Translation and Interpreting Studies education in the midst of platform capitalism

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we examine how TIS education unfolds within an all-encompassing digital education context that has been dramatically intensified by the sudden switch over to online-only instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic in major universities in Turkey. We surveyed 17 instructors (four were later interviewed) and 46 undergraduate students in order to find out how pedagogical relationships are impacted by the online-only distance education modalities. The disruptive effects as well as emancipatory potentials of these changes for TIS pedagogy were probed. In addressing these issues, the conceptual framework of the threefold division of educational purposes into qualification, socialisation, and subjectification was deployed. The analysis of our data suggests a lack of concerted attempts to address subjectification as a central issue in the online-only learning environment in TIS education. Both instructors and students have concerns regarding the domain of subjectification. Yet, instructors seem mostly focused on qualification- and socialisation-related issues rather than the needs of their students in terms of their subjectification. In this context, the so-called platform capitalism promotes pedagogical relationships that are not conducive to fostering the domain of subjectification and therefore poses a risk to the development of students' personal and professional identity.

KEYWORDS

Subjectification, qualification, socialisation, COVID-19, translation and interpreting education, platform capitalism, GAFAM, digitalisation, distance education, translation studies.

1. Introduction

A near-total digitalisation of schools and higher education is under way in many regions around the world, especially in high-consuming countries like Canada, the USA, the 27-state EU bloc, China, Australia, and the like (Peters *et al*. 2020). Education systems in advanced industrialised (post-industrial) nations of the high- and middle-income economies as well as the fast-growing economies of Ethiopia, Mexico, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nigeria, and so on, are now arguably thoroughly embedded within global digital ecosystems. This being said, it is clear that access to ICT (information and communication technologies) systems is neither uniformly available to all around the world, nor are the benefits equally shared.

In line with these rapid changes occurring across the world, virtual learning environments are increasingly replacing traditional contact/campus teaching, especially in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Even prior to this disruptive contingent event, however, we have been living in "the epoch of digital reason" (Peters 2017: 29) for some time now, whereby the so-called 'data' (information) is generated, extracted, analysed, used, and sold by info-utility transnational corporations, such as the infamous GAFAM,

namely, Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft. We should probably now also add Alibaba, Huawei, ByteDance (TikTok's Chinese owner), and other non-US tech giants to the list.

What is infamous about GAFAM and other similar platforms is that—despite their notable contribution to the constitution of a digital *as-sociated* milieu (Stiegler 2014), i.e., the internet—they almost immediately became instrumentalised in the service of the so-called technologies of control of the hyper industrial service society (Stiegler 2014), which may seem alarming, to say the least. As the recent documentary-drama streamed on Netflix "The Social Dilemma" explores in some detail, these platforms are predicated on an *attention-extraction* business model—"data is the new oil" (Nolin 2019)—whereby, because the attention of the user is monetised, the platforms, by design, aim to maximise the time spent on their sites in pursuit of profit by manipulating users' psychological weaknesses through the deployment of psychotechnological techniques that fragment users' attention (cf. Claudio Celis Bueno's *The Attention Economy: Labour, Time and Power in Cognitive Capitalism* (2017) for an analysis of attention as an economic resource, the so-called 'economisation of attention').

The expression "platform capitalism" (Srnicek 2017) refers to a new phase of capitalist accumulation whereby large amounts of data extracted from the activities of users are employed by companies like GAFAM "so as to optimise production processes, give insight into consumer preferences, control workers, provide the foundation for new products and services (e.g. Google Maps, self-driving cars, Siri), and sell to advertisers" (Srnicek 2017: 29). In this context, it is not just that student users are required to learn 'about' and 'with' digital technologies; more importantly, their administration, governance and surveillance are ubiquitously carried out in these digitally-mediated platforms as well (Thoutenhoofd 2018). Students, especially those in advanced industrialised nations, grow up and live in an environment saturated with ICT (Biesta 2016).

The ubiquity and power of these platforms dictate how other third-party companies and businesses operate and function. Indeed, the digital technologies that these platforms give rise to and support are so pervasive that they can arguably no longer be conceived as a supplement to, or an enhancement of, existing pedagogical practices and learning experiences. More and more, these digital technologies are thought to be moulding the core of human-technology relationships (Stiegler 2014; Srnicek 2017; Bueno 2017; Peters 2017). In many ways, they have the power to shape how we interact with them (and through them with each other) in ways that are not immediately obvious to us, for instance, by altering how we collaborate and co-create content (Lember *et al.* 2019). It is readily apparent that Translation and Interpreting Studies (TIS) are not spared from the potential disruptive effects or emancipatory possibilities of these changes (e.g. Olohan 2017).

In this study, our goal is to examine how TIS education unfolds in this digital education context that has been intensified by the necessity to abruptly switch over to online-only instruction during the COVID-19 emergency distance education period, and beyond, in major universities in Turkey. More specifically, we are interested in finding out how the pedagogical relationships between instructor and students, and those among students, are impacted by the online-only distance education modalities in the context of TIS. By pedagogical relationships we are referring to the relationships between teachers and students that are conducive to education, and not just learning (Biesta 2016: 30). As such, we employ the expression 'TIS education' in this article, rather than TIS learning. The distinction between education and learning is important and will be taken up in detail below. What are the disruptive effects and emancipatory potentials of these changes for TIS education?

In addressing these issues, we largely rely on the conceptual framework of the threefold division of the domains of educational purposes, qualification, socialisation, and subjectification, offered by the leading educational theorist Gert Biesta (2013 and 2020a).

2. Biesta and the question of purpose in education

In the midst of such momentous changes taking place in the politico-economic sphere, educational institutions of various kinds are caught up in a whirlwind of transformation often without much time to reflect on the core function of their endeavours, namely, subjectification. According to Biesta (2013), subjectification is:

> the way in which educational processes and practices contribute to the emergence of human subjectivity or "subject-ness." Subjectification, so we might say, expresses a particular interest—an interest in the subjectivity or subject-ness of those being educated—that is, in the assumption that those at whom our educational efforts are directed are not to be seen as objects but as subjects in their own right; subjects of action and responsibility (2013: 18).

