



# SLLO Newsletter

Special Issue II

Apr 2020

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, lots of teachers have been forced to switch to online teaching. A pandemic drives huge demand for online techniques, but not all teachers are familiar with them. In this issue, we will continue to share some initiatives in which our teachers have applied different online techniques to overcome the challenges.





# A Learning Experience for Teachers and Students

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, teachers in Hong Kong have been faced with the biggest online teaching challenge since the beginning of 2020. Unlike other academic subjects, service-learning (SL) has to overcome an even more vigorous challenge. Part of the SL learning outcomes intend to enhance students' sense of social responsibility through helping them to understand and develop empathy. When teachers cannot interact with students in classes, and face-to-face service sessions are restricted, how do teachers successfully develop students' attitudes? How do you teach students empathy online?

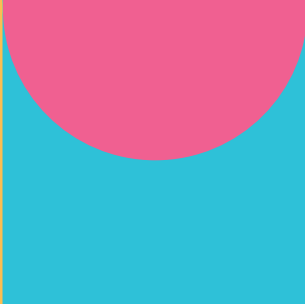
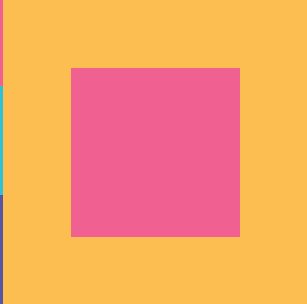
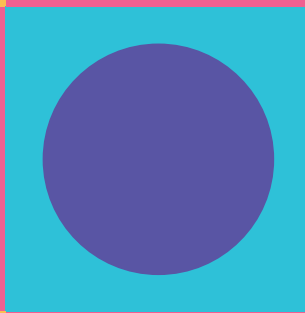
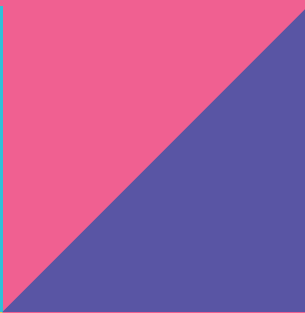
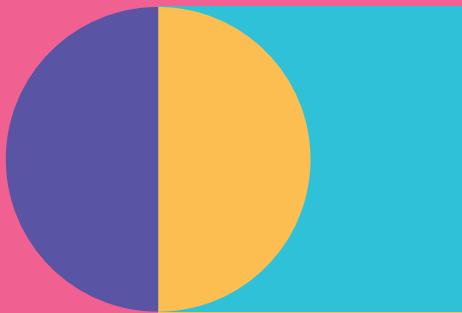
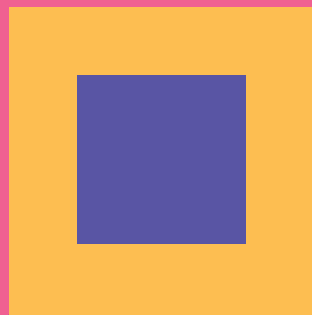
Ms Ellen Ku, Clinical Associate in the School of Nursing, is the subject teacher for SN2S03 *Healthy lifestyle for developing communities*. Ms Ku's classes use interactive lectures and workshops to cover topics in health promotion. In the process, students learn about the importance of basic health knowledge, and how this knowledge vitally impacts the health situation of developing communities. Ms Ku and her students will then go on site to developing communities in Vietnam and Myanmar, to carry out healthy lifestyle health promotion plans and with local villagers.

"My students and I are meeting on computer screens, it is very difficult for me to observe them," Ms Ku has her class every Monday evening. "It is very important for SL teachers to see students' reactions and understanding, because the knowledge is more than just cognitive learning. Students have to learn it with their heart; if they don't, they cannot empathize with their service recipients to give suitable judgement and service. In turn, the recipients would not benefit."



Through Blackboard, Ms Ku is giving her students extra readings, case studies and written reflection assignments. Technology and Blackboard provides another means for interaction: the wiki. She requires and encourages students to interact more with each other – via wiki and chat groups, by commenting on others’ proposals, presentations, asking and answering questions etc. “This may be another way to assess if students really understand what I talk about in e-class, and to make sure they give sufficient time and effort, truly trying to put themselves to understand the “world in the head of other people – their classmates”.

Like other international SL subjects, Ms Ku’s class is facing another challenge: the overseas service project may not be able to go ahead as the pandemic is happening across the globe; instead, Ms Ku and other teachers will need to adjust their service plans — maybe even move the project to Hong Kong. “In every way we can, we want to make sure students enjoy a meaningful learning experience. It is important for them to learn the link between the service project and the academic content of the subject. The essence of SL is provide an opportunity for learners to demonstrate empathy for people in need and develop sense of civic responsibility. It is aiming at preparing graduates from PolyU to learn and to apply, for the benefit of mankind.”



