



## **"Looking ahead – Educating Language Teachers in an Era of Uncertainty" June 2, 2021 (Wednesday)**

**ARLE - Association for Research in L1 Education  
SIG Teacher Education's virtual webinar  
Chairs: Yael Poyas and Elizabeth Ka Yee Loh**

Opening Keynote Speech

### **Teaching and learning in the middle of Corona-times: A L1 perspective**

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This keynote reports from two interrelated research projects. One is the so-called 'L1 covid 19-study' which is established as an international research collaboration within ARLE's SIG TALE (read more [here](#)). The other is a Danish project established in a collaboration between University of Southern Denmark and University of Copenhagen initiated March 2020. In this project, we collected diaries, materials and artefacts from teaching and learning sites as well as doing interviews with teachers involved in what was called the 'Corona-pedagogical new setting'.

The overarching research question pursued in both projects is: What does it mean, in an ethnographic sense, that the teacher and the school is going online and how is a school created at home at the kitchen table?

The point of departure in both projects is the claim that the pandemic has led to a historically unique situation where the interplay between what happens at school and at home is socially a turning point. It is without historical precedence that the whole society and online education transforms school to the virtual learning context, and home to the actual and physical learning context, which has been the case on a global scale. For ethnographic research there is both challenges, research drive and scientific perspective in the very issue and the different phases with lockdowns, openings, new lockdowns etc.

Theoretically, the projects share a sociocultural and sociomaterial understanding of teaching approaching teaching as practice architectures constituted by the 'doings, sayings and relatings' of involved actors (Tummons 2018, Kemmis et al., 2014). This framing allows us to explore how L1 teaching is constructed as a technocultural subject (Elf, Koutsogiannis & Bulfin, 2020) during the pandemic. It is hypothesized that major contextual 'global' changes, such as a pandemic and the lockdown leading to home schooling, lead to

discontinuities as well as continuities between ‘old’ and ‘new’ ways of teaching, teaching genres and ideologies embedded in, and shaped by, local contexts and practices.

Considering the evident role of technology during lockdown the technocultural production of teaching and learning is investigated across different subject areas. Methodologically, we argue that while the lockdown has affected not only practice, but also research, the fundamentals of ethnographic research in a digitalized world (Borgnakke, 2019) informing the present studies are intact. The projects employ the basic ethnographic toolkit of collecting a variety of data relevant for the ‘logic of inquiry’ (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012). For analysis, we draw on a meta-ethnographic analytic approach (Noblit, 2019). The analytical strategy is to establish a ‘storyline’ of an issue in focus – in this case educational implications of the lockdown. This presentation focuses on the L1/Language arts subject, drawing on data from interviews with six Danish L1 teachers conducted in June and August 2020 and follow-up interviews with one teacher in 2021. Specifically, I will illuminate how Danish L1 teachers are responding to the challenges of teaching during the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, I will discuss what might be learned for L1 teaching and teacher education in the future.

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## A Pilot Model in Distance-Teaching of Written Expression: Drawing Lessons and Development of Teaching Mechanisms

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Although Distance-Teaching is not a new term in the field of education, the Corona Virus pandemic has created a lot of confusion among teachers and several questions have been raised regarding training and qualification of teachers. Questions were also raised concerning exposing them to new mechanisms and methods that can preserve the teaching process and help teachers, mainly 'mother-tongue' language teachers, who were given the major responsibility and challenge, especially that of mastery reading and writing in mother-tongue, the gate to success in other subjects. I would like to point out here that Arabic is the mother tongue of the Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian colloquial dialect is the spoken version that is used in daily life communication. Classical or standard Arabic is the language of teaching at Arab schools as Hebrew is at Jewish schools.

Probably, the complex basics on which the components of written expression are based make its teaching task one of the most difficult and challenging missions. The difficulty of this mission grows in a distance-teaching environment because the teacher must invest larger efforts to design teaching-units that are motivating, suitable, flexible, and efficient. In the light of the difficulties that teachers have faced in this field, it became necessary to prepare the teachers for teaching during a period of changes and crises, by constructing a pilot-model for teaching written-expression in a distance-teaching/learning environment. This model, which I developed in the frame of teacher-guidance during the Corona Virus pandemic period, is based on 6 gradual stages of teaching written-expression, which are:

- 1. The Preparatory Stage:** This stage includes preparation of lesson plans and different tools that put the student in the center of interest.
- 2. Exposure of the Students to the Literary Genre:** The teacher exposes the students actively to the literary genre that they will write about and get acquainted with its structure and characteristics.
- 3. The Reading Comprehension Stage:** The teacher and the students read a text that belongs to the literary genre that the students will write about in order to internalize and acquire its characteristics in a deeper way.
- 4. Promotion of the Linguistic Wealth (Linkages):** The teacher highlights the linguistic and literary aspects that help the student in writing.
- 5. The Writing Stage:** This is the applied stage in which the students write their assignments.

**6. The Self-evaluation Stage:** This is the stage in which the students evaluate their tasks and achievements.

These stages integrate technical and non-technical tools and give special attention to the employment of the audio-visual sense and strategies of higher-thinking, which will help the student to organize his/her thoughts and internalize the learned material in an aim that he/she will employ them and implement them later.

