

## **Breaking Barriers: A Case Study of Culture and Facebook Usage**

*David Elvis Leeming*

*UCLan, School of Languages and International Studies*

*E-mail: DELeeming1@uclan.ac.uk*

*Nicky Danino*

*E-mail: ndanino@uclan.ac.uk*

*UCLan, School of Computing Engineering and Physical Sciences*

### **Key Words**

Intercultural Communication, Social Networking, Facebook, Learning Technologies, Higher Education

### **Abstract**

*This case study forms part of an ongoing project to examine how different cultures interact when using social networking websites in higher education; in this case the focus is on Facebook. It explores how current models and ideas continue to evolve and shift as the body of work within this subject area expands. It offers practical advice on how tutors and designers might improve their use of online social networking in the future. It certainly does not contain all the answers. However, it does offer some insights for educationalists and online social network designers. The paper concludes that cultural differences may have an effect on how social media (Facebook) is used. Suggestions are made on how barriers to using Facebook may be overcome, in order to include Facebook in teaching and learning as a useful tool to improve the language, social, and professional skills of International and European students.*

### **Introduction**

The main purpose of this case study is to scrutinize how different nationalities engage, or indeed why they may choose not to engage with a specific social media group set up on the popular site, Facebook. The Facebook group discussed in this paper was initially formed as a teaching and social aid on a BA (Hons) International Business Commutation undergraduate course in a UK higher educational establishment (University of Central Lancashire). The outcomes of the research would award the IBC team with an opportunity to design an improved tool for student engagement with future cohorts.

The paper's originality strives from the fact that little research, outside of the US, has been undertaken, of students who use Facebook to overcome language and social barriers

in an educational environment; some exceptions being Vasalou et. al. (2010) who examined differences between European users and those from the USA. Godwin-Jones (2008: 7) observes that tools and platforms such as Facebook, “enhance communication and human interaction can potentially be harnessed for language learning”. Bloch (2008) claims that, whilst there has been a lot of subjective indication, there has been little research on how creating Facebook pages improves students’ writing. In a conceptual paper, Blattner, and Fiori (2009: 17) consider how Facebook can improve the “development of socio-pragmatic competence in language learners” and the “sense of community in language classrooms”. Furthermore, Blattner, and Fiori (2009: 8) observe that the use of Facebook for language interaction can enthuse English language students and develop ability. They state that Facebook has “unique features that offer constructive educational experiences while maintaining privacy and safety” and that the prospective use of Facebook is “growing everyday with new applications” that are yet to be discovered.

The results of this paper come from a mixed nationality group from a variety of countries across Asia and Europe who engaged on a business language course in the UK; the lingua franca being English. The overall number of students on the course was in excess of three hundred. The number of Europeans on the final year of IBC in 2010/11 was 25%, the number of Chinese was 74% and the number of Japanese was 1%.

The Facebook site was examined and comments disseminated. A Facebook related question was placed at the end of a Module Evaluation Form (MEQ) in order to evaluate the data on use of the social media site. We decided to keep the question fairly open in order to elicit a wide range of responses and so that we could genuinely learn from this year’s experience, we asked, “Did you use the Facebook page? Why? Why not?” The return rate for the form was over 95% of the IBC course with around 80% of respondents offering a reply to the Facebook question. We used this method of collection (the MEQ) as we were guaranteed a large audience and a large return rate as these are given out to every student on the programme whilst in the classroom; a captive audience so to speak.

### **The Beginning**

The authors perceived a need to offer IBC students a more modern form of interaction that extended beyond the classroom. This would enable the course to build upon the student-centred learning approach that had thus far been so successful. As regards to using online activities for teaching, the teacher-centred approach can be seen as students simply reading reams of information online and not engaging actively in that material; this does have its uses. WebCT is the online learning system that is used extensively at UCLan (University of Central Lancashire), as it offers a facility for students to download notes and

PowerPoint slides, amongst other activities. Feedback from students through module evaluation questionnaires indicates that students are extremely satisfied that these facilities are available and hence interaction is not an issue here. However, uses such as 'chat' and 'postings' had been abandoned on the programme a year earlier due to poor participation. Interface design was often cited as one reason for not participating in these areas.