In other words, subjectification involves ways of being whereby individuals exercise their "capacity to remain independent from the existing orders of society by challenging their uncontested insertion into these orders" (Biesta 2013: 18). Our students are therefore viewed as subjects in their own right who develop agency. Subjectification stands in contrast to the qualification and socialisation functions of education, which essentially help reproduce the status quo since, through education, individuals become part of existing orders and traditions. To be more precise, qualification refers to "the domain of the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and dispositions" (Biesta 2013: 64), whereas socialisation is "the way in which, through education, we become part of existing 'orders' (social orders, political orders, cultural orders, religious orders, professional orders, and so on)" (Biesta 2013: 147). Subjectification, in contrast, is an open-ended process taking place in the pluralist public arena of contestation of such orders and

the associated knowledge and values that go into their makeup. As the very *raison d'être* of education is to bring about the individual development and autonomy of students themselves (e.g. Loftus and Madden 2020: 459), one may argue that subjectification—viewed by Biesta as a positive conception—carries more weight than qualification and socialisation when it comes to educational purpose. School systems in general—and higher education systems in particular—are such places where subjectification takes place.

To illustrate, let us take 'the school' as an example of a public place where education is enacted in its qualification, socialisation, and subjectification functions. In this case, the distinction between primary, secondary, or tertiary education is inconsequential.

> What *is* the school? Let us observe the negative definitions first: the school is *not* a learning environment. It is *not* a place to prepare students for 'real life,' or life as an adult. It is *not* a place to prepare workers for the labour market. It is *not* a place to produce pious citizens or believers. It is *not* a place designed to serve the needs of the capital. It is *not* a place to equip individuals to think critically so that they can question the needs of the capital either. It is *not* an apparatus reproducing the machinations of power to perpetuate social and economic inequalities, and so on. In short, the school is *not* an agent that contributes to pre-formulated purposes (Oral *forthcoming*).

The school, in the West and Westernising world, can (and has) crystallise(d) into all of these to various extents. In other words, employing Biesta's terminology (2020a), education more broadly, and the school as the latter's enactment, has often been reduced to a matter of qualification and socialisation functions when it should have been more mindful of its intended principal purpose, which is subjectification. But, more precisely, what is really at stake with subjectification, since it cannot be reduced to critical thinking alone?

According to the notion of school put forward by Masschelein and Simons in their book *In Defense of the School* (2013: 9-16), the school is the place of 'scholastic' education, by which they mean the school is a source of 'free time.'

> Guilty of misdeeds from its inception in the Greek city-states, the school was a source of 'free time'– the most common translation of the Greek word scholè – that is, free time for study and practice afforded to people who had no claim to it according to the archaic order prevailing at the time. The school was thus a source of knowledge and experience made available as a 'common good' […] From its inception in the Greek city states, school time has been time in which 'capital' (knowledge, skills, culture) is expropriated, released as a 'common good' for public use, thus existing independent of talent, ability or income. And this radical expropriation or 'making public' is difficult to tolerate for all who seek to protect property (2013: 9).

This view of what a school should embody was not simply mooted by the ancient Greeks and their rigidly hierarchical societies. Masschelein and

Simons (2013) argue that we should still consider schools as spaces of common good, now more than ever:

> the school provides 'free time' and transforms knowledge and skills into 'common goods,' and therefore has the potential to give everyone, regardless of background, natural talent or aptitude, the time and space to leave their known environment, rise above themselves and renew (and thus change in unpredictable ways) the world (2013: 10).

When Biesta defined subjectification as individuals exercising "their capacity to remain independent from the existing orders of society by challenging their uncontested insertion into these orders" (2013: 18) he viewed the school as a place where all pupils could "rise above themselves" and renew or change the world (Masschelein and Simons 2013: 10). In this sense, the world is not the world of private individuals, but the world constituted by 'common goods' that belong to the shared intersubjective public domain.

However, the constitution and reconstitution of the public domain made possible by the capacity of individuals to remain independent from the existing orders of society is easier said than done. When the impact of platform capitalism is added to the equation, things can take a rather bleak turn. Take, for instance, Cronin's discussion of the impact of GAFAM's ability to deploy 'big data' on the agency of the translator (Cronin 2013: 60-63). In the so-called "dilemma of split agency," there are two levels of authorship, hence two levels of knowledge and power: the primary and secondary authors.

> … the secondary author is to the primary author what the player in the video game is to the video game's designer. The players may invent (author) their own stories, but they are playing by rules and in an environment designed by someone else (Cronin 2013: 61).

That 'someone else' is more likely than not a GAFAM or a GAFAM-affiliated platform. It might at first appear that secondary authors are transforming their knowledge and skills into common goods. However, they are only doing that within the constraints of the rules of the game set by primary authors. It is interesting to think about subjectification in the context of these specific constraints and also within an educational environment.

Increasingly, translators can be seen as reduced to playing by the rules of a game designed by the tech giants. They are normally subject to these and no longer in a position to contest the rules since the latter are, on some occasions, no longer visible even to their own creators (Knight 2017). The deep learning algorithms, that is, the algorithms that self-learn, designed, for instance, to maximise the attention of a user by fragmenting it, are now so complex and complicated that human programmers/engineers that have designed them are no longer in a position to fully control the processes of machine learning (Knight 2017). In a sense, rather than subjectification, what is actually taking place is the opposite: desubjectification. People's

attention has been so fragmented by these processes that it is not an over-statement to suggest that they are no longer in a position to resist much of the immediate gratification provided by artificial intelligence. While desubjectification may not yet be all-encompassing, the logic that is currently driving machine learning is certainly moving in this direction. It seems relevant for translator educators to be mindful of this situation.

Another example that has relevance for the translation industry is Post-Editing (PE), which refers to editing and correcting MT output, in the context of ever-increasing pressure for efficiency and productivity in the translation profession. Do Carmo (2020) discussed how the imposition of contradictory translation industry standards concerning MT and PE undermines the value of translators and takes away their agency, that is, their ability to control their production time. Indeed, PE increases time pressure while claiming the opposite. Through a detailed analysis of the temporal nature of tasks performed by translators, do Carmo (2020: 36-42) convincingly argues that while PE is presented as a simple and cost-effective time-saving task, it is actually intrinsically complex. Due to this complexity, it cannot rely solely on MT but requires high-level skills and translator input. Regardless of the way it is presented in the industry, MT arguably cannot and should not replace the agency or subjectivity of the translator.

