

Learners' Attitudes towards the Online Simulations of the Self and the Other

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Abstract

It may be suggested that the technological boom had blurred certain elemental social notions, videlicet reality and knowledge construction, and hence had redefined the process of the social construction of reality in a new digitalized fashion. This alternation is noticeable in the realm of teaching English in EFL classes, a milieu where technology, via Internet, serves to the learners novel simulated realities that depict their communities and themselves along certain pejorative simulacra of the Self. To these institutionalized and objectivated realities, learners negatively react by developing certain stereotypes and prejudices towards the Other.

Key words: *Simulation, simulacra, self, other, Internet, reality, institutionalization, learners, stereotypes, prejudices.*

Les Attitudes des Apprenants Envers les Simulations en Ligne de Soi et de l'Autre**Résumé**

On peut suggérer que le développement technologique a brouillé certaines notions sociales élémentaires, notamment la réalité et la construction de la connaissance, et donc a redéfini le processus de la construction sociale de la réalité dans une nouvelle mode digitalisée. Cette alternance est perceptible dans le domaine de l'enseignement de l'anglais comme langue étrangère, un milieu où la technologie, par l'intermédiaire de ses médias, sert aux apprenants de nouvelles réalités simulées représentant leurs communautés et eux-mêmes à travers certains simulacres péjoratifs du Soi. Envers ces réalités institutionnalisées, les apprenants réagissent négativement en développant certains stéréotypes et préjugés à l'égard de l'Autre.

Mots-clés: *Simulation, simulacres, soi, Autre, internet, réalité, institutionnalisation, apprenants, stéréotypes, préjudices.*

مواقف المتعلمين من المحاكاة الرقمية للذات والآخر**ملخص**

إذا افترضنا أن الطفرة التكنولوجية قد تسببت في إحداث غموض في بعض المفاهيم الأساسية والاجتماعية خاصة فيما يتعلق بالواقع وتحصيل المعرفة، فإن هذا يعني أنها قد أسهمت في إعادة صياغة عملية البناء الاجتماعي للواقع بطريقة رقمية جديدة. وهذا بالضبط ما نلاحظه في مجال تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في أقسام تعليمها للأجانب. هذه الأقسام التي تجسّد فيها التكنولوجيا بكل وسائلها التواصلية للمتعلمين حقائق ذات طابع مؤسساتي، ولكن تصوّر لهم أنفسهم ومجتمعاتهم من خلال بعض الصور المزيفة التي تجعلهم فيما بعد يتفاعلون سلبيًا مع الآخر من خلال أحكام مسبقة وصور نمطية لا تمتّ له بصلة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: *محاكاة، صورة زائفة، ذات، آخر، انترنت، واقع، تأسيسية، متعلمون، صور نمطية، أحكام مسبقة.*

1. Introduction:

The mutual reciprocal relationship that brings both the Self and the Other together has never been a one way process devoid of any other intrusive interferences, let alone in a digitalized world where reality has become at the mercy of effective simulations of the already mentioned constructs. Consequently, individuals' understandings of these two pillars of societies had been deluded as new modes of social realities construction had been shaped along institutionalized ideological objectives. From a pedagogical panorama, the commonly physical mediation that used to join both the Self and the Other together, had been reinterpreted as new teaching materials invaded the pedagogical scene and had become available for the learners, namely Internet. Consequently, the interplay of both the Self and the Other had been attired technological dimensions as Internet became among the most important means of teaching, learning and most importantly a means of reconstructing realities in a simulated fashion. These institutionalized devices had been invested to spread ideological dimensions that metamorphosed how the learners perceive the Self and the Other. The relationship between these two constructs is nurtured by means of constant tension that paves the way for stereotypical ideas to be propagated via divergent online links, and instigates learners' negative attitudes towards the Other.

2. The Construction of Knowledge in the Era of Simulation and Simulacra⁽¹⁾:

Admittedly, the technological change the cosmos witnessed lately brought to the individual various tools and devices which became part of their everyday life. To cut it short, technology initiated a new mode of knowledge construction along diversified means. Now, technology shapes the afore-mentioned daily life knowledge, taken for granted as 'the new common sense'. Logically, as technology metamorphosed the very nature of accumulating savors, it also altered the concept of reality, as media became the leading agent of the social construction of it. Jean Baudrillard (1994) elucidates the point as he comments: *'There is no longer any medium in the literal sense; it is no intangible, diffused and diffracted in the real The medium is no longer presented to us as a medium in the sense of mediator'*⁽²⁾.

