Facebook me!: Initial insights in favour of using social networking as a tool for translator training

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This paper argues in favour of integrating and using online social networking, more specifically Facebook, within the translation classroom. This has numerous benefits in terms of aptly preparing trainees for the marketplace and also helping to foster a classroom community by encouraging a collaborative learning environment. A descriptive analysis of five undergraduate courses suggests that using online social networking as a teaching strategy has a significant impact: from engaging students through collaborative translation projects, to peer-reviewing assignments, to establishing 'telepresence', Facebook allows the trainer to 'connect' the classroom.

1. Introduction

Martin Weller argues that when it comes to integrating newer technologies into the classroom, specifically "internet-related technologies",[1] educators generally fall under one of the following two categories: e-learning detractors or e-learning enthusiasts (2007, p.6). E-learning detractors, who can be teachers and students alike, are, at times, "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001)[2]—individuals who have difficulty adapting to the 'language' of the 'digital natives'. Detractors opine that the decision to integrate new technologies, whether into their classroom routines or into their learning experiences, is often marked by a sense of insecurity and fear. Specifically, for educators, this "insecurity include[s] a level of 'not wanting to look foolish in front of students,'[who are increasingly "digital natives"] or be trapped by the technology with no options if the technology failed" (Schifter & Stewart, 2010, p.12). As an e-learning enthusiast, I am intrigued by the potential of using social networking sites, specifically Facebook,[3] as a tool for translator training rather than more "traditional" ("institutional") tools such as virtual learning environments (VLEs).[4] Drawing on my experience using Facebook in the context of teaching five undergraduate translation courses between 2005 and 2011 at the University of Ottawa in Canada, I will be assessing some of the benefits and drawbacks of incorporating social networking sites into translator training. Because the research is on-going at the time of writing, the observations discussed in this article are for the most part preliminary. Moreover, while some of the hypotheses make sense 'intuitively', they will

require additional empirical data to support their relevance over the long-term. Nonetheless, I contend that some of my students' feedback, as well as my own personal observations, could provide some useful insight into future curriculum development in translator training. Using theoretical perspectives from cognitive constructivism and social constructivism, social presence theory, and insights from previous scholarship on translator training, I will argue that on the whole, there appears to be far more reason to include social networking in translator training than not.

First, I will map out a brief evolution of the Web (1.0, 2.0, 3.0) to illustrate how we are increasingly and inescapably living in a *networked, digitized, personalized* and *mobile* world. It is necessary to be aware of this evolution to understand the type of students (i.e. media savvy/media consumers) enrolling in and attending undergraduate translation programs – for the most part, these students are spending significant amounts of time interacting with technology and informal media (which include, for example, social networking sites). Krumsvick highlights key insights drawn from the British study *Personalisation and Digital Technologies* (Green, Facer, Rudd, Dillon & Humphreys, 2006):

> The study forecasts that today's [2008] British school-age child will, by the age of 21 [the approximate average age of an undergraduate student in Canada], have spent 15,000 hours in formal education, 20,000 hours watching television and 50,000 hours in front of a computer screen. Although this is merely a projection, it nevertheless provides an indication of the extent to which today's "screenagers" (Rushkoff 1996) or "millennium learners" (Pedro 2006) use the media Krumsvick 2009).[5]

In light of these statistical forecasts, it would seem a missed opportunity not to bridge institutionalized e-learning with students' online existences outside of the school's boundaries. Doing so would not only transmit course content but also impart increased digital competency and literacy as part of a complex learning strategy.[6] According to Peder Haug, who cites the work of Krumsvik and Jones (2007), "[...] in order to develop the students' digital competence, school should build on the students' needs and on their digital experiences from outside [school]" (2009, p.196). According to my observations, a significant amount of students' digital experiences outside school occur on social networking sites, making them a compelling locus for incorporating e-learning as part of translation competency.

Second, having identified that many translation students today are 'digital natives', I briefly argue in favour of incorporating social and cognitive constructivist approaches into today's translation classroom. I explain why I have chosen Facebook over traditional and institutional virtual learning environments (VLEs), in particular those provided by the University of Ottawa: Blackboard Vista / Virtual Campus / uoZone.[7]

Finally, I discuss some of the ways in which I have used social networking sites, particularly Facebook, in an attempt to enrich the translation training experience.

While I have my own biases as a translator trainer and fervent Facebook fan, in the final part of the article, I cite some of my students' personal observations and comments gathered over the period of experimentation as further support of using Facebook in translator training.[8] The overarching argument is in favour of social networking sites, however, negative aspects of these websites/web-based technologies will also be acknowledged throughout the article. These drawbacks should also be considered when choosing between an institutionalized VLE and a social networking site.

