

# NUS 6<sup>th</sup> CELC Symposium Proceedings



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Language Teachers

## **Editorial Committee**

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# Foreword

The Centre for English Language Communication (CELC) held its sixth Symposium online, from 30 to 31 May 2022. Symposium 2022 gathered 144 researchers and educators from 14 countries in the pursuit of scholarly dialogue on the theme Teaching English Language and Communication in a Changing Landscape: Innovations and Possibilities.

This year's theme builds upon many of our recent experiences and conversations in response to some unprecedented massive changes and challenges acerbated by the pandemic. If there is one word that we could use to describe the past two plus years, "disruption" is probably one of the most frequently used words. It seems timely that we take stock of our teaching, learning, and research as suggested by the theme of this symposium.

To me, the fundamentals are the same but the approach in which we achieve the objective may now be different. Besides re-examining and reflecting on what we have done, we **re-imagine** teaching, learning, and doing research in a new educational landscape. Our students are going into a workplace that is unlike before, a workplace that perhaps not many of us are familiar with. They need to be nimble, adaptable, and resilient. They must make sense of and integrate knowledge in different contexts. All these soft skills may call for a different way of thinking about teaching and learning, and communication.

CELC Symposium 2022 provided a platform for English Language and Communication practitioners and researchers to share and discuss:

- Challenges relating to teaching under the new norms such as teaching in the digital space, engaging and assessing learners with advanced interactive technological tools, and managing increased student agency.
- Innovations that have helped students and educators adapt to the new norms, and that have taken into account academic and industry relevance in language and communication pedagogy.
- New ideas, undergirded by theoretical principles, that are proposed to help students and educators adapt to the new norms.

This volume represents a small percentage of the ideas disseminated during the various Symposium sessions. Nonetheless, there are many insights for us to learn from the experiences of contributors to this volume.

Associate Professor LEE Kooi Cheng  
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# DIGITAL TOOLS FOR PROMOTING SOCIAL READING

Tamara TATE & Mark WARSCHAUER

## Abstract

We know that students benefit from social learning: collaboration can help students process and understand new information, see different perspectives, and create a community of learners. However, reading in undergraduate classes is often a solitary activity. Annotation has long been known as a way to support reflective reading. Recently available social e-reading tools now allow a whole class of students to collectively annotate the same document. During social annotation, students simultaneously access and mark digital texts and leave comments and questions for each other, creating an anchored context for conversation. Social annotation improves learning by supporting self-regulation, increasing engagement, providing scaffolding for improved reading comprehension, and promoting deep thinking. While useful for all students, social annotation may be especially helpful for English learners and other students not studying in their primary language, allowing them to access the same materials as peers with the provided scaffolding. These positive outcomes occur when social annotation is well integrated into instruction. When it is too complicated, confusing, or buggy to access and use, it can distract students and actually harm their language and literacy development. Research on the impact of social annotation on learning processes and outcomes will be synthesized, including implications for use of these tools in English language teaching. We will then discuss a case study of the use of social annotation throughout a graduate school course, along with suggestions for implementation.

**Keywords:** Reading, Social Annotation, English learners, Second language learning

## INTRODUCTION

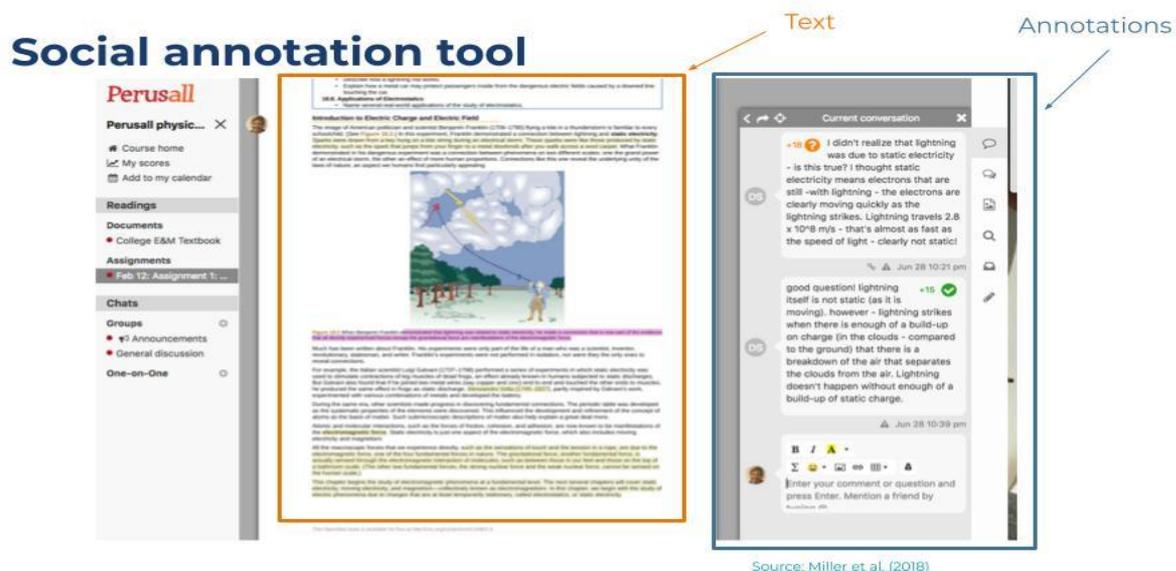
We know that students benefit from social learning. Collaboration can help students process and understand new information, see different perspectives, and create a community of learners (Tate & Warschauer, 2022; Mendenhall & Johnson, 2010). However, reading in undergraduate classes is often a solitary activity, done (or perhaps more often *not done*) prior to class. If students have not actively engaged with the reading materials prior to class time, the ensuing synchronous class time discussion can be unproductive, with the instructor forced to lecture on material that should have been learned prior to class or skip the planned content. What can instructors do to encourage and support student reading prior to class? Can students prepare asynchronously and digitally, reading in a reflective manner that is visible to the instructor?

One way readers interact with texts is through annotation. Using a pencil, pen, or perhaps post-it note, students have long used annotations to note important information, raise questions, and reflect on what they are reading. Unfortunately, these handwritten notes are clunky and hard to navigate, group, or otherwise consolidate. In addition, the notes are inaccessible to their classmates and instructors. No one is there to answer the question the student may have noted.

The inaccessibility of handwritten annotations has fostered an interest in digital annotations, which allow students and teachers to more easily engage in activities like chunking or commenting on text. But as we know, learning – and especially language learning – is more powerful when it is social. And that is the principle behind a recent set of tools for social annotation, which allow groups of learners and teachers to annotate texts together. There are a number of software products for social annotation, with the two best known being Perusall and Hypothes.is. We have used Perusall successfully in our own undergraduate and graduate courses, and also reviewed the literature on its use, particularly in second language classrooms. We will outline the current state of research on social annotation and present a case study of our use in a graduate course to inform others who may be interested in trying social annotation in their courses.

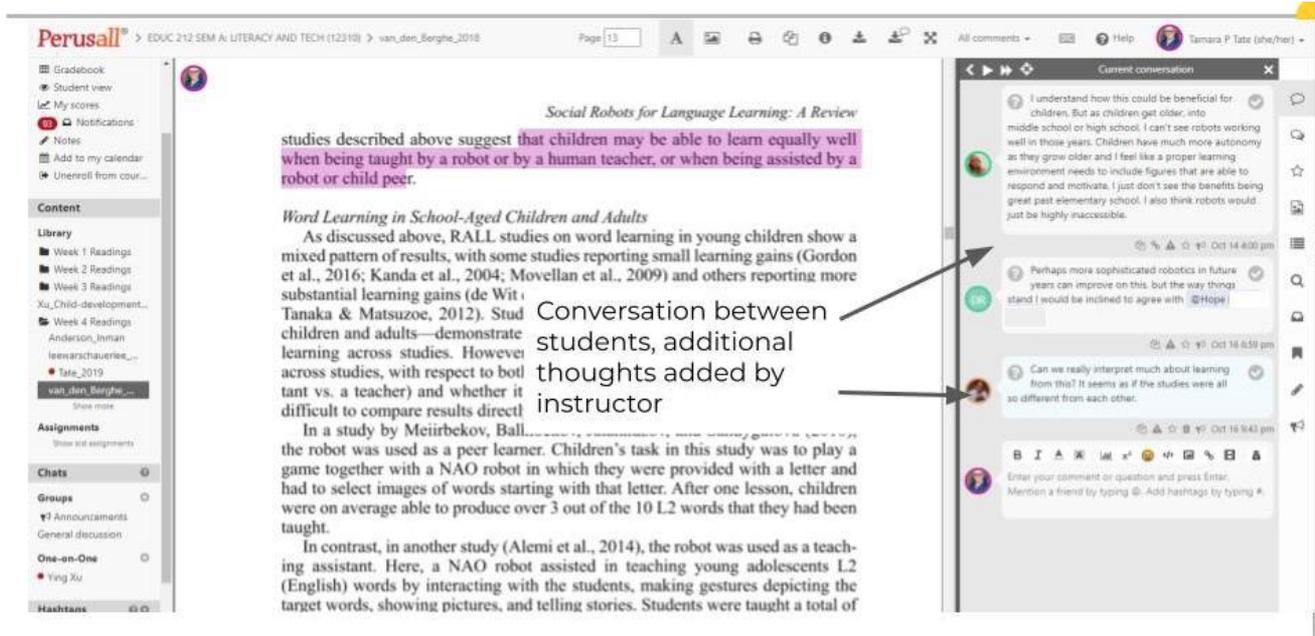
During social annotation, students simultaneously access and mark digital texts and leave comments and questions for each other (Morales et al., 2022; Figure 1). Annotating directly on a text creates what scholars call an anchored context for conversation (Brown & Croft, 2020). Students can ask about specific language issues or share personal responses right next to the portions of the text that they highlight. The instructor can also prime the discussion, either by raising questions for students to consider or by responding to student comments.

Figure 1. Example of annotations in Perusall



Below is an example of how we have used social annotation in one of our own graduate classes on literacy and technology. A student raised a comment on the text, and then other students and the instructor have responded as well (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Annotations in conversation with each other



Social annotation software also comes with a wide range of tools for instructors. Perusall, for example, has an automated student scoring mechanism that takes into account the quantity and quality of student postings, and also provides student confusion reports and student activity reports to faculty based on overall class comments. More broadly, social annotation software makes students' thoughts and questions visible during the reading process, which can help instructors better understand and support their learning trajectories.

## RESEARCH BASIS

Social annotation has been shown to improve student learning (Cadiz et al., 2000; Nokelainen et al., 2003; Marshall and Brush, 2004; Ahren, 2005; Gupta et al., 2008; Robert, 2009; Su et al., 2010). Social annotation improves learning by supporting self-regulation, increasing engagement, providing scaffolding for improved reading comprehension, and promoting deep thinking. While useful for all students, social annotation may be especially helpful for English learners and other students not studying in their primary language, allowing them to access the same materials as peers with the provided scaffolding. We discuss each of these briefly, with a deeper discussion of scaffolding for reading comprehension in order to highlight ways in which social annotation may be of particular benefit to English learners or students reading in their non-primary language.

## Self-Regulation

One-way social annotation improves student learning is by increasing accountability for student reading, thus increasing student completion of reading assignments from reported levels of 60-

80% not reading assigned texts to 90-95% completion of assigned readings prior to class (Miller et al., 2018). Social annotation tools also may increase the amount of time students spend reading (Miller et al., 2018), though we caution that this finding does not reflect off-line reading time nor account for the quality of the time spent online. Online social annotation also has a benefit over discussion forums, often used to discuss class readings--the online annotations are fixed in the text, rather than digressing as discussion threads often do. This may help students stay more grounded in the text and task at hand (Sun & Gao, 2017).

### **Engagement**

Instructors report substantial student motivation and engagement when using social annotation (d'Entremont & Eyking, 2021). Social annotation has even been seen to promote affective as well as cognitive engagement with texts (Traester et al., 2021). Social annotation makes the learning experience more interactive (Chen et al., 2014; Su et al., 2010) and creates a sense of community (Solmaz, 2020; Allred et al., 2020) and a relaxed pedagogical setting suitable for educational risk taking (Solmaz, 2021). One researcher found that "More than 60% of students said annotating helped them feel connected to their peers, and almost 70% said it increased the amount of interaction they had with others in the class (Novak et al., 2012).

### **Scaffolding for Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension abilities improve with the use of social annotations (Sun & Gao, 2017; Chang & Hsu, 2011; Chen et al., 2010; Chen et al., 2014) for both first and second language students (Sun & Gao, 2017). Social annotation distributes second language learners' cognitive load (Blyth, 2014) and offers the opportunity for individualized reading support (Tseng et al., 2015).

Online annotations are often characterized as improving three levels of comprehension: surface-based, text-based, and situation-based (Tseng et al., 2015). Surface-based comprehension means the students have sufficient grammatical knowledge and vocabulary to decode the meaning of the text. Text-based comprehension is a layer deeper and occurs when students cannot only decode the text, but can reproduce the essential information from the text. Finally, in the situation-based comprehension level students can situate the textual information in other knowledge and integrate it in a coherent manner (Tseng et al., 2015). An instructor can cause students to use the social annotation tool to support these levels of comprehension and both instructors and peers can provide scaffolding through annotation of the text under study. For example, instructors can prompt students to summarize what they have read at various points in

the text, students can add definitions for words that they had to look up, and both instructors and peers can add background information that makes the text more understandable or suggest linkages to other class content (d'Entremont & Eying, 2021).

Social annotation not only provides an interactive reading context for students with support for comprehension of the specific passage under study, but also opportunities to model and practice effective reading strategies (Bahari et al., 2021). Students using social annotation have improved their use of reading strategies (Chen & Chen, 2014). Collaborative annotation also provides students with the opportunity to draw others' attention to specific content; organize, index, and discuss new information; and correct misunderstandings (d'Entremont & Eying, 2021; Razon et al., 2012).

In one example, Solmaz (2021) carried out a study of social annotation in an English class of college students in Turkey. By analyzing students' annotations, he found contextual affordances were facilitated through digital social reading practices such as asking comprehension questions, expanding content through questions, integrating knowledge from other sources, exploring additional information, activating background knowledge, and providing additional contextual information. Text-to-text connections are a powerful practice for developing contextual knowledge (Adams & Wilson, 2021). Linguistic affordances of digital collaborative reading practices were helpful for skills in areas such as reading, vocabulary, grammar, and writing (Solmaz, 2021). Specifically, students could emphasize the function of a grammatical structure, share grammar-related notes, ask structure centered questions, provide vocabulary-related explanations, ask questions about lexical context, and add multimedia representing lexical items.

### **Promoting Deep Thinking**

Social annotation promotes deeper thinking by encouraging students to actively reflect on the text as they make annotations. Social annotation supports reinforcement of existing knowledge and the contextual integration of new knowledge (Glover et al., 2007). Social annotation helps students to build their knowledge in new domains by making and drawing on connections within texts together with their classmates and instructor. The act of annotation causes a reader to think about the content that they are about to write in order to ensure both the relevance and the merit of their thoughts before sharing them with their instructor and peers (Glover et al., 2007). It allows students time and space to consider rhetorical choices, reflect, think, and gather evidence prior to engaging in a discussion of the text (Chen & Chiu, 2008). In addition, the social

affordances of digital collaborative practices include the recognition of multiple perspectives (Solmaz, 2021), which in turn scaffolds more critical thinking. Students report deeper learning than in typical class discussions of reading (d'Entremont & Eyking, 2021).

### **And a Word of Warning**

All of these positive affordances have been reported multiple times. And we have noted them in our own instruction. However, a word of warning. These positive outcomes occur when social annotation is well integrated into instruction. When it is too complicated, confusing, or buggy to access and use, it can distract students and actually harm their language and literacy development (Archibald, 2010). It is important for instructors to be intentional about which digital tools and when they implement them in courses, since each tool has a learning curve. Thus, “we recommend purposeful implementation based on the accessibility of the technology, how effectively it addresses specific learning goals, and how well its intended purposes fit the needs of the students” (Allred et al, 2020, p. 238). Indeed, students report that the annotations take a great deal of time (d'Entremont & Eyking, 2021) and significant instructor time is required for integration. A final caveat, social annotation may only work when it is used in a collaborative mode, rather than as an individual, so the context in which it is employed is of critical importance (Johnson et al., 2010; Hwang et al., 2007).

### **CASE STUDY**

We used social annotation at a large research university in the southwestern United States. Our setting was a graduate course in literacy and technology taught by the second author with learning assistant support from the first author. The course was presented in hyflex mode, with students having the option of participating in person or online, due to the ongoing pandemic. Each week students had three to four readings on the week's topic, generally research articles. The class used the Canvas learning management system to host all course content.

The authors were interested in using social annotation for the course and investigated multiple platforms months prior to the start of the course. Perusall was selected because it was integrated with the Canvas learning platform, had been successfully used by other faculty members at the institution who offered suggestions and support, was free, and allowed annotation on uploaded pdfs of articles so that all reading could be made available on the platform without charge to students.

The authors explained in the first course announcement that they would be using social annotation and uploaded a screencast explaining how students would access and use the platform. The use of social annotation was positioned as an experiment and student feedback was encouraged. Indeed, use of the tool was iteratively revised over the course of the quarter based on student feedback. For example, after the first week, the instructor required that student readings be done by the night before class in order to allow the instructor to review the annotations prior to class because the annotations had proven so useful for creating engaging, deep class discussions. Students were also no longer put in groups to comment, preferring to have the entire class in the same group so they could see one another's comments. Although we had read that groups of more than 5 commenting on readings could become chaotic, we did not find this to be a problem in our class of approximately 10 people.