If data is the oil of the epoch of digital reason, perhaps it can be mooted that GAFAM extracts attention to maximise usable data just like BP or Exxon-Mobil extracts oil. In a similar vein, the translation industry partakes in the so-called digital Taylorism (DT) (Parenti 2001), whereby translation work is progressively decomposed, subdivided and hence heavily fragmented into smaller and smaller discrete tasks to maximise productivity and efficiency while minimising the translator's overall role (Moorkens 2020: 17-24). This extracts value from translators in ways that undermine their agency, and also at times their ethical judgment and moral responsibility (Moorkens 2020: 17). In this context, subjectification can be particularly challenging to achieve.

It was previously noted that higher education is not just about qualification and socialisation; it is also, and arguably more importantly, about subjectification. In times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, reflections on subjectification, however, tend to go by the wayside (Biesta 2016). Individuals will focus on 'doing' and 'performing', on effectiveness and accountability rather than, for instance, on the existential and/or aesthetic experience of learning on a digital platform (Hoyt and Jilka 2018). We would argue that, even though fully-online learning systems might provide opportunities for the qualification and socialisation functions of education, subjectification is more likely to require 'a culture of touch,' where physical face-to-face interactions provide an important component of becoming an individual who is capable of reflective thinking and autonomous action, with the capacity to question the existing order of things. While subjectification can certainly take place in well-designed

online-only educational environments, the term subjectification as described by Biesta (2020a) refers to a kind of slow and patient encounter with the world in a physical environment, and one that provides freedom from (platform, technology) forces and constraints. As such, we would argue that it is perhaps more likely (though not exclusively) to exist in spaces where people interact in person.

Given this overall context, we turn our attention to theoretical and empirical pedagogical practices and pedagogical relations among teacher, students, and TIS curriculum content. Specifically, we explore some of the effects of the sudden and forced online transition by reporting the views of two major actors, instructors and undergraduate students of translation and interpreting, and their experience in this so-called transitory environment in Turkish universities.

In TIS, the training of professional translators has at times solely focused on the teaching of linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural knowledge, as well as technical skills, i.e. the qualification function of education. Contrary to the widespread assumption that the qualification and socialisation functions of education are separate from subjectification (Biesta 2020a: 102), we will argue, in line with Biesta, that the three domains actually constitute a whole and cannot be divorced from one another. Reflecting on one's life project and values as a whole, developing the ability to think critically about the possibilities of one's life experience and the role of others in it, a critical questioning of society and one's professional role within it, and within the labour market, are all significant components of TIS education. These cannot be reduced, firstly, to the employment-oriented functions of individual job training for the translation labour market, which is increasingly fragmented (Moorkens 2020, Fırat 2019), and, secondly, to learning to adjust to the standards, norms, and expectations of the existing order of society and the professional community. Subjectification, as previously suggested, entails the ability to critically reflect on the determining force of the structural aspects of socio-cultural and politico-economic domains of shared public life on the formation of the individual and professional identity of the student (Biesta 2020b). This is not something that can be delivered in a stand-alone 'critical thinking module' or generic critical thinking component of any module in the TIS curriculum for the simple reason that subjectification is not about learning per se but rather it is about education, which is, broadly put, a process constituted by the various actions of diverse actors navigating multiple layers of interactions that unfold in a contested public domain that cannot be fully brought under any one actor's control, a process which Biesta (2013, 2020a) has referred to as "the beautiful risk of education."

In this risky environment, we aim to explore to what extent it is possible to form an online learning environment wherein these issues can be fruitfully addressed. Some of the more specific questions we engage with are: What is it that we lose when the practical aspects of the pedagogical relationships

unfolding in real-time between teacher and students, and among students, are disregarded or greatly reduced in an online-only environment? How do we address the removal of vital components of translator and interpreter education, such as internships, in the transition to online-only platforms, an act which is likely to undermine established situated, experiential, and collaborative learning environments, as well as impair the careful scaffolding by educators of learning activities (Kiraly 2014)? What new roles do translation technologies take in the development of the professional identity of students? And finally, how does this all relate to Biesta's three functions of education?

First, however, it seems relevant to explore more fully the difference Biesta makes between learnification and subjectification. This will help to provide further context for understanding the study's findings.

3. Learnification versus subjectification

In order to fully understand the relevance of subjectification, we need to discuss what Biesta calls the "learnification" of education first. The positing of the domain of subjectification is, in essence, an attempt to respond to the perceived excessive focus on the learner at the expense of the teacher, which Biesta witnessed in the educational dispositif, to use a Foucauldian term, of recent decades:

> This concerns the shift in educational discourse, policy, and practice toward learners and their learning. This shift is often presented as a response to top-down practices of education that focus on teaching, the curriculum, and the input side of education more generally. The turn toward learning is also presented as a response to authoritarian practices, where education is seen as an act of control (Biesta 2020a: 91).

It can be argued that, initially, a shift towards learners and their learning (cf. constructivist theories of learning) was justified in many ways given the prior predominance of transmissionist approaches to teaching and learning (Kiraly 2006: 78-79). However, some have realised that a learner-centred approach is not always emancipatory and that student-led education can also face significant challenges such as dominant discourses and power relations (see for example Herranen *et al.* 2018; Herranen *et al.* 2020). Biesta (2020a: 93) argues that we need to return to more emancipatory forms of teaching, since problems stem from educational discourse being conceived (almost exclusively) in the language of learning, whereby it becomes easier to disregard many core aspects of education that include teachers, schools, and policymaking. When this happens, it becomes possible to disengage learning from teaching, and therefore to create systems of information delivery spearheaded by GAFAM and their affiliates that focus on a narrow definition of learning at the expense of teachers, schools, and policymakers. This learnification gives the impression that what the learning is supposed to be 'about' and 'for' is already decided and there is no reason to lose additional time and energy over such issues

(Biesta 2020a). The idea that is promoted is that learning can be delivered in a straightforward manner, separately from teachers and brick-and-mortar schools and universities.