While training takes place in a variety of settings, five undergraduate courses serve as the training context for this particular case study**.** Arguably, the university classroom is not homogenous, but it does have certain characteristics that are not always present in other educational settings. For instance, students enrolled in an undergraduate translation course are not practising professionals with significant workplace experience; this is contrary to the state of affairs in professional workshops that cater to both professionals and trainees. Moreover, translation workshops often target a demographic that is already invested in the field of translation in some capacity, whereas this is not always the case for students in a first-year translation course who are trying to find their place in this new field.

2. The Web's evolution and its impact on teaching/learning

Without question, the Web and digital technologies have significantly altered many aspects of human interaction.[9] Moreover, these changes have been so rapid that it may seem nearly impossible to remember a time when we were not a "click away" from almost anything – an answer to a question, purchasing a product, booking a vacation and, in the context of translation, having access to a free, automatically translated text thanks to services such as Google Translate and Freetranslation.com. I would argue, however, that the Web has forcibly "digitized" our social interactions and that it is important to take a step back and take a moment to consider these shifts. After all, in terms of education and training, there is a direct correlation between the dissemination and implementation of digital technologies and the types of students populating today's classrooms. In fact, the use of digital technology and learning appear so increasingly intertwined, that some, such as Dr. Bruce D. Perry and Marc Prensky, argue that our brains have been altered as a result.

> It is now clear that as a result of this ubiquitous environment and the sheer volume of their interaction with it, today's students *think and process information fundamentally differently* from their predecessors [...] "Different kinds of experiences lead to different brain structures," says Dr. Bruce D. Perry of Baylor College of Medicine [...]. It is very likely that *our students' brains have physically changed* [and] [...] we can say with certainty that their *thinking patterns* have changed (Prensky, 2001, p.1).

In the following paragraphs, I will briefly map out the Web's evolution and tie in these changes with some of the shifts that have occurred in pedagogy, and more specifically translation pedagogy.

The first "incarnation" of the Web is known as Web 1.0. Essentially, this was the "read-only web" where sought online content could have just as easily been found offline, for instance in a printed encyclopaedia or even on a CD-ROM. Content was uploaded online to be consulted 'passively' by users (read-only). In terms of modifying student behaviour and learning, Web 1.0 is likely the impetus behind the digital native habit of consulting the Web/Internet before consulting "offline" reference material (Prensky, 2001). Prior to the widespread use of Web 1.0, access to certain types of information/knowledge was generally restricted to experts and society's elite, which in turn justified a predominantly 'transmissionist' or 'instructivist' teaching model at the university level. Web 1.0 began to change this dynamic by democratizing access to information, which in turn modified the student/educator relationship. Students could access a wealth of information and find answers to virtually any question, bypassing the need for an in-person expert to 'transfer' content. That said, sifting through such a large body of information could cause 'content-overload', especially for students lacking certain digital competencies; the educator's role in the context of Web 1.0 was to help students navigate content and learn how to select valid, relevant sources. This shift from the trainer/educator as 'instructor' to 'guide' occurred roughly at the same period during which theories in education began to increasingly favour constructivist approaches; i.e. approaches that centered around the principles of "engagement, intelligibility and participation" (Weller, 2007, p.19). As Schifter and Stewart state: "As the technologies grew more multisensory, engaging, controllable and socially interactive [e.g. as Web 1.0 shifted to Web 2.0], elements of both the cognitive and social constructivist framework became apparent" (2010, p.14). Additionally, this led education theorists and educators alike to increasingly conceptualize the classroom as a "community" in which the student should be "enculturated" (Weller, 2007, p.19). "Community", at this juncture, generally implied the classroom community, not necessarily "community" in a broader sense (for example, the wider community of professional translators, the wider community of the university, the wider community at large, etc.).