Previously, the individual used to demarcate between reality and non- reality by means of the apparent dissimilarities, certain abstractions and imaginary features that distinguished between them. Howbeit, these lines of demarcations blurred as media initiated and maintained the simulated version of reality that does not only ape but replaces it in a deluding and confusing way. Baudrillard (ibid.) argues that today's world is run by such a mode of simulation where various kinds of simulations are in a continuous attempt to transform the real to resemble certain simulated models. Howbeit, what Baudrillard (ibid.) underscores in this regard is the disappearance of the processes of "abstraction" and imagination that differentiate between the real and the simulated⁽³⁾. He adds: *'Something has disappeared: the sovereign difference, between one and the other, that constituted the charm of abstraction. This imaginary of representation, disappears in the simulation whose operation is nuclear and genetic, no longer at all specular or discursive. It is all of metaphysics that is lost'*⁽⁴⁾. The replacement of the real for a new model gets rid of mirroring and imitating the original source⁽⁵⁾. In such a case, it does not stand as the second entity, but it occupies a space of its own, a legitimate locus⁽⁶⁾. Baudrillard (ibid.) in his seminal work *'Simulations and Simulacra'* adds that given the features of the simulated beings and objects, any comparison between the "original real and the "simulated real" would be misleading. He adds:

Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor does it survive it. It is nevertheless the map that precedes the territory - precession of simulacra - that engenders the territory" he means that simulation operates at the level of creating models (a kind of imitation) which hold their own reality'⁽⁷⁾.

3. Internet as an Institutionalized Medium of Social Control: The new online modes of reality construction emanate from certain sources that are taken as a common sense due to

their effective and legitimized manner of operation. These sources are the manifold institutions that, by means of investing Internet and other devices, simulate the reality in accordance with predefined aims and objectives⁽⁸⁾. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that: *‘by the very fact of their existence, control human conduct by setting up predefined patterns of conduct, which channel it in one direction as against the many other directions that would theoretically be possible’*⁽⁹⁾. More importantly, claiming the institutionalization of Internet alludes to the emergence of “social control” that individuals, in this case learners, may be exposed to. This process of social control is maintained along knowledge creation and manipulation via online platforms. This knowledge dictates the desired conducts that suit the designing institution as it prescribes the institutionalized reality that constitutes the standard social norms individuals need to abide by. Berger and Luckmann (ibid.) describe this institutionalized knowledge:

As a body of generally valid truths about reality, any radical deviance from the institutional order appears as a departure from reality... It objectifies this world through language and the cognitive apparatus based on language, that is, it orders it into objects to be apprehended as reality”... This knowledge serves as a channeling, controlling force in itself, an indispensable ingredient of the institutionalization of this area of conduct⁽¹⁰⁾.

The threat of these institutionalized online platforms resides in their ideological shaping of reality via their deluding functioning that exposes the individual to a reality that is taken as an objective and convincing depiction of everyday life, if not the only possible reality. Berger and Luckmann (ibid.) explain: *“The institutions, as historical and objective facticities, confront the individual as undeniable facts. The institutions are there, external to him, persistent in their reality, whether he likes it or not. He cannot wish them away. They resist his attempts to change or evade them”*⁽¹¹⁾. This institutionalized manipulating manoeuvre is highly operational as it gets reified and hence detached from human qualities. Reification⁽¹²⁾ is defined by Berger and Luckmann (ibid.) as the perception of *“human phenomena” as non-human ...as they were something other than human products - such as facts of nature, results of cosmic laws, or manifestations of divine will*⁽¹³⁾. The effectiveness of such reification and reality distortion reaches its peak as it turns the human being, its designer, its own product⁽¹⁴⁾... *“Human beings are no longer understood as world-producing but as being, in their turn, products of the ‘nature of thing’*⁽¹⁵⁾.

4. The Self and the Other:

The concept of the Other has become one of the labyrinthine concepts that permeate current intellectual landscapes, tackled within heterogeneous cultures and within different communities. Likewise, in politics, one is likely to come across the *‘the political Other’*. The same thing is applicable to the other fields such as religion and culture, where *“the religious Other”* and *“the cultural Other”* have become conventional words employed in all forms of speeches and writings (Almilad, 2013). Withal, the issue that obligates emphasis does not relate to the forms of the other, but to how conglomeratic cultures chauvinistically approach it⁽¹⁶⁾.