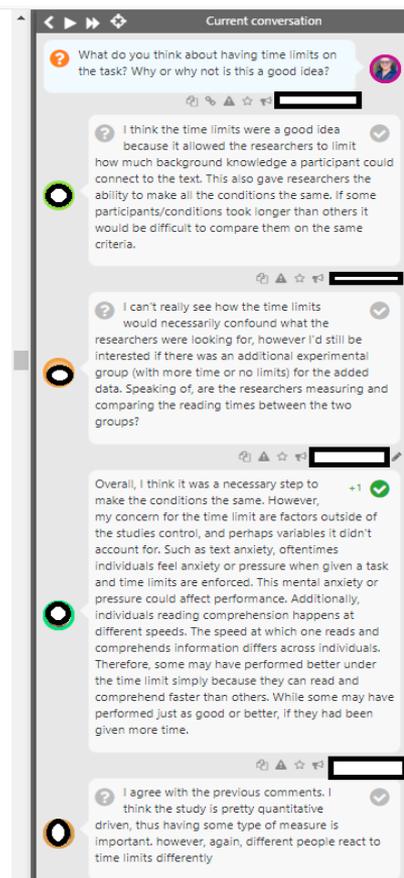
The instructor took various roles during the quarter. Especially in the early weeks, one of the authors would post comments, suggest questions, and make linkages between readings for students to consider. See Figure 3 for an example of an instructor asking a specific question and student replies.

Figure 3. Instructor and student discussion of text

occur, and how they are treated. The text consists of 10 paragraphs, with one paragraph on each page. When you have read a page, you will be asked to say aloud everything you are thinking about what you are reading. You cannot look back to the text while thinking aloud.

Participants in the print/no-think-aloud and digital/no-think-aloud conditions read the same instruction except for the last two sentences. Moreover, participants in the no-think-aloud conditions were instructed that they could spend up to eight minutes reading the entire text, whereas participants in the think-aloud conditions were instructed that they could spend up to 15 minutes. This difference was based on piloting of the materials, which indicated that a time limit of eight minutes would allow all students to read the entire text and that the average additional time used to think aloud was approximately seven minutes. **These time limits were intended to make participants in all conditions experience a certain time pressure because reading medium effects have been found to be more pronounced when reading times are restricted (Delgado et al., 2018; see also Delgado & Salmerón, 2021).**

Participants reading in print were informed that the text was available in a folder labeled "Text" within the folder containing the other materials, and participants reading digitally were informed that the text was available as a clickable file labeled "Text" on the home screen of the tablet. Participants were informed that when they had finished reading the entire text, they should put the text back in the folder (when reading in print) or return to the home screen (when reading digitally). When participants in the think-aloud conditions had read a paragraph and turned



In later weeks, less prompting by the instructors was needed and students were independently annotating with comments like, “This reminds me of a conversation we had in class about ...” in which they connected the text to an earlier class discussion. They also became confident in clarifying and refining each other’s annotations as time went on and in stating “I’m a little confused by this...” Posts became more conversational over time, for example “I was wondering the same thing!” One of our students even tried to regularly post memes as part of their annotations, adding some multimodality (and humor) to the readings.

One of the authors would also try to check in on the ongoing status of annotations during the week (generally the 48 hours before readings were due) to answer questions, correct misconceptions, and generally become aware of topics of interest that could be addressed in the upcoming synchronous class. Prior to class, the instructor would find annotations that would serve as useful discussion starters in class, often copying the text of the annotation to the week’s slides and letting the student know that their annotation would be part of the class discussion. Here’s an example (Figure 4) when the instructor had reviewed students' comments and made notes on them during her slide presentation so she could call on the students to further elaborate during class.

Figure 4. Class slide with excerpts from reading annotations to prompt student in class discussion

**Reading #1 Anderson Inman**

**From annotations**

- How best to modify electronic text so that it is maximally supportive of the largest group possible.
  - STUDENT NAME 1: I'm curious as to if this is even possible. Individual characteristics, SES, age, the genre and characteristics of the reading itself, along with other factors, all seem to affect how beneficial electronic reading can be. Do we think it's even possible to make a version of electronic reading that is beneficial to a large audience?
  - STUDENT NAME 2: I think the key to supporting a large audience would be the idea of settings. Allowing users to set the font, having a read-aloud function that isn't always on, allow the definition of words but allow the dictionary to be turned off, etc. Including the possibility to use a ton of helpful features but allowing the reader to select the relevant and useful ones to them can be a good way to go.

EDUC [ ] Literacy & Technology | Week 4: Scaffolding Reading | [ ]

This process was time intensive, but led to very rich discussions in which all students could participate. Even students who might not prefer speaking in class were more likely to expand on thoughts they had been able to put down in the privacy of their reading without time constraints. We think the ability to think through their responses prior to class, coupled with the

foreknowledge they would be called on to elaborate, allowed students (including those who were multilingual or had learning disabilities) to fully participate in ways that cold-calling on them would not.

We do note that there are students for whom the social annotation process hampers their reading for a variety of reasons, and for such situations, alternative arrangements may be appropriate (e.g., a 1-page reading response discussing the week's readings). For some students with reading disabilities, the additional textual input from their peers may be too distracting for them to process. A student with social anxiety may be uncomfortable showing their thinking to their peers in the annotations. In these situations, the instructor can consult with the student, and possibly the disability resources on campus, to determine how to best structure the students' learning. We have not seen research at this point that looks at the use of social annotation for neurodiverse populations, so instructors will need to creatively and compassionately address these issues as they arise.

Grading of the social annotations each week was awkward. Perusall will do automatic scoring of annotations based on quantity of annotations, perceived quality of annotations, amount of time recorded reading on the Perusall site, and other factors. The factors can be adjusted by the instructor, and the settings used by the authors were based on suggestions from other faculty members. However, since students were not required to read on Perusall (they could read offline and simply add annotations after reading) and the AI used imperfectly judged quality, the authors repeatedly assured students that reading grades would be adjusted at the end based on feedback from students. To allow students to provide this feedback, an assignment was created on Canvas giving each student the opportunity to give the instructor their own self-assessment of their reading/reflection in the course, giving themselves a grade of 0-100. The instructor took these ratings into consideration and revised the automatic grading scores as deemed appropriate. 30% of the students chose to provide feedback, one noting that a score for a week had not been corrected on Canvas, but Perusall was "good overall," and others explaining why they deserved higher grades and noting their appreciation for the opportunity to provide feedback. We recommend careful consideration of giving appropriate credit for the work involved in online social annotation and not de-motivating students with excessively narrow requirements for grading. As noted in a recent Opinion piece,

An engaging technology-aided activity guided by an instructor might feel like an invasion of privacy for students hesitant to make private thoughts public. An instructor

encouraging open-mindedness can make students feel like they're being watched. An over-reliance on technology assessing participation can make students feel like homework compliance is valued more highly than comprehension and the substance of their responses. (Cohn & Kalir, 2022)

## CONCLUSION

If deep reading of a select amount of text is necessary in a course (as compared to skimming a large number of texts), instructors should consider the use of social annotation. Social annotation can help level the playing field for students who will be reading in a language other than their primary language. It may also support students with learning disabilities or provide important interactivity and social connection in an online course. We found active use of social annotation by instructors and students greatly enhanced the quality and breadth of in-class discussions. However, instructors should select their platform with care to ensure that it is easy to use and well-integrated with their course platform. They need to provide clear instructions and ensure that all students are comfortably able to interact with the social annotation tool. Course readings should be reduced in number to account for the additional time and effort to be put into more thoroughly reading a limited number of texts. The instructor should plan to use the annotations actively, so that students are not shouting into a void, but rather their voices are amplified and discussed in class or seen and discussed by the instructor in the annotations. Students should receive appropriate credit in the grading scheme for their work reading the texts and the grading rubric should be transparent.

In summary, social annotation is similar to many other educational technologies we have researched (see, e.g., Grimes & Warschauer, 2010; Tate, et al, 2019; Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer, 2011) – not a magic bullet to transform learning, but a valuable tool if effectively integrated into instruction. Educators who design learning experiences that build on both the affordances of the technology and the context of their classes can expect corresponding benefits for their students in both engagement and learning.

**Acknowledgment:** This paper draws on the keynote presentation made by the second author on social reading at the 6th CELC (e)Symposium, May 30, 2022.

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# FUTURE-LOOKING PRINCIPLE-BASED CURRICULUM INNOVATIONS

Julia CHEN

## Abstract

This summary of a keynote address delivered at the 6th CELC Symposium presents some observations about the accelerated creation and adoption of curriculum innovations triggered by both the pandemic and rapid technological advances. It then discusses innovations in learning and teaching to prepare students for the world of VUCA: volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity. The recommendations are underpinned by three key pedagogic principles: familiarisation of students with new competencies; authentic engagement of students with learning and thinking amid changing scenarios; and empowering students in blended learning environments. Suggestions are offered on curriculum design including: multimodal literacies; thinking-based learning; multi-stage communication; students as partners in blended and flipped activities; connecting local with international students in purposeful communication; and complementing the formal curriculum with English Across the Curriculum. Some considerations are highlighted and examples of activities and assessment are provided. Shaping the future of language education with sound pedagogic principles is a purposeful action in the continuous process of forward-looking quality enhancement.

**Keywords:** Pandemic, VUCA, principle-based, curriculum innovation, new literacies, English Across the Curriculum

## INTRODUCTION

Higher education (HE) around the world has been facing unprecedented challenges in the last few years. The onset of COVID-19 necessitated a radical shift from face-to-face lessons to emergency remote learning and teaching (L&T) within a few weeks; and as COVID-19 continued, online L&T has become the norm in many higher education institutions (HEIs). Further, the world is facing an era of VUCA, an acronym first used by the US army, standing for volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity. The Oxford University Executive Education program has a similar acronym, which is TUNA: turbulence; uncertainty; novelty; ambiguity. Both acronyms reflect a complex and ambiguous world in which unpredictable changes, rapid upheavals, and new elements are emerging. While the day-to-day aspects of education in the COVID (or post-COVID) era, such as engaging students in blended courses and designing online assessment, are being addressed, HEIs should also be aware of how a VUCA or TUNA world will form the next generation and consider ways to adapt or re-conceptualise education to prepare students for the future.

## CHANGES TO HE CAUSED BY THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has been called a perfect storm given the impact it has had on traditional methods of teaching, learning, training, and education (Sutton & Jorge, 2020, p. 125). The

pandemic has forced all parties into the middle of a typical battlefield as “it unmasked the hidden fragilities of the system and vulnerabilities of all its stakeholders”, requiring an abrupt and urgent need to change over a very short period of time (Domingo-Maglinao, 2021, p. 803). Although there are diverse views about the effects of COVID on HE, academics agree that teachers and students should try to “achieve a mutual and meaningful collaborative learning and social space” (Neuwirth et al., 2021, p. 154), in which “learning activities involving digital technologies reflect cognitive processes of students” (Sailer, 2021, p.1). In this way, the pandemic can be viewed positively as it has triggered a transformative process that builds on the insights of the past two years, seeking to engage students in “active, constructive, and interactive learning activities” (Sailer, 2021, p.5), and “ease adherence to new processes that foster sustainable development in higher education” (Sá & Serpa, 2020, p.13).

Some, however, have observed that rather than having a transformative process on education, the pandemic has brought a change to online learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) which has simply “reduced [it] to the fulfilment of rudimentary technical functions” (Watermeyer et al., 2020, p. 631). When HEIs “rethink and reinvent learning environments ... that expand ... and complement students’ learning” (Tejedor et al., 2020, p. 14), a key to determining whether the changes are rudimentary or transformative may lie with their teachers. Teachers’ responses to the transition to online teaching have been categorised under three profiles: those who have: 1) “actively use new methods and software thoughtfully and managed constraints, and indicated sustainable changes to their way of teaching”, 2) “engaged moderately in making changes, experienced challenges and were less optimistic about their efforts”, and 3) “reported various constraints, that hindered teaching practices and successful delivery of teaching” (Damşa et al., 2021, p. 13). Thus, HEIs should encourage staff, whether they are innovators, early adopters, or laggards (Rogers, 2003), to make the most of the insights and experiences gained in the last two years.

## **DEVELOPMENT OF TECHNOLOGY-ENHANCED LEARNING AND MULTIMODAL LITERACIES**

While COVID-19 has highlighted the need to improve remote teaching with well-planned digital learning environments, the advent of new technologies has given rise to innovative teaching activities that require a certain degree of digital competence from both the teacher and the student. As early as 2006, the European Commission had identified digital competence, communication in the mother tongue, and competence in foreign languages as three of the eight

key life skills; however, a review of the literature reveals that the majority of HEI teachers and students are at only “a basic level of digital competence” (Zhao et al., 2021, p. 1).

Rapid technological advances have brought about unprecedented effects on education. Using advanced technology has become a normal, if not required part teaching in HEIs, with Learning Management Systems (LMSs) being a major platform for learning, academic discussions, and archiving of course materials (Navarro et al., 2021). The use of the LMS, other elearning methods, and mobile-assisted learning have prompted studies on task-technology fit, learning styles, and influences on the elearning process (Tan et al., 2018; Dolawattha et al., 2022). One of the notable challenges is the lack of interaction in synchronous lessons and asynchronous activities (Vlachopoulos & Makri, 2019). This difficulty serves as a timely reminder that the design of courses, whether in face-to-face, fully online, or blended mode, should attend to the interplay between three presences: cognitive, teacher, and social, as presented in the Community of Enquiry framework (Garrison et al., 2000; Tyrvaïnen et al., 2021; Goggins & Hajdukiewicz, 2022). Rapidly changing environments have also re-conceptualised communication. No longer mono-directional in the form of writing (e.g., via email) or speaking (e.g., in presentations), communication is an organised and purposeful multi-dimensional mixture of connected and iterative concepts (Martin & Lambert, 2015), and has become “increasingly complex, multimodal, and ... inextricably linked with the use of technology” (McCallum, 2021, p. 616). HE students should be taught to make “coherent use” of different modes (Ruiz-Madrid, & Valeiras-Jurado, 2020, p. 44). Multimodal learning design has been found to promote “students’ communication of their understanding of STEM concepts” and their acquisition of “multiple disciplines” (Gray et al., 2019, p. 9).

## **LANGUAGE CURRICULUM DESIGN THAT PREPARES STUDENTS FOR THE FUTURE**

The volatility sparked by the pandemic, rapid technological advances, and new literacies emerging in the digital age, demand a serious re-consideration of whether our present form of education is appropriately and adequately preparing students for the future. Concurrently, educators need to consider how innovations can be incorporated into our courses, curriculums, and co-curricular provisions to train students to thrive in a VUCA world. Accordingly, I propose addressing VUCA with education supported by the following underpinning pedagogic principles: familiarisation with new competencies, authentic engagement with learning and thinking amid changing scenarios, and empowerment of students in blended learning environments.

While academic literacies are important and should continue to be a main component of language courses, some of the new literacies and genres should also be included to familiarise students with the competencies they are expected to develop (Elola & Oskoz, 2017). The concept of literacy has expanded to include different modes of meaning-making and communication. As defined by UNESCO (2021), “literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich and fast-changing world.” The aim of HEIs should be to develop students’ ability to communicate and negotiate successfully whatever the mode: written or spoken, text or visual, and in-person or virtual. Developing students’ multiple literacies should be coordinated at the institutional level and the language centre level. At the former level, the development of new literacies should be aligned with the attributes that the HEIs would want to see in their graduates (e.g., effective multi-dimensional communication); thus, they need to be incorporated into institutes’ strategic plans to ensure students do develop those attributes.

At the centre level, some teachers are beginning to include the use of infographics in their courses enabling them to visualise their ideas, systematically present their information, and transfer their content from one mode (e.g., text) to another (graphics) (Sukerti & Sitawati, 2019]. Studies have shown the effect of infographics on enhancing student motivation and achievement (Ibrahim & Alamro, 2021; Kohnke et al., 2021). Another example concerns the focus of language teaching and assessment, where new literacies and competencies are built via the digital story, which is an example of assessment that develops both writing (i.e., composing) and speaking (i.e., audio/video presentation of stories) skills in a situated context, (e.g., topics related to the students’ major discipline). Using digital stories has also been found to increase student achievement and motivation (Aktas & Yurt, 2017). Other types of multi-literacy teaching foci and assessment include multi-modal proposals that have text, infographics and videos, and a critical synthesis and review of multimedia information from multiple sources to help students realise the relationship between, and the inter-dependence of, the various modes and the content expressed through them. One study showed that assignments that require the creation of multimodal portfolios can even engage at-risk students in multimodal thinking and the development of a critical stance (Lawrence & Mathis, 2020). At a more strategic level, language centres can plan which new literacies and competencies should be introduced in which courses, thus building a progressive pathway across the language centre courses in students’ undergraduate years.

Another underpinning educational principle is the active engagement of students in authentic learning and thinking amid changing scenarios, i.e., teachers should train students how to communicate using real-life situations. Courses that currently teach mono-directional communication (e.g., writing one email to a pseudo recipient) should be redesigned to focus on diverse communicative responses (e.g., replying to recipients of different status). Students can be given scenarios in which they do not compose only one response (e.g., proposal or email) or one presentation; instead, after their first response or speaking delivery, they can be required to give two or more different responses (e.g., a rejection or a sceptical response requesting clarification). These practices bring together linguistic and thinking skills, and provide opportunities for discussion of higher-level skills, such as register, criticality, defence, and succinctness. These learning activities promote thinking-based learning, where students articulate their thinking, strategise their responses, and translate those into writing (Swartz, 2008).

Communication is often a multi-stage process (Krishna & Morgan, 2004); thus, to prepare students for a VUCA world, courses should provide students with complex problems that require multiple stages of thinking and communication. In pairs or groups, students can be either given, or asked to establish, the parameters of stage 1 of a multi-stage scenario, then define the problem and attempt to address it. Then they can be given new factors and considerations that offset their previous solutions, forcing them to change their assumptions, re-think, re-plan, and re-communicate their ideas. Deep learning best occurs when some of the multi-stage scenarios end with only temporal solutions to bigger problems, or when tasks are designed in such a way that there are no optimal solutions or conclusion, which is often the case in real life.

The third underpinning pedagogic principle concerns empowering students in blended environments. Blended learning is likely to remain in the post-pandemic era, and flipped-classroom pedagogy will also probably continue. To increase student engagement and deepen their learning in blended and flipped classrooms, the Students-as-Partners or the Student-Staff-Partnership approach may be useful. “‘Students as Partners’ (SaP) in higher education re-envision students and staff as active collaborators in teaching and learning” (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017, p.1). Students are engaged as partners in the co-creation of learning and teaching activities and materials. One possible way of integrating SaP and blended/flipped learning is for students to work in pairs/groups to design blended activities to be completed pre- or post-class; students can manage the first half hour of every lesson in which they conduct activities to check

that their peers have completed and learnt from the flipped pre-class activities. Teachers can co-design with students “multiliteracies learning that meets them where they are” (Lim et al., 2021, p.109). These SaP arrangements empower students and have the potential to lead to deep, transformative learning (Healey et al., 2014).