Web 2.0 designates the Web's shift from a primarily read-only interface to a read-write interface. In other words, Web 2.0 meant that users could not only upload and disseminate content online; they could now interact with other users, as well as interact directly with Web-based content. Examples of Web 2.0 features include wikis (in which users can interact and modify online content),[10] online instant messaging (with which users can interact with each other in real-time), online forums (on which users can interact asynchronously), search engines (which use semantic searching mechanisms such as Google) and early incarnations of social networking sites such as Myspace, etc. Succinctly, not only could users 'congregate' virtually by consulting the same online content – creating a sense of "telepresence" [11] and "community" [12] – they could now collaborate digitally. Digital collaboration and sharing are two key Web 2.0 descriptors and they reinforce the notion of 'community' which is central to constructivist approaches in education. Thus, Web 2.0 technologies are particularly relevant tools in the context of e-learning. One example is the notion of peer-to-peer (P2P) collaboration. With Web 2.0, peer-to-peer collaboration can be exemplified through file sharing and instant messaging. In the context of constructivist strategies in education, peer-to-peer learning can take the form of discussion groups, tutoring and mentoring, both in and out of the classroom, as well as with collaborative assignments, etc. Evidently, this technology and these pedagogical activities can be combined so that students can use instant messaging to provide (peer)-mentorship and (peer)-tutoring in an online setting.

Another particularly important term associated with Web 2.0 is that of "online social networking". The adage "It's not what you know; it's who you know" was used before the Web; as such, it would be incorrect to claim that fostering a strong social network came about with the advent of the Web. However, it is interesting that most digital natives tend to associate any type of networking with online social networking, and this is largely due to the pervasiveness of social networking sites, especially, since 2006 with the mainstream use of Facebook. Indeed, such sites now constitute the backbone not only of major corporate marketing strategies, but are also ostensibly a main component of many universities' attempts at creating an online presence and branding strategy amongst potential and current students.[13] As a result, the connections that can be made between Web 2.0-style networking and education are numerous. In social constructivist theories, the belief is that learning is an inherently social practice; as such, social networking sites might offer a new locus for classroom activities (Selwyn, 2011, p.14). Social networking also promotes active participation or a participatory culture within shared communities, as well as a 'flattening the hierarchies' (cf., Kelly, 2005; Selwyn, 2011). Finally, "As Solomon and Schrum (2007) conclud[e] with regards to the second wave of 'social' internet applications that emerged throughout the 2000s, 'everyone can participate thanks to social networking and collaborative tools and the

abundance of web 2.0 sites...The web is no longer a one-way street where someone controls the content. Anyone can control content in a web 2.0 world" (p. 8, as cited in Selwyn, 2011, pp.15-16).

Finally, the most recent incarnation, Web 3.0, also known as the semantic web,[14] focuses on customizing and personalizing the user's 'digital experience' through media and platform convergence. With the advent of more sophisticated and powerful mobile technologies (hardware such as smart phones and tablets, for instance, as well as software such as applications and widgets), digital natives are increasingly interested by platforms that allow them to consult and sift through all their data seamlessly. Web 3.0 caters to this request by allowing websites and other applications to 'talk to one another'; in short, data becomes interoperable and applications integrated—also known as convergence (Jenkins, 2006, p.282) so that users can now consult their e-mail on all their mobile devices, converge and upload multimedia files on social networking sites, etc. The notion of convergence, like the Web 1.0 and 2.0 notions of "digitized information" and "community", has also come to the fore in education scholarship, in particular with theories and approaches that foster "complex learning" (i.e., a convergence of skills) in which students are taught cross-disciplinary skills that include critical thinking, synthesis and metacognitive skills (Weller, 2007, p.20).

While the main goal of this paper is not to extensively outline the Web's evolution in any greater depth, this overview lists some of the web-based technological 'advancements' used by today's translation trainees and trainers.[15] Due to the Web's increased presence in the lives of students, the use of technology in the classroom appears inescapable. Moreover, if trainers do not want to seem like antiquated 'digital immigrants', ideally they will favour the use of up-to-date technologies, even if at first this can be intimidating. Furthermore, today's undergraduate student is largely the product of a social and cognitive constructivist education (from K-12, or what is also known as "compulsory schooling"),[16] meaning that transmission-style lectures are also viewed as being archaic and out of sync with students' previous educational experiences and currently favoured pedagogical approaches. In her book *A handbook for translator trainers: A guide to reflective practice*, Dorothy Kelly (2005) discusses many of the challenges trainers and trainees face. Because training is generally split between university professors and translation professionals (retired translators, government employees, freelancers), teaching styles can vary tremendously. Kelly affirms "As professionals with little time to devote to reflection on how to organize teaching and learning, many early trainers limit […] class activity to asking for on-sight translation of journalistic and literary texts, with little or no prior preparation on the part of the students" (2005, p.11). Her assertion echoes Kiraly's (1995) earlier observations, and while Kelly claims that progress has been made since the publication of Kiraly's work (her publication arriving nearly a decade later and

overviewing the work of prominent translation pedagogues),[17] I would argue that as a graduate of the School of Translation and Interpretation's undergraduate program (graduating class of 2005), I have attended lectures that were taught in a similar fashion to that previously described: that is to say, translations carried out by students in class, with no prior contextual information and/or preparation – a context that left my peers and me feeling completely disengaged. Moreover, students of my graduating class were even deterred or barred from using the Web by some professors who felt that using such technology was unprofessional, unscholarly and even deemed, in some extreme cases, to be a form of cheating. In the context of today's competitive marketplace, it would be unreasonable to suggest that one could not have access to the Web in order to carry out one's work, especially in the context of professional translation praxis in which quick turnaround and speedy information retrieval are deemed essential to the translator's skill set.

