

RM week 7-8: Qualitative interview 1

[12:04] Joe Manton: Hi, Taro.

[12:04] Joe Manton is Online

[12:04] Michelle Ford: Seats?

[12:05] Michelle Ford: Taro, do you want to take the lead?

[12:06] Taro Harrison: Ok, thanks Joe for coming along. I think you know the focus of our discussion tonight, so would you like to take things away by giving us first a sense of the teaching you've been involved in before you came to Second Life, teaching in your non-avatar life?

[12:08] Joe Manton: Ok, before Edinburgh I lectured in [X university] as a business statistics and mathematical programming lecturer on their degree and masters courses in business school - undergrad would have been up to 200 students in a lecture hall, to 30 in a tutorial. Masters was 25 in a room.

[12:08] Joe Manton: hosting workshops on blackboard and other technologies for a few years also in real life.

[12:08] Taro Harrison: So experience at different levels and in different subjects then.

[12:09] Joe Manton: Indeed - undergrad and postgrad - all in business school but on different subjects within that

[12:09] Taro Harrison: Maybe moving then towards Second Life, have you had any engagement in on-line gaming?

[12:10] Joe Manton: As a teacher or user of online gaming?

[12:10] Taro Harrison: Well - either - both?

[12:11] Joe Manton: As a user I have videogamed for many years - online gaming only in last year or so. since technologies have improved. online role playing game like world of warcraft at the moment - as a user. As a teacher - apart from [mentions a specific teaching input] no other experience.

[12:11] Joe Manton: I was an implementer of online games in business school

[12:12] Joe Manton: so not teaching the technology as such but using games to teach business - run a bicycle company for example - developed by McGraw Hill and Prentice Hall also -

[12:12] Joe Manton: students on masters worked in groups and ran a company - so game like - simulation I guess but also competitive with rules - so a game - ?

[12:13] Taro Harrison: So a lot of experience there, and your route into Second Life?

[12:14] Joe Manton: well studying for [redacted] a relevant Ph.D.] I was around when MSc colleagues were looking to expand in to SL - explore and develop

[12:14] Joe Manton: I offered to be involved as I have experience with gaming (user and developer) and so right place I guess!

[12:14] Joe Manton: remit was to check out SL and what others were doing in here - other educators - what was it all about - what were people doing, learning, teaching.

[12:14] Taro Harrison: So almost serendipitous

[12:15] Joe Manton: Easy job then as it was June 06 and early doors for SL and education.

[12:15] Joe Manton: Indeed, right place, right time and I pretty much begged to be involved!

[12:15] Joe Manton: It was a very exciting opportunity

[12:15] Joe Manton: opportunity

[12:15] Joe Manton: one I relished.

[12:16] Taro Harrison: Staying with SL and education, what are you seeking to do in an educational context in SL?

[12:16] Joe Manton: and so I investigated what others were doing in Second Life and met with education leader of Linden Labs (SL owners) and borrowed an acre, built a small teaching space, and we go to work!

[12:17] Joe Manton: For me I have avoided building at all costs! I am trying to provide a space that one feels comfortable in as a learner. a space where you would visit even outside "class time"

[12:17] Joe Manton: one that is hopefully inviting, open, friendly - without bricks!

[12:17] Joe Manton: I like the beach/seaside theme, a teaching space like Holyrood Park and although there are spaces that are within an office building - they are temporary and hidden.

[12:17] Joe Manton: I like that.

[12:18] Taro Harrison: Right, so the actual space being key.

[12:18] Joe Manton: But maybe that is more what I want to do with education space and not so much education context.

[12:18] Joe Manton: To me the space in here is key.

[12:18] Joe Manton: For what we wanted to do within SL; for what I wanted to do; what I was asked to do.

[12:19] Joe Manton: For  space is key - no buildings, open spaces

[12:19] Joe Manton: but  cosy tutorial spaces.

[12:19] Taro Harrison: Right, so you feel that the space then really impacts on the kind of learning dialogue you can have in SL?