> Yet these questions are crucial for education, because the point of education is never that students simply learn — they can do that anywhere, including, nowadays, on the Internet — but that they learn *something*, that they learn it *for a reason*, and that they learn it *from someone*. A key problem with the language of learning is that it tends to make these questions — about educational content, purpose, and relationships — invisible, or that it assumes the answer to these questions is already clear and decided upon (Biesta 2020a: 91).

Subjectification, on the other hand, involves engaging in complex ways that are not pre-specified or entirely predictable. At its core, it holds that human beings are free to question, resist, modify, or embrace changes. As Biesta (2020a) aptly states, this freedom is not the neoliberal "freedom of shopping" however; rather, it is

> integrally connected to our existence as subject. This is never an existence just with and for ourselves, but always an existence in and with the world. An existence with human beings and other living creatures and "in" a physical environment that is not a simple backdrop, a context in which we act, but rather a complex network through which we act; a network, moreover, that sustains and nurtures us (2020a: 95-96).

This complex physical network, however, is obscured by recent attempts to completely digitalise education, from primary school to higher education, in many European countries and elsewhere (Lindberg 2020). E-learning has been hyped as the panacea, the pharmakon, especially during the corona crisis. One might, however, consider e-learning as a form of techno-rational dystopia, because education—as we have seen—is not simply about learning but it is also about emancipatory teaching.

> And the basic gesture of teaching is that of trying to catch and direct the attention of another human being—an act of 'turning,' as Plato already describes it in The Republic. Authoritarian teaching does not just want to direct the attention of students, but also wants to have total control over what students do with what enters their field of perception. Emancipatory teaching, on the other hand, also wants to direct the attention of students, but leaves it to them to figure out what they do with what they may encounter there (Biesta 2020b: 2).

One might argue that, for the teacherly gesture to direct the attention of the student to something worthwhile and enable their exploration, we need to go beyond a learning environment, online or otherwise, and enter into embodied classroom relationships with students (e.g. Alerby *et al.* 2014). Education takes place more fully in that embodied affective relationship (Wetherell 2012: 9-11; Mulcahy and Morrison 2017: 752). Here the student is not regulating their own learning, defining their own learning needs, or in other words, self-administering their learning in the context of a learning environment controlled by the omnipresent digital technologies that function through the control of attention. Instead, the student, the teacher, and the educational content co-exist in a relationship of care. We attend to

each other within the social context of the school, where critical distance vis-à-vis the utilitarian demands of society is perhaps more easily maintained.

As previously mentioned with the example of schools, the concept of time is important for subjectification to take place. Free time is key, but it is 'not' defined as productive time. In this perspective, it is not the time where we prepare students for real life, or life as an adult. It is not the time to prepare workers for the labour market. It is not the time to produce pious citizens or believers. It is not the time designed to serve the needs of the capital. It is vital non-productive time, when we sustain students' attention on a worthwhile subject by slowing down, and by giving them time to meet the world and meet themselves in relation to the world (Biesta 2020a: 98). Despite recent progress in this area, e-learning platforms are still not generally designed with these complex phenomenological concepts in mind.

Having given a broad overview of the threefold division of the purposes of education into qualification, socialisation, and subjectification in the context of the epoch of digital reason shaped by platform capitalism, we now move on to the analysis of the empirical component of our research.

4. Methodology

In the empirical component of our research, we collected data with instructor and student surveys and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with instructors (see Table 1). We also carried out a complementary examination of social media and blog posts related to teaching translation and interpreting courses during the pandemic period. Given the limitations attached to, and subjective nature of, the social media/blog posts analysis, we treated this source of data as auxiliary to the main study. Nevertheless, it served to shed some further light on the findings and provided potentially useful context for understanding the results.

Inductive qualitative analysis (Patton 2002: 41-57) was deployed to analyse emerging patterns and group participants' views in relation to the new learning environment and to the qualification, socialisation and, more importantly, subjectification functions of education. Table 1 summarises the content and number of participants for each data collection instrument.

Instrument[1]	Instructor survey	Student survey	Interviews	Social media & blogs
Content	34 questions (19 open-ended)	42 questions (25 open-ended)	Semi-structured	Posts about TIS education during the pandemic
Participants	17	46 (undergraduate level)	4	
Data	~6k words	~20k words	Transcription 40-45 minutes each	

Table 1. Instruments and data for analysis

We e-mailed the survey links to instructors in the translation and interpreting studies departments of major universities in Turkey. The instructors forwarded the survey to their undergraduate students. We focused on undergraduate education because TIS education in Turkey is generally offered as a four-year BA programme with courses on both theory and practice. There are only a few MA and PhD degree TIS programmes in the country. We believe that the subjectification of students is more important in undergraduate years where they step into adulthood and become more independent. We did not require an answer to every question in the surveys so participants could skip any question they did not wish to answer and still submit the survey. To maximise responses to the critical concerns of the study, questions addressing these appeared in different parts of the survey so that participants provided information regarding each critical concern even if they skipped certain questions. We obtained consent electronically, and the surveys were available in both English and Turkish for two reasons: (1) to allow an unhindered expression of ideas, and (2) because participants included faculty members and students from TIS departments majoring in languages other than English, such as French or German. Following the surveys, four faculty members—all full-time TIS scholars—were interviewed in separate online meetings which were audio-recorded. Interviews were held in Turkish or English and transcribed and translated where needed.

To gain further insight into the context in which online-only education became omnipresent, and the reactions thereto, we also conducted a brief search of social media, namely Facebook and Twitter, and on the World Wide Web for public posts with #t9n #1nt #COVID19 hashtags and with keywords "teaching," "students," "motivation" and "pandemic" in English for the period between 15 March and 15 June 2020. This type of data

collection has certain drawbacks, such as omission of posts within locked accounts, in different languages, or posts shared in other modes such as video or image files. In addition, social media posts did not all originate in Turkey. However, these were helpful in terms of gaining a broader understanding of existing issues and reactions in terms of online teaching during this unprecedented period.