Advanced technology also allows remote student-student partnerships in blended environments without geographical borders. The pandemic may have prevented HEIs from sending students on overseas learning trips; however, language courses are in an optimal position to bring the world to the classroom, enabling students to have an international experience. Collaborative online international learning (COIL) allows students from different countries to engage online in purposeful learning with “concrete goals and deliverables” (Mundel, 2020, p.114). In a COIL classroom, a class of students from another city join a local lesson online. Both classes of students can be engaged in cross-group discussions and assignments (such as comparative studies) that foster their intercultural communicative competence. Another type of assessment that suits COIL classes is problem-solving group activities (Jimenez & Kressner, 2021) that enrich students’ understanding of the thought processes and considerations of different cultures.

Blended learning encourages learning beyond the classroom and outside the formal curriculum. Due to a typically packed curriculum in undergraduate programmes, the number of English language courses is limited, with none in many semesters, resulting in an understandably incomplete coverage of the disciplinary academic literacy needs of students. Further, if an HEI provides generic academic English courses to students from all departments, those courses cannot cover highly specific academic genres, such as laboratory report writing. The English Across the Curriculum (EAC) initiative, based on the Writing Across the Curriculum model in North America, has identified these learning gaps and offers language learning resources and support outside the formal language curriculum (Chen & Morrison, 2021). In EAC, English teachers and discipline faculty work together to address students’ disciplinary literacy needs by offering timely English tips and learning activities that align with the language skills needed for specific assignments (Chen, Chan, & Ng, 2021), such as laboratory reports, medical incident reports, and product promotion. Textual analyses of students’ writing and speaking performances have been conducted to enable the production of support materials that target weaknesses, e.g., research mapping (Chen et al., 2021). The resources that are produced for students can be in multi-modal format and delivered to students via multiple channels using different platforms, including the Learning Management System or mobile applications, to cater for ubiquitous learning.

## ENDING REMARKS

Rather than viewing VUCA negatively and avoiding its teaching repercussions, HEIs should train students to face VUCA and embrace its four aspects as critical processes that are present in any system that grows and evolves. Indeed, “the forces outlined in the VUCA model are beginning to wend their way into the rarefied environment of academe and are necessitating an existential reappraisal of higher educational institutions” (Stewart et al., 2016, p. 242). The pandemic has been a very difficult period, but it has also accelerated exciting changes in education while challenging academics to think strategically about the future of education, which includes the shaping of language education that reaches so many students every year. With strong underpinning philosophies and teamwork, HEIs and language centres need to step up to the challenge and make educational decisions that are compatible with sound pedagogic principles. The future may not be friendly to the unprepared; however, with determination and agility, language educators can introduce quality enhancement to their courses and programmes and develop in students a “futures literacy” (Miller, 2018) and a future-oriented mindset.

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# DECOLONIZING LANGUAGE BELIEFS AND IDEOLOGIES IN ELT

Ruanni TUPAS

## Abstract

The English Language Teaching classroom is not an isolated social vacuum but an institutional global(ised) space. Therefore, my talk centres on the coloniality of our beliefs and practices in ELT. While many argue that colonialism is a thing of the past, the discourses and practices associated with it continue to shape most, if not all, facets of the ELT profession. We refer to this condition as the coloniality of ELT where the practice of ELT is by itself deeply embedded within the structures and logics of (global) coloniality. Although I also problematise the many ways this lens is mobilised in teaching and research, I argue that attempts at transforming the ELT classroom must contend with its embeddedness within conditions of coloniality.

**Keywords:** ELT, language beliefs, coloniality, decolonization

## INTRODUCTION

Why do we need to decolonize language beliefs and ideologies in English Language Teaching (ELT), and what does decolonizing entail? These are two intertwined questions which will be addressed in this paper. For the first one, it is because core language beliefs and ideologies which circulate in the field remain deeply colonial. For the second question, it entails more than just problematizing such beliefs and ideologies. We need to take control of the processes and infrastructures of knowledge production which perpetuate such beliefs and ideologies in the first place.

In practically all academic disciplines, especially in the social sciences and humanities, we have in recent years seen a “surge of decolonial debates” (Moghli & Kadiwal, 2021, p. 11). In the interrelated fields of applied linguistics and sociolinguistics and, more specifically, English Language Teaching (ELT), this is a much welcome development. More than three decades ago, Pennycook (1989) asserted that “ELT theories and practices that emanate from the former colonial powers still carry traces of those colonial histories” (p. 19). However, for most of the past three decades, the centrality of colonial questions has somehow been glossed over by work which focuses on celebrating English language users’ agency, creativity and so-called postcolonial resistance. While such agentive, creative and/or resistive use of English shows us that we are not “cultural dupes or passive puppets of an ideological order, or cogs in a mechanistic universe” (Morrison and Lui, 2000, p. 472), how it has been conceptualized is problematic. Agency has been overemphasized and decontextualized from the structure within which it (agency) is operationalized. The dominant academic rhetoric has been something like this: ‘It is true that

there remain structures of domination in today's world, but you see, speakers of English have also exercised their agency over these structures.' The scholarly work then surfaces these instantiations of agency and sets aside the continuing conditions of domination and social inequality within which such agency is mobilized. This is the reason why, for some scholars, colonialism is a thing of the past or is now a side issue (Sibayan & Gonzalez, 1996; Manarpaac, 2008).

But "coloniality survives colonialism" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). As a political and economic system of domination which characterizes particular periods of history, colonialism may indeed be a thing of the past. However, it "is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience" (p. 243). We refer to this condition as the coloniality of everyday life today. In the teaching of English, what is very much alive is a body of knowledge and network of practices which remain quintessentially colonial in nature (Moncada, 2007).

For example, the construct of the native speaker continues to mobilize the policies, practices and materials of many scholars and teachers today (Rubdy, 2015; Kiczkowiak & Lowe, 2021). Much has been written about the destructive impact of native-speakerism in the profession – the belief in the superiority of 'native speakers' in all aspects of teaching and learning (Holliday, 2006) – on the lives and identities of teachers and students whose first language is not American or British English. Just one case in point: many textbooks around the world "emphasize the image of the native speaker (man, white, heterosexual) in a superior relation or position to other interactants in dialogues" (Soto-Molina & Méndez, 2020, p. 13) which "consolidate[s] certain deficient practices, prejudices and stereotypes while at the same time strengthening or weakening local or national awareness". Similarly, there have been calls to recognize the multilingual make up of English language classrooms, and thus a 'multilingual ELT' (Tupas & Renandya, 2020; Cummins, 2009), yet language teaching methods, beliefs and attitudes remain firmly monolingualist in nature. That is, there remains a deep-rooted predilection towards rejecting or devaluing the role of multilingual and multicultural resources in English language classrooms because they purportedly affect the learning of English negatively. Despite all the critical work of scholars (Kumaravadivelu, 2016), the English language classroom essentially remains a colonial space where English-Only ideologies and practices thrive.

In this paper, I focus on mapping ways of decolonizing language beliefs and ideologies in ELT. In doing so, however, I align myself with Kumaravadivelu's (2016) contention that "Seldom in the annals of an academic discipline have so many people toiled so hard, for so long, and achieved so little in their avowed attempt at disrupting the insidious structure of inequality in their chosen profession" (p. 82). He also refers to continuing practices and ideologies in the English teaching profession which perpetuate monolingualism and native speakerism in all aspects of the profession, including hiring practices and the production of knowledge, despite intense and concerted intellectual elaboration on these harmful professional, teaching and learning orthodoxies. A decolonial option, Kumaravadivelu continues, "demands action" because "(w)ithout action, the discourse is reduced to banality" (p. 82). Thus, in this paper, I would like to share a particular action – a concrete, 'ordinary' project of decoloniality – which aims to highlight the centrality of engagement with deep-rooted language beliefs in teacher training. This is a *Sociolinguistics in English Education (SEED) project*, a certificate course for English language teachers and administrators which helps teachers earn Continuing Professional Development points for the renewal of their professional license. Such a seemingly ordinary or mundane project, if mobilized through a decolonial lens, allows us to link intellectual elaboration with different forms of structural inequities in the profession. In the end, a decolonizing approach to critiquing and transforming language beliefs and ideologies demands 'action' (e.g., the SEED project) which is embedded in intersecting structures of power in the profession. To put it another way, decolonizing language beliefs and ideologies in ELT does not simply involve reviewing, revising and overhauling curricula; it involves confronting systemic inequalities of knowledge production as well as unequal access to such transformative curricula in the first place. Elements of epistemic decolonization, knowledge activism and social justice are entangled in the conceptualization and implementation of a decolonizing ELT project. But first, let us examine how a decolonizing agenda in ELT has come about in the field.

### **CONCEPTUAL SHIFTS DUE TO GLOBALIZATION**

The globalization and spread of English have resulted in its diversification. Several conceptual lenses have emerged to make sense of this sociolinguistic transformation of the language. 'World English' (Rajagopalan, 2004; Crystal, 2004) characterizes English as having taken on a linguistic and cultural character which consolidates the influences of people using the language from different parts of the world. 'English as an International Language' (Smith, 1976; McKay, 2002), on the other hand, conceptualizes English as a conduit through which the different cultures of its

speakers flow. The language no longer carries the culture of its so-called native speakers, but the cultures of its culturally diverse speakers.

‘World Englishes’ (WE) (Llamson, 1969; Kachru, 1992) does not only assert that English is no longer singular but multiple, but also that these multiple Englishes are expressions of cultural identities and postcolonial liberation. More importantly perhaps, it has provided evidence of the systematic nature of national differences in the use of English, thus we have many Englishes such as Philippine English, Singapore English, Malaysian English, and so on. ‘English as a Lingua Franca’ (ELF) (Jenkins, 2007; Seidlhofer, 2008), on the other hand, argues that as a result of globalization, the language has served as a communication tool between speakers in global or cross-national settings whose first languages or mother tongues are different from each other. ‘Global Englishes’ (Galloway and Rose, 2015) covers the range of Englishes from nation-based (WE) to non-nation-based varieties (ELF). Thus, it “is an umbrella and a more inclusive term that encompasses recognized English varieties and ELF” (Fang & Ren, 2018, p. 385).

‘Translingual practices’ (Canagarajah, 2012) argues that realities on the ground surface linguistic practices of speakers which break down the so-called artificial boundaries between languages and language varieties. What the speakers have at their disposal are unified communicative repertoires through which they are able to establish intercultural and interpersonal interactions. What this means is that the English language is embedded in (and indistinguishable from) these communicative repertoires, thus we need to focus on the “pluricentricity of ongoing negotiated English” (Pennycook, 2008, p. 30.3, italics supplied). Lastly, ‘Unequal Englishes’ (UE) puts the spotlight on power and inequalities between speakers of Englishes, arguing that while English has diversified into different Englishes as a result of globalization, some remain more valued than others (Tupas, 2015; Salonga, 2015). Many speakers of English have been mocked and even discriminated against at home, in school and in the workplace, among many other contexts of use.

While these varying sociolinguistic lenses give us different angles from which to appraise the globalization and spread of English, we should emphasize that they are all grounded in the assumption that English has diversified and such diversification has systematic implications for the linguistic and cultural transformation of English. Thus, collectively these ways of apprehending the diversification of English have resulted in various attempts to reconceptualize the teaching of English. In my review of the literature on the impact of scholarly work on the

Englishes of the world on the ELT profession (Tupas, 2018), I have found three key routes to such reconceptualization, and one of these routes – transforming language beliefs and ideologies – is what frames the decolonizing agenda of SEED.

### **THREE ROUTES TO RECONCEPTUALIZING ELT**

The first route revolves around the question about ‘what English to teach’ (Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015; Schaetzel et al., 2010). If various international, national and sub-national iterations of English language use have been empirically found to be linguistically and culturally legitimate, with their own logics of use, what happens then to ‘Standard English’ as the ideal teaching and learning norm in the classroom? What is the role of localized Englishes in the teaching of ‘English’? Should we continue to aim for standardized norms and rules in the use of English, or should we replace them with the norms and rules of localized Englishes? Much has been written to track noteworthy attempts to respond to this question about what English to teach, but the reality of Unequal Englishes has made it difficult to transform ELT through this route because assessment practices, along with global institutions of testing and textbook production, have by and large remained committed to promoting ‘native speaker’ norms as the ideals of teaching and learning (Soto-Molina & Méndez, 2020).

The second route revolves around the question of ‘how to teach English’ (Tupas & Renandya, 2020; Cummins, 2009). The multilingual character of English is one of the key assumptions of work around this question, while another related one is the multilingual character of the users of English themselves. In other words, no matter what one’s political and ideological stance is towards the legitimacy of (a) pluralized English or Englishes, the fact remains that in most of the English classrooms around the world, the contexts and participants are multilingual and multicultural (Tupas & Renandya, 2020; Cummins, 2009). Colonial language teaching methods from audiolingual to communication language teaching have practically denied the positive contributions of multilingualism to effective teaching and learning (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). However, with the unrelenting push of some scholarly work towards embracing and mobilizing multilingualism in schools, pedagogies of English as an International Language have been envisioned, mobilized and examined through multilingual and multicultural lenses (Marlina and Giri, 2014; McKay, 2002). The use of mother tongues and ‘non-standard’ Englishes to teach ‘English’ has been explored and debated extensively (Wheeler, 2010; Sato, 1989). Contrastive or bidialectal strategies which, for example, encourage noticing or language awareness of structural differences between two Englishes or between English and the students’ mother tongue(s), have

been proven effective in the teaching and learning of English in the classroom (Lu, 2022; Wheeler, 2010).

The third route is what this chapter is most concerned about although, as we will soon find out, it also implicates the earlier questions. It seeks to address the question about ‘how to think about English’ which is fundamentally interested in transforming deep-rooted beliefs and ideologies about English and multilingualism. There are deep (although not necessarily straightforward) links between language beliefs and language teaching practices, thus, to mobilize a decolonizing agenda in ELT, it is imperative to map out the ideological structure of the system of beliefs which underpin our policies and practices. Such a system, as will be explicated below, concerns the monolingualist and deficit ideology in ELT. ‘What English to teach’ and ‘how to teach English’ are difficult to address because teachers and other stakeholders’ deep-rooted beliefs are not treated as a fundamental challenge to transforming language education. It is possible, for example, to implement policies which promote and celebrate multilingualism, but if teachers’ beliefs about it are not aligned with the supposedly transformative agenda of such policies, classroom practices would remain unreceptive to additive and constructive pedagogies which take as their core the importance of teachers’ and students’ diverse linguistic and cultural resources for effective and justice-based learning. In my work on secondary classrooms in Singapore, some of which has been presented elsewhere (Tupas, 2021b; Tupas and Weninger, 2020), I observed that many teachers had well-meaning intentions to legitimize Singlish as a pedagogical tool. They use Singlish structures and lexicon to contrast with those of the school-sanctioned standard variety for the purpose of language awareness but in the end the Singlish examples are mocked or devalued. Contrastive analysis, one of the ways to teach grammar and writing by drawing on knowledge of pupils’ first language(s) and language variety/ies (Wheeler, 2010; Lu, 2022), is deployed by some teachers I observed to devalue, rather than affirm, linguistic and cultural diversity.

Therefore, in decolonizing ELT, this paper contends that beliefs and ideologies should be at the core of the transformation. Expósito and Favela (2003) argue, first of all, that “...only teachers that reflect critically on their practices—that are aware of the political and cultural nature of their work—can effectively meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students” (p. 89). However, critical reflection on our practices assumes clarity of our political commitments, including clarity of the system of beliefs which underpin our work. Thus, this explains why we need to start with how to think about English now, rather than what English to teach and how to

teach it. This is aligned with Trueba and Bartolomé's (2000) contention that "the need for clarity of political beliefs, practices, and commitments is as important as the actual pedagogical strategies used in instruction" (p. 278; also Gorski, 2016).

### **THE COLONIALITY OF LANGUAGE BELIEFS IN ELT**

According to Kumaravadivelu (2003), attempts at transforming ELT based on our sociolinguistic knowledge about the globalization and spread of English are not enough. This is because most of these attempts are grounded in the simple view of English as undergoing internal changes referred to as *nativization*. In other words, English is undergoing changes to its linguistic, semantic, lexical and pragmatic system because of cultural globalization, thus the agenda for transformation should be based on these grounds of nativization, which is also referred to in some works as indigenization or localization (Mufwene, 1994; Yano, 2001). For Kumaravadivelu (2003), however, we need to bring the project of transformation to the level of decolonization which is not merely concerned with the internal changes of English but, more importantly, with social and economic structures and conditions which govern the logic of English language use, teaching and learning today. At the centre of change, in other words, is the role of power in the production of knowledge, in the making of institutional and national policies, and in the determination of pedagogical practices which are deemed legitimate by both educational institutions and the state (Manan, 2018; Valdez, 2011). Teaching and learning materials such as textbooks, for example, are "signs of neo-colonial practices" (Soto-Molina & Méndez, 2020, p. 14) if they continue to promote traditional native speaker norms and overwrite linguistic and cultural diversity, but infusing new cultural content into these materials as a decolonial strategy is ineffective if it fails to consider the transnational infrastructure of power -- constituted by, for example, global assessment institutions, development aid, and publishing corporations -- which controls the production of knowledge (Tupas & Tabiola, 2017; Valdez, 2011). Therefore, decolonization, not nativization, should govern our transformative agenda in ELT because it means engaging in "a fairly complex process of *taking control* of the principles and practices of planning, learning, and teaching English" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 140, italics supplied). Thus, as we will see later in the paper, while transforming ELT should begin with epistemic decolonization (Posholi, 2020) focused on deconstructing language beliefs and ideologies and replacing them with more culturally sensitive ones drawn from multicultural and multilingual realities, taking control of the production of knowledge requires more than just replacing one body of knowledge with another (Tupas, 2021a). Let us now proceed with unpacking some of the key language beliefs which circulate in our profession.