## **Research**

Forms of social networking are nothing new, even if it is only recently that the term has really come to the fore. Social networking websites are virtual communities that let users interact with each other on specific topics or to just socialise online (Murray & Waller, 2007). Learners need to feel that they have some ownership of their learning process. Indeed, the learners themselves can help shape the course by the teacher and fellow students reacting to such things as 'postings' made by each other. By using this approach, the learner will become more engaged while he identifies the lecturer's role as less authoritarian and more of facilitator. Collins and Moonen (2001) argued that the tutor should design the activities and not the actual materials. They believe that the students themselves should contribute to learning materials through their own experiences. Difficulties may arise when considering educational cultural backgrounds. However this is what can and does happen in social networking. Therefore, one could argue, the technologies have come of age in terms of the learners being a real part of the learning process. But does this actually ring true, especially when faced with a multicultural group of second language learners? This case study helps to answer that question.

As stated earlier, online activities should then allow the tutor to move their prime role away from the 'teacher-centred' approach in education to a more 'learner-centred' approach (Calvert, 2002: 357 in Leacock, 2005). The traditional model placed the teacher at the centre as the passer of knowledge. Correct use of online activities should enhance the learning process by engaging the learner in an active process of their own education. Beyond this, social media sites such as Facebook offer an opportunity to perform without the pressure of the speaking out in a classroom among students of perceived or actual higher level (be that in content or language terms) or answering a question wrongly when asked to do so by the tutor. It also gives the student time to think before replying.

A study by Fovet (2009) on the educational use of Facebook, considered that when instructors who wanted to use Facebook in education were mindful of the advantages and disadvantages of aspects of technology-human interaction, Facebook delivered rich lesson matter and effectual learning in a virtual environment. This was feasible because of advantages like interactive communication. The same study conveyed that Facebook, under

no supervision, might cause disadvantages. In another study (Hargittai, 2007), student actions on Facebook were reviewed. The study established that when Facebook was preferred for educational purposes, proceedings in that virtual environment were different according to gender, ethnicity and educational background of parents.

However, if we are to engage learners from other cultures, then we need to be aware that they themselves may not have had the opportunity to engage in a learner-centred approach. National culture for renowned researcher Geert Hofstede is, "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category" (2005: 4). De Mooji (2004: 33) states that, "Culture is to society what memory is to individuals." This suggests that should one stay within a new culture for any length of time, then these memories may become diminished or tarnished. In other words, people/cultures can and do change. This is relevant to this research as the students used in the main control group (undergraduates) had already interacted with British society.

### **The Case Study**

In September 2010 a new cohort of around 300 International students from relatively diverse backgrounds began a BA (Hons) course at the University of Central Lancashire in International Business Communication. It was decided early on by the Course Leader that Facebook would be used as a tool to facilitate communication and internationalisation. The reason that Facebook was chosen for this study is that it is the most popular online social networking site among university students. Understanding why students use online social networking sites is vital for the academics, as this communication method displays a significant impact on student motivation to learn, affective learning, and classroom climate (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). Moreover, it crafts an online social environment for university students (Lytras and Garcia, 2008). With over five hundred million users purported to have adopted the site, it seemed a logical choice on the presumption that many of the users probably used this site already or knew of the site. It could be assumed that the students would have few issues with navigating it; hence they could begin using the site with little support from the tutor. (<http://www.Facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>, Retrieved 28<sup>th</sup> May 2011).

The process was simple: at the opening induction event it was announced that the Facebook page was live and that students would have the option to sign up to the IBC Facebook site. During the opening lectures and seminars, the site was demonstrated in order to offer an insight to students how they could make use of it. According to Vasalou et al (2010: 725) "<.> social network designers' ultimate goal is to foster a sense of true commitment in their users". The Course Leader was perhaps a little naive as no thought was really put into the actual design. The idea was to let the site morph into something that the

actual users wished it to be. The tenuous link identified to the users was that the team felt it would improve their social language, and perhaps be a place to go for help; this did seem to ring true. Did the tutors gain immediate commitment? The answer was a resounding no. But this did go back to the ideas of Collins and Moonen (2001) as it was hoped that students would 'design' their 'own materials' i.e. posting photographs to discuss, post links to sites, and so on.