Positively, the concept of the other has never been confined to a particular field of study. Nevertheless, it appeals to sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and philosophers, in particular. As to Lacan, J., the discrimination between *“the other and Other”*⁽¹⁷⁾ is paramount in diving deep in the true meaning of the concept⁽¹⁸⁾. The other (with small o) can be effortlessly identified in infants’ behaviour. Infants are predisposed to face the other as they look at the mirror, and hence forming their construal of the other in a form of an ego that meets their desires. The sequel of that process manufactures a cognitive imaginary of the other that is preconceived as unified and coherent self-depiction. Most importantly, this egocentric representation of the other is likely to bring about in us a sense of complete human beings. As to the Other (with capitalised O), Lacan, J., postulates, it excels one’s utter subjective ego. The Other, he argues, epitomises the linguistic ecology that beleaguers the

individual. In other words, this understanding of otherness limns individuals' using their language to express their desires. In the same way, it delineates how people's discourse is internalized within one's desires⁽¹⁹⁾.

Sartre, J.P. was amid the philosophers whose ideas had been cardinal in relation to the understanding of human existence. The existentialist view of the Other is reflected in persons' daily life. Likewise, to probe into the understanding of the Other, Sartre, J.P., recounts the imaginative story of a person who, while listening through the doors' keyhole, got caught by someone else, who kept gazing at them strangely⁽²⁰⁾. Under this spirit, the feeling of shame is contextualized within the presence of the Other. Unquestionably, the other, here, has negative connotations, mainly typified in forming preconceptions and judgments about the self. The negative aspects of the concept of the Other, expressed in most of contemporary European scholars' writings, Almilad, Z. (ibid.) speculates, are lucidly pictured in Sartre's famous mantra "*hell is the others*". Be that as it may, the mammoth duties that the Other occupies, though they circumvent one's freedom, are a quintessential part of who that individual is. To cut it short, the self is part of the Other⁽²¹⁾.

5. Methodology:

Approaching cultural issues empirically has always been a knotty practice for researchers, given the illusive nature of the concept targeted. Truly, the advent of the Internet, though it noticeably abetted a lot in reducing distances among researchers and research participants, made the study of culture more arduous as, in technological terms, one is likely to come across digital cultures and online cultural identities⁽²²⁾. For this reason, this paper diversified its methodological tools so as to hopefully contribute to the stream of valid researches and studies that can enlighten some minds and initiate other future studies. In this paper, the most useful website used by learners of English will be analyzed from the vista of computer-mediated discourse analysis, with the emphasis on online simulations and simulacra of different cultures⁽²³⁾. This section posits that these online platforms purposefully do spread certain distorted simulations of the Self, in most of the cases negative simulacra, and positively simulate the online identity of the Other.

Admittedly, the concept culture is rather an inclusive concept that encompasses multifarious elements and behaviours, including the practices and the products altered by the technological boom. Due to the impossibility of encapsulating culture as a whole process in this modest paper, only some aspects of cultures had been contrasted within online platforms, depicting simulated mechanisms of the previously mentioned virtual milieus. These aspects are rigorously chosen since they are believed to be the pillars of any culture, and on which lot of controversies emanate, let alone their decisive roles in developing learners' negatives attitudes and stereotypes, that unquestionably obstruct the learning process. Behaviours, national identities (Arabs, Africans and Westerners), traditions, and aspects are analyzed cross-culturally from the perceptive of online simulations of the Self and the Other within the software Google Image⁽²⁴⁾.

6. Online Simulations of the Arabs and the Westerners:

6.1. Arabs' Online Simulacra:

To rigorously explore online simulation of the Self, one hundred simulacra (pictures) which depict the Arabs online had been retrieved from the Internet (via Google image). They have been classified in the categories mentioned below⁽²⁵⁾. The analysis conducted had focused on the topics and the themes these pictures share in common, in addition to the negative as well as the positive connotations they trigger off. The graph below elucidates the common stereotypes carried by the online simulacra of the Arabs identified in the love of music, dance and fan. Under this spirit, the pictures portray different music TV shows and miscellaneous parties organized within the Arab world. The other negative stereotype that is gelled to the Arabs relates to the daily conflicts and the demonstrations that are accompanied by clashes in the Arab world. The stereotype, within this vista, stands for the Arabs as

aggressive and uncivilized people. Last but not least, some online simulacra picture the Arabs as organizers of useless summits. The graph below clarifies the point:

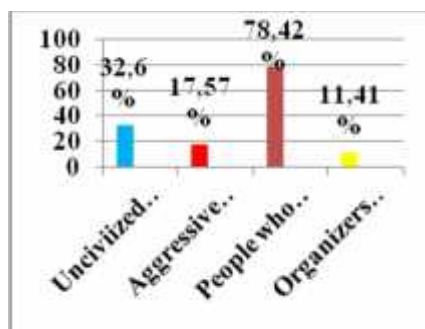


Figure 1: Arabs' Online Simulacra

Media, in the light of the arguments provided above, have never been a neutral source of information. Unquestionably, these means are useful tools for researches studies to be carried out. But, the other seamy side reveals a habitualized and manipulative, taken for granted, panorama that cannot be denied⁽²⁶⁾. Among the quintessential aspects of media is that they influence morals, values, if not utterly altering original meanings and as such changing perspectives about the whole world via their manipulative and cogent simulations⁽²⁷⁾. Now, world view about the Arabs' identity tends to cogently believe in the online simulacra of aggression and violence gelled to all that is Arabic. This deluding nature of simulation and simulacra emanates from the way they approach reality. According to Jean Baudrillard (1994), these kinds of new mechanisms murder reality and substitute it for novel reality that stands on its own. He argues: *'Never again will the real have the chance to produce itself - such is the vital function of the model in a system of death, or rather of anticipated resurrection, that no longer even gives the event of death a chance'*⁽²⁸⁾.

The tension between the Self and the Other in a simulated online world reaches the climax as religious symbols are portrayed in relation to online simulacra. As it had been noted before, online simulations produce certain simulacra that propagate and describe the Arabs as people who *"live in mythical kingdoms of endless desert dotted with oil wells, tents, run-down mosques, palaces, goats, and camels"* ⁽²⁹⁾. However, it is elemental to state that the pictures retrieved from 'Google Image' though explored in relation to how they simulate the Arabs, describe Islam in the same aggressive and violent fashion to serve a given politics. Jean Baudrillard (ibid.) adds: *"Behind the baroque of images hides the éminence grise of politics. This way the stake will always have been the murderous power of images, murderers of the real, and murderers of their own model"*⁽³⁰⁾. Baudrillard (ibid.), debating the Christian faith and *"divine irrelevance of simulacra"*, argues that all the danger lies in the fact that simulation threatens Divinity as it attempts to make it a mere *"simulacrum"* devoid of any religious connotation⁽³¹⁾. He (ibid.) argues divinity *"volatilize into simulacra which alone deploy their pomp and power of fascination - the visible machinery of icons being substituted for the pure and intelligible Idea of God"*⁽³²⁾. Consequently, they would decrease men's faith in God, and worse, would implicitly convince them that God does not exist. Baudrillard (ibid.) adds: *"that deep down God never existed, that only the simulacrum ever existed, even that God himself was never anything but his own simulacrum"*⁽³³⁾. These religious images are carriers of certain political ideologies and as such act as murderers of reality. The same mechanism may be attached to Islamic faith that with the spread of online simulacra became the source for world threat.

6.2. Westerners' Online Simulacra⁽³⁴⁾:

Unlike the online simulacra of the Arabs that in most cases depict aggression, violence, and terrorism, those of the Americans⁽³⁵⁾ denote positive traits. Most of the retrieved images described the Americans as people who are more concerned with human issues, including

healthcare, education, and aids of different kinds to the poor people around the globe. The other positive simulated image given to these people emphasizes the organized and the democratic nature of its culture, including the organized ceremonies, unions and peaceful demonstrations. The only negative picture attached to the Americans relates to the issue of obesity that would not harm the American nation as the Arabs' online simulacra would do. The figure below explicates the data discussed:

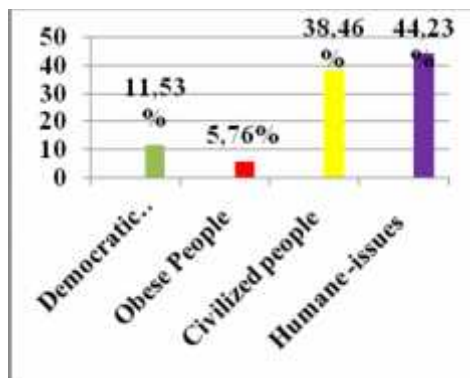


Figure 2: Americans' Online Simulacra

7. Learners' Stereotypes about the Self and the Other:

The encompassing nature that knowledge construction is featured with makes the aforementioned process influence and gets influenced by manifold social entities, namely everyday technology- determined reality, more often than not taken for granted as commonsense⁽³⁶⁾. Individuals tend to develop certain savoirs in relation to the reality they live in or which surrounds them. In seeking such knowledge, the individual may live a tension between their consciousness and everyday reality, especially when they come across unfamiliar objects, beings and ideas online that go against their views and opinions. This climax would undoubtedly lead the individuals, in this case learners, to develop certain stereotypes when they subjectively question the reality served to them online. However, those who do not objectively and critically approach aforementioned portrayals and integrate the served depiction easily would take it as a “*reality par excellence*” that occupies a superior position in comparison to the other realities, to make it the “*paramount reality*”. Berger and Luckmann (1966) explain the tension between everyday life knowledge and consciousness as they state:

The tension of consciousness is highest in everyday life, that is, the latter imposes itself upon consciousnesses in the most massive, urgent and intense manner. It is impossible to ignore, difficult even to weaken in its imperative presence. Consequently, it forces me to be attentive to it in the fullest way. I experience everyday life in the state of being wide-awake. This wide awake state of existing in and apprehending the reality of everyday life is taken by me to be normal and self-evident, that is, it constitutes my natural attitude⁽³⁷⁾.

The previous section elucidated the chauvinistic position online platforms display in relation to the Other, particularly towards the Muslim and Arabs. However, this part, by contrast to the one that proceeds, targets learners' stereotypes about the West and their attitudes in relation to online simulacra. To test if learners tend to be influenced by their cultural belongings when approaching the Self and the Other, a questionnaire had been given to the 75 students of English who are members of the online community studied. It included a set of quantitative questions as well as qualitative ones purposefully for the sake of cross-checking the findings.

All the learners who have been interviewed via the questionnaire admitted that they access images and videos via Google. In addition to this the majority of them claimed they search for videos and images in relation to their own culture and the target one as well. The role of

media and Internet in particular in shaping learners' stereotypes about the other cannot be eschewed. The Americans are among the people who receive a great deal of stereotypes in such online platforms. Learners too, are more likely to link the West to America, and consequently produce miscellaneous kinds of simulated portrayals towards it. In the graph below, most of the learners believe the Americans to be intellectual people (27,77%). Howbeit, this positive image is contrasted by means of two negative images, including Americans as colonizers (19,44%) and as allies of Israel (19,44%). It is worthwhile noting that these two negative images are developed due to historical backgrounds, ethnic conflicts within the cultures involved, and the political discourse within learners' community⁽³⁸⁾. Other stereotypes picture the Americans as "most hated societies in the world, criminals, powerful, mind-users, and creative. The figure below elucidates the data discussed:

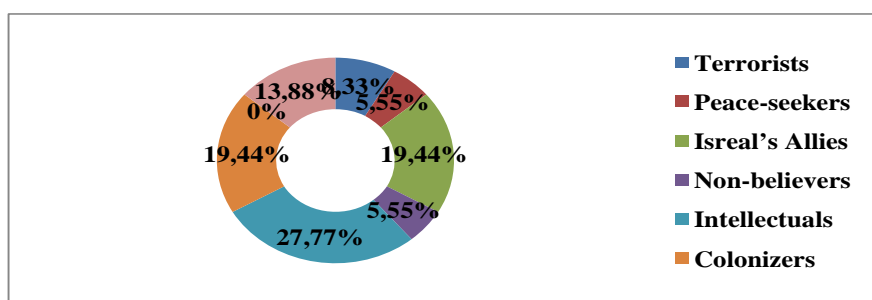


Figure 3: Learners' Online Stereotypes about the Americans

Most of the learners who have been asked the question in relation to the way they stereotype the Europeans, have pictured them as intellectual (26,47%)⁽³⁹⁾. They also maintain that the Europeans are colonizers due to the historical heritage they call upon in the process of stereotyping the Other. What can be noticed here is that both the Americans and the Europeans are pictured almost in the same way, despite the fact that each one epitomises divergent histories and cultures. The body of knowledge in relation to the nature of stereotypes serves as a lighthouse in relation to this, since these kinds of reality distortion group people of different cultures in certain unitary categories. The same thing is applicable to the Muslims who, to some extent, are positioned within the locus of terrorism. In addition to this, some learners think that the Europeans are racists (17,64%), while others describe them as "non-believers (12,5%). Other stereotypes centre on the following ideas: "civilized, unified, developers, friends, and "they hate Muslims". The graph below details the findings:

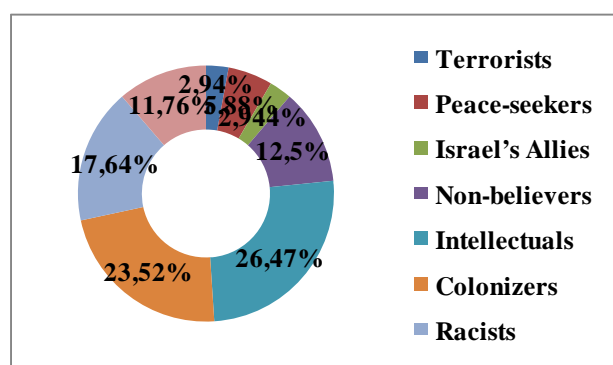


Figure 4: Learners' Online Stereotypes about the Europeans

The effects of online simulations on learners' development of certain stereotypes are lucid in the graph below. These forms of reality distortion and simplification serve as hotbeds for learners to develop ethnocentric attitudes in relation to the Other. Learners, as it is shown below, fall in the trap of generalization, the natural process of stereotyping others. More

precisely, the learners interviewed conjecture that all the Arabs are believers (27, 58%). They seem to overlook the fact that in some Arab countries, numerous non-believers co-exist with believers. Lucidly, the learners respond, in most case negatively to the online simulations they have been introduced to. Furthermore, these learners are not au courant of the clear-cut distinction between the religions and religious beings, and religious interpretations. Consequently, they label all that is the Other in the frame of “unbelievers”. Interestingly, as opposed to the belief that Westerners are the enemies of Palestinians, the image of the Arabs as allies of Palestinians is among the ironclad representations that the learners hold in their minds (20, 68%). Beyond shadow of a doubt, this issue is debatable, and therefore requires other studies that cavilingly permeate politicized and religious discourses. Other representations and stereotypes about the Arabs include the following descriptions “*They treat all men as their brothers*”, “*weak*”, “*empty-minded*”, “*narrow-minded*”, “*separated*”, “*peaceful*”, “*non understood people by other communities*”, and “*brave*”. The graph below explicates the findings:

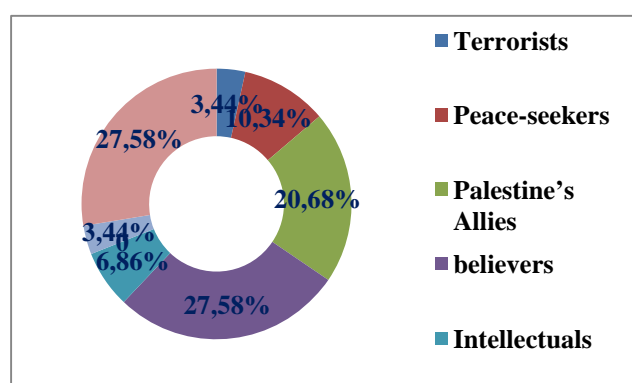


Figure 5: Learners' Online Stereotypes about the Arabs

8. Discussion:

The biased nature of these online ecologies inspects the very nature of technology that, according to the prospect that this study adopts, is humanised and deprived of its robotic and mechanistic qualities. The neutrality of such online spaces is substituted for implicit intentions loaded by discriminatory, racist attitudes and evil wills as they propagate divergent kinds of stereotypes, simulations and simulacra. Learners, though it is undeniable to eschew the amount of knowledge they develop in relation to online spaces, are exposed to a flow of information along stereotypical ideas and depictions, including their own culture. Learners of English are exposed to myriad kinds of reality distortion via online simulations of the Self and the Other that are enhanced by means of online platforms. These kinds of manipulations are even accentuated as learners lack intercultural skills that allow them think critically as they come across those forms of reality distortion. In addition to this, the absence of teachers as intercultural mediators intensifies the heat that brings the Self and the Other into contact. Consequently, learners are prone to respond to the stereotypes they come across online in a negative way, and hence in turn launch a vicious circle of reality distortion.

9. Conclusion:

In such unbridled online ecologies where the human percolators, namely the teachers are substituted for manifold links of distractions, the chary infiltration of the knowledge that the learners come across is too low. Paul Ricoeur in his analysis of the nature of the Self, identified two cardinal relational features that lead to a better understanding of both the Self and the Other. His hermeneutic principles mainly embody: primacy of reflection before positioning any construct, opposing the selfhood to sameness, and finally drawing the dialectic ties between the self and the Other⁽⁴⁰⁾. He claims that Otherness has never been

autonomous in relation to the self; on the contrary, 'it is part of the meaning and the ontological constitution of the selfhood' ⁽⁴¹⁾. A successful communication between the self and the Other hinges, to a great extent, on the ability to put oneself in the position of another. Empathy, under this spirit, is the skill that teachers should be aware of so as to be charted within their course objectives. In the same way, learners need to develop it to become intercultural mediators. Claiming the significance of the elements that intervene in the reciprocity that jumbles both constructs, one may suggest that the success of the mediation bottoms on the development of an intercultural competence, a competence that does not differentiate between the Self and the Other on grounds of ethnicity and sexism, but on platforms of tolerance and understanding. In connection with this, the role of education is momentous, as to developing learners' awareness in relation to the use of technology. To cut it short, the aim of teaching languages and about other cultures should be enhancing learners' critical thinking.

