Social MEdia and Social-I-zing: Some Observations by a Student Teacher in World Languages

Using Social MEdia from a Teen’s Perspective, Marketing Roman Imagery with Social Media Tools in Latin, and Learning to do a Social Dance in German

SED 800: Teen Media Experience #2 by Jenny Mullowney
November 1, 2015
Luther’s reflection concludes by making the point that teens are pretty much the same as in our day:

“We had malls, they have malls….The glaring differences are the internet and cell phones.”

What about this social media component?
What do teens use these new types of social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) for?
Introduction—continued

Steinberg presents a section (pp. 237-247) in his chapter on Teens’ Work, Leisure, and Media on Adolescents, Media, and the Internet: he looks at patterns of use, research on the connection between sex, violence, and drugs and media, and the disturbing link between social media and the objectification of women.

But he doesn’t really address satisfactorily studies about why teens use these particular social media platforms.

Therefore, for this presentation my questions are:

- Are there different purposes for each of the currently popular social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)? If so, why?
- What can we do as teachers to address this issue of the objectification of women in the social media with our lesson plans?
- Finally, Brooke made an interesting observation in her post—all that social media makes teens today a “little less social.” How do we as teachers get students to do more Social-I-zing in an old-fashioned sense without the social MEdia?
Part I: Teen Interview
Understanding the various purposes for using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram from a teen perspective

Part II: Lesson Plan for Latin III
Understanding the Constructed Image of Key Roman Historical Figures using Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram)

Part III: Lesson Plan for German 3
Understanding the Subjunctive and Imperative in a Social Dance (Waltz) Context
Part I: Interviewing *Sabrina*
One Junior Girl’s Perspective

*Name and image have been made anonymous to protect the student’s identity.*
Who is Sabrina?

- High School Junior
- Interviewed her from my school placement*
- Has a younger sister in middle school so was able to offer perspectives from both later and earlier adolescence
- Provided interesting feedback on both:
  - the uses of social media from a teen perspective
  - the uses from a gendered perspective (boys vs. girls)

*Admittedly the data sample size is small but I also know the comments made were genuine.
On Using Facebook:

- **Sabrina**: “It’s cool but not cool. It’s not for personal stuff.”

- **Student Teacher**: “Why?” **Sabrina**: “Here you have to interact with your family” (i.e., they all have Facebook pages too).

- **Student Teacher**: “What do girls use it for?” **Sabrina**: “For example, girls use their prom picture. It’s stylized, posed. It becomes a contest between the girls to see who has a better life.”

- **Student Teacher**: “What else?” **Sabrina**: “Pure communication tool. For members of things like Drama Club, Latin Club and other organizations to post information about events, meetings, etc.”
On Using Twitter:

- **Sabrina**: “It’s a lot more foul-mouthed…. You know…the F-bomb.”

- **Student Teacher**: “Why?” Sabrina: “Adults, i.e., parents, are not on it.”

- **Sabrina**: “We only use it about once a month. We have alternate accounts. We also find out what’s happening socially in terms of events on it.”

- **Student Teacher**: “Didn’t you just say that’s why you use Facebook?” Sabrina: “Twitter’s better because you aren’t inundated with information the way you are on Facebook.”
On Using Instagram:

**Sabrina**: “We use it but it’s more popular with middle schoolers.”

“It’s even-gendered. Students try to send “hipster” pics. Hipsters are those trying to look uncool in a cool or quirky way, like wearing certain kinds of plaid.”

**Student Teacher**: “Why is it big with middle school students?”

**Sabrina**: “It’s a novelty and easy to use. The girls love making duck-faced pics.” **Student Teacher**: “What are these?” **Sabrina**: “Sexy, pouty-mouthed images to make you appear older than you are like Angelina Jolie.”

**Student Teacher**: “Do boys do this too?”

**Sabrina**: “No, boys post images of themselves skateboarding or 5 second videos that are sporty. Basically, all students like to show where they are and what they are doing using Instagram. Snapchat was popular last year but not now because other students could take a screenshot of your image and then it could appear somewhere else without your knowledge.”
Some thoughts from the Student Teacher:

• Facebook seems to be the platform for teenagers' “professional” image (i.e., the way many adults use the professional networking site LinkedIn); it's a self-marketing tool

• Adolescent teens seem to use all of these types of social media to project to their peers an idealized, alternative, and/or risk-taker persona of themselves without really understanding the connotations of these images (e.g. many appear highly sexualized and exploitative)