Within a week, around one hundred students had signed up to the site along with a small number of staff. By the end of the course the numbers had swelled to around 200 users. Only basic rules and norms were formed in order to avoid any serious conflict issues. The use of the site is ongoing and by May 2011 nearly 400 postings had been made.

As mentioned earlier, it was decided the site should be student-led. However, in order to get things up and running, one of the Course Leaders began to post. After initial introductions and suggestions of how students may make use of the site, the lecturer began to post links to some of his favourite movie and music clips that he felt were related to British culture. The purpose was to stimulate interest by using 'safe' posts; in other words avoiding any major cultural issues whilst helping the students focus on what he felt represented 'Britishness'. This did attract a limited response; at this point, no 'national culture' issues surfaced. What did emerge was the clear age gap. The tutor posting is in his forties and predominantly his audience comprises students who are in their twenties. The first student to post put up a more modern music video, commenting that the tutor's interpretation of British culture through music i.e. artists such as Morrissey, Madness and Take That, was outdated and that time had moved on; that student is from Germany and male. We began a short dialogue around what it means to be British. This was carried on in our next seminar. Already a barrier had been broken down, arguably not a cultural barrier, but an age barrier and a tutor/ student barrier. In other words, we had found a common ground, music.

The next student to post was again from Germany, but this time it was a female; she posted photographs from her travels. The tutor commented and then a Chinese student, a female, posted that she liked the photograph and wished to go to that place. It was Blackpool, and the tutor did not want to offer his view on the place, but did comment on the professional nature of the photograph.

At this point the lead tutor felt that the site was beginning to work for the purpose it was originally created; so far, the posts related to travel, music and movies. News items were introduced at this point, but no one participated. At this stage, only one Chinese student had posted, all the replies and posts had come from German students. The Chinese students, however, did click on the 'like' icon, one might argue bizarrely, with a link to a story in a local newspaper explaining the significance of Remembrance Day.

The next posts that came were 'Events' postings by staff and students. These proved popular throughout, and arguably helped increase the attendance at a number of these activities. This did allow for a 'real world' crossover as the events were all 'cultural' in nature.

Next, came the first posting from a Spanish student, a male. He posted a story from Newsweek that directly related to an issue in the class about the valuation of the Chinese currency, the Yuan. After several posts between the tutor and student the debate closed. At this point, one could argue that this debate may not have been discussed in detail in the classroom and that further learning around the topic had been enabled by active student engagement. Indeed, the student in question very rarely spoke in class unless asked to do so. To link this to our earlier premise, the main objective of education, according to Jonassen, Peck and Wilson (1999), in Collins and Moonen (2001:87) is "to engage students in meaningful learning – which they define as active, constructive, intentional, authentic and co-operative." In order to do this, Hurley (2001) suggests that a better approach to learning would be the 'progressive' approach or 'learner-centred' approach as it stresses the importance of the learner being an 'active agent' in the learning process. Arguably, this learner was achieving the 'active agent' paradigm.

The next post stimulated interest among one Chinese student and a number of German students. Two staff members were going to present a conference paper in Germany and therefore, the post asked students about cultural differences and recommendations on what to do when there. The first comment from the female Chinese stated, "be punctual". One could not decide if this was meant in jest or if it entered into the realm of cultural stereotyping. Either way, the debate had started.

After several more interesting posts the bombshell hit. A German female decided to post a survey as part of her dissertation research. Initially the response from students was very positive. All nationalities posted these; the 'self help' had begun. One or two produced them in their native language which gained comments from students that felt that English had to be the medium of conversation. Within a couple of months it soon became clear that students began to suffer from 'survey fatigue' as one after another request to answer surveys appeared on the site. On the other hand, in general, the number of respondents was quite positive, for the most part.

