

Transportable Identities and Social Networks: a reflection on the pros and cons of out-of-class communication

Richard Pinner rpinner@sophia.ac.jp

www.uniliterate.com

[@uniliterate](https://twitter.com/uniliterate)

Abstract:

Accept or Decline? Some teachers encourage their students to befriend them on social networking sites (SNS), others are understandably wary. SNS can be a very effective way of connecting with students outside the classroom, engaging their real lives and identities. It can also create opportunities for authentic and motivating communication, not just between classmates but also a web of connections with other learners and speakers around the globe. It

could also be an ethical minefield, a social 'can of worms' and a web of disaster. When people interact in different social contexts, they utilise Transportable Identities (see Ushioda, 2011 for explanation). In this presentation I will draw on both published research and personal experience to reflect on the place of these types of Web 2.0 technology and the inevitable consequences they pose.

Transportable Identities (Zimmerman, 1998)

- Situated identities, which are explicitly conferred by the context of communication, such as doctor/patient identities in the context of a health clinic or teacher/student identities in the context of a classroom;
- Discourse identities, as participants orient themselves to particular discourse roles in the unfolding organization of the interaction (e.g. initiator, listener and questioner);
- Transportable identities, which are latent or implicit but can be invoked during the interaction, such as when a teacher alludes to her identity as a mother or as a keen gardener during a language lesson. (Richards, 2006; Ushioda, 2011)

References

- Agger, B. (2012). *Oversharing: Presentations of self in the internet age*. New York: Routledge.
- Glatthorn, A. A. (1975). Teacher as person: The search for the authentic. *English Journal*, 37-39.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor (Random House).
- Pinner, R. S. (forthcoming). *Reconceptualising Authenticity for English as a Global Language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Richards, K. (2006). 'Being the teacher': Identity and classroom conversation. *Applied Linguistics*, 27(1), 51-77.
- Sacks, O. (2013). Speak, Memory. *The New York Review of Books*, February 21.
- Ushioda, E. (2011). Motivating learners to speak as themselves. In G. Murray, X. Gao, & T. E. Lamb (Eds.), *Identity, motivation and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 11 - 25). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Zimmerman, D. H. (1998). Identity, context and interaction. In C. Antaki & S. Widdicombe (Eds.), *Identities in Talk* (pp. 87-106). London: Sage.