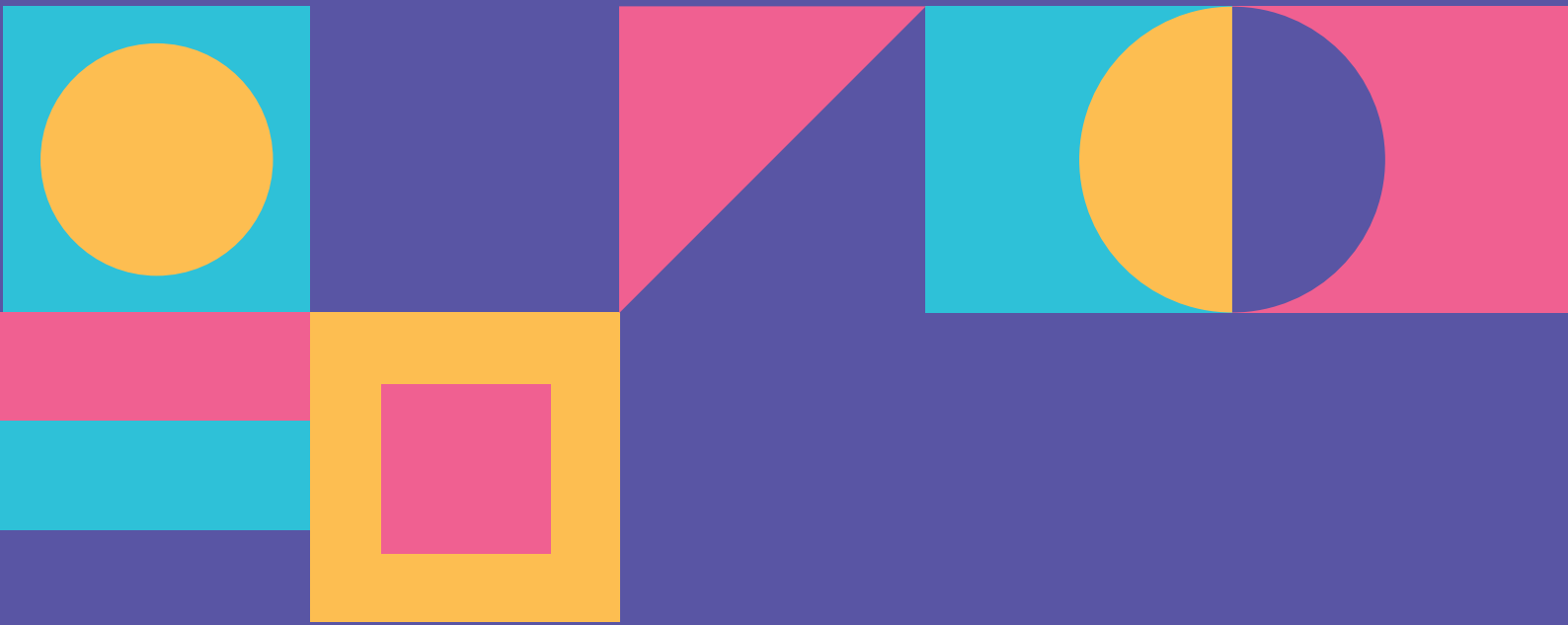
# Viruses never Block our Connections

The coronavirus outbreak is forcing social distancing on the population. Since early February, all subjects have been conducted online, and the term “virtual class” has been flooded over student groups. All of us not only have to be mentally adaptive, but we also need to overcome continual technical issues to ensure that we deliver an effective and enjoyable teaching and learning to our students.

COMP3S02, *Socially Responsible Global Leadership in a Digital World*, is one SL subject that was the first to combine traditional classroom and virtual classroom setting. This subject is linked with a Leadership Studies subject at the University of Maryland, HESI 318, *Global Leadership in a Virtual Context*. Five lectures were shared between the two classes in the form of “virtual classes”, which are carried out using video-conferencing and flipped classroom techniques. Students were given class materials in the form of lectures, videos and online discussion fora, which they were expected to complete before class. During the class, students would be divided into small groups, with each group involving students from both universities, and asked to complete interactive activities. Some examples were: discussing a case study and creating a shared document; debating on a controversial topic; creating a music wall, etc.

For us, our roles changed from teacher to facilitator. To motivate our students and increase their participation, we used a collection of tools to imitate a real learning environment as much as we can. For instance, the breakout room function in ZOOM allows students to have group discussion while teaching team can “visit” each room, making them feel like we are with them. Also, various online platforms were leveraged. Collaborative drawing tools, real-time polling website and post-it e-notes allow students to creatively interact, exchange ideas, and express opinions





Even though this course has been running for three years, and we had quite a bit of experience in using virtual classrooms, this year brought a new challenge in we would have no face-to-face contact with our students at all. Therefore, small group reflections were held after each class session to help students to consolidate what they learned and share their difficulties. For the past few months, many efforts were put to narrow the distance between each other and build a close rapport, as we believe bonding and trust come first and leads to a better learning atmosphere for the students.

We acknowledge that online teaching cannot completely replace face-to-face teaching, but we try the best that we can. It has been rewarding to see our students bloom and come out of their shells – and as one student pointed out, going completely online has forced them to rely on themselves – they cannot look to their classmates for “help” when being called on in class. This bonding will help to carry the class forward as the epidemic becomes a pandemic, and even our partner, the University of Maryland, now has to go completely online as well, and all students start working remotely.