[12:19] Joe Manton: No lecture  lecture theatres, powerpoint slides and so forth.

[12:19] Joe Manton: I think so definitely.

[12:20] Joe Manton: Even in this space it's circular and although  you are leading you aren't standing at front standing over me - while I sit and listen. It's  cosy, and even though this feels a little formal (as it's an interview) it isn't a desk and chairs - there is no need for that I don't think - an office space, desk, chairs - like a real  interview would be.

[12:20] Joe Manton: Although I am a little  bossy here - I amn't as bad as I would be if we were in real life having this discussion/interview

[12:21] Taro Harrison: That's interesting

[12:21] Joe Manton: So I guess I feel maybe  a bit behind Joe than in real life!

[12:21] Joe Manton: and I think that does, ( learning space design), that does impact on dialogue one has in here

[12:22] Taro Harrison: What do you feel that SL with its unique spaces then allows Joe to achieve in learning dialogues that would be more difficult in RL?

[12:23] Joe Manton: Mmmmm. this is where I need a gesture HUD to show you I am thinking!! 

[12:23] Taro Harrison: OK!

[12:24] Joe Manton: I guess it depends on what you are  talking a dialogue about - I mean for online identity SL affords the students and teacher more  opportunities than RL to experiment and experience online  identity and then discuss. So SL allows that. RL can't really. It would be a role play in rl; but I think SL allows for more opportunities there.

[12:24] Joe Manton: So it does depend on what one is talking about

[12:25] Joe Manton: but even then I have seen  a teacher talk about his philosophy students - and how SL also gave the opportunity to have a more  interesting dialogue than RL sometimes can.

[12:25] Joe Manton: that the environment itself played a part in that dialogue. gave them something to talk about!

[12:25] Taro Harrison: Right, that is very interesting.

[12:26] Joe Manton: But SL gives you a  sense of place and presence I think in this dialogue with

me typing and my arms moving in here

[12:26] Joe Manton: I am here - you are in front of me. Michelle is on my left.

[12:26] Joe Manton: Presence:



[12:26] Joe Manton: and I don't think that other forms of communication technologies can do that.

[12:27] Joe Manton: Obviously RL has presence!

[12:27] Taro Harrison: Indeed!

[12:28] Taro Harrison: So what you have just said really addressed directly the question about comparing a SL conversation with one conducted purely through the medium of a text chat system.

[12:28] Joe Manton: Well, yeah - I mean it's like voice in here. Well, no hold on - I'll go there in a minute if you want.

[12:29] Joe Manton: For me SL has more presence. Joe's arms are moving. I am typing. I can hear the water of the fountain (annoying as some find it, I find it comforting) - you are in front of me, Michelle to my left. if you stood up right now I would see that

[12:29] Joe Manton: If you walked away I would see that - Taro that is.

[12:29] Joe Manton: Obviously in real life you d be doing anything!

[12:29] Joe Manton: All that gives more presence  and place to a skype chat/IM or such

[12:30] Joe Manton: I have been using MSN messenger for years (not anymore skype took over) - but 9 years or so.

[12:30] Joe Manton: This more than that.

[12:30] Joe Manton: More in the ways I just said.

[12:30] Joe Manton: I feel like I have met you in here tonight. We are here.

[12:31] Joe Manton: I like that. I like that for distance  students. I like that for myself as a teacher of distance learners. I know more by avatar name  than real name!

[12:31] Joe Manton: I would recognise SL avatar piccie before real life piccie.

[12:31] Joe Manton: I don't know.

[12:31] Taro Harrison: This real sense of being present.

[12:32] Joe Manton: Yeah - and I think it's important. Especially on distance course. That is why it's mentioned (way too much) last few sentences!

[12:32] Taro Harrison: Not at all.

[12:32] Joe Manton: And voice in here, reminds me of that sense of presence for some reason. 

[12:32] Taro Harrison: That's interesting, do you want to say a bit more about that?

[12:33] Joe Manton: I become other than Joe. And although Anne [RL name pseudonym] is here drinking tea and typing through Joe - and we are aware that Anne is controlling Joe so to speak I feel like Joe is who you are meeting tonight and voice - well that brings us right back immediately to Anne and it isn't Joe's voice.