In November 2010, the course assessments began in earnest. At this point students started posting questions in relation to those assessments. At first it was only the tutor that began to answer the queries, but soon the students began to help each other. This was a very positive sign and use of Facebook. The tutor monitored and only intervened when he felt the students were providing misinformation. The main aims of the online activities were to stimulate the users beyond being passive receivers of information, which links well into

theories of constructivism. Again, this fits with Rahman's research that expressed that online activities can be used as a key motivator in enhancing the learning process.

"These are the external motivational factors, but there might also be internal motivational factors for using online activities. Motivation is altogether a very important issue. Most students find it motivating that they themselves have to take responsibility for their own learning. This may result in improved learning, but this learning is difficult to measure." (Rahman and Mahbubur, 2001: 317).

It was at this point that the learning outcomes of the programme linked more closely to the social networking tool used. The discussions around the assessment became specifically aimed at guiding students, through peer and tutor intervention, towards successfully completing the programme's aims and objectives. However, the posts were not initiated by the tutors; the students themselves felt that this forum was a safe place to openly discuss assignments.

However, the social aspect of the site did not end. Although one could argue, as the programme focuses heavily on Intercultural Communication, many of the posts, although social, did have a wider impact on the curriculum being taught in the classroom. These posts became an extension and 'living reality' of the theory being taught. On such example was demonstrated on November 23<sup>rd</sup> when the tutor posted from a hotel room in Germany, stating he was in Germany and was a little cold. Within one minute of posting a number of German students began a dialogue on what he might do, eat and so on. Again, this was an event that would not have happened through the normal channels. It was a Saturday night and the tutor was in another country whilst the students were in the UK. The social network enabled dialogue, socialising, advice, and learning, that would not have taken place under normal conditions.

Around December came the first contentious issue raised on the site. These kinds of issues occurred only three or four times. Each time the issues were raised by a German female. The tutor always tried to remain neutral and as factual as possible. It was at these times that the students involved became quite vocal. These issues could have escalated had the tutor not been on hand to mediate. In fact, all the issues were resolved amicably. However, it was interesting to note that in the feedback given at the end of the year, one of the students felt that the tutor was quite forceful in his viewpoint; perceptions are obviously important. The clear danger here is that these viewpoints, that were individual in nature, were aired in public. This is one of the drawbacks of such a tool. However, had those views not been aired in the designated site then they would probably have appeared elsewhere, and could have been quite damaging.

In terms of team building one German male student commented, "Efficiency dramatically increased by adopting a Facebook group as a tool for information sharing."

By the end of the course all nationalities on the programme had posted on the site. Proportionally, the highest number of users came from Germany, even though the majority of the course originates from China.

### **Observations**

It is important to keep in mind that even if students do not actually engage in the chats and postings that many will be watching the posts. This reflects the statistics on how people use social networks. According to usability guru Jakob Nielsen ([http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation\\_inequality.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html), 2006), only around 1% of users actually contribute to online postings whilst around 90% are considered as 'lurkers', in other words people that simply look at the posts and never offer comment. However, even if these students only 'lurk' they can learn from their peers. They still formulate views on the content, take away helpful hints, and practise their reading skills.

In fact, on investigating the reasons why we had a lower percentage of Chinese users posting, several factors became evident. Chinese students commented that Facebook was irrelevant to them, preferring to use a Chinese social network site instead such as RenRen or Sina Weibo (<http://thenextweb.com/asia/2011/05/23/why-chinese-social-networking-sites-are-not-available-in-english-yet/>,2011). Indeed, unlike the west, the use of social media is not as widespread in China, yet.

However, even though one could argue that this is a cultural factor internally in China, this mentality clearly demonstrated that a number of Chinese students had not understood the usefulness and reasons for using the tool (or the team had failed to communicate this). This attitude could be argued as a political issue related to the Chinese policy on the use of the Internet, especially social networking sites; "why bother when we won't use it after the course?". However, encouraging the use of Facebook (or similar) can clearly have great benefits from language use to networking; as demonstrated by other nationalities that actively engaged with the site.