Given that the role of training is to prepare trainees for the marketplace that awaits them upon graduation, it follows that translation training must ideally incorporate these technological changes into the classroom, whether in terms of using the technologies in the context of practical/professional translation or as part of the teaching methodology. Certainly, translation technology courses are one way of doing this (teaching *wiki*-technology in the context of a translation technology course in the same way as computer-assisted translation tools or translation memory software would allow translator trainees to have a better command of wiki-technology in the context of localization, for instance), but I also contend that there is something to be said about the actual teaching of translation through some of the interfaces and tools provided by Web 2.0 and Web 3.0[18]—which is why I justify a move to Facebook**.**

3. Using Facebook as a Pedagogical Translation Tool—preliminary observations

3. 1 Why Facebook?

The first question that arose when I first started presenting my preliminary hypotheses (Desjardins, 2010, 2011) pertaining to the use of Facebook in translator training was why I had chosen this particular platform instead of a more 'conventional' and academically 'acceptable' VLE. There are two answers to this question. The first is rather simple: from 2006 to 2011, at the beginning of each semester and with each new group of students, I polled the students anonymously, asking them to choose between having our class group on WebCT or on Facebook.[19] In total, of the approximately 200 undergraduate students I have taught, only 5 of these students have significantly opposed the use of Facebook, and this was either due to an

altogether refusal to use the site or due to a lack of an existing Facebook profile at the time (2 of the initial detractors eventually created profiles, while the other 3 maintained their ideological stance).[20] Evidently, given the overwhelming majority favoured the use of Facebook, the use of the site was deemed consensual. Because the use of Facebook was initially an "add on" to the courses' mandatory core content, important notifications were always conveyed either in-class or through a mandatory e-mailing list so that all students, regardless of Facebook membership, would be contacted. However, as semesters would progress, initially sceptical or reluctant students would generally hear of the benefits and sign up.

The second answer is slightly more complex. First, while some claim Facebook's status as a commercial company and classroom distraction (Bugeja, 2007) blurs the lines between 'laudable' academia and corporate culture and consequently has no place over more widely-accepted VLEs such as WebCT and Blackboard, I personally fail to see the difference. For instance, to suggest that Blackboard is any less of a commercial entity than Facebook seems unjustified; advertising and branding may be less obvious with the tools provided by the former company, but authors such as Selwyn tend to place both companies on an equal playing field stating that "a multitude of commercial providers and IT industry actors are responsible for 'selling' [...] educational technologies to schools" (2011, p.11). This runs parallel to Giroux's description of the university acting increasingly like a corporation:

> Anyone who spends any time on a college campus [...] these days cannot miss how higher education is changing. Strapped for money and increasingly defined through the language of corporate culture, many universities seem less interested in higher learning than in becoming storefronts for brand-name corporations – selling off space, buildings, and endowed chairs to rich corporate donors. (2007, p.105).

Furthermore, universities are even branding themselves in order to 'sell' their programs over those of other universities' (Giroux, 2007); ironically, one of the main strategies of this type of corporate branding strategies is marketing via Facebook.

From a pedagogical perspective, I would be tempted to argue that VLEs still place the educator at the 'center' of course content dissemination: VLE moderation can in most cases only be granted to the course's lecturer or professor. If using Facebook, however, the educator may be the one who creates the courses' online discussion groups, but then can grant administrative functions to any and all group participants, thus eliminating an online hierarchy between educator and students in terms of uploading content. In my experience, this has fostered increased online group/discussion participation and has also increased my "telepresence"

with students, simultaneously creating a heightened perception of "being there" and "being with" (Schifter & Stewart, 2010, p.18). Moreover, Facebook was not an innocent choice; the site is used nearly ubiquitously by students and incorporating the site into one's course structure meant permeating into students' social lives. Whereas students could easily claim "forgetting" to check the institutional VLE, students tend to log onto Facebook daily (if not more frequently), and as such, it was a strategic medium to stay connected with them. On the whole, I would say that my students have found my use of Facebook "surprising" and "cool", and have framed me as a more "approachable" and "up-to-date" lecturer because of it.[21] Instructivist and constructivist approaches argue that one of the fundamental roles of the educator is to connect with students offline and online; I have found that my use of a Facebook group has ostensibly favoured both offline and online connections.