Following an inductive analysis, we initially focused on "understanding of individual cases before those unique cases are combined or aggregated thematically" (Patton 2002: 57). We were then able to discover certain patterns, themes, and interrelationships by immersion into the details and specifics of the data (Patton 2002: 41). We discerned three principal themes in our analysis:

1. Macroscale/philosophical issues
    a. What makes humans human; the distinguishing characteristic of being human
    b. The role of higher education in making us human understood thus
    c. Humans versus technology
    d. Humans together with technology
2. Future of the profession in the face of GAFAM and MT
    a. The effect of technology on the translation profession
    b. Concerns regarding the future of the translation profession
    c. Concerns about students' and instructors' own future
3. Online teaching and learning experience
    a. Pros and cons of online teaching
    b. Expectations for the near future

5. Results

5.1 The context

A search of social media with the abovementioned criteria revealed that a key concern was the continued delivery of translation and interpreting services during the pandemic and the impact of the pandemic on the translation market. In other words, most posts seemed to relate to the impact of the pandemic on the profession rather than on education. Searches that included the specific keywords 'teaching,' 'motivation,' and 'students' revealed general concerns about a significant drop in student motivation but there were only a few posts relating directly to TIS education. We also found a number of reports on distance education strategies in response to COVID-19 such as the report by UNESCO (2020) or the report by the Toronto Science Policy Network (2020) on the impact of the pandemic on students, but no specific report about TIS education.

Two contributions widely shared on social media stood out to us, however. The first was by Translation Studies scholar Mark Shuttleworth (2020), who

shared a blog post entitled "Teaching translation technology online: some initial suggestions" soon after the epidemic broke out. This blog post listed useful applications like Zoom and Moodle and included suggestions on how to employ them effectively. The post was practical in nature and shared widely. The second contribution was a post drafted by Rafa Lombardino (2020), Portuguese Language Division Editor of American Translators Association, in relation to podcasts she hosted, entitled "Teaching Translation Amid the Pandemic 1 & 2." In these podcasts she interviewed four translation and interpretation instructors to learn how they supported their students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In these interviews, the instructors emphasised the importance of interaction, the stress levels of their students, and their feeling of isolation, in spite of the fact that some of them already had online learning experience before the pandemic. Interestingly, no major problems are reported in those interviews relating specifically to teaching activities.

Based on this (albeit brief) overview, the authors deduced that, in the immediate context of "survival" during the pandemic, the emphasis was—at least initially—on delivering the content and coursework as smoothly as possible with the technological tools available. At this early stage of the new reality, there was no immediate concern in relation to developing a critical stance towards online-only education modalities.

5.2 Survey results/Instructors

5.2.1 Macroscale/philosophical issues

The qualitative analysis of the responses provided by instructors surveyed in the study revealed that they made a clear distinction between human capabilities and digital technologies. In that sense, they generally did not express ambiguity with respect to the differences between humans and non-human intelligence systems. That which characterises human beings was expressed by participants largely in cognitive or information processing terms (i.e., contextual knowledge, critical thinking, immediate ability to comprehend collocations, and so on). To a lesser extent, existential terms such as creativity, empathy, authenticity, and sensitivity were also used by the participants to mark out what is specifically human.

When asked about the benefits of education, they highlighted elements belonging to the three purposes of education but listed more elements that can be categorised as contributing to subjectification, as can be seen in Table 2.

Subjectification	**Socialisation**	**Qualification**
• Respect for plurality • Diversity • Democracy/democratic culture • Enlightening and empowering • Finding one's own path • Autonomy/freedom • Resisting oppression and inequalities • Environment free of the economic imperative • Questioning/critical thinking • Public good • Mental maturity/broadening of horizons • Solidarity and unity • Power to educate virtuous individuals	• Professional ethics • Being useful for the society they live in • Professionalism	• Developing knowledge and skills • Specialising • Research skills • Higher employability, higher salary, better working conditions • Problem-solving skills

Table 2. The most important benefits of higher education for individuals and society

In answer to the questions relating to tech giants and online platforms, a majority of the instructors (14) stated their concerns that tech giants are more and more in control of our daily and professional lives. A recurring theme in their answers in relation to the role of digital technologies in our lives was the point that it decreases human feedback and interaction, and that it creates addiction. Other concerns were raised, such as disinformation, inactivity, cognitive burden, the ability of digital platforms to gather data about us and "make us dumb" (in one respondent's words), as well as time-consumption, and plagiarism. Instructors also expressed negativity in relation to GAFAM. Some see it as a manipulation tool and have privacy concerns. Others see it as a threat to human free will. Only three of the instructors did not express concern on this topic.

5.2.2 Future of the profession in the face of GAFAM and MT

Nearly half of the instructors (eight) viewed the role of translators as mainly post-editors in a global digital ecosystem dominated by tech giants like GAFAM. In response to questions on the role of human beings in an increasingly digitised environment, four instructors stated that humans still have an important role to play and three others stated that humans' role is bound to change. One instructor mentioned the participatory role of translators and interpreters in the technology development processes.

Within the world of MT and CAT tools, ten out of the 17 instructors stated that translators and interpreters will still play an active role in guiding and using technology, as reflected in the following quote:

> To provide and analyse data. To think in a multidimensional and multifunctional way—which computers cannot do—to make selection and fulfil the task. Artificial neural networks work on this but unless they can use qbit, it will stay as 0's and 1's. A translator, as a person that can turn 0's into 1's and 1's into 0's when needed, will have an irreplaceable position in the phase of post-editing and editing.

The instructors listed a number of aspects that they felt could not be taken over by digital technology, such as contextual knowledge (seven), creativity (five), sensitivity/empathy (six), ideology/activism (three), communication (two), and the need to make sense of something (one).