Endnotes:

1-In the field of media, two main overlapping concepts 'simulation and simulacra' may generate confusion. Simulation is believed to differ from "images and icons", since it does not provide a static representation of something and somebody. On the contrary, it generates an active process of representation. Simulacra is "a material image, made as a representation of some deity, person, or thing," as "something having merely the form or appearance of a certain thing, without possessing its substance or proper qualities," and as "a mere image, a specious imitation or likeness, of something" (Oxford English Dictionary). Michael Camille emphasizes the idea that simulacra goes beyond a static image. He adds: "The simulacrum is more than just a useless image, it is a deviation and perversion of imitation itself - a false likeness" (cited in Nelson, Robert S., and Richard Schiff, eds).

2-Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation*, trans. Sheila Faria Glaser (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 1994).

3-Baudrillard (1994) states that in this era of simulation, reality had been mingled with notions of hyperreality and imaginary. Moreover, reality in depicting life had been stratified along a new scale. He argues: 'The imaginary was the alibi of the real, in a world dominated by the reality principle. Today, it is the real that has become the alibi of the model, in a world controlled by the principle of simulation' (p.122). Most importantly, the misleading interplay between imaginary and real gave birth to novel realities that stand on their own. He adds: 'It is no longer a question of a false representation of reality (ideology) but of concealing the fact that the real is no longer real, and thus of saving the reality principle' (p 175). By the same token other features of reality are categorized differently'.

4-Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 2.

5-Jean Baudrillard elaborates the point as he claims: "Everywhere we live in a universe strangely similar to the original - things are doubled by their own scenario. But this doubling does not signify, as it did traditionally, the imminence of their death - they are already purged of their death, and better than when they were alive; more cheerful, more authentic, in the light of their model, like the faces in funeral homes" (p 10).

6-Legitimation is affiliated mostly with the process of institutionalization discussed by Berger and Luckmann (1966) in their book 'The Social Construction of Reality'. They claim that this process is elemental as to practice of institutionalization as they commented "And since online simulations are part of 'virtual institutions', they need to be legitimized to be taken as 'common sense'. According to Berger and Luckmann, legitimation is the process that hinges on the creation of new meanings that seek to 'explain' the institutional order by ascribing cognitive validity to its objectivated meanings... by giving a normative dignity to its practical imperatives. It also designates those objects and beings as being non-legitimate. Berger and Luckmann add: "The conceptual operation here is rather simple. The threat to the social definitions of reality is neutralized by assigning an inferior ontological status, and thereby a not-to-be-taken-seriously cognitive status, to all definitions existing outside the symbolic universe" (p 80).

7- Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 3.

8-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1966) state that any institutionalized practice needs to be legitimized so as to be applied to the social fields. These practices and their products are real though unfamiliar to the individual, at least in their operating mechanisms. These legitimized practices

manipulate the individuals' conducts efficiently. Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann add that: *'The more conduct is institutionalized, the more predictable and thus the more controlled it becomes.'*

9-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1966), *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. (New York: Penguin Putnam Inc, 1966).

10-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann, op, cit., 75.

11-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann, op, cit., 76.

12-Reification is a social process that leads the human being to forget that all these social activities and products are created by him, since it has effective influence on one's consciousness. *'The reified world is, by definition, a dehumanized world. It is experienced by man as a strange facticity'*, claim Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann.

13-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann, Ibidem.

14-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann (1966) argue that despite the fact that reification process that deludes reality of the producer and the product, man is the one who creates these social products. They add: *'That is, man is capable paradoxically of producing a reality that denies him. Through reification, the world of institutions appears to merge with the world of nature'* (p 75).

15-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann, op, cit., 78.

16-Almilad, Z. فعاليات الملتقى الدولي الثاني حول حوارات في الدين و اللغة .حفريات معرفية في معنى الآخر (2013) :

17-In this paper, the Other with capital "O" is employed, since it embraces perceiving individuals from heterogeneous cultures and from particular linguistic and cultural lens.

18-Cited in Homer, 2005, p 11.

19-Cited in Homer, op, cit., p 12.

20-Cited in Priest, 2001, p 45.

21-Almilad, Z, op, cit., p 15.

22-Digital cultures are the cultures that emanate from the use of the Internet.

23-Computer-mediated discourse analysis is the application of the rules of discourse analysis to the study of computer mediated communication.