## **Circulating Language Beliefs**

*If you do not speak English, you are not smart.* One of the major projects of colonialism was to devalue or erase indigenous identities, histories and cultures, and establish educational and social systems which valorized the colonizers' cultures and languages. In the case of the colonial rule of the United States and the United Kingdom, education through the English language was imposed as a way to 'civilize' the so-called 'barbaric' subjugated peoples (Constantino, 1970; Martin, 2010). As a result, English has taken on values which are associated with being civilized, educated and smart. Local languages have been vilified as useless and backward. Anecdotal and data-driven narratives of subjects of (neo) colonialism consistently show that people indeed associate English with being smart, confident and trustworthy (Lai, 2007; Shah, 2019).

*I am a non-native teacher of English.* This is a statement which has taken on the status of a social fact. Who can argue against the 'fact' that if English is not my first language or mother tongue, then I am a 'non-native' speaker or teacher of English? However, it was colonial power itself which also positioned 'non-native' speakers as 'non-native' perpetually working towards the ideal speech of American or British speakers but would never achieve it (Tupas, 2022; Phillipson, 1992). Thus, if we describe ourselves as 'non-native' speakers or teachers, our identity is a colonially imposed one. It is an identity which becomes meaningful only for what it is not – 'I am not a native teacher of English'. Consequently, we become recipients of many material and cultural consequences of being defined as non-native, including being discriminated against in hiring processes ('Only native speakers can apply'), such that if hired we are by default paid far less than our so-called native counterparts or assigned work which is more labour intensive (Canagarajah, 1999). There is, for example, an alternative way to frame ourselves as English teachers or speakers – 'I am a multilingual teacher of English'. This statement highlights who we are or what we 'have', and that is being multilingual. More importantly, it highlights our desire to self-identify with our multilingualism as having positive or constructive contributions to our teaching, learning or use of English.

*Local languages are not allowed in the English classroom.* This is another powerful but unfortunate belief which circulates in our profession, both in practice and scholarship (Cummins, 2009; Manan et al., 2020). This is based on the assumption that local languages are undesirable and have negative consequences on the learning of English. A related statement here is, 'L1 interferes in the learning of English'. Notice the use of the word 'interfere'. The L1 (first language) is negatively framed and is a burden to English language teaching and learning. This is what Wee (2014) refers

as the ‘interference argument’. As teachers, however, we do have choices in how to frame the role of the L1 in language learning. It can ‘shape’, ‘influence’ or ‘facilitate’ the learning of English. In fact, research has empirically proven that multilingual resources, including the use of L1 and unsanctioned varieties of English in the classroom, can be strategically or judiciously used to improve the teaching and learning of English (Luke, 2022; Walter & Dekker, 2011; Buchs & Maradan, 2021). Such research provides ample evidence that shows that local languages indeed can increase the chances of pupils in doing better academically, both in English language classrooms and other classrooms such as Mathematics and Science.

### **Language Beliefs as Colonial Ideology**

These are but a few dominant language beliefs which circulate in the ELT profession. The statements may appear to be discrete expressions of these beliefs, but they are in fact statements which constitute a historically assembled body of colonial knowledge framed coherently within the matrix of *monolingualist and deficit language ideology*. When we refer to an ideology, we mean it as “a framework of thought constructed and held by members of a society to justify or rationalize an existing social order” (Bartolomé, 2004, p. 97). Particular language beliefs in ELT, therefore, such as those articulated through the circulating statements above, make up one broad ideology or framework of thought which mobilizes ELT theories and practices. To give one specific example: Manan (2018) explains how the monolingualist and deficit language ideology underpins the decision-making trajectories of educators, especially those in leadership positions. They use coercive power to justify, rationalize and reinforce the coloniality of ELT practices and beliefs.

### **The Sociolinguistics in English Education (SEED) Project**

The preceding sections have made the case for examining language beliefs and ideologies in ELT as core to addressing the coloniality of the field. Therefore, SEED was envisioned as a teacher professional development initiative centred on transforming teachers’ beliefs and ideologies. This would open spaces for them to also question and explore alternative practices and approaches in the classroom which address different forms of inequities as a result of the mobilization of a monolingualist and deficit language ideology. Such a focus on ideological transformation in language teacher education is also justified on the grounds that, as Trueba and Bartolomé (2000), Bartolomé (2000), Tupas (2018) and Expósito and Favela (2003) assert, clarity of political and ideological commitment among teachers is as important as pedagogical approaches in teacher training and development. In the succeeding paragraphs, I will detail and narrate some key

considerations in the conceptualization and implementation of SEED through a decolonizing lens. In the process of doing so, I will highlight and discuss the challenges to implementing a decolonizing project. As in the case of any instantiation of a decolonizing act, SEED was always in danger of being treated as decontextualized and unhinged from structures of inequalities within which it was supposed to operate. The challenge was – and continues to be – how to mobilize and concretize a decolonizing agenda through a specific undertaking such as SEED without losing the activist and political character of the agenda. I must say this is a dangerous but needed move since I am making the project completely vulnerable to criticism especially because decolonization as a concept is complex and nuanced, and cannot be pinned down to a particular concrete undertaking. In recent years, decolonizing designs, strategies and practices have been criticized as tokenism and lip service – simply a spate of “fashionable” perspectives on education (Høiskar, 2022, p. 172):

The term “decolonization” has become ubiquitous, but how are we to ensure that it is more than just a label without real substance, or a fashionable buzzword to which we merely pay lip service? (The Global Education Network, 2021, p. 190)

SEED is aware of this persistent academic criticism, thus the way forward was to mobilize decolonization, first, as an act “to open up for a chance to critically revisit curricula and teaching practices” (Høiskar, 2022, p. 172), “ensuring that curriculum design, content and delivery are truly inclusive and do not always elevate just one voice, one experience, one way of being in the world” (The Global Education Network, 2021, p. 190); but second, to aim “to understand and disentangle power relations and structures” which are responsible in the first place for the continuing delivery of educational content proven to be harmful to students of marginalized and minoritized background. SEED treads carefully on and between these two broad aims of a decolonizing project in education. It is an on-going struggle but confronting the challenges head on should be one small step towards opening new spaces for rethinking what we assume and do in our profession. As professionals engaged in the practicalities of our everyday work, we also need examples of how broad, abstract concepts can or may work within the messiness of everyday life even with the danger of oversimplification or reductionism.

### ***Epistemic decolonization***

SEED was conceptualized primarily as a project of unpacking and transforming core beliefs and ideologies in ELT which govern how we think and do things in the field. This is part of what may be described as epistemic decolonization which “refers to the redemption of worldviews and

theories and ways of knowing that are not rooted in, nor oriented around Euro-American theory” (Kessi et al., 2020, p. 274). This is what I have attempted to do in the earlier sections of the chapter. This requires *thinking otherwise* (Foucault, 1992), to “turn away from the norm, from expected or authorized thinking” (Homes & Grant, 2007, p. 1). A focus on language beliefs and ideologies is to think otherwise since it aims to deconstruct authorized understandings of dominant concepts and practices such as native-speakerism, English-Only, Standard English, correct grammar, and even bilingualism and multilingualism. SEED was thus going to be organized around these concepts and practices, rather than the typical focus of language teacher development on teaching strategies or the ‘how to’ of teaching and learning.

The decolonizing vision of SEED was presented to the Ateneo Centre for English Language Teaching (ACELT) in Manila, one of the key institutions dedicated to English language teacher education in the Philippines. An important feature of this negotiation, however, was the collaborative nature of SEED. ACELT and its expert teachers would need to be deeply involved in the design and implementation of the project as they have been working very closely with teachers from different parts of the Philippines. Epistemic decolonization requires that those involved are willing to collectively mobilize shared knowledge and expertise, but one which is drawn from the complexities of the local context and configurations of power among the stakeholders. The result of the negotiated syllabus was content which was critical but organized around what shared knowledge and expertise determined to be appropriate for and needed by target student-participants.

SEED was also going to be a six two-hour-session certificate course for Filipino teachers of English in all levels of formal education, literacy teachers in non-formal education, school principals and administrators, and anyone involved in educational policy-making and implementation. It was offered for Filipino teachers of English in the Philippines or abroad for the first time in 2021, but also ran for the second time in 2022. One of the student-participants in 2021 also offered to host SEED for her colleagues in a university as well, and this run was also completed in early 2022. Given the success of these three iterations of the project, it is highly likely that it will be offered in many years to come, or localized for the specific needs of particular institutions in the country.

SEED is taught mainly through synchronous online sessions, and even if we return to F2F classrooms, it will mostly likely essentially remain online, with space for adapting to F2F if specific conditions demand it. These sessions are recorded and made available for students who are

unable to attend synchronously. Every session features worksheets and case studies for class and group discussion with the aim of surfacing and interrogating real-world examples of the interrelations between language, politics and education. For SEED 2022, the main requirement was for student-participants to organize webinars and talks which target their own colleagues and communities on themes relevant to the course. *Thinking otherwise*, the following themes organize the conduct of the certificate course.

Theme	Description
Week 1: Understanding Linguistic Difference	This session discusses the notion of linguistic difference and how it is linked with social variables such as social class, ethnicity and gender. The session also explains why it is important for all stakeholders of education should learn about linguistic difference.
Week 2: Unpacking Basic Concepts in Teaching and Learning	This session unpacks the limits of basic concepts in teaching and learning through the lens of linguistic difference. These concepts include, but are not limited to, standard/non-standard, correct/wrong grammar, language/dialect, and native/non-native.
Week 3: Exploring the Impact of Linguistic Difference	This session explores the impact of linguistic difference on people, especially teachers and learners. It further explores how the way linguistic difference is valued impacts the lives of teachers and learners, including teacher effectiveness and learner achievement.
Week 4: Configuring the Globalization of English	This session critically examines the phenomenon of the globalization of English and its impact on the structures and functions of the language. It discusses how local cultures and social relations shape how the English language is used, thus resulting in many Englishes.
Week 5: Mapping Multilingual ELT	This session defines Multilingual ELT and explains the role of multilingualism in the teaching and learning of English. In this session, ‘translingualism’ is also introduced to help us make sense of the overlapping languages and language varieties in the classroom.
Week 6: Exploring Pedagogies of Transformation	This session brings together key concepts and arguments in the course and explores ways by which teaching and learning of English can be transformed to benefit teachers and learners. In this session, students are expected to provide innovative solutions to classroom problems.

### **Knowledge activism**

As mentioned in the preceding section, *thinking otherwise* as a practice of epistemic decolonization needs to delink from but also re-engage with an infrastructure of knowledge production which is essentially responsible for the dissemination and utilization of knowledge

within specific educational systems. In the case of SEED, how is it possible for research-informed knowledge in sociolinguistics to be communicated to a target audience who move about within specific configurations of work and knowledge of production? In the literature on applicable research and knowledge, the typical route is knowledge transfer or knowledge dissemination. For Gillies (2015), however, this assumes a rather passive way of moving knowledge from one platform to another. There is no “active processing” (p. 280) involved. “The object – in this case ‘research knowledge’ – is not acted upon in any way but is merely the subject of movement: it is moved from one sphere to another, from one group to another” (p. 280). SEED, therefore, has to be viewed as a platform of persuasion – thus politics – where thinking otherwise is mobilized as research-informed leading to transformative practice. In our case, it is the decolonizing agenda. This is what is referred to by Gillies (2015) as *knowledge activism* where knowledge – generated through thinking otherwise – “is to be treated to become politically significant” (p. 282).

However, the movement of knowledge across different spheres does not happen on a decontextualized platform. It implicates a complex institutional and geopolitical infrastructure which should then be critically negotiated in order for knowledge activism to start moving. In fact, overcoming inequities in knowledge production is part of what constitutes knowledge activism. The first consideration is critical institutional engagement. Our target participants all operate within formal educational institutions, thus in order for the certificate course to be accessible, we need to work within institutions of power. This action is what many may refer to as the complicity of scholars, but for Daza (2012) complicity is ‘infiltration’ if one gains access to workings of power in order to initiate change. One way we accomplished this was by going through the process of getting accreditation for the certificate course as a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course which would help the participants earn CPD points leading to the renewal of their teachers’ license with the Philippines’ Professional Regulatory Commission. The collaborative work with ACELT proved to be crucial here because they have institutional knowledge of the accreditation culture in the Philippines. In the end, SEED received accreditation and earned 10 CPD points (out of 15) for participants working towards renewing their teaching licenses.

Another way is to work within conditions of knowledge production using online infrastructures. Much has been written about unequal access to technologies of learning (Ojetunde et al., 2021; Devkota, 2021; Jantjies, 2020). The SEED syllabus, therefore, cannot function efficiently with a one-size-fits-all approach to learning (Carter & Fewster, 2013). It has to address problems of

online connectivity and uneven workload among the participants who come from institutions of varied labour demands and regulations. Thus, participation in the certificate course could be accomplished through attendance in synchronous sessions, access to asynchronous recorded sessions with written outputs, orally recorded responses to written tasks and collaborative projects leading towards the conduct of talks or webinars targeting the participants' own communities of learning and teaching. Contextualized learning experiences (Koh, 2021) do not just offer individualized and cultural solutions to diversifying learning. In fact, they also address material or structural inequalities in educational provision through online use of technology (Stanistreet, 2021; Devkota, 2021).

As we can see, knowledge activism must address fundamental structural inequalities to work well. It goes without saying that while epistemic decolonization begins with thinking otherwise, knowledge activism mobilizes knowledge transformation. But this is possible only if structural inequalities are addressed. Of course, such inequalities are massive and implicate a totality of systemic social injustices which go beyond educational concerns, and thus cannot be solved simply by one mundane decolonizing project such as a certificate course for continuing professional development. But we should think of this differently – that mundane everyday decolonial attempts at transforming education are ongoing struggles and never futile, but we should dig deeper into how such attempts can only be successful if material and structural considerations are treated as core challenges. We see here again that decolonizing language beliefs and ideologies, for example in the context of online teacher education, is implicated in broader conditions of power and social and educational inequality.

### **Social justice**

Other than epistemic decolonization and knowledge activism, social justice concerns were also critical to how we conceptualized the SEED project. Once again, I am keenly aware of the enormously demanding nature of social justice (e.g., Rosa & Flores, 2021; Osborn, 2006) thus talking about it in the context of one seemingly insignificant teacher training course may be interpreted as trivializing its lofty ideals. But we should also think of this differently, and rather ask how a social justice lens can help us mobilize a decolonizing agenda through a particular project. Despite recent talk about social justice, according to Hytten and Bettez (2011), “it is often unclear in any practical terms what we mean when we invoke a vision of social justice or how this influences such issues as program development, curricula, practicum opportunities, educational philosophy, social vision, and activist work” (p. 8). Talking about it through SEED will certainly not

be sufficient, but it will nevertheless provide us ordinary teachers with questions to ask and reflect on our own assumptions and practices. Indeed, how is decolonizing beliefs and ideologies in ELT, in both epistemic and structural terms, link with social justice concerns?

First of all, when we speak of social justice, we speak of ameliorating the lives of people who have been subjected to different forms of marginalization and discrimination. It refers to “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs” (Bell, 1997, p. 3). This means reconstituting unequal social relations, and then creating spaces and opportunities for these groups of people to access society’s symbolic and material resources, as well as reclaim all that was lost from them as they went through processes of minoritization and marginalization. In the case of the SEED project, the social justice component is significant largely due to socio-economic disparities among participants and their institutions. The material conditions within which many teachers operate to live their everyday lives prevent them from accessing quality and transformative educational content. In other words, will they be able to afford to attend the certificate course if they have to pay a certain amount of money as tuition fee? We have recently seen critical work on how teacher education especially during and because of the pandemic has been reenvisioned or sharpened to focus on incorporating content which will serve as guides to implement decolonizing projects (Hill, 2020), but students’ and teachers’ access to such content is usually not tackled at all. Who has access to such content and who does not? Are there possibilities for some teachers who cannot afford to pay fees to access training or continuing professional development courses?

Therefore, in offering SEED as a joint project, ACELT and I negotiated on the best possible terms for participants to join the certificate course. This has led to ACELT sourcing for 20 partially-funded scholarships to 20 deserving participants. Financial need was a key criterion of the selection of these 20 applicants. On top of this, I negotiated with ACELT to offer the certificate course at the lowest possible CPD workshop fees in exchange for me offering all my services for free. This helped bring down the fees to their minimum (with minimal ones needed to fund ACELT’s online platform and other services). In the end, 37 participants completed SEED 2021, a relatively high number according to ACELT records as average enrolment would hover around 15-20 students. What this demonstrates is that a decolonizing agenda requires that those engaged in it must be critically aware of their subject positions and privilege (Soler, 2019), but also must act on them (Harrison, 2019). One of such acts is to let go of whatever academic privilege one has in articulating and mobilizing a potentially transformative action.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter is about decolonizing language beliefs and ideologies in ELT. However, as I have hopefully shown, this does not merely involve critically reflecting on harmful concepts and practices in the field, and then revising or overhauling our curricula or classroom practices. Through SEED, we have found that a decolonizing agenda begins with thinking otherwise, but in order for it to work, structural and material conditions and challenges must be addressed as well. SEED as an attempt at epistemic decolonization is structurally implicated in unequally distributed opportunities to access the certificate course in the first place, and addressing these involves democratizing access through diversifying modes of teaching, learning and assessment through online technology, as well as unpacking and then letting go of our own institutional and social privileges to enable some participants to enrol in the course with the least possible impact on their material conditions.

“Decolonization,” according to Canagarajah (2022), “is risky business” (p. 1). It “is sobering to recognize that radical thought paradigms are always entangled in diverse market forces, political regimes, and ideological discourses” (p. 2). Thus, it is imperative “to explore how progressive linguistic paradigms have to negotiate these entanglements in an ongoing manner to always reposition themselves strategically and maintain their critical edge” (p. 2). However, research has also found that one reason why transformative concepts in sociolinguistics and education do not get implemented successfully is not because teachers do not understand how these concepts work, but because provision of these in teacher training and development typically lacks concrete, tangible examples (Godley et al., 2006; Wheeler, 2016). Therefore, this chapter as mentioned many times over in the earlier sections, treads on dangerous grounds because it aims to operationalize a huge concept through one particular initiative. It is dangerous because the possibility of reducing or trivializing decolonization is palpable through this route. However, this chapter in the end is born out of a practical need: to decolonize language beliefs and ideologies through concrete and operationalizable means, and take control of ELT and fashion it the way we want it and as appropriate for our own respective contexts.