[12:33] Joe Manton: Also voice wasn't in here when I started in SL so that might be something.

[12:34] Taro Harrison: Yes, that makes sense.

[12:34] Joe Manton: Joe hadn't a voice only text for a long while before voice came along.

[12:34] Joe Manton: and when I chat I can look away from keyboard and screen and walk about and not be present. Joe could fall off a log and fall in to the sea and I could still be chatting on! 

[12:34] Taro Harrison: Yes!

[12:34] Joe Manton: It made this all very game like when I spoke - and not in a good way "game like" - in a bad way. 

[12:35] Joe Manton: I do use it though and understand opportunities it affords around accessibility and so forth. 

[12:35] Joe Manton: Sometimes it is a requirement of some meetings.

[12:35] Joe Manton: but never teaching (for me).

[12:35] Joe Manton: I know others have different opinions on it

[12:36] Taro Harrison: OK, we have been focusing on the affordances of SL, particularly for a kind of presence, but are there any constraints in relation to educational dialogues?

[12:37] Joe Manton: Well, I mean typing for one! On the flip side of "not using voice" is the issue often raised of text chat.

[12:37] Joe Manton: I am used to it - I don't mind it but I guess some might feel that educational dialogue can't flow as easily through typing alone: that voice would be faster, easier, simpler. 

[12:38] Taro Harrison: OK, anything you would want to add on points of comparison or contrast with other educational contexts/environments?

[12:38] Joe Manton: So you add in an etiquette for one to wait while another is typing (unlike what I am doing right now) - and I know that so I have waited for your question everytime, even with a slight delay from my side or your side. I am used to it but I know others have commented 

on that being an issue.

[12:39] Joe Manton: Other educational contexts  - real life?

[12:39] Joe Manton: Or other virtual worlds?

[12:40] Taro Harrison: Both, in real life or in other virtual worlds - just an open invitation?

[12:41] Joe Manton: Well I still really like (here I'll  myself maybe) the real life teaching situation - workshops, training labs, teaching. I do love  that environment. but I have definitely adjusted and enjoyed working and teaching in here too

[12:41] Joe Manton: I hope Joe is as helpful, cooperative,  respected as I would like to be in real life.

[12:42] Joe Manton: Other virtual worlds and SL - well none compare to SL graphics wise - the detail SL gives you - the opportunity to build for very little money - can't be compared (at the moment) to other virtual worlds.

[12:42] Joe Manton: But it is still not accessible . and does require a lot of a system, and so it can't be core to teaching unless all can access

[12:42] Joe Manton: But it is basically free and others aren't.

[12:42] Joe Manton: That is more a bullet list of  versus others.

[12:43] Joe Manton: (Also I like that I was about to say two separate things just there and I deleted both) - in real life I couldn't!

[12:44] Joe Manton: Gives me time to think - which I should do more of in real life!

[12:44] Taro Harrison: That's helpful, thanks.

[12:46] Taro Harrison: Could we move now to the question of relationship between Joe and your real life identity, you touched on that a little bit, and it would be good to hear more about that.

[12:46] Joe Manton: This is where I am sure to contradict myself!

[12:47] Joe Manton: I am aware of myself. I don't think that I "am" Joe right now or ever obviously. Real life mobile text just went  hands confirming plans this weekend - Anne - Anne here typing as Joe. Am very aware of my real life identity: and who I am. But I definitely feel like Joe is very like me. Who Joe is - how he looks, dresses, acts in here - it is very like me.

[12:48] Joe Manton: As mentioned I  hope Joe is as helpful, considerate, thoughtful, supportive in here as Anne (I) try to be in real life

[12:49] Joe Manton: He has a lot of my personality traits - a chancer early doors when he asked for a free acre for a year when we should  paid and got away with it - asking for free objects, and help and so forth - well Joe did that in here, because Anne would totally do that in real life!

[12:49] Joe Manton: So we are alike in that sense.