5.2.3 Online teaching experience

A large majority of instructors stated that digital technologies enhanced their value as an instructor and that online instruction contributed to the development of their skills. Most instructors (12) highlighted that online-only instruction for translation and interpreting education can facilitate their work by helping them keep track of participation, manage time better, diversify assessment tools, record lessons, and increase technological competence. In addition, three instructors noted that online teaching is beneficial because it prepares students for future work environments. Yet, many of these instructors also expressed negative feelings about online teaching due to factors such as a lack of interaction, and difficulties in understanding students' reactions, giving feedback, and promoting student engagement. 13 respondents stated they would not like to continue teaching in online-only mode in the future, but most agreed that it might be reasonable to conduct more than half of an undergraduate degree program in TIS in online-only mode (See Figure 1).

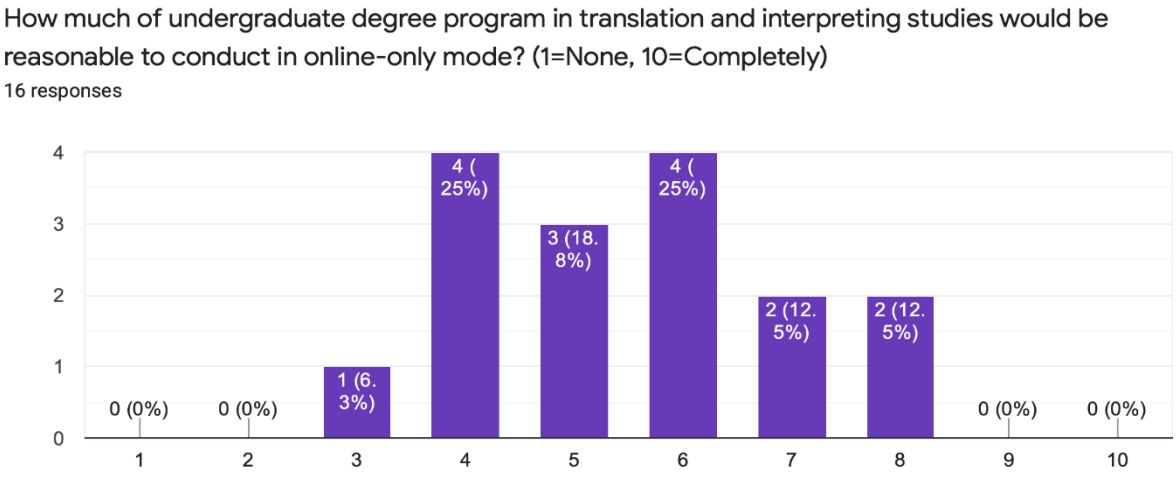

Figure 1. TIS in online-only mode

5.3 Interview results

Follow-up semi-structured in-depth interviews allowed us to focus on macroscale issues and learn more about instructors' online teaching experience. All interviewees claimed that campus life experience is an indispensable part of university education since, in their view, university life does not consist of instruction activities only. In addition, none of the instructors interviewed said they would consider working in a university where only online education is offered. Yet, they did not seem to feel very strongly about the current switch to the online mode. Also, despite the fact that all interviewees emphasised the importance of physical campus life for students' personal and social development, they did not articulate this aspect of education along the lines of subjectification using the various key terms from the written survey (see Table 2). Despite numerous questions attempting to elicit elaboration from the interviewees in relation to their views on this aspect of presence and the pluralist public arena that Biesta (2013) champions, this was not forthcoming.

An interesting observation was the instructors' flexibility in the face of this sudden switch to online-only mode, as they were able to take necessary measures swiftly such as using new tools, especially for interpreting courses, and adopting new methods. They made changes in their syllabi, such as increasing the share of assignments or projects in course grades, and they managed to deliver their course relatively successfully. Nevertheless, all participants expressed concern about the lack of interaction they experienced in virtual learning environments and noted problems they encountered with administering exams. All instructors were quite hopeful that a return to onsite education would soon materialise. They were also optimistic about the future of education, even if, for instance, all educational activities are conducted in three-dimensional virtual environments with no campuses.

5.4 Survey results/Students

5.4.1 Macroscale/philosophical issues

One of the key findings from this part of the study was that students aim to contribute to society by removing linguistic and cultural barriers. In their answers to questions on values, recurring themes included empathy, having a conscience, respect, fairness, and love. One student also emphasised the principles of his or her religion. Students seemed to have concerns caused by digital technologies due to their perceived omnipresence, failures to protect privacy or provide data security (eleven), and spreading of disinformation (four); they were also concerned by people's dependence and addiction (eight), and a weakening of their connection with each other (eight). Two students stated that digital technologies render people unemployed.

Out of 43 students, 38 felt that tech giants are increasingly in control of our daily and professional lives.

> Aforementioned tech giants obviously set the norms and standards of the evolutionary path of neoliberalism, influencing other companies and people to follow the way of life they see fit.

Worryingly, more than half of the students expressed a lack of control about their future. When asked whether they felt in control, one of the students noted the following:

> I certainly do not. I don't [sic] what kind of inventions will be made that will take over my job. I don't know what kind of a state my country will be in, in the future. There are lots of uncertainties that scare me. But I still want to be translator because it means something to me.

Other key areas of concern included financial problems and an inability to fulfil their dreams.

5.4.2 Future of the profession in the face of GAFAM and MT

Nearly a third of students stayed relatively optimistic about their role as a translator or interpreter in a global digital ecosystem dominated by tech giants. However, a number of students expressed pessimism, with one student stating: "I honestly cannot see my role being something more than a cogwheel in such ecosystem."

Interestingly, most students (29) are positive about working for one of the tech giants in the future, with five expressing mixed opinions in this respect: "I would not consider working for such tech giants for ethical reasons, but I would consider working for them for money". Most of the students acknowledged the disadvantages of working on digital platforms and mentioned associated factors such as social isolation, alienation, distraction, and physical and mental health issues. Nine students found digital platforms to be positive and practical. As can be seen in Figure 2, a majority of students expressed concern about the future viability of the profession. More specifically, some see their role as post-editors (14) and some (ten) think they would not have a significant role in the world of CAT tools and MT. This finding perhaps highlights the impact of digital technologies and ICT saturation on students' perceptions of themselves as subjects of action and responsibility (Biesta 2013: 20-23). It is also interesting to see that, on the whole, they do not seem prepared to—in Biesta's terms—challenge their uncontested insertion into these orders. When asked about the irreducible human aspects related to translation and interpreting, students highlighted: feelings and creativity (18), context and the ability to interpret (13), culture (two), and ideology (one). Only one student stated that computers do a better job than humans when it comes to these aspects.