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# TURKISH EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ONLINE TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Burcu GÜL

## Abstract

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic imposed an immediate transition upon teachers replacing face-to-face lessons with online environments. This drastic change brought out a novel phenomenon for investigation: teachers' perceptions of online teaching during the pandemic. The literature indicated teachers' perceived issues related to workload, pedagogy, assessment, and institutional support during online teaching in various contexts (Cheung, 2021; Todd, 2020; Yang, 2020); however, the number of existing studies in the Turkish context is scarce. Thus, the rationale of the present study is to fill the gap as no research has aimed to study Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on the K-12 online teaching. The present mixed-method study had a twofold aim: to investigate the perception levels of K-12 Turkish EFL teachers about online teaching during the pandemic and to explore their perceptions pertaining to institutional support. The quantitative data were collected from 31 teachers via a questionnaire developed by Şener et al. (2020) and the qualitative data were obtained via a semi-structured focus group interview with five volunteer teachers. The findings of the descriptive analysis of the teachers' perceptions toward online teaching revealed moderate-high scores. The results of the qualitative data with related themes demonstrated that most of the participant teachers urged for more technical and emotional support from their institutions.

**Keywords:** Turkish EFL teachers, language teaching, online teaching, teacher perceptions, the COVID-19 pandemic

## INTRODUCTION

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, many governments and educational institutions worldwide had to leave the traditional face-to-face classroom teaching methods and start online education immediately. This drastic change was so sudden that teachers had almost no time to plan for the online learning environments. Although online education is not a new phenomenon, online education during the pandemic is a novel situation that necessitated the complete replacement of face-to-face lessons with online lessons. This shift eliminated the validity of all previous research conducted on the subject of online education since the context of the COVID-19 pandemic was a novel paradigm both for the students and the teachers throughout the world. The situation was the same for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers. They had no time to arrange for the necessary changes for online education and make plans for online teaching. There is only a little research conducted on EFL teachers' perceptions of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Likewise, there is no research conducted in Turkey that aims to understand K-12 Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions about online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, there is an urgent need for understanding the K-12 Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions regarding online teaching since this information might be used to improve future online teaching

practices. The purpose of this study is to shed light on Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of online teaching and reveal the significance of teachers' perceptions for future online teaching practices.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Theoretical Framework**

In the simplest way possible, the term perception was defined as “the processes that allow us to extract information from the patterns of energy that impinge on our sense organs” (Rogers, 2017, p. 1). In addition, Papadakis and Kalogiannakis (2020) defined the term teachers' perceptions as “the thoughts or mental images which teachers have about their professional activities and their students, which are shaped by their background knowledge and life experiences and influence their professional behavior” (p. 1). These definitions are highly valuable for the present research as they limit one of the main constructs of this research.

Other significant constructs that require definitions for the context of the present research are online education and online teaching. Briefly, Sherritt and Basom (1997, as cited in Gudea, 2008) define online education as the use of the Internet for teaching and learning purposes and emphasize how distance education has evolved to take full advantage of the latest technology to improve the educational experience for learners. According to Major (2015), online teaching means changing the way we think about our profession as educators and requires rethinking our beliefs and skills; it entails learning new pedagogical approaches, media-related information, and communication techniques. Major (2015) also pointed out that teaching online provides us the grounds for the necessity of novel research on this phenomenon since online teaching requires rethinking teaching, and altering the methods, materials, and pedagogy. Thus, the use of teaching materials, methods, and pedagogies that were designed for traditional classroom teaching environments for online education proposes a threat that might be irreparable to EFL students' language acquisition.

Previous definitions provide us with the grounds for the necessity of understanding EFL teachers' perceptions on online teaching during the pandemic period. Based on the teachers' perceptions, researchers might develop new methods, materials, and pedagogies to implement for online education as immediately as possible. Furthermore, this study aims to fill the rationale gap as no research directly aims to study Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on the K-12 online teaching. The findings of the present study might be used in further research as they might give researchers ideas about how to ameliorate teachers' perceptions of online teaching and explicitly improve current online teaching practices.

### ***Major issues mentioned by teachers worldwide regarding online teaching during the pandemic***

In order to provide a general understanding of the topic of teachers' perceptions about online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, this section was divided into four main concepts. The concepts were decided based on the main themes that exist in the majority of the research articles on the topic of teachers' perceptions during online education: teachers' workload, pedagogical issues, difficulties in assessment, and institutional support in online teaching environments.

#### ***Teachers' perceptions of workload***

There are several studies worldwide whose findings specifically include workload in terms of teachers' perceptions (Niemi & Kousa, 2020; Pedro & Kumar, 2020; Priyadarshani & Jesuiya, 2021; Todd, 2020).

In a study conducted at a local upper secondary school in Finland, Niemi and Kousa (2020) aimed to describe students' and teachers' perceptions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The data was collected via a survey applied at four distinct times and open-ended interviews. The findings of the study revealed many factors including teachers' perceptions of increased workload. The qualitative results of the survey showed that in distance teaching, more than half of the teachers spent more time planning distance teaching than in-person teaching, thus leading to increased workload of the teachers. Another study that mentioned increased workload during online teaching was Todd's (2020) study conducted at a Thai University. In the study, participant teachers were asked in a survey to rate the seriousness of the problems teachers might have encountered during online teaching and to share their ideas regarding the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching in a subsequent interview. The findings of the study showed that although some of the problems participant teachers encountered during online teaching became more trivial, some remained unresolved. The unresolved issues were: the time spent checking assignments and the time spent contacting the students. The researchers concluded that the workload the teachers have during online teaching might be heavier than in face-to-face teaching.

#### ***Teachers' perceptions of pedagogical issues***

Many studies purport lack of interaction in online lessons as one of the most predominant findings related to pedagogical issues (Cheung, 2021; Gao & Zhang, 2020; Niemi & Kousa, 2020; Spoel et al., 2020; Yang, 2020).

In the study conducted by Spoel et al. (2020), the researchers compared teachers' perceptions of online teaching expectations and experiences with data coming from a survey of 200 Dutch educators. The findings of the study demonstrated that there was a significant change in the perceptions of the teachers as they managed to resolve the majority of their problems except for interaction in online teaching environments. Another study with similar findings conducted by Cheung (2021) investigated the phenomenon of one ESL teacher delivering her lessons on Zoom synchronously and the factors affecting her level of technology integration. One of the emergent themes was teachers' interaction with students and Cheung mentioned that conducting lessons on zoom had its challenges. Similarly, Gao and Zhang (2020) investigated EFL teachers' cognitions about online teaching in response to the disruption of traditional teaching and found that online EFL teaching lacked instantaneous teacher-student interaction.

### ***Teachers' perceptions of assessment***

There are also a couple of recent studies conducted on teachers' perceptions regarding online teaching during the pandemic and their results demonstrate perceived difficulty in terms of assessment (Cheung, 2021; Niemi & Kousa, 2020; Todd, 2020; Yang, 2020). In Todd's (2020) study, one of the remaining problems mentioned in the findings was marking student assignments in online education. In Cheung's (2021) case study, the participant also reported having difficulty in checking students' understanding of online lessons and considered evaluation to be the greatest problem in online lessons. The results of an online survey conducted by Yang (2020) also showed that 33.3% of the teachers reported having difficulty controlling the progress of the class. Similarly, the qualitative findings of Niemi and Kousa's (2020) study revealed that most teachers were worried about how to follow students' progress and students' evaluation was a major concern for the teachers.

### ***Institutional support***

At the time when the present study was conducted, there was no study in the literature that directly investigated teachers' perceptions of institutional support during online teaching other than in Turkey. Since teachers' perceptions of online teaching are a novel phenomenon, the study by Şener et al. (2020) was found to be the only valid study on this topic. The study explored the perceptions of English teachers in terms of technical, pedagogical, and institutional problems they experienced. The participants were 39 English teachers at a private university in Istanbul. The data was collected with a cross-sectional survey that included a Likert scale and open-ended

questions. The results of the quantitative data indicated that although most teachers reported being asked about assistance on technical issues and equipment, only half of them reported getting actual technical help from their institutions. Besides, teachers' answers to the qualitative questions revealed problems related to lack of standardization and communication within the institutions that the teachers worked for. One positive point the teachers made was getting emotional support from their colleagues. Secondly, the study brought forth some interesting results concerning pedagogical facts like interaction. Lack of interaction among instructors, between instructors and students was mentioned by many participants in the study. Thirdly, 31 out of 39 teachers reported an increase in workload compared to face-to-face education. Moreover, in the open-ended questions, some of the teachers mentioned they also had worked outside the office hours. Lastly, teachers also expressed financial concerns. Another study conducted by Pedro and Kumar (2020) solely aimed to find out the main categories of an institutional framework. In this study, researchers did not investigate teachers' perceptions. As the researchers knew the importance of institutional support to provide quality online teaching environments, they aimed to determine institutional support services that help faculty practice quality online teaching. Findings of the research demonstrated the categories of institutional support for quality teaching which were: technical support for teachers and students, teachers' access to course evaluation data, institutional guidelines for online course design, administrative and academic support for online students, professional development opportunities for the teachers, instructional design support, online program management support, and online education research support.

### ***Critique of existing literature***

A review of existing studies conducted worldwide provides a framework and valuable information about teachers' perceptions regarding online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. Except for the domain of teachers' perceptions of institutional support in online education, all other domains that were discussed in this literature review such as teachers' perceptions of workload, assessment, and interaction were found to be entreated in several studies worldwide. The findings of these studies provided the grounds for the present research and also showed the lack of research worldwide on the topic of teachers' perceptions of institutional support in online education. Since teachers' perceptions of online education is a novel topic and there is no research that directly aims to study Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on the K-12 teaching, this research aims to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions on the K-12 online teaching.

## **Research Questions**

In line with the above-mentioned aims, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the perception level of Turkish EFL teachers about online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers pertaining to institutional support?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants and Context**

The study was conducted after the end of the academic year of 2020-2021 in Istanbul, Turkey. The target population for the study was K-12 Turkish EFL teachers who had experienced online teaching. The non-probability Snowball sampling method was used to determine the research participants. The Google form questionnaire link was sent to various K-12 Private School English department heads from Istanbul, Turkey. The department heads were asked to share the questionnaire in their teachers' WhatsApp groups. The semi-structured interview was conducted with volunteer participants who had taken the questionnaire and denoted their interest in taking part in the interview.

According to the demographic information from the survey, 14 out of 31 participants were elementary school teachers, 11 of them were high school teachers, four of them were middle school teachers, and two of them were kindergarten teachers. Out of the 31 participants, 29 confirmed that they were teaching online at the time they took the survey, 22 stated that they had never taught online before the pandemic, six stated that they had conducted blended lessons including both face-to-face and online components, and three were teaching fully online.

### ***Data collection procedure and instruments***

The research design for the present study is a mixed-method research design since the data was collected by both quantitative and qualitative instruments. To answer the first research question, a Google form questionnaire was used as the first data collection tool. The questionnaire that was used in the study is taken from the study conducted by Şener et al. (2020). To ensure the validity of the survey, a reliability analysis was conducted on SPSS by the researchers, and the Cronbach alpha coefficient was found to be 0.725. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was found to be high. The questionnaire consisted of two sections including demographic and 5-point Likert scale questions. The part that included open-ended questions was removed from the

questionnaire. In addition, the options for the first demographic questions asking for the participants' teaching context were changed into K-12 grades to match the target population (see Appendix A). To answer the second research question, semi-structured focus group interviews were used as a data collection tool. The participants who volunteered in the survey were invited to a focus group interview. There was one focus group with 5 participants. The questions which were used in the interviews were formulated by the researchers to bring an in-depth understanding of teachers' perceptions of institutional support (see Appendix B). The participants were allowed to use their mother tongue to better express themselves.

### ***Data analysis procedure***

The demographic questions from the questionnaire were used to describe the participants of the study, whereas the 5-point Likert scale questions ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) were analyzed on IBM SPSS Statistics 25 using descriptive statistics. Specifically, the frequency and mean scores of the Likert scale questions were analyzed to answer the first research question and investigate Turkish EFL teachers' perception levels of online teaching. Secondly, focus group interviews were translated into English and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were analyzed inductively to bring an in-depth understanding of Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions regarding institutional support. Miles and Huberman (1994) define inductive analysis as a process in which "the researcher discovers recurrent phenomena in the stream of local experience and finds recurrent relations among them" (p. 155). Since the categories in the inductive analysis are not pre-determined, the qualitative data analysis procedure was done thematically with an expert colleague in the field. During this process, the researchers constantly negotiated among themselves for the emergent categories, themes, and codes to ensure inter-rater reliability and abstain from researcher bias. This process continued until the emergent themes and categories answered the research question completely. As a result, the researchers came up with a holistic final outcome.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Findings for Research Question 1: What is the perception level of Turkish EFL teachers about online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Quantitative data obtained from the 5-point Likert scale questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics on SPSS. In order to give overall information about teachers' perception levels concerning online teaching during the pandemic, the Likert scale questions were grouped under five sub-themes and overall mean scores ( $\bar{x}$ ) for each of these sub-themes were calculated.

Table 1. Turkish EFL Teachers' Perception Levels of Online Teaching during the Pandemic

Sub-themes	M
Institutional Support	3.24
Increased Workload	3.61
Difficulty in Effective Teaching/Learning	3.67
Difficulty in Assessment	3.64
Emotional Support by Colleagues	4.06

Out of the 12 questions, seven were directly measuring teachers' perceptions regarding institutional support and as the lowest score in the scale, the mean score calculated for institutional support was  $\bar{x} = 3.24$ . Respectively, it was followed by increased workload, difficulty in assessment, and difficulty in effective teaching/learning scores, and the highest mean score calculated was  $\bar{x} = 4.06$  for the sub-theme of emotional support by colleagues.

**Findings for Research Question 2: What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers pertaining to institutional support?**

The analysis of the focus group interview transcriptions resulted in the emergence of the following three themes and six categories. The initial emergent theme was insufficient technical support with the categories of no internet support and slow computers. The second theme was no emotional support with the categories of no caring and late meeting hours. The last theme was outcomes including the categories of exhaustion and isolation. Table 2 below shows a detailed summary of the direct quotations from the interviews.

Overall, teachers' perceptions of institutional support during an unprecedented time like the pandemic illustrated a case in which teachers had been highly affected by the lack of technical and emotional support provided by the institutions. This overt lack led teachers to face new feelings related to their occupations: exhaustion and isolation.

Table 2. *Perceptions of Turkish EFL Teachers Pertaining to Institutional Support*

Themes	Categories	Quotations
Insufficient Technical Support	No internet support	T1 “The school mentioned that they will provide internet because we had internet outages very often and everyone connected to their mobile devices in those times. That is something we provided by ourselves.”
	Slow computers	T3 “I had to wait 8 hours to set up the book... Due to the slowness of the computer when I wanted to check my e-mail, I had to wait for a long time for my e-mails to load.”
No Emotional Support	No caring	T4 “Except that the institution just gave orders like "do this and that" etc. Other than giving orders and managing us they didn't really provide great support.”
	Late meeting hours	T3 “...at times I also attended and listened to the contents of the seminars held at 21:00... and the fact that they were held at inappropriate times was an intervention in our privacy.”
Outcomes	Exhaustion	T2 “Generally speaking I felt under pressure, anxious and even if it's not physical I also felt exhausted in this period.”
	Isolation	T1 “We have been doing meetings, we were congratulated with a word or two. But you're alone under your roof. I think it wasn't a sincere 'thank you.' For that reason, most of the time I felt isolated.”

## DISCUSSION

The present study sought to address two research questions: What is the perception level of Turkish EFL teachers about online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic? What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL teachers pertaining to institutional support? The findings of the study revealed that the theme with the highest loadings for the participant EFL teachers was emotional

support provided by colleagues during online education. Although the participant teachers had to work remotely from each other under the unusual working conditions of the pandemic, they nonetheless perceived a strong support network among themselves. On the other hand, the lowest loadings were shared for institutional support during online teaching. This finding was also in line with the data from the focus group interviews where the participant teachers also reported a lack of emotional and technical support from their administrators.

In comparison with the previous literature, the present study has several interference points. First, the study presents similar quantitative findings as in Şener et al.'s (2020) study. Although the above-mentioned study was conducted with tertiary level EFL teachers and the present one was conducted with K-12 teachers, in both studies, participant teachers reported low levels of institutional support and high levels of collegial support during online teaching. The accordance in these two studies demonstrates that institutional support in online education is an issue in the EFL field for teachers of all levels. Secondly, in terms of institutional support, the technical support provided by the institutions was found to be insufficient. This finding can be interpreted with one of Pedro and Kumar's (2020) suggestions for overcoming the setbacks online education environments have; the researchers point out the need for institutions to provide more effective online training about technical support both for teachers and students. Another important issue put forth was increased workload during online teaching (as in Niemi & Kousa, 2020; Todd, 2020). Although workload in online teaching might not be considered much physically when compared to face-to-face teaching, the perceived workload participant teachers reported in all these studies was significantly high. This finding might be caused by the blurred working hours in online teaching environments or the extra time-consuming tasks online teaching has brought forth like planning, assignment control, and reaching students as the previous research demonstrates. In this changing landscape, where online teaching has brought many novel issues for EFL teachers to overcome, drawing implications from our experiences at the unprecedented times of the COVID-19 pandemic has utmost importance. The perceived experiences of the participant EFL teachers in the present study shed light on a need for finding possible solutions to the issue of institutional support in online teaching. In terms of supplying technical support, institutions might give effective training to teachers on a regular basis. They might increase the number of IT staff who can remotely guide both teachers and students during online teaching. As for emotional support, institutions may arrange teacher round tables where teachers might have a common space to share their feelings. During these round table events, teachers might come up with common activity suggestions that might ease their support needs and share these with their

administrators. Institutions can also take action so as to reduce teachers' online class and meeting hours in online teaching environments since this would also increase the quality of the education teachers provide.