The final part of the answer lies in the symbolic connotation associated with VLEs: Facebook is an inherently social interface, and as such, student contributions to the group are not generally seen in the same light as 'homework', which bears a negative connotation; rather, contributions to Facebook's discussion threads—whether achieved by posting videos, sharing news articles, etc.—become part of a social experience. As some of the previously cited social constructivists have argued, reframing learning as socialising has a lot more currency for digital natives and certainly promotes the view of the trainer as 'cognitive coach'. VLEs are perceived by students as institutional tools that are regulated and that promote and value certain types of interactions over others. Finally, as a trainer, I wonder about the universities' rationale behind implementing institution-wide VLEs; while I would be tempted to think this is to foster e-learning, to cater to diverse learning styles and to optimize student/teacher contact, one might instead get the impression that these environments benefit the corporate strategies of the institutions rather than meeting purely academic goals. To explain briefly, let me use the example of WebCT's 2003 sales pitch (as cited in Weller, 2007, p.8): "E-learning technology is a proven way to expand an institution's enrolment capacity without the capital outlays for new construction. Institutional infrastructure can be built virtually rather than physically, often at lower cost". Keeping costs at a minimum seems to be a recurrent trend for universities seeking to maximize the bottom line which is also achieved by "replacing full-timers with part-timers and temps and by subcontracting everything from food services to the total management of physical plants, but also by substituting various schemes of computerized instruction" (Ohmann, 2002).

Given the scope of this article, I will not delve into more of the reasoning behind choosing Facebook over the University of Ottawa's Blackboard Vista; I hope the previous arguments will prove sufficient for the time being.

4. 1 Facebook, Social Networking and Translator Training—a few examples

Communities are formed around a sense of belonging and shared practices (Weller, 2007; Stewart, Schifter, & Selverian, 2010). If learning is a social process, it follows that we should create disciplinary communities that primarily use shared social practices. In my estimation, the Facebook group is a tool that achieves this quite successfully. Not only does the Facebook group easily facilitate the possibility of peer-to-peer networking (which includes group and private instant messaging, asynchronous discussion threads, and the possibility of classmates becoming Facebook "friends"), but it also creates a link with the larger professional translation community. For instance, by encouraging students to use online social networking in their translation practice, the translation trainer implicitly trains students to talk about translation with others (peers, fellow students, other translators, other Facebook users, etc.). Doing so forces the trainees to utilize translation's metalanguage and concepts regularly, which helps them become 'fluent' in the language of professional translation and is likely to better prepare them to face some of the adversity professional translators face in the workplace. For instance, a trainee who has become accustomed to discussing their reasoning behind certain terminological choices is far more likely to convince a client than one who has never had this opportunity. And while such an exercise could be carried out in the classroom, the synchronous/asynchronous feature of the Facebook group allows students the time to reflect and come back to the exercise rather than having to perform on demand, which can be especially intimidating for introverted students. To encourage the active discussion of translation both online and offline is to prepare students for the marketplace in that they will be able to talk about what it is that they are doing. Passive learning, the type that Kiraly (1995) and Kelly (2005) both strongly denounce, does not empower students to think of themselves as professionals able to speak about their profession and skills. Moreover, discussing translation and supplementing this discussion using media rich content (videos, sound clips, mash-ups, pictures, applications, etc.), which is easily integrated into the Facebook group (and does not have to go through the trainer to be uploaded), has the added advantage of situating the translation student in the larger translation community. For example, being able to easily and instantaneously post online news articles pertaining to current affairs involving translation tells students that what they are learning is directly related to real-world events.

Additionally, the social nature of Facebook deters student disengagement. Because translation is a highly subjective practice and involves a much broader skill set than most lay people and incoming undergraduates realize, in my experience, beginner trainees often feel discouraged after they have received their first evaluations. Students can be

encouraged to post some of their solutions on the Facebook group's discussion wall ("board"), and may discover, to their surprise, that many of their peers had similar solutions. Not only is this form of peer-to-peer sharing invaluable in terms of creating a sense of classroom community (through shared practice/share experience), but the posts act as a sort of collaborative translation. Students may build upon each other's ideas and rework their translations. From an educator's perspective, these posts provide insight with regards to students' learning curves, their aptitudes, and the areas that need improvement without the detrimental effect of punitive evaluation which is invaluable in terms of providing ongoing assessment and feedback for students. Though some of these exercises and features are available through VLEs, in my experience, participation has always been more positive and more active via Facebook.