This research depends on a group of researches that confirm the difficulty in teaching 'written expression', and in the preparation of the teaching program by the Ministry of Education in Israel, who recommends variation and diversity of teaching methods, tools, and activities that provide the students with an atmosphere of freedom and encouragement, and turn the teaching process into a constant process of dialogue and meaningful discussions (Ministry of Education Curriculum, 2013).

My paper will give answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that teachers faced in conducting distance-teaching of written expression?
2. How does the Pilot-Model contribute to guiding the teachers and developing their methods, and to making the distance-teaching/learning environment motivating to expressing opinions, conducting research, discovering unknown areas, drawing conclusions and making evaluations?

### **In-service language teachers' training in using digital technologies during the pandemic: revealing the complexity**

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Language teacher education has long focused on the use of digital media. The rich relevant literature emphasizes the possibilities offered by new technologies, but little attention has been paid to the fact that teachers' training is a multidimensional educational practice. The aim of this presentation is to delineate language teachers' in-service training as an organic part of a complex reality.

Our analysis is based on data drawn from an ICT training program for secondary education L1 teachers in Greece (February-June 2020), which was designed as a 60-hour blended course, i.e. a combination of face-to-face sessions, synchronous distance sessions, asynchronous activities and "in-class application of ICT". Our team prepared training material and mentored 27 certified trainers; they in turn were responsible for 416 trainees in clusters. A large part of the program coincided with the Covid-19 induced lockdown

(March 11<sup>th</sup> - May 2<sup>nd</sup>). The training material had not, and could not have, anticipated the use of digital platforms for remote school teaching; however, the trainees were now viewing their utilization as a priority, since they were at a loss as to how to adapt “in-class” activities to distance learning. Our team held emergence sessions with the trainers and worked to adapt the program to the “new normal”.

We consider that period of disruption to be ideally suited for examining teacher training as part of a complex reality, by drawing from complexity theories (e.g. Larsen-Freeman 2016, Scollon & Scollon 2004). Our study, based on six two-hour long recorded sessions with the trainers and a questionnaire completed by the trainees, suggests that language teachers’ education in digital media can be understood as a nexus of a multilayered reality (Blommaert 2013), that is permeated, among others, by discourses in place about teaching L1, local configurations of distance learning (Koutsogiannis et al. 2020), official initiatives during the pandemic and trainers’ agency. This nexus analytic perspective reveals the importance of taking into account many different aspects and discourses in the designing of similar training programs in the future.

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**Nurturing Course Leaders in Uncertain Times: The Case of Co-teaching Mentoring for Early Childhood CSL Professional Development for Teachers**

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With the emergence of early childhood second language (L2) education as a response to the call for multiculturalism and social integration around the globe, there has been a fast-growing demand for in-service professional development for course leaders who design,

deliver, and oversee emergent literacy programs at school level. To cater for the diverse needs of very young learners from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in uncertain times (Heck & Ambrosetti, 2018) like the coronavirus pandemic, the nurturing of cultural competence and pedagogical awareness in online-offline L2 classrooms is playing an increasingly important role. In this study, the authors present a theoretically and empirically grounded co-teaching mentoring model of early childhood Chinese as a second language (CSL) professional development for serving teachers. Drawing upon previous research on teacher change (Guskey, 1986, 2002; Hall & Hord, 1987) and professional development (e.g., Elm & Nordqvist, 2019; Knight, 2007), the current study addresses three research questions: (1) What are the roles and responsibilities of educators in planning and delivering co-taught lessons? (2) What are the obstacles to effective co-teaching? (3) What are the factors leading to the success of co-teaching, particularly for the enhancement of teacher professionalism in the hybrid online-offline mode, between curriculum development officers (teacher trainers and mentors for serving teachers) and class teachers (mentees)? Through class observations, semi-structured interviews and document analysis with a focus on the Hong Kong context, the results of this study indicate that the model helps to instill theoretical knowledge and good practices of emergent L2 literacy and cultural awareness in serving teachers who need to switch between different classroom settings through a combination of collaborative learning and mentor-coaching.

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## What does the Students say about E-learning Literature?

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The study of literature focuses on texts that differ from those used in other disciplines, as they serve not only as a means to convey information; rather, the text itself is the information that the teacher aims to convey. The interpretation of the text involves appropriation, in the sense of understanding the text from within the reader's world and in a manner that the meaning attributed to the text becomes an inseparable part of the reader's self (Ricoeur, 1980). This aspect of literature studies involves interactions that occur in a face-to-face learning context (Lotan & Miller, 2016)—and in the existence of a spontaneous and positive interpretative dialogue toward the constructive approach of the material being studied (Poyas & Elkad-Lehman, 2016). The transition to online learning in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic has created processes of disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2015) that deserve our attention.