### **LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The present study had certain limitations such as the limited number of participants and the narrow scope of the study. Since only 31 Turkish K12 EFL teacher participants completed the survey in the quantitative part of the study, the number might have fallen short in representing the target population thoroughly. Similarly, the focus group interview was conducted only once with the five volunteer teachers, which could have included more participants or could have been conducted at intervals. The narrow scope of the study was another limitation since the data was collected from K12 Turkish EFL teachers. The topic of EFL teachers' online teaching perceptions is not distinctive to K12 Turkish EFL teachers and it concerns all EFL teachers worldwide. A further research suggestion could be conducting a similar study with a larger universe and participant numbers since all EFL teachers were affected by the immediate online teaching experience the COVID-19 pandemic propounded. Examining the perceptions of state and foundation school teachers separately may also bring forth distinctive results in terms of institutional support. Another suggestion for investigating the topic of institutional support during online teaching could be adding the perceptions of the administrative staff on this matter.

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## APPENDIX A

### Adapted Questionnaire

#### SECTION 1)

1) Which K-12 level do you teach?

- Kindergarten
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High school

2) Are you currently teaching online?

- Yes
- No

3) Have you ever taught online before?

- No
- Yes, blended (Face to face + Synchronous / Asynchronous Online Component)
- Yes, fully online

4) Which language skills do you teach? If other, please specify

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Grammar
- Vocabulary
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

5) Please provide us your e-mail address. We might invite you to take an interview with us on a voluntary basis

(Your answer)\_\_\_\_\_

6) Please enter a valid phone number. We might invite you to take an interview with us on a voluntary basis?

(Your answer)\_\_\_\_\_

SECTION 2)

Please answer the questions regarding your current online teaching experience.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
My institution has offered to provide me with necessary technical equipment (internet connection, laptop, camera etc.	0	0	0	0	0
My institution has provided me with necessary technical equipment (internet connection, laptop, camera etc.)	0	0	0	0	0
My institution has provided me with necessary technical knowledge (how to use online tools, virtual classroom etc.)	0	0	0	0	0
My institution has provided me with pedagogical/ academic help regarding how to teach online.	0	0	0	0	0
My institution has taken measurements against the potential increase in teachers' workload. (reducing class hours/ office hours/ offering extra help)	0	0	0	0	0
My institution's expectations from me have increased compared to face-to-face teaching workload.	0	0	0	0	0
I think online teaching is more difficult than face-to-face teaching in terms of workload.	0	0	0	0	0
I think online teaching is more difficult than face-to-face teaching in terms of effective teaching/ learning.	0	0	0	0	0
I think online teaching is more difficult than face-to-face teaching in terms of assessment.	0	0	0	0	0
I feel I am currently financially supported by my institution.	0	0	0	0	0
I feel I am currently emotionally supported by my institution.	0	0	0	0	0
I feel I am currently emotionally supported by my colleagues.	0	0	0	0	0

## APPENDIX B

Semi-structured interview questions produced by the researcher

- 1) What do you think about institutional support you have received during the online teaching period? Tell me about your experiences so far.
- 2) How do you feel about about institutional support you have received during the online teaching period?
- 3) If this question was asked to your colleagues, what would they say about the institutional support they have received during the online teaching period?
- 4) Considering your online teaching experiences so far, what was the most difficult institutional/ workplace problem you have encountered? Are you still experiencing this problem? If no, how was it solved? If yes, what do you think causes this problem to continue?

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# NO GRADES PLEASE! WE ARE LEARNING

Sylvia SIM and Patrick GALLO

## Abstract

In his theory of experiential learning, Kolb (1984) argues that learning occurs through a cycle of experience, reflection, thought, and experimentation. Thus, learners make meaning from their experiences when they think about what they have done and re-learn by trying alternative approaches. For authentic learning to occur, students need to be in a “safe space” (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015) in which their experimentation is valued. In applying this approach to a university-level professional communication skills course, we have created many unassessed activities and tasks which require the use of the communication skills we are targeting. Our goal is to provide “safe spaces” for the learners to experiment with their skills in a low stakes environment before they are assessed on marked assignments. However, with students’ priority on achieving good grades, their willingness to go through the full process of experiential learning is often interrupted by their desire to ascertain what they believe the instructors want. In this paper, we argue that learning will occur best when instructors create safe and conducive learning spaces, and learners engage in the full experiential learning cycle.

**Keywords:** Experiential learning, authentic, safe spaces, engagement, experimentation

## INTRODUCTION

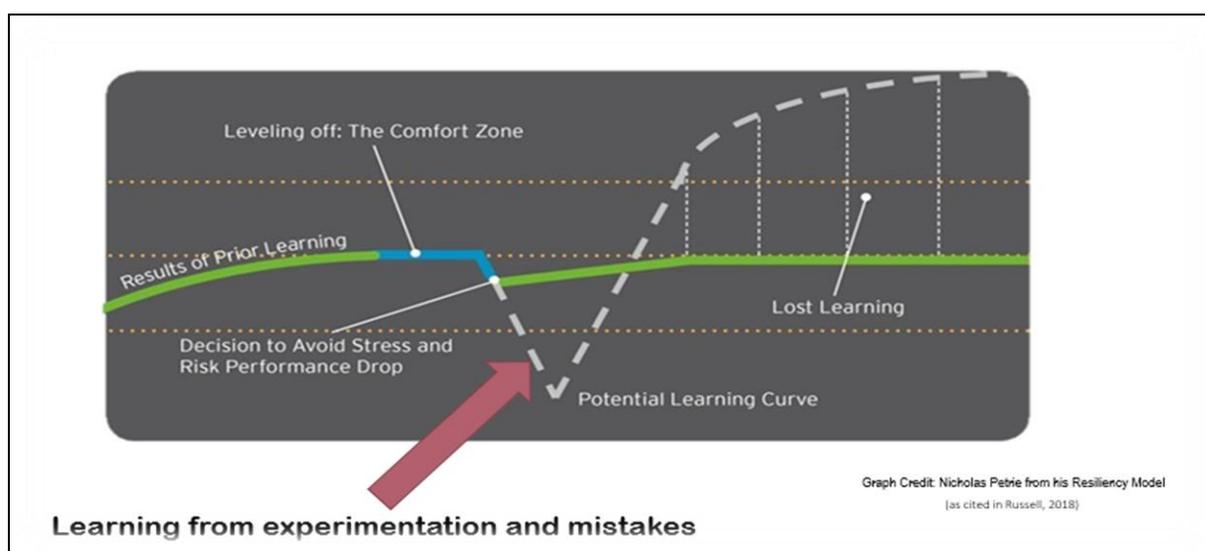
In higher education, the process of knowledge creation is often viewed as a social activity situated in a community of practice. Wenger-Trayner (2015) defines a community of practice as “a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly” (p. 1). Students become members of a community of practice by participating in the activities of that community. Learning takes place when the norms, tools, and traditions of the community shape students’ experiences as they gradually transition from novice to expert.

Similarly, in his theory of experiential learning, Kolb (1984) argues that learning occurs through a cycle of experience, reflection, thought, and experimentation. Learners first complete tasks and reflect on their experience, considering what needs to be improved. After the reflection, learners form hypotheses about alternative strategies for completing the tasks. Experimenting with the insights gained helps learners to build knowledge about which of the possible alternatives work for them and which do not, thus perpetuating their learning cycle. In Kolb’s words, “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 38). For authentic experiential learning to occur, learners need to move through the full learning cycle, including the experimentation stage. At this stage, learners are given the autonomy to make decisions and must bear the responsibility for the results of their choices. However, with

the inherent risk of failure, students may feel insecure and unsafe (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015) during the experimentation stage. Some may be reluctant to step out of their comfort zone and take such risks, especially with high-stakes graded assignments.

In most higher education institutions, evaluation of student learning is an integral part of the learning experience. Professors spend much of their time creating and marking assignments and exams, designed to identify and reward those students who have mastered the material. Students naturally focus on doing what it takes to achieve high marks in their assignments and exams, at times substituting exam strategies for real learning. With grades at stake, many students prefer to avoid experimenting during their learning and default to what worked sufficiently well previously or what they believe will grant them the highest marks. As noted by Ryan and Deci (2000), such focus on extrinsic reward can drive out intrinsically motivated learning. Schlechty (2011) terms this behaviour as “strategic compliance” when learners make strategic decisions to comply with the requirements without finding personal meaning in the work that they do. To enhance experiential learning and achieve growth-producing experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2005), learners need to move beyond strategic compliance and be actively engaged in the full learning cycle. Therefore, it is important to create the space for students to see the relevance of what they are learning and to develop an appreciation of the skills they need. For learning to be effective, learners need to be sufficiently engaged to persist when they face challenges. As Petrie illustrated in his resilience model of learning (2017; as cited in Russell, 2017), there is often a dip in performance when learners move out of their comfort zone. However, mistakes made during the experimentation stage may be necessary to unlock students’ opportunities for potential learning (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Petrie’s resilience model of learning (Source: Russell, 2017)



To maximize their potential, learners require the resilience and commitment to persevere through the complete cycle of experiential learning.

In order to help students persevere in a grade-driven educational context, instructors must create a “safe space” (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015, p. 721) in which students’ experimentation is valued. It is the creation of such safe spaces within a graded university-level professional communication course that is the subject of this paper. We will start by providing the context of the module that we teach. We will then describe how we implement a form of experiential learning and provide safe learning spaces for our students. We will conclude by describing the impact of this approach on our students and drawing implications from our work.

## **THE MODULE CONTEXT**

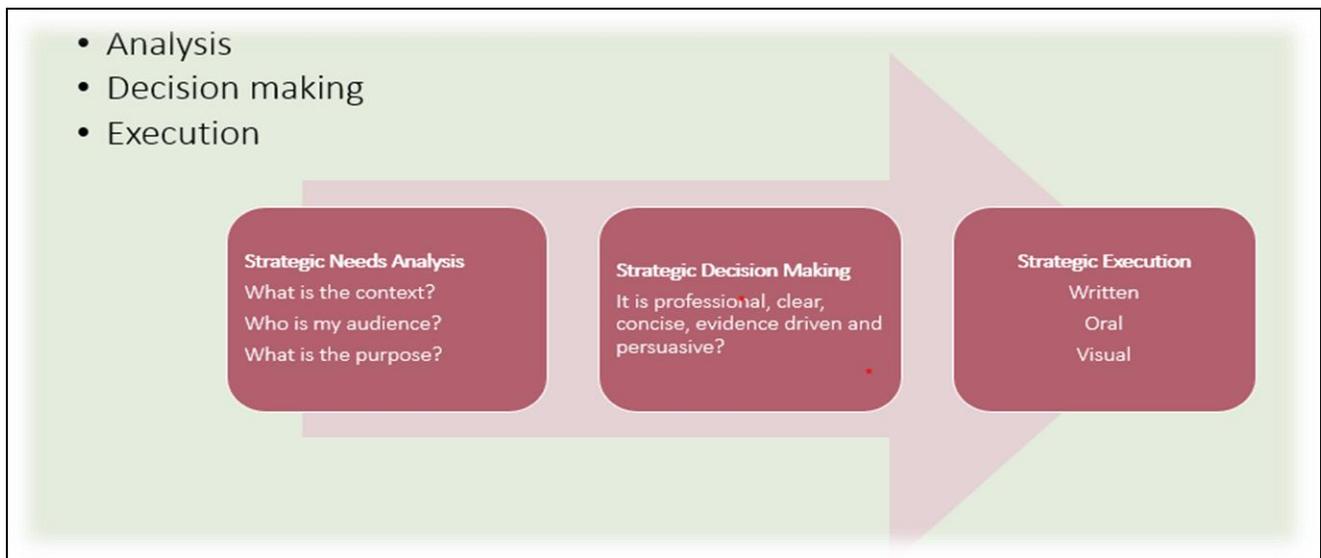
Business and Technical Communication (known as IS2101) is a 48-hour customised professional communication skills module offered by the Centre for English Language Communication for the department of Information Systems and Analytics at the School of Computing, National University of Singapore. Our students are mostly first and second year undergraduates majoring in information systems or business analytics. They join the module with a generally high proficiency in English, but with minimal professional experience. The main aim of the module is to provide an opportunity for these students to enhance their professional communication skills to prepare them for working in information-technology related organizations.

### **Applying the Competency Pivot Approach**

In developing this module, we have adapted Lucas and Rawlins (2015) Competency Pivot approach, which identifies two guiding principles and five core competencies. The two principles are: being goal-oriented and receiver-centric; and the five competencies include being professional, clear, concise, evidence-driven, and persuasive. In accordance with this approach, for each task, the students move through a process of strategic analysis, decision-making, and execution to tailor the way they communicate in a professional setting (see Figure 2).

During the analysis stage, the students examine the context, audience, and purpose for the communication. They then make decisions about the content, organization, and lexical choices of the discourse in order to ensure that the communication is professional, clear, concise, evidence-driven, and persuasive. Finally, in the execution stage, they deliver the required written, oral or visual products, completing the communicative task.

Figure 2. Tailoring communication



We discuss and apply Lucas and Rawlins’s (2015) two principles and five competencies during nearly all of our tutorial sessions. For example, when analysing sample email messages, the students identify the instrumental, identity, and relational goals of the writer, and whether the writer took into consideration the receiver when crafting the message. Where there are faults, we ask the students to specify in which competency area the writer needs to improve. Most importantly, we use the two principles and five competencies as the basis for each of our assignment marking rubrics. The descriptors for each component differentiate the students’ application of these competencies from excellent to poor.

### **Applying an Experiential Approach**

In applying Kolb’s (1984) experiential approach to IS2101, we begin by simulating an IT workplace environment. We strive to create a scenario of a fictitious local subsidiary of an actual IT company. Students assume the role of an IT consultant working in this subsidiary and complete in-class activities and marked assignments as if they are responding to requests from their bosses or meeting with and/or presenting to colleagues and customers of this company. The main communication topics and marked assignments include writing an email and a business proposal, delivering oral presentations, and conducting/participating in meetings. While the email is written individually, the proposal, oral presentations and meetings are group tasks.

Following Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning cycle (described in the introduction), for each topic and its related tasks, the students experience the communicative situation and are encouraged to reflect on what they have done in order to draw conclusions about what they have learned. We require two forms of evidence of their reflections: a logbook and a brief report of their

contribution to the group assignments. In the report, the students identify their own and their groupmates' contribution to the writing of the business proposal and the related pitch presentation. They are asked to score themselves and their groupmates along a continuum from 'little contribution' to 'goes beyond the call of duty' and explain their evaluation. Thus, their descriptions should provide evidence for the scores they give.

In the logbook, the students record their experiences during the module, the feedback they have received from their peers and tutor, and the lessons they believe they are learning. They are encouraged to go beyond listing events and engage in deeper reflection. The students use these reflections to conduct a final meeting, loosely based on a 360-degree appraisal commonly used in many companies for their annual review exercise. The students meet to comment on and respond to one another's reflections on their individual contributions and group's performance over the semester. They use such categories as "teamwork," "interpersonal communication," "leadership," and "problem solving" to frame the discussion. The result is often a deeper appreciation of the strengths of each team member, a heightened awareness of individual growth areas, and some practical suggestions for the way forward.

## **CHALLENGES**

As briefly described above, one of the main challenges we have implementing this approach is that our students often hesitate to engage in the full experiential learning cycle. Being concerned about achieving good grades, students may not be willing to experiment with their communication patterns, even after reflecting on their recent communication experiences. Thus, learning is often interrupted by the students' desire to ascertain what they believe the instructors want and what will assure them of a good grade.

In line with Schlechty's (2011) idea of "strategic compliance", students would rather comply with what they think would lead to a good grade than fully engage in the experimental phase of the experiential learning cycle. In order to avoid possible mistakes or a dip in performance quality, more risk-averse students may try to comply with what they think their professors want or what they have done successfully in the past. Some of them may become frustrated when they perceive the opportunities to take risks and make decisions based on their own judgment as a lack of guidance or clear instructions from the professors.

In IS2101, this frustration was evident in some of the comments students gave in the course evaluation:

*Instructions were vague and marking rubrics were ambiguous, and students were left to wonder if their work would score well. Effort put into work did not translate well into grades. At times, especially in the beginning of the semester, assignments are quite open-ended and given vaguely, with little guidance on what is actually required of students. Why can't the module just be normal...?*

Obviously, these students were expecting to be provided with guidelines that they could comply with rather than an opportunity to exercise their judgment. Yet, to unlock their full learning potential, students need such challenges to take them out of their comfort zone and to provide an opportunity for them to experiment and learn from their choices. Consequently, the question remains: how do we encourage grade-focused university undergraduates to move beyond strategic compliance and engage fully in experiential learning? We believe part of the answer lies in the concept of creating safe learning spaces.

### **Safe Learning Spaces**

The concept of learning spaces in higher education has been around for a while. Winnicott (1989) wrote that the experiential classroom can provide a “transitional space” in which learners progress from “not knowing to knowing” (as cited in Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015, p. 722). Kolb and Kolb (2005) linked experiential learning with learning spaces when they wrote, “Experiential learning in higher education can be achieved through the creation of learning spaces that promote growth-producing experiences for learners” (p. 205). Kisfalvi and Oliver (2015) develop the idea of learning spaces as places for students to experiment and get feedback from their peers and professors so that they could move towards greater self-confidence in their learning.

However, for learning to occur through experimentation, students need to feel safe. The concept of a safe space includes physical and psychological safety. The fear of rejection, criticism or poor evaluation from others could inhibit a student from engaging in the learning process. Kisfalvi and Oliver (2015) also suggest that a safe space is created when there are clear boundaries, mutual trust and respect, high quality listening, and a suspension of judgment and censorship. Certainly, with grade-conscious students, the first and last of these characteristics are particularly important.

When creating safe learning spaces, instructors need to provide clear boundaries. In discussions, these boundaries could include ground rules about how the discussion will proceed and/or types of comments about others' ideas that are expected (e.g., comment on the idea without belittling the speaker). For other types of communicative tasks, the boundaries may include specifying the context, audience, and purpose of the discourse so that the students are less at risk of being 'off-task' when making their decisions about the content, structure, and lexical items. In addition, instructors should provide students with opportunities to experiment without being judged or censored. In the university classroom, this typically means unmarked tasks and activities for which the risk of poor performance will not pull down one's grade for the course.