Finally, professional translation praxis is increasingly becoming collaborative and "digitized" in nature. Though translators have always worked in tandem with other specialized professionals (subject-field experts, for instance) and clients, new technologies and digitization have created new challenges and novel types of translation projects that require a full command of digital competencies. For instance, Ubisoft, an educational software and videogame company, employs translators/localizers to work alongside programmers and software engineers in order to create localized versions of their products. The localization strategy inevitably includes the translation of marketing campaigns, which, unsurprisingly, often incorporate social media (Facebook and Twitter). The more translators find ways of integrating and using social media in their professional translation practice, the more savvy they will be in terms of translating content destined for these platforms. For instance, a 2011 guest lecture at the School of Translation given by freelancer and videogame localizer Baris Bilgen included some examples of localizers having to translate Twitter "tweets" for promotional purposes. Tweets are 140-character micro-blogs (or micro-messages) that can be used to "publish" quick, instantaneous updates—in short, they are an extremely condensed version of larger-scale social networking profiles and pages. 'Tweets' are commonly used by companies to launch new products, and thus, localized versions of these 'tweets' have become central to international marketing campaigns. Students who are well-versed in online social media understand the relevance and structure of these updates and as a result, they are also better suited to translate them in an efficient and effective manner. In light of these types of campaigns, educators can incorporate online social media into translation exercises such as the localization of tweets. For example, a "Translation Challenge" posted on a class' Facebook group wall might consist of translating 140-character posts and the student who could respond the fastest (exemplifying the translator's ability to provide quick turnaround time) with the most effective target version (based on in-class lectures on what parameters constituted "most effective" or "most

functional") would "win". Not only does this exercise implement a number of constructivist principles (role-playing, simulation, collaboration, etc.), but it demonstrates that social networking sites are not simply used for professional networking—they are also being translated. Facebook's statistics page boasts that the site is translated and localized in 70 different languages.

5. Student Comments

Given certain challenges with regards to ethics clearance, screenshots of students' Facebook contributions could not be included in this article. While this is certainly a substantial drawback, it does suggest some avenues for more thorough research in the future as well as the possibility of collecting additional empirical data to support some of the tentative hypotheses presented here. Fortunately, many students share their opinions regarding the use of Facebook using the University of Ottawa's teaching evaluations which take place every semester. Student feedback is anonymous and given to the professor only after the final marks have been submitted to the administration.

Overall, response to Facebook was positive. Students enjoyed feeling that they could easily contact the professor and found that while it was unconventional to discuss course content via Facebook's features, it made them feel as though they could more easily relate to the professor and vice versa. Moreover, they appreciated that they had been exposed to the networking potential of social media in professional translation praxis. They thoroughly enjoyed creating promotional Facebook pages for fictional translation companies, translating 'tweets' and 'status updates', uploading YouTube videos of newer translation technologies (for example, tutorials for Google Translate and Word Lens), and participating in what came to be known as the "translation classroom community". Shy students enjoyed using Facebook, stating that while conventional VLEs were helpful in terms of accommodating their personalities and learning styles, being able to use online social media made them feel "more extroverted" and "more connected" to the rest of the group. Students with lower level of linguistic proficiency, either in the L1 or L2, expressed that they had started using Facebook in different languages in order to increase their linguistic proficiency—an unintended benefit which certainly merits additional study.

In short, student commentary tended to support two main hypotheses I had when initially considering the use of social networking sites in translator training: (1) such media easily enable trainers to implement and devise social and cognitive constructivist approaches; (2) the possibilities for finding links between these sites and professional translation are only beginning to come to the fore—as mentioned previously, not only can social networking sites themselves be translated (link with practical

translation/professional translation), but they can also become tools for translator training and professional networking.