*Grace Ngai, Stephen Chan, Peter Ng, Kenneth Lo, Anson Wong*





# “Online” is not only for Learning but also for Service

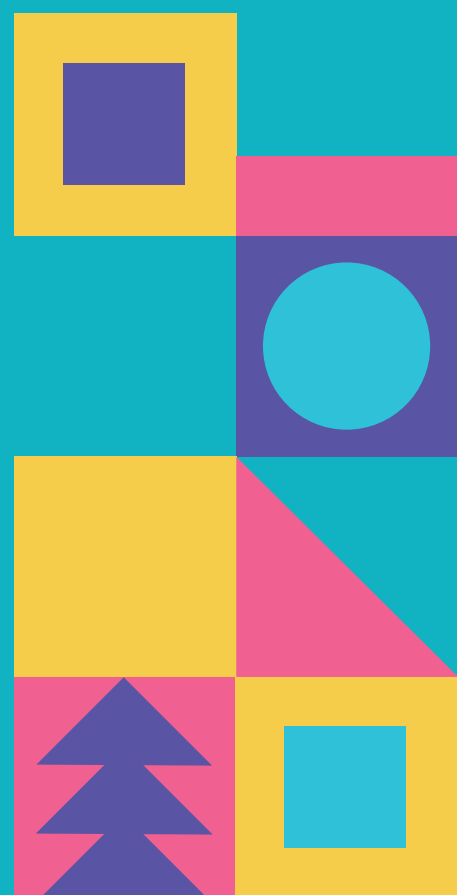
It is estimated that about 10% of primary schoolchildren in Hong Kong have reading difficulties. The virus outbreak makes it a challenge for school teachers and social workers to follow up their cases closely. CBS3S01 *Service-Learning through Helping Primary Students with Special Reading Difficulties* is an SL subject that brings our students to serve these children. Dr Janet Ng, the subject teacher, has switched their face-to-face services to online.

Since 2014-15, CBS3S01 students have been helping primary schoolchildren master reading strategies in Chinese using the ‘Accelerating Reading Ability’ (ARA) face-to-face educational programme. ARA was developed by the Speech Therapy Unit at the Department of Chinese and Bilingual Studies (CBS) using psycholinguistic theories of dyslexia. Under the supervision of speech therapists, CBS3S01 students deliver the intervention program to primary children on a weekly basis over a 3-month period.

“With the outbreak of COVID-19 in early February 2020, we found ourselves obliged to explore using telepractice in order to preserve the learning opportunities of both our students and service recipients.” Dr Ng said. Every Saturday morning, our students run concurrent Zoom/ Skype telepractice sessions for 17 primary children and their parents. Our students work in groups to deliver Chinese reading strategies training using a combination of training slides and online games. Tutors, who are speech therapists, supervise the students using Zoom/ Skype and then use WhatsApp to give immediate feedback to students.



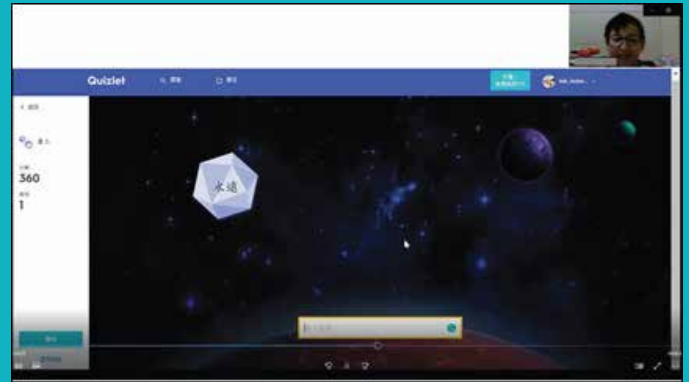
*A student utilizes reinforcement during training according to the child's interest.*



Dr Ng said, "We are thrilled to see that primary children take on the training well. Progress on Chinese reading skills has been observed after a few sessions, which appears to be comparable to face-to-face delivery. One drawback of telepractice is that we could not conduct group games to consolidate skills; yet students spend more time on online revision with primary children and their parents as an alternative solution."

The virus outbreak happened very suddenly and it was actually not easy to adapt so quickly. "One of the biggest challenges is that we have to turn conventional training materials (such as Chinese character cards and picture cards) into slides within a very short period of time. We appreciate the additional support by our Department that allowed us to engage Student Assistants to assist with the process. We are also grateful to a few Master of Speech Therapy students and graduates who volunteer to help out." Dr Ng said.

Though telepractice of speech therapy has been well documented in literature, it has not thus far been popular in Hong Kong. Together with students and the teaching team, we march boldly into the unknown. Students have never failed to surprise us with their dedication and their innovative game ideas. Telepractice has another advantage --- it has also allowed us to bring ARA to the doorstep of service recipients in Macau.



*A child learns reading strategies through customized online games.*



*Mother and child together take part in a training session from Macau.*



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