In Business and Technical Communication, our goal is to provide a safe learning space for our students. We do this in several ways. First of all, we establish project teams of 4-5 students during the first tutorial lesson. Our intention is that the students need time to build the trust necessary for them to feel safe with one another. Knowing that they will be working together for the whole 12-week semester should persuade them to invest the energy it takes to build trust. Secondly, we encourage our students to experiment with their communication skills in low-stakes, ungraded activities before they are assessed on marked assignments. For example, we introduce meeting skills in the beginning of the semester through a mini-lecture, and the students make ungraded presentations on the meeting culture of the fictitious subsidiary they "work for." Subsequently, they are expected to use what they have learned about meeting skills in out-of-class team meetings that they arrange for the purpose of completing the group-based assignments. Their meeting skills are formally assessed only at the end of the semester during their 360-degree appraisal meeting.

Thirdly, during the many unmarked communication tasks, the students have the opportunity to receive feedback from their peers and the instructor using the same criteria that will be applied during the marked assignments. As described previously, we have created marking rubrics using the two principles of being goal-oriented and receiver-centric and using the five competencies of being professional, clear, concise, evidence-driven, and persuasive. These criteria and the related descriptors are used when providing feedback to the students on the unmarked in-class activities in the same way as they will be applied during the marked assignments. By providing many opportunities for feedback using the same criteria, we not only model how to give appropriate, respectful feedback, but also provide the opportunity for students to become comfortable with the assessment criteria that will eventually be used during marking.

Finally, to create a safe space for experiential learning, we arrange the marked assignments from lower-weighted tasks at the start of the module to higher-weighted tasks at the end of the module. Again, our intention is to reduce the impact of grades at the start, when the students are still settling into the course, building trust with one another, and understanding the assessment criteria. The assignments that carry more marks for the final course grade come at the end, after the students are quite familiar (and hopefully feel safe with) the assessment criteria. While not perfect, IS2101 has many of the characteristics of a safe learning space.

## **IMPACT AND IMPLICATIONS**

Our experience of providing safe spaces for students in this module shows that these learners have become more reflective learners who tap on their personal experiences to grow. With the element of grades removed as a motivator in unmarked assignments, the students move away from strategic compliance to engagement, which promotes a deep approach to learning that, according to Biggs and Tang (2011) emphasizes meaningful understanding and a mastery of concepts. As a result, students' motivation comes from their appreciation of the relevance of what they are learning to the workplace. Schlechty (2011) describes the engaged student as committed, persistent, and motivated. Committed students voluntarily deploy their time, energy, and attention to learning without the promise of extrinsic rewards or threats of negative consequences. Persistent students stay committed to a task despite difficulties or poor results. Motivated students find meaning and value in the tasks themselves and have the drive to press on until better results emerge.

Comments taken from student reflections and feedback show the impact of our approach in three areas:

*Learning from experience* – Students indicated that by working with their team-mates they realized the importance of interpersonal skills. They also appreciated the safe learning space since it allowed students to practice without fear. This realization is indicated by the following comments:

*Working with my teammates every lesson ... has made me realise how important having interpersonal skills is. Whether it is during meetings, or group work, or group presentations, making it a point to know and understand, interact properly with your teammates is the key to making a group function well, and everything else will start to fall into place once a group is on the same page, while being friendly, cordial and helpful to one another.*

*This is an important skill especially when we enter the workforce in the extremely near future.*

*I enjoyed that the module provided us a means to practice real world communication skills in a controlled/safe environment. This enabled us to practice without fear of backlash.*

Less focus on grades – The biggest backlash that students fear is that their grades will suffer if they make mistakes. However, within a safe learning space, students were more willing to take risks. Of course, this is an undergraduate module that includes marked assignments. Grades are important. However, there is sufficient safe space given so that the students effectively engage in the process of learning from experience and appreciate the value of what they have learnt, not just the grades. Feedback to support this includes the following:

*Not gonna lie, I struggled a lot ... and I kinda failed to adapt quickly enough to the work given, and it kinda showed in my grades. I recognised my weaknesses for the module though ... and I enjoyed learning a lot from the experience itself. That wouldn't have been possible without me recognising that I lack certain core skills in order to actually work well in a technical environment, and I'd like to thank you and the module for exposing the weakness in me and giving me the opportunity to grow from it.*

Paying more attention to feedback – As engagement increased, students saw mistakes as opportunities for learning and not the cause of poor grades. As a result, receiving feedback, especially constructive criticism, became less threatening and was better appreciated. Reflecting on outcomes helped the students to understand and reshape their thinking as they applied what they had learned to new contexts and situations. This focus on feedback is important in experiential learning as reflection and experimentation lead to further reflection and more experimentation. Students' comments show this growing awareness:

*I received some useful feedback after my impromptu presentation, which I felt was effective in helping me improve. For the pitch presentation, I think I should try to speak more naturally, which will also help my audience better relate to me.*

*While giving and receiving feedback, I learned that it is important to be open to criticism. I will learn from my mistakes only if I acknowledge them. I gained important skills in giving feedback and receiving feedback. More importantly, I learned how to handle constructive criticism. These skills can be put to use in the future when I enter the workforce.*

To conclude, our application of experiential learning shows much promise as an exciting approach that bears fruit when students are fully engaged in the learning process. In this paper, we have argued that students will be more likely to engage in the full experiential learning cycle when instructors create a safe and conducive learning space. It is clear that these safe spaces

must be carefully put together and intentionally created by instructors committed to their students' learning process. When such spaces are present, students may be more likely to shift from focusing on grades to learning from their experience. It is through such authentic and meaningful experiences that students discover the relevance and find the joy of learning.

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# TRANSFORMING THE PEDAGOGICAL LANDSCAPE OF ENGLISH TEACHING IN JAPAN THROUGH PRACTICAL SUPPORT

Tony CRIPPS

## Abstract

This presentation explicates a nascent research project that aims to understand and support the practical needs of pre-service English teachers who intend to teach at junior high schools and senior high schools in Japan. The presenters will outline the necessity for such practical support considering the current teacher-training structure in Japan. Through intensive workshops and online support, pre-service English teachers will enhance their methodological knowledge and practical teaching skills. Support will be provided in three main ways by: 1) Holding a series of intensive practical teaching workshops focusing on teaching methodology and practice; 2) Creating an 'English Knowledge Lab' (EKL) website which will house useful audio and video files, as well as be a host of other teaching support materials such as lesson plans, grammar activities, communication activities, and ICT implementation activities; 3) Producing practical teaching handbooks based on the teaching workshops. This research project aims to provide realistic solutions to practical problems which English teachers in Japan face every day. It is hoped that fellow educators will find this presentation useful when considering making changes to their own educational contexts.

**Keywords:** English teaching, in-service, Japan, support

## INTRODUCTION

The pedagogical landscape is constantly shifting and this creates possibilities for innovation in teaching. In the realm of English teaching in Japan “change” is often the subject of academic debate, yet meaningful and dramatic shifts rarely occur. At the 6<sup>th</sup> CELC Symposium I outlined a nascent research project upon which my colleagues and I have embarked. The aim of the research project is to transform the landscape of English teaching in Japan by providing meaningful support to pre-service English teachers. Below I will provide some background to this project before discussing the need for change and outlining how a pedagogical framework which supports pre-service English teachers is being created.

## BACKGROUND

I have been teaching English in Japan since 1990. During this time radical change to the English language education system in Japan has often been mooted, but what change has occurred has tended to be minimal. Often reforms are implemented by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) without any firm guidelines on how to implement them. To further compound the problem, schools and teachers must try and implement the new guidelines with almost no support from MEXT.

Nanzan University is a private Catholic university in Nagoya, Japan. I teach in the Department of British and American Studies known as *Eibei* in Japanese. *Eibei* is known for the high English level of its graduates and many of the students go on to teach English at junior and senior high schools. The courses I teach focus on teaching methodology and practice. In addition, my seminar aims to provide students with the practical skills they will need after they graduate. My students' graduation theses cover a wide range of topics – below are some examples of recent theses:

- The challenging teaching situation of English teachers in Japan
- Effective English education: What can English teachers do for students to help improve their English skills?
- Online teaching in Japan
- Introducing an English immersion program into Japan
- English language education in Japanese elementary schools: A comparison with other Asian countries
- A comparison of education in Japan and Finland

### **PAST RESEARCH AIMED AT SUPPORTING IN-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS**

In 2015, I received a research grant from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). The aim of the research project was to provide support for in-service English teachers at Japanese junior and senior high schools. The motivation for applying for the grant was my frustration at seeing many of my students struggle when they first start teaching. Having taught at junior and senior high schools in Japan, I am well aware of the difficulties that my students face and this provided the impetus for the grant application. The four-year grant aimed to support in-service English teachers through teacher-training workshops and the creation of a dedicated website. In total, five workshops were held with the first four workshops focusing on topics that were chosen by in-service teachers: “Motivation,” “Intercultural Communication,” “Teaching English in English,” and “Creativity in Education.” Guest speakers from universities in Japan and overseas were invited to give the workshops (see Cripps, Miles, & O’Connell, 2017; 2018).

As the research project progressed, I started to invite pre-service English teachers (i.e., students from *Eibei* who planned to be English teachers) to the workshops. From my experience teaching these students in my seminar and in other classes at Nanzan University, it was clear that they were anxious about their ability to meet the demands of teaching once they graduated. For this

reason, I decided to devote the final workshop to addressing the needs of pre-service English teachers. I invited Dr Saori Doi from the University of Hawaii to give a workshop on “Transitioning from a Learner to a Teacher” (see Cripps & Doi, 2020 for a detailed explanation). The workshop was a great success and inspired me to apply for a research grant for a project which would focus solely on pre-service English teachers’ needs to help prepare them for the challenges that they would face.

### **CHALLENGES IN-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS FACE**

Novice English teachers in Japan face three main challenges once they become English teachers: (1) Changes to the curriculum by MEXT, (2) Inadequate pre-service training, and (3) A poor (almost non-existent) support structure. Every ten years MEXT changes its Course of Study Guidelines. Despite the reforms implemented by MEXT, inadequate teacher training has created a worrying gap between educational policy and teaching practice (Kikuchi & Browne, 2009). No indication is given by MEXT regarding how to implement the guidelines and often teachers are left to their own devices as to how to follow the guidelines.

Pre-service teacher training in Japan takes place as part of a teaching license course. Courses are run by universities, and undergraduates take specific classes for the teaching license course whilst also taking their regular classes. Teaching license courses tend to almost exclusively focus on the theoretical side of teaching, in addition to focusing on legal rules and history. The only practical training that students receive takes place in their final year of studies. Students who want to obtain a license to teach at a junior high school undergo three weeks onsite training, and those who want to acquire a high school license receive onsite training for two weeks. More often than not student teachers “shadow” an in-service teacher at the school where they previously attended as a junior or senior high school student. Usually, the student teachers are given only piecemeal guidance when it comes to teaching, and typically they are only allowed to teach three or four classes throughout their onsite training. Once students pass the teaching license course and graduate from university, they then begin their life as an in-service teacher. For their first year of teaching, they are assigned a mentor who will watch over them, but the reality is that they receive little or no help. This “sink or swim” policy has led to a massive increase in the attrition rate of teachers. Many education experts agree that the dearth of qualified English teachers in Japan is problematic and that the provision of teacher-training programs can go some way to help solve this problem (Fukushima, 2018; Steele & Zhang, 2016; Tahira, 2012).

## **SUPPORTING PRE-SERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS**

Since joining Nanzan University in 2012, I have been working towards trying to help prepare my students for the reality of classroom teaching after they graduate. I often run mini workshops which focus on practical skills such as classroom dynamics, how to foster learner autonomy, and how to teach the four skills. In 2021, I received a five-year grant to help support pre-service teachers of English (JSPS research grant Kaken 'B' No. 21H00551). This research project aims to research and support the practical needs of pre-service English teachers who intend to teach at junior high schools and senior high schools in Japan (Cripps, 2021). Through intensive workshops and online support, pre-service English teachers will enhance their methodological knowledge and practical teaching skills. Support will be provided in three main ways by:

1. Holding a series of intensive practical teaching workshops focusing on teaching methodology and practice;
2. Creating an “English Knowledge Lab” (EKL) website which will house useful audio and video files, as well as a host of other teaching support material such as lesson plans, grammar activities, communication activities and ICT implementation activities;
3. Producing practical teaching handbooks based on the teaching workshops.

The plan is to hold mini-teaching workshops at least twice a year. These workshops will be targeted at pre-service English teachers, but in-service English teachers will also be welcomed. The first workshop was held in June 2022 (see below). Work has already begun on the creation of the English Knowledge Lab. A dedicated server has been set up and the research team has started designing the EKL website. The first of many practical teaching handbooks is slated for publication in December 2023. The themes of the handbooks are likely to mirror those of the mini-teaching workshops.

### **WORKSHOP NO. 1 AND FUTURE WORKSHOPS**

The first mini-teaching workshop was held at Nanzan University on Saturday, June 15, 2022. Twelve pre-service teachers from my seminar attended. Two guest speakers were invited to give separate sessions. The first session was given by Professor Sean H Toland from the International University of Kagoshima. The theme of his session was “Cultivating English Language Learners’ Creativity.”

The second session was given by Professor Hiroki Uchida, Dean of Akita International University's Graduate School of Global Communication and Language. The title of Professor Uchida's session was "Why Can't They Write?" and focused on innovative ways to teach writing to high school students to help improve their writing and their spoken communication skills.

The feedback from the students about the first mini-teaching workshop is currently being analyzed in detail to help inform the design of future workshops. However, initial analysis indicates that the students found the workshop extremely useful and that they would like to attend further workshops. A presentation based on the research project is slated to be given at the 9<sup>th</sup> CLS International Conference in December 2022 and a paper is also being written on the first workshop (Cripps, Imai, Toland & Uchida, forthcoming).

## SUMMARY

The English language teaching landscape is forever changing and therefore educators need to adapt to circumstances and provide practical pedagogical solutions to existing problems in order to help fellow teachers and their students. The feedback that I received at the 6<sup>th</sup> CELC Symposium when outlining our research project was very supportive and encouraging. I hope that the workshops, the English Knowledge Lab, and the practical teaching handbooks, will go some way to helping support both pre- and in-service teachers of English in Japan.

A second workshop is currently being planned for November 2022 and two more workshops will be held each year until 2026. It is likely that some of the workshops will also be given online to allow educators outside of Japan to share their expertise. Our aim is to involve as many experts as possible in the research project. If you are interested in giving a session for one of the workshops, feel free to contact me.

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# DISCIPLINE BASED MINI LECTURES FOR ENGLISH ENHANCEMENT (MILEE)

Marc LEBANE

## Abstract

The project designed and developed twenty-six mini-lectures for two core curriculum courses at Lingnan University: The Process of Science and The Making of Hong Kong. In addition, a suite of online learning packages encapsulating the media content in an interoperable package that allows “plug-and-play” with any LMS platform were created. These provided students with an overview and a list of learning outcomes, followed by the learning content and then comprehension exercises to reinforce their learning. This allowed students to use the packages independently to learn and review materials. The project highlights the importance of incorporating a student perspective in curriculum design bringing a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning, which will enhance student comprehension and engagement both inside and outside of the classroom.

**Keywords:** Blended learning, mini-lectures, student-as-partners, curriculum design.

## INTRODUCTION

Aside from requisite English and Chinese language course, all students at Hong Kong’s Lingnan University are required to successfully complete four common core courses entitled Critical Thinking: Analysis and Argumentation; The Making of Hong Kong; The Process of Science; and China in World History. The university’s required English courses expose students to the various forms of English that they need to be well versed in while studying at university. However, students tend to fall short when it comes to specifically focusing on faculty/departmental language needs. Therefore, an urgent need arose to find a way to address students’ English language requirements in their respective majors. It is here that the project team focused its efforts developing a range of mini lectures for The Making of Hong Kong and The Process of Science, two of these courses.

As Lingnan University is a Liberal Arts Institution, most of its students have not had any formal secondary school science instruction. Thus, the course concepts and terminology contained in and used throughout the lectures and tutorials in The Process of Science tend to be entirely new and difficult for most students to understand. Furthermore, the Making of Hong Kong blends concepts from three social science disciplines (Political Science, Economics, and Sociology), which requires a diverse academic background. Consequently, the project mainly aimed to help facilitate teaching and enhance student learning through the development of mini lectures introducing key terminology and concepts at the beginning of each unit.

## PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND RATIONALE

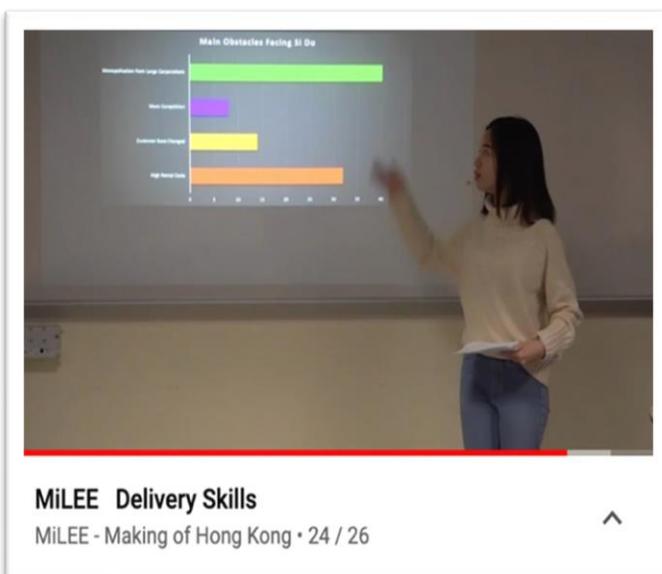
The mini lectures were designed collaboratively by discipline instructors, language professionals, and a large student helper team. First, a process of reviewing all the course and assessment materials, as well as auditing classes for a semester to gauge teaching effectiveness and student comprehension took place. Subsequently, the project team reviewed their respective findings and together designed and developed a range of mini lectures, which were mostly 3-6 mins in length to address them. Short videos, captured below in Figures 1 and 2, were produced and made available as part of the mini lectures (26 for The Making of Hong Kong and 11 for The Process of Science). In addition to creating the scripts, and performing in most mini lectures, students also assisted in the creation of comprehension exercises for each video.

Figure 1. Mini lecture: *The Process of Science*



MiLEE The Process of Science Correlation vs Causal  
MiLEE The Process of Science • 8 / 11

Figure 2. Mini lecture: *The Making of Hong Kong*



MiLEE Delivery Skills  
MiLEE - Making of Hong Kong • 24 / 26

These online learning packages were then embedded on Moodle or other Learning Management System to ensure students could study independently (see Figures 3 and 4 below).