[12:49] Joe Manton: He is male obviously so we aren't alike there - but. . .



[12:50] Joe Manton: I found it easier to be male in this environment. and have always gamed as male.

[12:51] Joe Manton: When I log in as my female alt - it feels strange. I felt more confident in here as a male, getting on with things, asking for things, being left alone.



[12:51] Joe Manton: (Told you I'd contradict myself!)

[12:51] Taro Harrison: That's identity!

[12:51] Taro Harrison: Alike as teachers?

[12:52] Joe Manton: Joe and I - alike? is that what you mean when you say "alike as teachers"?

[12:52] Joe Manton: Because if so then yes.

[12:52] Joe Manton: I hope - supportive, helpful, cooperative, friendly. I hope I am that in real life. I hope Joe is that in here.



[12:53] Joe Manton: if I created him, then I find it hard to know how he couldn't have a personality like mine.

[12:53] Joe Manton: I could play a role indeed - I could play a gruff, stern, strict teacher, but that isn't me, that would be role play.

[12:53] Joe Manton: And in here I am an avatar  is my 3d representation.



[12:53] Joe Manton: And I don't feel like I am playing a role.

[12:53] Joe Manton: (eek! Give up now?!)

[12:53] Joe Manton: I don't feel like this is role play.

[12:54] Joe Manton: I feel like this is my Second Life identity. I have chosen this. I created this. This is who I bring to meet you here in the grove.

[12:54] Taro Harrison: That makes sense in terms of what we discussed earlier, in terms of a sense of real presence.

[12:54] Joe Manton: And connection to your avatar also, a connection between real life identity and online identity.

[12:55] Taro Harrison: Ok, could we move from yourself to learners in SL, what do you find they find most engaging about interactions in SL?

[12:56] Joe Manton: I find dialogue like this engaging: sitting, chatting, and so forth.

[12:57] Joe Manton: BUT I definitely don't find all interactions in SL engaging.

[12:57] Joe Manton: there are some learning spaces and designs that aren't interactive at all - interaction I don't think anyway counts as clicking a button on your mouse all the time!

[12:58] Joe Manton: So I think SL has opportunity to advance some interactions - advance mightn't be correct word - but. . . it can also hinder I think

[12:58] Joe Manton: by design and interface and scripting limitations it can hinder interaction, in what is deemed to be a 3d interactive space!

[12:59] Taro Harrison: Right, anything else learners might find problematic or difficult in SL?

[12:59] Joe Manton: Well, I often forget, but get reminded at every induction, how disorientating a world like this can be for a new person.

[13:00] Joe Manton: The whole environment, moving, flying (!!), teleporting.

[13:00] Joe Manton: Some things like mpa reading are real life skills, but obviously flying isn't! So I think that getting orientated in this environment can be problematic

[13:00] Joe Manton: and if forgotten can be an issue for teaching.

[13:01] Joe Manton: There is only so much flying into trees, and sinking in the sea that one will put up with before frustration kicks in and you give up!

[13:01] Joe Manton: The opportunities and affordances will never be seen that way - one will give up well before that.

[13:01] Joe Manton: So an orientation/lab session is important;

[13:02] Joe Manton: but I enjoy that.

[13:02] Joe Manton: It is different in here! Camera angles, avatars, flying, teleporting!

[13:02] Joe Manton: it is different - it's a virtual world. You are an avatar in here. It's different - and when that is forgotten I think there are problems there.

[13:03] Joe Manton: There is only so much frustration a person will take!

[13:03] Taro Harrison: So wanting to avoid the frustration, but also maybe the importance of getting a sense of yourself as an avatar?

[13:04] Joe Manton: Well, yeah - movement, flying, editing appearance - all these work towards getting a sense of yourself as an avatar.

[13:04] Joe Manton: Editing appearance - choosing hair, skin colour, gender, a shirt!!

[13:05] Joe Manton: Orientation is important - but I think guidance through it helps - try and at least reduce frustration.