6. Conclusion

Initially, investigating how Facebook could play a positive role in translation pedagogy was simply a means to find an alternative to conventional VLEs. In other words, Facebook seemed a more convenient way of conveying course-related content to students in a way that would appeal to them. After having used Facebook for nearly 5 years, I now realize the repercussions of using these websites and they far exceed expectations, both in terms of the benefits, and especially in terms of the potential ethical and pedagogical drawbacks that authors like Selwyn (2011) have so aptly discussed in their critical assessment of digital technologies in schools. Particularly worthy of further analysis and discussion are the issues of privacy and security, and while a detailed position on the matter falls slightly out of the scope of this preliminary set of observations, suffice to say they cannot be disregarded. Hacking, content copyright, and students' and educators' privacy settings are a few examples of parameters that would require more investigation.[22] Moreover, the idea that Facebook can be a tool in education is certainly not novel, and has increasingly been discussed in second-language education (Roblyer et al., 2010; Kabilan et al., 2010; Blattner & Fiori, 2009), thus far, however, there seems be relatively little research on social networking sites, particularly Facebook and their relevance in and for Translation Studies. I hope this article has begun to fill that void.

By no means do I believe these observations to be conclusive, especially given the transient nature of the Web and digital technologies, but nevertheless contend that future research that links online social networking, translation training and professional translation will become indispensable. Facebook may often be framed as a distraction rather than a potentially rich educational space; this is unfortunate, particularly because excluding these tools from our classrooms represents a missed opportunity when they are so pervasive on the outside. Social networking sites can be incorporated in ways that foster complex learning provided students are taught to use them judiciously. If this can be achieved, then I would argue that we are effectively helping students to navigate the social, academic and professional spheres, both physical and virtual, in which they invariably interact. And is that not the goal of higher education as a whole?

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[1] "The US-based *Learning Circuits* magazine (http://www.learningcircuits.org/glossary) defines it as 'a wide set of applications and processes, such as Web-based learning, computer-based learning, virtual classrooms, and digital collaboration. It includes the delivery of content via internet, intranet/extranet (LAN/WAN), audio- and videotape, satellite broadcast, interactive TV, CD-ROM, and more.' [...] So, for the purpose of this book I will define e-learning as any learning experience that utilizes internet-related technologies to some extent. This definition emphasizes the internet as the primary medium with regards to e-learning but does not exclude blending with other media and approaches (for example DVD, face-to-face, print, etc.), but by focusing on the internet, some key features of the medium, and how these relate to learning and teaching can be examined" (Weller, 2007, p.5).

[2] Prensky uses the terms "digital immigrants" and "digital natives" to make the distinction between those who were born before and after the mainstream use of digital technologies: "What should we call these "*new*" students of today? Some refer to them as the N-[for Net]-gen or D-[for digital]-gen. But the most useful designation I have found for them is *Digital Natives*. Our students today are all "native speakers" of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet. So what does that make the rest of us? Those of us who were not born into the digital world but have, at some later point in our lives, become fascinated by and adopted many or most aspects of the new technology are, and will always be compared to them, *Digital Immigrants.* The importance of the distinction is this: as Digital Immigrants learn – like all immigrants, some better than others – to adapt to their environment, they always retain, to some degree, their "accent,", that is their foot in the past. The "digital immigrant accent" can be seen in such as things as turning to the Internet for information second rather than first [...]" (2001, p.12).

[3] As of May 2008, Facebook was ranked the world's most frequently consulted and used social networking site (Balagué &Fayon, 2010, p. 14). According to Facebook's own statistics page (http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics), at the time of writing, the social networking site has a total of more than 750 million active users.

[4] I follow Weller's definition: "For our purposes, we will define a VLE and LMS [learning management system] as 'a software that combines a number of different tools that are used to systematically deliver content online and facilitate the learning experience around that content'. This definition is sufficiently broad to encompass most recognized VLEs, regardless of

whether they have an underlying pedagogy associated with them. It does, however, deliberately exclude bespoke websites, or specific tools that may be used in a learning context but do not in themselves constitute a VLE. The point about a VLE is that it is an enterprise, institution-wide system used by a variety of educators to deliver a range of courses; it is not specific to one course or one function” (Weller, 2007, p.5).

5 Prensky states: “Today’s [2001] average college grads have spent less 5,000 hours of their lives reading, but over 10,000 hours playing video games (not to mention 20,000 hours watching TV). Computer games, email, the Internet, cell phones and instant messaging are all integral parts of their lives” (2001, p.1).

6 Weller explains that complex learning is “an approach that focuses on the type of learning that takes place across or between courses. It is concerned with the development of complex skills such as critical thinking, analysis, synthesis and evaluation as well as metacognitive skills. These go beyond an appreciation of the particular subject matter and require considerable time to develop [...]. They are also the type of skills that employers frequently say they require of graduates” (2007, p.20). In my estimation, this falls in line with some of the suggestions Donald C. Kiraly listed in his “New Pedagogy of Translation”, in which translator training goes beyond simply translating texts and seeks to encourage students to utilize a broader skill set to solve translation ‘problems’ and tasks (1995, p.18-19 and p. 33).