Figure 3. *Process of Science EdX Lesson*

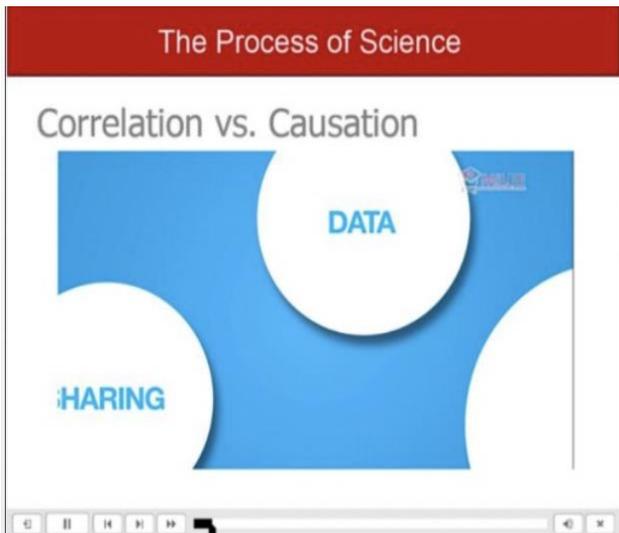
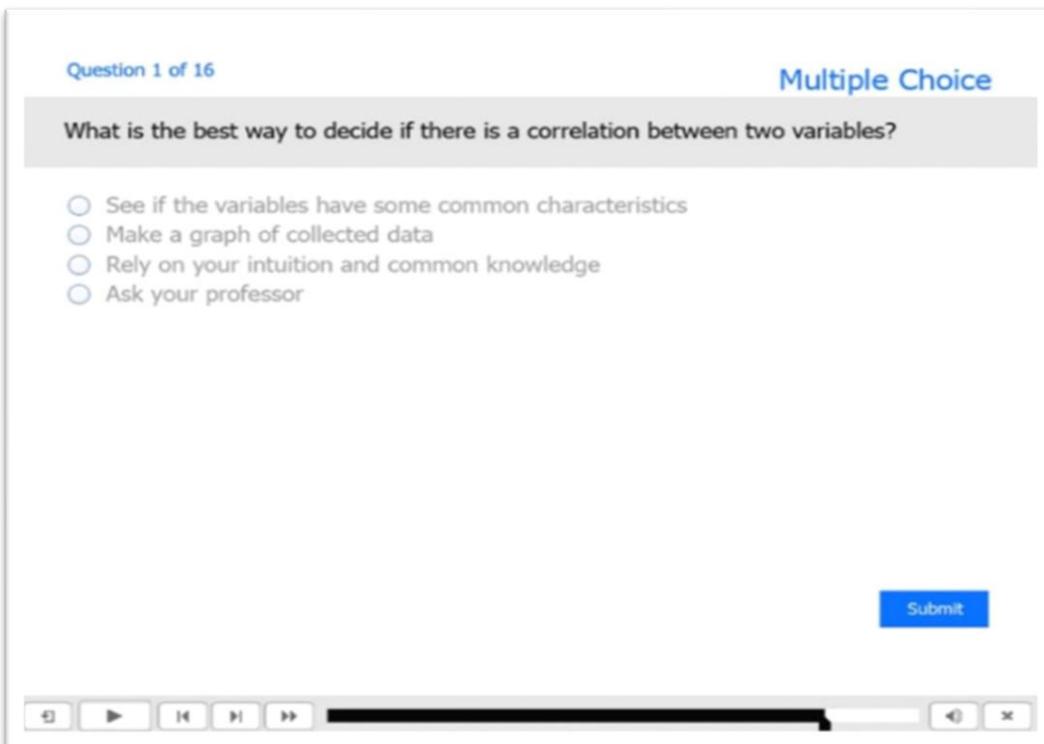
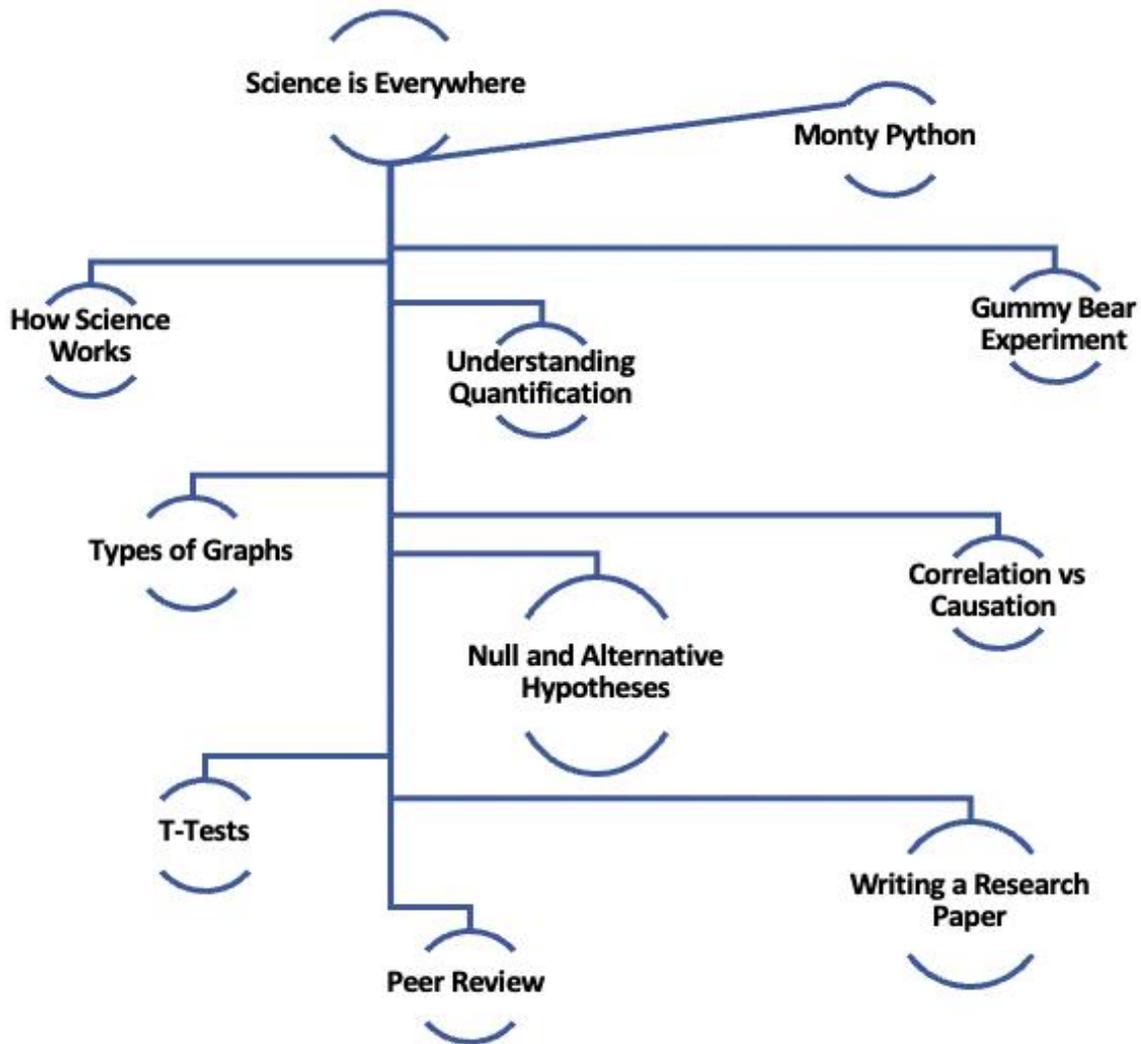


Figure 4. *Comprehension exercise on EdX*



The series of mini lectures for The Process of Science is reflected in Figure 5 below (for a more detailed overview, see the appendix section).

Figure 5. Flow of mini lectures for *The Process of Science*

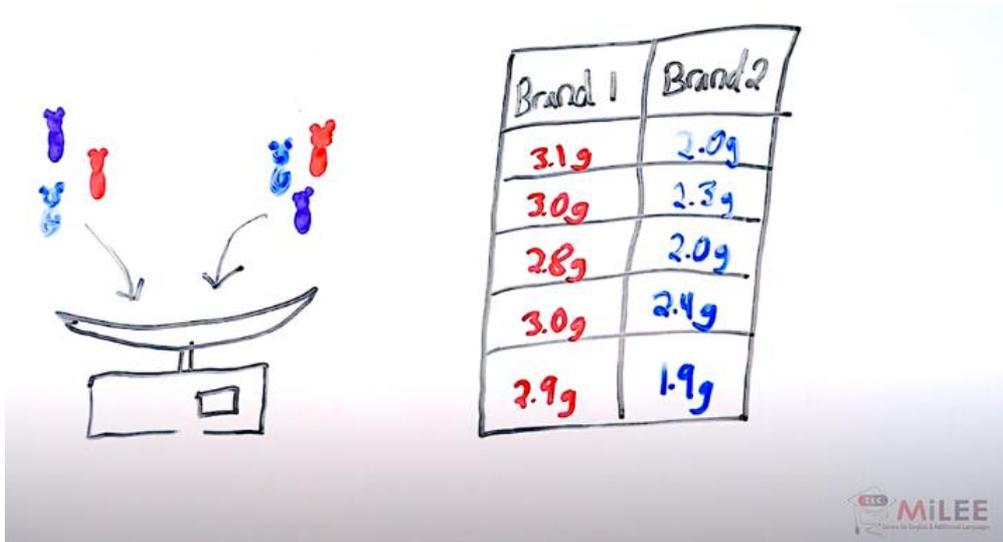


A closer look at a specific example from *The Process of Science* follows. Chapter two in the course textbook deals with the importance of quantification. The course lecture leads right into discussing approaches to analysing quantifiable and categorical data. In order to prepare students for this unit, a mini lecture was created ‘Understanding Quantification.’ The mini lecture starts with two students talking about which brand of gummy bear is better, Select or Haribo? The lesson then introduces students to how they can answer this question by making observations about various characteristics: either qualitatively, describing a non-countable quality, such as colour and brand, or quantitatively, related to size, weight, and cost.

The mini lecture then guides students to analyse which categories, or in this case variables, to choose to determine which gummy bear is best. In this case, brand and weight are chosen. First, each brand of gummy bear is weighed in grams and the data recorded in a table (see Figure 6 below). Then the two chosen categories, brand, and weight, are presented as two different types of data: the categorical variable distinguishes the brands, while the quantitative variable, with

numbers that can be counted and measured, is weight. So, for example, if we add up all the weights for each brand of gummy bear and divide it by five, we can find the average weight, or in scientific terms, the mean. Since brand 1 (2.96g) weighs more than brand 2 (2.12g), we could state that brand 1 is better because it gives us more gummy bears in weight.

Figure 6. Understanding Quantification: Gummy Bear Data



As already noted, most students attending these courses have little or no knowledge foundation about this content initially. The mini lectures help them to prepare for the forthcoming lectures. Thus, students' cognitive load is reduced. In addition, as the lectures are short, students' attention span is maintained (Ingram et al., 2017). Unlike out of class learning through solely flipping content, mini lectures provide students with a more effective source of content to actively engage and contribute better during classes (Howell, 2021). Berlin and Weavera (2021) studied the effect various online modalities had on student learning. They found that the majority of their students maintained a high degree of engagement by using mini lectures, particularly if they included comprehension quizzes. Mini lectures should be designed and developed in a systematic way and serve a definitive purpose, and not just for the sake of freeing up class time (Hulls & Rennik, 2017). In 2016, Caviglia-Harris studied the impact of her mini lectures on student performance versus traditional flipping in her Economics course. For those students who used mini lectures, their scores were 4-14% higher.

## PROJECT IMPACT

Three strategies were used to evaluate the success of the project:

- Two large scale online questionnaires with students
- In-depth interviews with students and course teachers

- External reviews by QS' Reimagine Education 2019 reviewers (<https://www.reimagine-education.com/>)

The questionnaires consisted of 20 questions evaluating the overall usefulness of the projects towards students' learning needs. Students were asked on a rating scale of 0 to 10 whether the mini lectures helped them to understand key information. A total of 159 students completed the online questionnaires. The vast majority of students on both courses reported positively with approximately 75% choosing 7 or higher and the rest no lower than 6.

Complementing the online questionnaires, the results of student interviews were also very positive. The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or via Zoom and were recorded. The results showed that the deliverables of the project had a significantly positive impact on their studies. Ina from the Process of Science said:

“When I’m doing my homework I can just go to the video and get the idea quickly and easily... it can also help us summarize the ideas in a very short video and then we can have a quick revision on the idea and theory.” Louis from The Making of Hong Kong echoed this sentiment when he said that the “mini-course is important. Class is distracting, you can lay in your bed and watch.”

Regarding the language component of the videos, it was also agreed that this was useful. The respondents liked the idea of the key vocabulary, as well as the ideas, being introduced before the lecture as they often contained lexis that they had not encountered before or, perhaps, because of lack of use, had forgotten and needed to refresh. Nicole from The Making of Hong Kong and Hazel from The Process of Science both agreed that it “helps vocab, some that I haven’t seen or understand.”

These students also felt that the topics were useful and delivered in a very concise and interesting manner. Hazel felt that they were “not exhaustive, like it was in the lecture,” while Ina thought that they had “some dramatic scenes that we cannot see in the lecture, but we can explore in the video.” Nicole also felt that the videos could “stimulate” her whereas the lectures often make her “feel sleepy.

The feedback received from the course instructors was also very positive. Professor Mark McGinley, the Director of the Core Curriculum and General Education Office and the HEAD of the Science Unit commented on The Process of Science shared:

“I found the videos produced in this project to be quite useful. As we move towards a more blended learning environment, I think that we can incorporate these videos to help (1) introduce students to key vocabulary terms, (2) provide them with a diverse exposure to important topics, and (3) capture their interest and draw attention to course topics.”

External reviewers’ comments from Reimagine Education 2019 were also very favourable:

“The innovative approach uses short videos to bridge language in a contextualized experience... The groundwork that has been is promising. A great deal of thought and planning went into the design and implementation...”

“The pedagogical theory underlying their approach appears to be sound” and “this project is an interesting attempt to improve educational resource provision, and to ensure that all course learners are adequately prepared for the academic challenges ahead.”

“As universities continue to recruit higher numbers of international students, and as universities across the world report varying levels of preparedness across a range of key competencies, it is undeniable that the project authors have identified a genuine need.”

Our project also had limitations. With *The Making of Hong Kong*, there were numerous course instructors and not all of them chose to use each mini lecture. In order to fully analyse the effectiveness of the mini lectures developed, the entire teaching team would need to utilise them in the same manner. In addition, the project team used two different platforms to deliver materials for *The Process of Science*: Moodle and EdX. Although instructors and students were familiar with Moodle, more time was needed for them to learn how to navigate the EdX platform.

## **PROJECT EVALUATION**

It is evident that since COVID 19, more and more educators have been delivering content online. Although the mini lecture format has shown to be effective, it is not a replacement for formal lectures as it only equips students with a foundation so that they may contribute to the classroom more effectively. Time is a key factor in developing mini lectures. Educators need to take the time to understand their materials from the student’s perspective. To accomplish this, educators should work together with students as partners.

Multimodal approaches to teaching and learning have become firmly implanted in academia today. However, we deliver materials, whether blended, inverted or completely online, enhancing students’ learning experience should be at the forefront of the materials design process. Educators willing to take the time and effort could create their own mini lectures using insights from the MiLEE design process.

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## **Unit 1 Science is Everywhere Unit 1.1**

This video introduces the basic steps of the scientific method and reveals how it can be used in everyday situations—even if you are not a scientist!

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### **Monty Python Unit 1.2**

The process of science can be found anywhere, even in a movie clip . Although it is humorous and fictional, try to recognize the five steps: identify the question, collect background information, formulate a hypothesis, plan the experiment, and conduct the experiment.

### **Gummy Bear Experiment Unit 1.3**

Experimentation is a key step in the scientific method, but what makes a valid experiment? This video demonstrates how to properly set up an experiment and discusses some essential features: a hypothesis that can be tested, independent and dependent variables, experimental and control groups, and the different types of data that can be collected.

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### **How Science Works Unit 1.4**

While the steps may be straightforward, the scientific method is not usually linear. Take a look at how a group of scientists discovered a new species of spider and see how in real life the process can be quite complex. The process of science never truly ends.

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## **Unit 2 Understanding Quantification Unit 2.1**

Quantification is the process of organizing data so that it can be analyzed. Data can be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative data is great for creating categories but quantitative data is more flexible and useful. Scientists must consider the types of data that they will collect and their variables when designing an experiment.

### **Types of Graphs Unit 2.2**

Graphs are an effective way to visualize and analyze data. Different types of data require different types of graphs. This video reviews how to use and interpret a few common graph types.

### **Correlation vs Causation Unit 2.3**

When analyzing data, many people jump to conclusions about how their variables are related. However, just because there is a relationship between two variables does not mean that one causes the other. It is important to know the difference between causation and correlation, as well as recognize the different types of correlations.

### **Null and Alternative Hypotheses Unit 2.4**

Hypotheses are important, but how does one know if they are right or wrong? There are actually two parts to every hypothesis: the null hypothesis and the alternative hypothesis. When scientists test their hypothesis with an experiment, they are actually trying to either accept or reject each of these parts.

### **T-Tests Unit 2.5**

Scientists analyze their data using statistical tests. This video discusses two types of statistical tests: one-tailed and two-tailed t-tests. These tests allow scientists to make comparisons between groups resulting in a p-value, which helps them to either reject or accept their null hypothesis.

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## **Unit 3 Writing a Research Paper Unit 3.1**

After scientists complete their research, they must share it by writing a research paper. Every effective research paper contains several parts: abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results, and discussion. This video will explain what each of these parts are and how to write them.

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### **Peer Review Unit 3.2**

Peer review is an essential step in publishing scientific work. This step is the practice of collecting feedback from other scientists throughout the process of science. This ensures that only accurate scientific research gets published.

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## **PROJECT PARTICIPANTS**

### **Principal Project Supervisor**

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