[13:05] Joe Manton: And SL itself as an interface has problems in people not knowing what is where, what to "do" in here

[13:05] Joe Manton: I often get asked what do I ~"do" in here.

[13:05] Joe Manton: No levels, no game, no completion of the game - so what do I do!

[13:06] Joe Manton: That's where someone is confusing this environment with a game

[13:06] Joe Manton: I think.

[13:06] Taro Harrison: That is really interesting.

[13:07] Taro Harrison: Implicitly anyway you have given a picture of what makes for a good SL session in an educational context and what makes for a less satisfactory session - anything to add on that theme?

[13:08] Joe Manton: Well as I said - and just as I did and we've been doing - one needs to wait for another person to finish typing before coming in, otherwise it's chaos. If a tutorial discussion is taking place it needs to be in small groups - like 4-5 or so.

[13:09] Joe Manton: Orientation is fine with many - fun, social, playing - learning. but once a tutorial starts and it's discussion smaller groups - otherwise history of chat becomes impossible to manage.

[13:09] Joe Manton: And unlike in real life where I say hey, hey, hey hold on there now - we've gone off point and so forth - you can't do that as quickly here.

[13:10] Joe Manton: Well you can but it might get lost up in the middle of 5 other comments at the same time.

[13:10] Joe Manton: I know one person who scripted in that when they thought discussion was getting out of control in SL - they let out a yell and butterflies (yes indeed) butterflies flew out from her avatar!

[13:10] Joe Manton: Well that would get the attention!

[13:11] Joe Manton: So small groups; waiting for text chat; a reason for discussion - but sure you'd need that in RL anyways.

[13:11] Joe Manton: Sorry - instead of reason there I mean topic.

[13:11] Joe Manton: We tried out things and have learnt slowly what works/doesn't work. So trial and error on that one.

[13:12] Taro Harrison: We have covered a lot of ground in the past hour, but are there issues I've not raised that you feel really do need to be explored, or topics that we have maybe glanced by that you'd want to return to?

[13:14] Joe Manton: Well, I guess I was going to add to previous bit that SL IS a disruptive technology in a way - it is disorientating and so forth and so a tutorial for example will not run smoothly all of the time - even with small groups, etiquette when typing and so forth. It does have the element added in that a person can't sit on a log, or when they sit they are backwards, or their clothes don't render and they look naked and they stand up when they "should" be sitting.

[13:14] Joe Manton: "Mistakes" happen,

[13:14] Joe Manton: walking in fire and so forth - and one needs to be aware of that disruption - well the potential for that disruption which comes as part of an environment like this.

[13:15] Joe Manton: Apart from that not much else, I don't think.

[13:15] Taro Harrison: Right, so maybe something to do there with potential embarrassment also for new folks, or am I reading too much into that?

[13:15] Joe Manton: No, no, exactly.

[13:16] Joe Manton: Embarrassment has been felt and spoken about when clothes don't render and one looks naked even momentarily.

[13:16] Joe Manton: Often embarrassment is talked about

[13:16] Joe Manton: or walking over the log instead of sitting on it

[13:16] Joe Manton: these are all interface issues - learning the interface and you obviously wouldn't have those in real life.

[13:17] Joe Manton: So it is embarrassment - and I guess that is where support, orientation, and so forth comes in to it - helping people through that –

[13:17] Joe Manton: so along with frustration they don't feel embarrassment - that is is a real issue I think

[13:17] Joe Manton: which is interesting especially when someone speaks about not being attached to their avatar,

[13:17] Joe Manton: not feeling anything.

[13:18] Joe Manton: Well, embarrassment is a real life emotion and why would you feel that if you were naked IF you didn't care about avatar, if you didn't feel avatar was part of you?

[13:18] Joe Manton: It's an interesting notion I think.

[13:18] Joe Manton: Walk through this world naked and then see how you would feel - be really interesting I think.

[13:18] Taro Harrison: Yes, indeed.