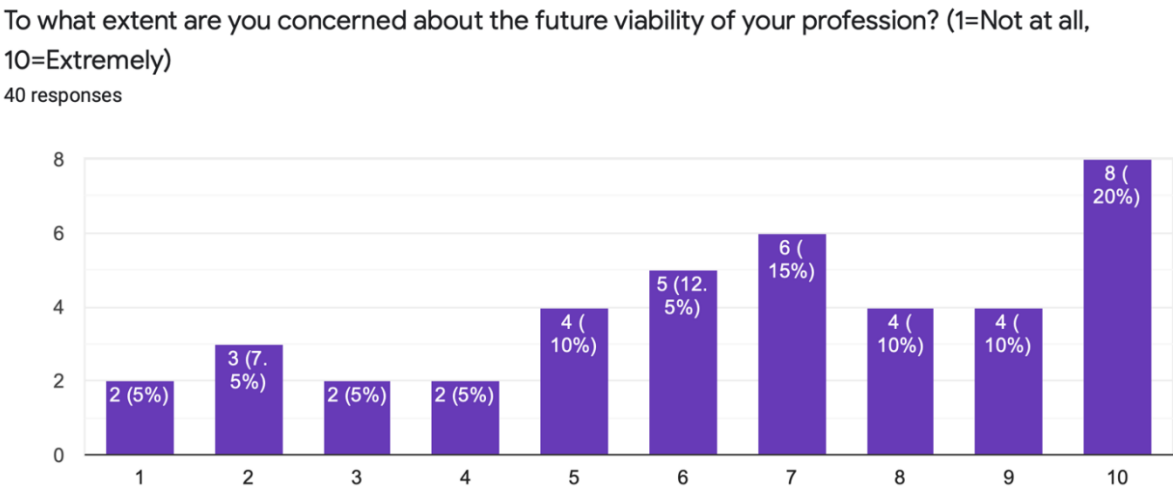

Figure 2. Future viability of the profession

5.4.3 Online learning experience

When asked about their online learning experience, most students expressed that they missed physical classroom interaction (20), and being physically on campus (eleven). The majority of students (25) see some practical benefits in online-only instruction, while about one third see no benefit at all (12). Their main concerns related to a lack of interaction (15), technical problems (12), and a lack of concentration (six). Three quarters of the respondents do not want to continue with distance education (see Figure 3) and only a few would like to see a limited portion of online-only components during their undergraduate degree program (see Figure 4).

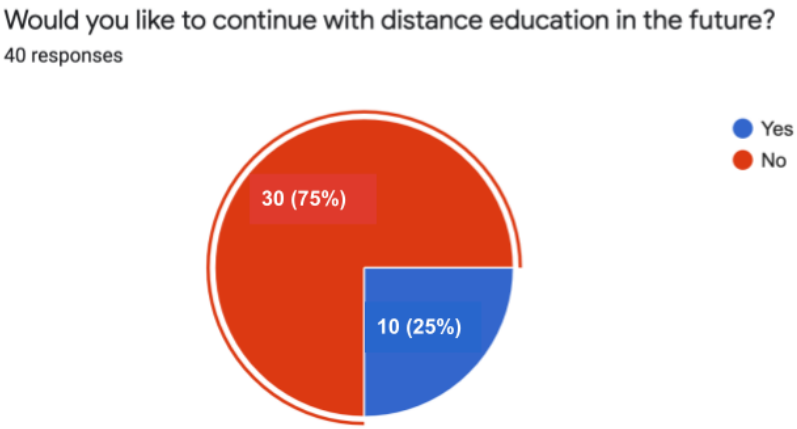

Figure 3. Students and distance education

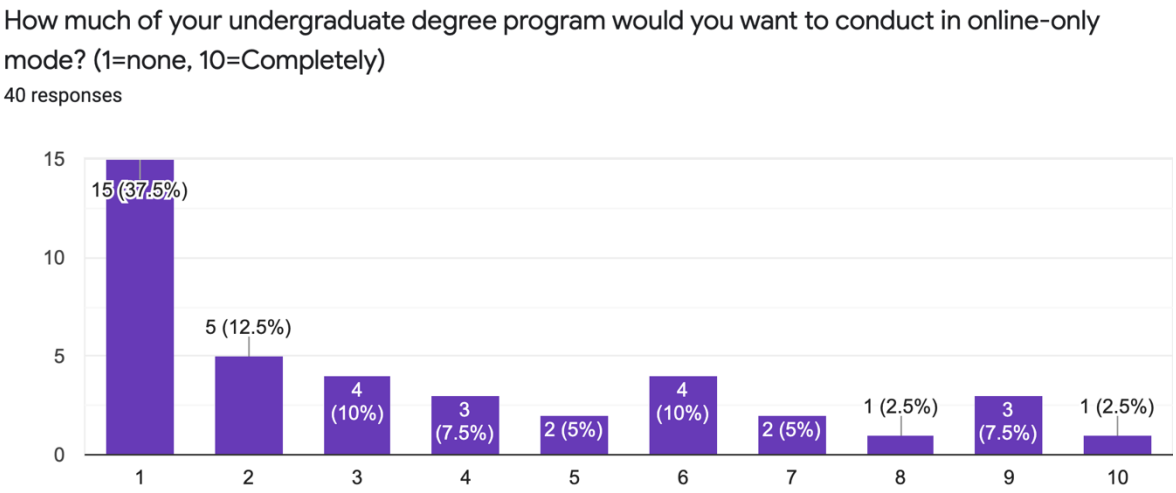

Figure 4. The portion of online-only components in undergraduate degree program

While this study is context-bound and only relates to these students' specific experience of emergency remote online teaching, it is interesting to note that about one third of the students believed that instruction in this online mode was less effective than face-to-face education. One student found it "easier to understand the lectures in physical environment" and reported that "[g]estures and collective participations of the students made it easier to grasp the topic." Another commented:

> A lot of my friends and including me are not able understand things fully without concrete materials. Of course we can understand through the internet, we are generation z after all but when it comes to my main courses I would really like it if I was able to hold the book in my hands. But from an environmentalist approach, of course online material is better. Less paper less deforestation. But on the other hand, more digital technologies means more energy usage. So someone should figure out which one is better for the environment. I don't have enough math skills to do that.