7 The University of Ottawa’s portal (“web-based system for non-course related information” (Weller, 2007, p.58) is called uOzone. uOzone, as defined by the University, is the “gateway to your uOttawa web applications, personalized information and alerts from your professors, faculty and department...all in one central, single sign-on environment” (http://uozone.uottawa.ca/en/faq). From this portal, students can access “Virtual Campus” which houses the University of Ottawa’s virtual learning environment, Blackboard Vista (previously, the University of Ottawa used WebCT as its primary VLE; Blackboard acquired WebCT through a merger that took place in 2005-2006).

8 In compliance with research ethics, student feedback was offered voluntarily and anonymously in the “Additional Comments” section of the University of Ottawa’s Teaching and Course Evaluation Questionnaire. As such, these data can be included in academic research without asking explicit consent from individual students.

9 Nicholas Gane further describes these changes and states: “It would seem to me that internet-related technologies have directly altered the patterning of our everyday life, including the way we work, access and exchange information, shop, meet people, and maintain and organise existing social ties. These technologies have dome more than ‘add on’ to existing social arrangements; they have radically altered the three main spheres of social life, the spheres of production, consumption and communication” (2005, p.475).

10 “A wiki is a Web site that allows users to add and update content on the site using their own Web browser. This is made possible by Wiki software that runs on the Web server. Wikis end

up being created mainly by a collaborative effort of the site visitors. A great example of a large wiki is the Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia in many languages that anyone can edit. The term "wiki" comes from the Hawaiian phrase, "wiki wiki," which means "super fast." I guess if you have thousands of users adding content to a Web site on a regular basis, the site could grow 'super fast'." (TechTerms, 2011, *wiki* definition)

[11] According to Schifter and Stewart, "telepresence is the "perceptual illusion of nonmediation" (Lombard and Ditton, 1997). "Perceptual" refers to the real-time reaction of the individual through sensory, cognitive and affective systems to stimuli. The "illusion of nonmediation" occurs when the individual no longer recognizes that the sensory stimuli are introduced or produced through a medium" (2010, p.18). In short, Web 2.0 blurred the lines between our virtual and real lives in that even though social interaction is filtered through the medium of the screen and the Web itself, users still perceive the "real presence" of their interlocutors.

[12] "In retrospect, looking back at the development of the internet, it makes sense that such technology would profoundly affect the potential of communities because the interactivity and connectivity it enables are so aligned with the ways communities of practice function as a context for learning" (Wenger et al., 2009, cited in Wenger, 2009, p.xv).

[13] For example, the University of Ottawa has a Facebook page: http://www.facebook.com/pages/Universit%C3%A9-dOttawa-University-of-Ottawa/34877449140.

[14] "The Semantic Web provides a common framework that allows data to be shared and reused across application, enterprise, and community boundaries. It is a collaborative effort led by W3C with participation from a large number of researchers and industrial partners." (http://www.w3.org/2001/sw/SW-FAQ)

[15] While I generally maintain an optimistic and positive view of Web technologies, I am aware that it is important to consider some of the negative consequences and effects these technologies can also have. In fact, more and more recent scholarship has presented the 'untold story' of academic digitization which tends to paint a far less utopian picture. This body of research suggests that digitization presents an "illusion of novel progress" (new = better) (c.f. Selwyn, 2011) and is largely premised upon "corporate education" (cf., Giroux, 2007).

[16] "i.e. the elementary and secondary schooling that is provided free of charge by the state and is generally mandatory for all children and young people" (Selwyn, 2011, p.8)

[17] Cf., Delisle (2003), Nord (1991), Gile (1995), Kiraly (1995) and Robinson (2003).

[18] Using technology both in terms of practical translation and as part of the teaching method has the "double advantage of giving students the practical skills they will require in the workplace

and of generating new knowledge of how technologies impact on translation practice” (Kenny, 1999, p.73).

[19] This was prior to the University of Ottawa’s implementation of *Blackboard Vista.*

[20] Correspondence with these students was maintained using alternative solutions such as in-person meetings or e-mail.

[21] Comments excerpted from my teaching evaluations.

[22] A recent Canadian documentary produced by the CBC (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation) titled *Facebook follies* addressed some of these issues, using recent examples from the corporate and public sectors, as well as examples from individual’s private lives. Security experts weighed in on the issues and suggest that social media literacy is a competency that many lack. These observations add weight to the argument that social media literacy should be part of media literacy, and taught as part of core content in today’s classrooms.