Another consideration is the design of the application itself. Marcus (2001) undertook research using Hofstede's (2002) dimensions to see if these might affect user-interface designs in particular, online. He showed that web sites around the world were often redesigned to take account of the national culture; whether or not this was done with the dimensions in mind is questionable. He concluded that if companies felt that culture was important in the design of their websites, then this would need local adjustment to the sites. Therefore, the question remains, could this be true in the actual design of sites such as Facebook? It seems these issues are beginning to be addressed but this does not address the problem of users from one culture / country interacting with a site in another e.g. a Chinese national using Facebook in the UK as is the case with our students.



Asimina et. al. (2010: 726) observed that cultural differences existed in the research they presented in terms of how nationalities engaged in their use of Facebook. We also found differences but this was more in terms of who engages and why. Clearly, German users were the most frequent active users of the site even though they make up a small proportion of the programme. However, if one considers the German national stereotype it may be easy to explain why there is such a high level of involvement. According to Flamini (1997), German nationals need clarity and order; hence why they felt the need to ask questions; Facebook allowed them to air those anxieties in public.

In terms of German students we could draw a comparison of these results with work done by Royer and Velden (2002) who argued that high Uncertainty Avoidance and Low Power Distance often signifies that Germans (in that case employees) often feel quite insecure and therefore only accepting a limited risk of failure.

In terms of the Chinese students it is even harder to generalize. Cartazzi (2002 in Wenfeng, W and Xuesong G., 2008) in research into Chinese students learning expectations showed that students did have a high degree of respect for their tutor but also had high expectations. They expect structure, planning and enjoy activity-based work. This would concur with the Hofstede (2005) research. They enjoy exploring and hence the low uncertainty score. They also, as shown in the questionnaires, find some activities a waste of time if the tutor is not involved. Some do prefer to discuss issues with the tutor.

## **Findings**

The authors feel that Facebook has allowed students to offer peer support along with an opportunity to network with other nationalities or simply other students that they have not been able to work with before. The tutors also had a greater access to more frank and socially determined discussions with their students. This can only be viewed as a positive. It allows for greater cultural understanding along with a feeling of togetherness and in the days of personal tutors being more important to students, it creates a feeling that a tutor does care as they will engage with you beyond the classroom and the comfort of their office; the irony being they may actually be undertaking this engagement form within the office or as happened once while demonstrating chat to one class, while teaching. Research by Kim et al (2010: 7) concurs with this view; American students are often motivated by entertainment on social media sites, whereas Korean students prefer to use the medium for information and social support.

The one aspect that was difficult to measure was the fact that many students simply used the IBC group as a 'portal;' in other words they dropped in out of the site just to check on 'any news' that may be of importance to them. Besides this, many developed their own network of 'friends' from students they first connected with on the group site. It was

fascinating to see how students interacted in terms of posting and photographs and so on, on their own personal pages. It was equally fascinating to observe which students gave access to their personal site and which did not.

One interesting question a German student brought up was in relation to how we would keep their privacy. The question asked related to whether we would monitor such aspects as attendance when clearly, a student had, for example, posted a photograph of being drunk the night before a lecture and had failed to turn up to said lecture. Companies such as British Airways famously suspended workers following comments on Facebook (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/feb/12/bae-Facebook-strike-action>). Again, these genuine concerns should have been addressed in a formalised set of ground rules, as clearly this does make a number of students wary. One suggestion was to ask students to create a 'UCLan' profile. This method was adopted by many among the staff, this author included. It allowed a private and public profile; a clear distinction to avoid any misunderstandings.

The next time this programme uses Facebook the tutors will need to make a more concerted effort to explain the benefits, and will have to try to break down the artificial barriers that have been created. The Chinese students, for example, will need to be 'sold' on the idea of this being a useful learning tool, even if it is only for a year. It is understandable that they may prefer to use their own social network site, which would concur with Kim et. al.'s research (2010) showing Korean students prefer using a local social network site as opposed to Facebook. However, Facebook statistics (see Table 1, appendix 1.1) show that it is the site predominately used in the west and arguably, this offers an insight itself into western culture and the language of western culture; even advertising on the homepage can also be viewed as a cultural experience.

