic expressions. The main cultural objectives were for the students to explore Paris and the Montmartre quarter, to learn how people live in Paris and France, and to explore various French customs. In addition to Facebook*,* Blackboard provided links to thematically organized cultural online website references and grammatical and lexical website references. To reinforce the interactive nature of the project, the students posted and read each other's chapters on Facebook*.* The bimonthly writing tasks were 1 to 1.5 pages in length with revisions due every other week. The grading system encouraged the students to work on the grammatical accuracy as well as to explore and experiment with the language, style, and linguistic complexity of their compositions. The instructors alerted students to necessary grammatical revisions, but also encouraged them to vary the vocabulary and complexity of their syntactic constructions, to refine their style, and to develop the content and creativity of their compositions.

The building happenings were also used as a backdrop for integrating the *immeuble* context into the classroom. Various acts of in-class communication, such as in-class role plays, skits, and weekly resident meetings, were set in the context of the building. Furthermore, the oral exam required students to integrate linguistic and cultural information learned in class while playing the role of their character in a role-play topic contextualized around Montmartre and the *immeuble* characters. This back and forth movement between the students' written creations and their oral character development during class time aimed at actively engaging students in their learning process and developing a strong sense of ownership in both the collective story and their character's integrity.

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