Ninety preservice teachers (PST) who study literature participated in the current qualitative study. The study's goal is to identify the components of an online literature lesson as perceived by the PSTs. The research methods included three tools: (1) documentation of telephone conversations held with the PST's at the beginning of the semester when the system was initially transitioning to online learning. (2) anonymous questionnaires which were distributed to the preservice teachers via email in midsemester; these open-ended questionnaires required the PSTs to describe a positive and negative case of online literature learning and to share an insight that they had garnered as a result of this experience, as well as the mode of learning they preferred (online versus face-to-face). (3) semi structured interviews that were conducted at the end of the semester over the ZOOM online platform. In the semistructured interviews, several questions were posed with the intent of understanding the PSTs' perspective of what they considered important elements of a literature lesson in general and of an online literature lesson in particular.

The results of the study show that the students considered spontaneous interpretative dialogue as a critical component of a successful online class. The central contribution of the present study is in broadening existing knowledge regarding the components of the online literature classroom, in addition to the practical applications offered for the online teaching of literature.

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## **Teaching Flexibility and Exchange of Roles of Teacher-Student: Lessons and Thoughts from the Reality of Distance-Teaching**

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We, at the Pedagogical Secretariat at the Israeli Ministry of Education, pursue pedagogical flexibility. Mother-tongue has become for us the main factor of future-oriented teaching. Distance-teaching was this year a two-faced coin, and despite the retreat and gaps that occurred in the process of the students' acquisition of mother-tongue, we have developed teaching mechanisms and important methods of mother-tongue acquisition, depending on the principle that says: "There is no student who is not able, but there is a disabling environment". We have turned this distance-teaching environment from a synchronous and hybrid environment into an enabling environment.

My paper will present the methods that we have adopted in teaching Arabic Language as L1 for Arab schools, like:

- Structurization of the language
- Adopting the "Personalization" in teaching language
- The Strategy of "Less is more"
- The "Pedagogy of learning from mistakes"
- "Success examinations"- Enhancing the student's self-confidence
- Repetition
- Transformation of the abstract into concrete
- Construction of meaning by mental maps, memory aids, examples.
- Strategy of asking questions.



- Activation of Higher Thinking Strategies
- Raising doubts and provocation
- Search and filtering
- And we adopt the strategy "Illusion of the implicit"

My presentation will describe the methods that we have adopted, and methods that we are preparing for teaching Arabic as mother-tongue, and will discuss the question: Will there be a return to the old methods after today?

### **Teaching and learning of Chinese language in kindergartens during COVID-19 pandemic in Hong Kong**

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An intervention program designed to help non-Chinese speaking (NCS) preschoolers to learn Chinese was temporarily halted by the current pandemic. Hong Kong kindergartens have only been able to provide classes in-person for two months during 2020. Kindergarten teachers are used to play-based teaching, and other teaching approaches that involve learning by doing. As such, they need active participation in a physical environment from students. They are not accustomed to using computers and technology in teaching. For preschoolers, using computers to learn from distance also pose challenges, as they are not familiar with technology and require assistance from adults. Some families also may not afford to buy computers. Despite this, assessments found that preschoolers of this study did not show too much regression in their Chinese language development compared to the control group. Listening and speaking ability continued to improve, whereas reading scores dropped. Interviews are conducted with kindergarten teachers and members of our support team to investigate on the methods and strategies they used to sustain the teaching and learning of Chinese for these NCS preschoolers during this period. These included the use of online resources coupled with home support and parent empowerment. The findings will be reported in this conference.

## Teaching the literary text - insights in light of the crisis

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The study of literature focuses on texts, but unlike other subjects, these texts are not simply means for gaining knowledge but rather themselves the knowledge that the teacher aims to impart. The interpretation of the text is connected to appropriation, in the sense of understanding the text through the world of the reader and the way in which the meaning of the texts become an indispensable part of his or her self-conception (Ricoeur, 1980). These aspects of the study of literature are wrapped up in the interaction that arises in the learning space—usually face-to-face (Lotan & Miller, 2016)—and in the existence of a spontaneous and positive interpretative dialogue toward the constructive approach of the material being studied (Poyas & Elkad-Lehman, 2016). The transition to online learning in the wake of the Coronavirus pandemic has created processes of disruptive innovation (Christensen et al., 2015) that deserve our attention.

Ninety education students, who focus on teaching literature, participated in the present qualitative study. The goal of the study is to identify which components the students see as necessary to allow for the best possible online literary classroom session. The research methods included conversations, questionnaires, and interviews. The results of the study show that the students considered spontaneous interpretative dialogue as a critical component of a successful online class. The central contribution of the present study is in broadening existing knowledge regarding the components of the online literature classroom, in addition to the practical applications offered for the online teaching of literature. It can also enrich the methods used by teachers which enables them to boost their teaching ability and therefore benefit their students.

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Closing Keynote Speech

**Mentoring 'in the Time of Cholera': Perspectives, Promises and Challenges in the Preparation of EFL Mentors for Diversity in the New Digital Teacher Learning Space**

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In this presentation I discuss the perspectives, challenges and promises of EFL mentoring in the new digital teacher learning space. Specifically, I focus on recent research agendas and policy trends aimed at redefining and 'reinventing' the preparation of mentors in diverse socio-cultural educational contexts across the globe. This is then contextualized by zooming in to the case of EFL mentoring in Israeli teacher education launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.