• Steinberg doesn't really address this notion of using the various types of media as a self-propaganda tool to create a particular teen persona

• Creating and managing an online persona seems to occupy so much of a teen's energy and hearkens back to what Brooke suggested in her post: it makes them appear “a little less social” in the sense of sharing their “true” selves and less able to be spontaneous in social situations
Part II and III: Two Lesson Plan Solutions for World Language Teachers Dealing with the Implications of Teen Social MEdia as Self-Propaganda Tool and Barrier to Social(-I-zing) Reality

Latin III Lesson: Understanding the Constructed Image of Key Roman Historical Figures using Social Media

German 3 Lesson: Understanding the Subjunctive and Imperative in a Social Dance (Waltz) Context

Copy of cuirassed statue of Augustus from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta (Google Images).

Painting of a Viennese Waltz by Vladimir Pervuninsky (Google Images).
Part II—Latin III Lesson: for juniors, part of a larger unit dealing with key figures in Roman history

Directions:

- Students will select one historical figure from the Roman World (such as Cicero, Caesar, Augustus, Cleopatra, Boudicca) and will present the who, why, what, when, where, how, and slogan(s) using:

- One type of social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)

- Students will present & submit the platform visually along with a 1-2 pg. typed explanation for the constructed content

Goals and Objectives:

- Students will demonstrate their competence with current social media platforms

- Students will learn about one particular historical figure in the Roman world and particular imagery associated with that figure

- Students will understand the various uses (political, social, economic, cultural) of propaganda in classical imagery/messages and compare and relate this to the imagery found in 21st century social media
Latin III Lesson: A Brief Sample from a Facebook Page for Augustus (Octavian), First Roman Emperor, 63BCE—14CE

Nota Bene: The text could be assigned in Latin or English or a combination of both.

Why Augustus? First emperor of Rome after the Roman Republic collapses. He established the Pax Romana or Roman peace, a program of total control of the state and its imagery. As Paul Zanker (1990) explains, “Even those in power are affected by the image they project. Their image of themselves and of the role they play in public life are strongly influenced by their own slogans, and of course also by their opponents’ slogans” (p. 3).

Wall: What’s on your mind? My face is as still as a frozen lake but inside my stomach churns with worry about Varus and my three legions in Germania.

Information

Birthday:
September 23

Hometown:
Velletri, Italy

Relationship Status:
Married (Livia Drusilla—third wife)

Friends
2 Friends: Agrippa and Maecenas

Slogans: Pax Romana: Mea Via Vel Alta Via (The Roman Peace: It’s My Way or the Highway), Festina Lente (Hurry Slowly)
Part III—German 3 Lesson: for juniors, part of larger units on the subjunctive and imperative and cultural development of dance and music in German-speaking countries

Directions:
- First students will watch a short clip from a Japanese comedy, *Shall We Dance*, on the waltz.
- Students will then work in groups to identify vocabulary that they think they would need to be able to learn to dance the waltz with a partner.
- With the teacher’s help, students will write sentences in German using subjunctive to express wishes (needed in social etiquette with a dance partner) and imperative to express commands (needed with dance directions).
- The teacher will also communicate clear expectations in terms of social etiquette and gender roles (i.e., not treating the female students as sex objects).

Goals and Objectives:
- Students will learn to use the subjunctive and imperative verb tenses in German and social etiquette.
- Students will familiarize themselves with the main aspects of the waltz in both music and dance steps.
- At the end of the unit, students will have the opportunity to get together with another German 3 class or a Japanese 3 class and have a real waltz dance lesson.
- Students will have the opportunity to socialize in a social setting using the target language to communicate with each other and across language communities (if the lesson is designed for juniors from two different language classes).
German 3 Lesson: An opportunity to practice the target language(s) and socialize with peers.

Concluding Comments:

Lessley wrote in her post about how she spent a lot of time as a teenager just having “inane conversations.”

Mariela wrote in her post that many students have tremendous responsibilities (e.g., family, work, school) but reminded us that our students “are still kids”

With this type of social(izing) lesson, students have the opportunity to have some spontaneous fun (they can act a bit inane and still be kids), and learn how to socialize in a respectful manner with their peers without the platform of the social media (they can send Instagram photos after the lesson).

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DqpmNdUyvME

(A brief scene from Japanese film Shall We Dance (1996))
Sources: (all images from Google images in public domain unless otherwise noted)