Other concerns relating to the online environment included additional workload, possibility of exam cheating, less feedback, and increased one-way interactions (teacher -> student). Only a few students were positive, pointing to the convenience of lesson recordings and better lectures (two).

6. Discussion

Based on the results of the distance-education study reported above and the prior discussion of educational purpose, a number of themes stand out. First, it is clear that both instructors and undergraduate university students have a number of concerns pertaining to the domain of subjectification (autonomy, freedom, individuation, meaning in life, concerns about their future, and so on). Students more specifically do not have a strong sense of agency regarding their ability to control their own future, for instance when it comes to the dominance of platform capitalism in their social and professional lives. They express these concerns in terms of not being able

to get a job they are happy doing, not feeling strong and competent/confident enough about making a living, not being able to fulfil their dreams, and not living life to the full. These existential issues seem to be enabled or reinforced by technology, impairing their capacity to question the order of things and to fulfil their potential. Their fears about the existing order of things in relation to technology include living in the age of post-truth (the online propagation of 'fake news'), the ecological crisis that digital technologies contribute to, the self-destructive nature of humanity, the societal collapse precipitated by platform capitalism, and so on. To our surprise, many of these concerns voiced by students were not raised by their instructors.

When probed deeper, especially during the interviews, the instructors pointed out the importance of university campus life for the psychological and sociocultural development and well-being of the students in their care but they fell short of articulating the significance of a more pluralistic socio-political account of university life. The issues pertaining to the domain of subjectification were by and large not explored in depth by the instructors. They seemed mostly focused on qualification- and socialisation-related issues, rather than being overly concerned with returning to an embodied classroom where time, exploration, and freedom to question are enabled. Perhaps it might be suggested that instructors could be more mindful of subjectification-related concerns for the development of their students, particularly given the latter's deep existential concerns.

Second, the study revealed that students are very articulate in their understanding of the role they will have as translation and interpretation professionals in the labour market, and it was clear that the large majority have concerns about the diminished role they will play in this area. With youthful impetus, they strongly and consistently expressed their ethical and professional values as having respect for themselves and the work they do, earning people's trust and respect, honesty and trust-worthiness, being true to one's nature, being open-minded, staying faithful to the translated material while at the same time staying true to one's values, helping out underprivileged people, hard work and meticulousness, breaking down barriers, and altruism, not to mention, in one student's words, "believing in a socialist future where human beings work for their own interests instead of the market and working for this cause." These statements highlight a desire for agency, contestation, and the kind of critical questioning that Biesta believes is core to the purpose of education. Instructors, in contrast, did not express these philosophically- and politically-charged sentiments in such strong terms. Although they missed interactions with students and hoped for a return to in-person teaching, they spoke of their role in higher education in a more restricted fashion, limited to providing the best learning environment for imparting the knowledge and skills they are tasked to deliver.

Given all this, it seems safe to say that attempts to address subjectification as a central issue in the online-only learning environment was not detected in the present study. During the unexpected and swift shift to online-only teaching in the Spring 2020 semester, both instructors and students were primarily preoccupied with getting through the remaining weeks in the smoothest possible way. In the ensuing Summer and Fall semesters, however, once the initial shock dissipated, instructors were able to focus on how to deliver their courses more efficiently and effectively, taking advantage of new online-teaching tools. Again, their fundamental orientation was not so much how they could focus on the needs and desires of their students in terms of their subjectification but, rather, on how they could best transfer basic face-to-face experiences within and through virtual learning platforms.

At this point in this unfolding global experiment, we have not seen any deep critical engagement yet with the way distance learning shapes the terms and purpose of education in universities. It is our observation that TIS education, online or otherwise, would benefit from reflecting on these issues in a more systematic and sustained fashion. We need to be careful that, in removing the in-person collaborative environment and relegating the student-teacher relationship to digital technologies, we do not also lose some of the multiple layers that contributed to the so-called 'beautiful risk' of education.

This study was conducted in a very limited time period due to the urgency of the topic. Our data came from a relatively small sample, 17 faculty members (only four of whom were interviewed) and 46 undergraduate students of TIS departments in Turkey, which all had to switch to online-only mode due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We acknowledge the wider contextual factors that might have contributed to the way our participants answered the survey and interview questions. Nevertheless, we believe that our study contributes to the efforts of raising awareness of the highly vital—yet often ignored—aspect of education: subjectification. We hope to pursue this line of research with longitudinal data to reflect wider contexts and perspectives.

7. Conclusion

At the minimum, higher education carries responsibility for the three areas of educational purpose we have discussed in this study. These are entangled in complex ways, and it is clear that we cannot prioritise one area to the detriment of the others. However, the importance of all three and their interdependence is routinely ignored. In this study, we aimed to make this clear.

Undergraduate TIS students in Turkey have serious concerns, many of these existential in nature, and articulated at the intersection of subjectification, qualification, and socialisation. In particular, they have an

arguably under-developed sense of their personal and professional identity in the current socio-political context, which is in large part shaped within the parameters of digital technologies and platform capitalism. Students worry about the challenges facing them in the years to come with respect to changes in employment opportunities, the TIS profession, the sociopolitical structure of their society, and ecological destruction, amongst other aspects. Issues linked to the so-called technologies of control described in this article (e.g. fragmenting attention, creating addiction) can serve to exacerbate these worries and transform pedagogical relationships in a way that is not conducive to education in its truest sense and to the emergence of students as "subjects of action and responsibility" (Biesta 2013). Our survey of students and instructors in Turkey in the context of the emergency online-only education, although context-bound, served to highlight that we can do better to address the domain of subjectification in TIS education, both online and on-campus.

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Notes

[1] The surveys used in the study are available at: https://academics.boun.edu.tr/mehmet.sahin5/sites/mehmet.sahin5/files/inline-files/Appendix.pdf.