24-Google is *"an American multinational corporation specializing in Internet-related services and products. These include online advertising technologies, search, cloud computing, and software."*

25-Here too, we typed the word "Arabs" with no specification as to orienting the research towards implicit aims. Neutrality had been an ethical issue on which this research bottoms on.

26-Berger and Luckmann (1966) state that *'All human activity is subject to habitualization'*. In relation to that Online platforms tend to occupy an elemental locus as far as these activities are concerned, and hence they are exposed to the process of habitualization. This process when merged with online simulations would narrow the choices for the individual to interpret reality, and thus lead them to consume these fake realities as the norm, the only possible reality. Berger and Luckmann (ibid.) explain the ideas as they add: *'Habitualized actions, of course, retain their meaningful character for the individual although the meanings involved become embedded as routines in his general stock of knowledge, taken for granted by him and at hand for his projects into the future'*. These habitualized practices are effective since they are grounded on psychological relief that reduces individuals' state of anxiety. The authors argue that *"habitualization narrows these down to one. This frees the individual from the burden of 'all those decisions', providing a psychological relief that has its basis in man's undirected instinctual structure"*. It also engenders certain prototypes that are taken by the individual as the standard that may be applied to all the situations they pass by without the need for questioning reality.

27-Baudrillard (1995) believes that as simulations reach a certain effective level, they destroy reality completely. It does so since it not only substitutes meanings for new ones but it generates new signs that have their own meanings, what Baudrillard terms 'the new real'. In an endless continuum, these created signs may be taken a source for other simulations.

28-Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 2.

29-Ridoauni, The representation of Arabs and Muslims in Western media. *RUTA*. N° 03, 2011, p11.

30-Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 5.

31-Iconoclasts (the opponents of divine images) urged for the destruction of these images since they have been effectively created to murder divinity. Baudrillard comments: *"But their metaphysical despair came from the idea that the image didn't conceal anything at all, and that these images were in essence not images, such as an original model would have made them, but perfect simulacra,*

forever radiant with their own fascination. Thus this death of the divine referential must be exorcised at all costs” (p 4).

32-Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 8.

33-Jean Baudrillard, op,cit., p 4.

34-The West includes many countries, but since America represents it, it is taken as a sample.

35-The Americans have been taken as representatives of the West.

36-The interplay between knowledge construction and reality is mediated by the mechanism of common sense, which implicitly orients one's views and perspectives. This process entails manifold instructions as how things should be done. Its paramount duty is providing for the individual certain guidelines to distinguish between 'problematic reality and unproblematic reality'. In relation to that, technology and Internet along their operating simulating systems have become internalized as a common sense. Under this connection, individuals are more likely to embrace these online simulations as reality. Berger and Luckmann (1966) elucidate the functioning of commonsense knowledge as follows: 'The reality of everyday life is taken for granted as reality. It does not require additional verification over and beyond its simple presence. It is simply there, as self-evident and compelling facticity. I know that it is real. While I am capable of engaging in doubt about its reality, I am obliged to suspend such doubt as I routinely exist in everyday life'.

37-Berger, P. L. and T. Luckmann, op, cit., p 35.

38-Political discourse is believed to be effective in the process of stereotyping and representing culture due to the employment of religious texts in such kinds of speeches.

39-The sixth question of the questionnaire goes this way "how can you describe the Europeans?"

40-Hermeneutics refers to: "the science of interpretation, especially of the Scriptures; the branch of theology (the study of religions) that deals with the principles of Biblical exegesis" (Dictionary.com).

41-Cited in M., Ruwaili, and S., Bazighi, p 124.

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Appendix: Learners' Questionnaire

This questionnaire explores learners' stereotypes about the self (their own culture) and the Other (Western cultures). Parallel to this, it delves into learners' attitudes about these online simulations of reality of both the self and the Other.

1- Do you use social media?

2-Do you access images and videos via Google

3-Have you ever tried to look for some images and videos about your own culture using Google?

4-Have you ever tried to look for some images and videos about Western cultures using Google?

5-How can you describe the Americans?

- Terrorists

- Peace-seekers

- Israel's Allies
- Non-believers? ()
- Intellectuals (مُثَقِّفِينَ)
- Colonizers?
- Racists
- Other descriptions
- 6-** How do you describe the Europeans?
- Terrorists
- Peace-seekers
- Israel's Allies
- Non-believers? ()
- Intellectuals (مُثَقِّفِينَ)
- Colonizers
- Racists
- Other descriptions
- 7-** How do you describe the Arabs?
- Terrorists
- Peace-seekers
- Palestine's Allies
- believers? ()
- Intellectuals (مُثَقِّفِينَ)
- Colonizers?
- Racists?
- Other descriptions