## **Conclusions**

It is quite obvious that this research is limited. We would certainly have liked more time to evaluate the results. The main control group (the undergraduates) had been in the UK for around three months or more and hence, this may have distorted the results as perceptions can change; even their self-referent bias or self-reference criteria (whereby one imposes his or her view on the culture based on their cultural background and beliefs) may have altered. Therefore it seems sensible to end this case study with the following: Douglas and Craig (1983) urged caution when attempting to read into results of research around culture due to our own self-referent criteria. They suggested researchers may indeed be biased and ambiguous, and therefore our results may simply occur due to our own cultural perspective rather than being objective.

Appendix 1.1

Table 1: Top 30 countries with highest number of Facebook users (1st Apr 2011)

Rank	Country	Number of Facebook users April 2009	Number of Facebook users April 2010	Number of Facebook users 1st April 2011	12 month growth %	24 month growth %
1	USA	56,796,060	114,190,780	154,226,960	35.1%	171.6%
2	Indonesia	2,325,840	20,775,320	35,177,260	69.3%	1412.5%
3	UK	17,866,140	24,378,040	29,673,740	21.7%	66.1%
4	Turkey	9,759,780	20,538,740	27,665,280	34.7%	183.5%
5	India	1,561,000	7,809,800	22,956,220	193.9%	1370.6%
6	Mexico	2,142,080	9,208,560	22,799,780	147.6%	964.4%
7	Philippines	1,026,300	11,561,740	22,376,740	93.5%	2080.3%
8	France	8,946,140	17,317,460	21,748,240	25.6%	143.1%
9	Italy	8,260,300	15,486,480	19,143,520	23.6%	131.8%
10	Canada	11,597,420	13,952,740	17,792,280	27.5%	53.4%
11	Germany	1,955,240	8,454,240	17,499,060	107%	795%
12	Brazil	395,940	3,602,100	15,567,620	332.2%	3831.8%
13	Argentina	3,406,520	8,580,180	13,786,020	60.7%	304.7%
14	Spain	4,228,220	9,292,380	13,534,800	45.7%	220.1%
15	Colombia	4,838,760	8,681,500	13,122,300	51.2%	171.2%
16	Malaysia	1,197,560	5,552,660	10,088,720	81.7%	742.4%
17	Australia	5,327,260	7,922,140	9,862,820	24.5%	85.1%
18	Taiwan	205,500	6,107,100	9,053,660	48.3%	4305.7%
19	Thailand	284,340	2,895,320	8,699,080	200.5%	2959.4%
20	Venezuela	2,658,140	5,765,240	8,354,340	44.9%	214.3%
21	Chile	4,397,300	6,273,000	7,884,360	25.7%	79.3%
22	Egypt	1,252,100	2,816,480	6,662,100	136.5%	432.1%
23	Poland	293,800	2,211,940	5,986,640	170.7%	1937.7%
24	Peru	454,000	1,943,000	5,121,860	163.6%	1028.2%
25	Russia	201,840	906,440	4,371,040	382.2%	2065.6%
26	South Korea	156,740	566,780	4,230,500	646.4%	2599.1%
27	Sweden	2,052,080	3,422,680	4,203,500	22.8%	104.8%
28	Netherlands	615,520	2,292,600	4,111,260	79.3%	567.9%
29	Belgium	2,125,600	3,239,980	4,085,360	26.1%	92.2%
30	Pakistan	549,560	2,006,600	4,030,260	100.9%	633.4%

[figures are taken from Facebook API and then compared to Facebook usage statistics lists by Nick Bircher.]