[13:18] Joe Manton: Not even naked, clothes issue: but even just sitting on logs for instance

[13:19] Joe Manton: here right click and choose SIT - it's an interface function. but sometimes that would have you sitting right by Michelle, for example,

[13:19] Joe Manton: like right beside, too close one might say

[13:19] Joe Manton: and we've had that issue and a lot of jokes about it,

[13:19] Joe Manton: about it.

[13:19] Joe Manton: But that is about personal space and how you wouldn't sit right beside a person, like right beside them in real life.

[13:19] Joe Manton: SL "makes" you do that.

[13:20] Joe Manton: So animation issues there which is an interface thing,

[13:20] Joe Manton: forcing you in to positions not of your choosing.

[13:20] Joe Manton: And if you are with a student, as their teacher, well you just don't want to have a situation where they end up sitting on your lap,

[13:20] Joe Manton: I don't think.

[13:20] Joe Manton: BUT this can happen in here!

[13:21] Joe Manton: So one needs to be aware and "accept" that.

[13:21] Taro Harrison: Any other matters that you'd want to raise?

[13:22] Joe Manton: Sorry - wrong button!

[13:22] Joe Manton: No, I think that is everything I can think of in answer to your questions.

[13:22] Joe Manton: I hope I at least answered some of what you were asking.

[13:22] Joe Manton: I am sure to think of other things I should have said/shouldn't have said. but that is the way!

[13:23] Joe Manton: it's interesting that this is all logged now. I can read back over it and see things I shouldn't have said, or areas where I contradict myself.

[13:23] Joe Manton: Makes it interesting am sure- but for me it's like a log I don't want to read!

[13:23] Joe Manton: But an environment like this does have you saying things quicker than you

might say in an email reply, for example,

[13:24] Joe Manton: you'd take time to think - I mean you have time to think in here but you also type and return and then you read what you've said! And then it's in history (chat log) and you can't change it!!!

[13:25] Joe Manton: I mean if I was to type every answer out to your question, write answer, read it, look over it, edit it we'd be here all night!! That's a different type of research I think,

[13:25] Joe Manton: that's more an email survey or something I guess.

[13:25] Taro Harrison: Indeed. That's been very helpful, thanks. I've really enjoyed this session too.

[13:25] Joe Manton: So I do have time to think, I took time over one or two questions, but for the main it felt like a conversation and informal chat and I just said what I thought at the time.

[13:25] Michelle Ford: Yes, thanks.

[13:25] Joe Manton: I really enjoyed this.

[13:26] Joe Manton: Hey, Michelle!! Was very aware you were there. . . .

[13:26] Michelle Ford: Interesting, isn't it?

[13:26] Joe Manton: Yes, yes, really.

[13:26] Michelle Ford: Inhibiting?

[13:26] Joe Manton: I mean in an interview in real life if you were there and NOT saying anything but I knew you could hear me it would be strange

[13:26] Joe Manton: but in here you were here, I knew you could READ everything and wasn't saying anything.

[13:27] Michelle Ford: So, is this a "take" as it were?

[13:27] Michelle Ford: Shall I catch the data?

[13:27] Joe Manton: No, no - not inhibiting but I was definitely aware you were there, reading history and although you weren't saying anything I feel like I was answering both you and Taro.

[13:27] Joe Manton: I have a log of all chat if you want.

[13:27] Joe Manton: It automatically logs.

[13:27] Michelle Ford: Backup would be good.

[13:28] Taro Harrison: Indeed.

[13:28] Joe Manton: I mean are there RL situations where a person would sit through an interview and not say anything.

[13:28] Joe Manton: I guess I could have zoomed in on Taro only and maybe become less aware of you.

[13:28] Joe Manton: Anyways just a comment is all.

[13:28] Joe Manton: Comment.

[13:29] Joe Manton: Nothing deep, was just strange - but I guess if I had never met you before it would have been even stranger. . . .

[13:29] Michelle Ford: OK - I have caught the text.

[13:29] Michelle Ford: So I guess that that is us?

[13:29] Taro Harrison: Good.

[13:29] Taro Harrison: Thanks, again.

[13:29] Joe Manton: Thanks though - hope it was helpful.