## References

- Blattner, G., & Fiori, M.** (2009) *'Facebook in the language classroom: Promises and possibilities. Instructional Technology and Distance Learning'*, (ITDL), 6(1), 17–28
- Bloch, J.** (2008). From the special issue editor, *'Language Learning & Technology'*, 12(2), 2–6
- Bostrom, R. P., Gupta, S., & Hill, J. R.** (2008), *'Peer-to-peer technology in collaborative learning networks: Applications and research issues'*, International Journal of Knowledge and Learning, 4(1), 36–57
- Chatti, M. A., Jarke, M., & Frosch-Wike, D.** (2007) *'The future of e-learning: A shift to knowledge networking and social software'*, International Journal of Knowledge and Learning, 3(4/5), 404–420
- Collins, B., Moonen, J.** (2001) *Flexible learning in a digital world*, Open and distance learning series. London: Kegan Page Ltd.
- De Mooji, M.** (2004) *Consumer Behaviour and Culture: Consequences for Global Marketing and Advertising*, California: Sage Publishing Inc
- Douglas S.P., Craig C.S. (1983)** *International Marketing Research*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Flamini, R.** (1997), *Passport Germany*, California: World Trade Press
- Fovet, F.** (2009) Impact of the use of Facebook amongst students of high school age with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD). 39th ASEE/IEEE Frontiers in Education Conference. Session W2G. San Antonio, TX, October 18 - 21, 2009.
- Hargittai, E.** (2007) "Whose space differences among users and non-users of social network sites", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, Vol. 13, No. 1, pp 14
- Godwin-Jones, R.** (2008) *'Mobile computing technologies: Lighter, faster, smarter'*, *Language Learning & Technology*, 12(3), 3–9
- Hofstede, G.** (2001) *Culture's Consequences, Comparing Values, Behaviours, Institutions, and organizations Across nations*, Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications
- Hofstede, G.** (2005) *Cultures and Organizations* 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, New York: McGraw-Hill, USA
- Hofstede, G.** (2002) *Exploring Culture: Exercises, Stories and Synthetic Cultures*, Intercultural Press
- Hurley, J. (2001)** *Supporting on-line learning*, Winchcombe (UK) Learning Partners
- Kim, Y. M, and Geidner, N.** (2008) *'Politics as friendship: The impact of online social networks on young voters' political behavior'*, Annual conference of the International Communication Association. Montreal, Canada
- Leacock, T.** (2005) *Building a Sustainable E-Learning Development Culture*, The Learning Organization. 12(4), pp. 355-367
- Lytras, M. D., & Garcia, R.** (2008), *'Semantic Web applications: A framework for*

*industry and business exploitation – What is needed for the adoption of the*

*Semantic Web from the market and industry'*, International Journal of Knowledge

**Marcus, A.** (2001) *Cultural Dimensions and Global Web Design: What? So What? Now What?* Aaron Marcus and Associates, Inc.

**Mazer, J. P., Murphy, R. E., & Simonds, C. J.** (2007) *'I'll see you on "Facebook": The effects of computer-mediated teacher self-disclosure on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate'*, Communication Education, 56(1), 1–17

**Murray, K. E., & Waller, R.** (2007) *'Social networking goes abroad'*, International Educator, 16(3), 56–59

**Nielson, J.** (2006) Available at: [http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation\\_inequality.html](http://www.useit.com/alertbox/participation_inequality.html), [Last accessed 24 May 2011]

**Rahman, Syed Mahbubur.** (2001) *Design and Management of Online activities Information Systems: Opportunities and Challenges*, Hershey, Pa. Idea Group Publishing

**Royer, S and R. van der Velden.** (2002) Seminar in Organization and International, *"Theories and Concepts of Internationalization and FDI"*

**Unknown author.** (2011) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/feb/12/bae-Facebook-strike-action>), [Last accessed 26 May 2011]

**Unknown author.** (2011) <http://thenextweb.com/asia/2011/05/23/why-chinese-social-networking-sites-are-not-available-in-english-yet/>, [Last accessed 29 May 2011]

**Vasalou, A, Joinson, A, & Courvoisier, D.** (2010) *'Cultural differences, experience with social networks and the nature of "true commitment" in Facebook'*, International Journal of Human-Computer Studies

**Wenfeng, W and Xuesong G.** (2008) *English Language Education in China: A Review of Selected Research*, Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, Volume 29, Issue 5, 2008, 380 - 399