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# The digital reshaping of English instruction in the Philippines during the time of pandemic

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## RESEARCH PROBLEM

What are the characteristics of the figured world of online English instruction in the Humanities and Social Sciences?



## BACKGROUND

- Pre-COVID19 English curriculum - Fully f2f, optional use of LMS for supplementary activities
- COVID19 era and the emergency shift to fully digital format



# LITERATURE AND GAP

- **Online teaching of English in the COVID-19 context**
  - Students' experiences and perceptions (Lehman, 2021; Rinekso & Muslim, 2020; Srivastava, 2021), struggles (Abdullah, 2020), and satisfaction (Yan & Batako, 2020)
  - Teachers' training needs (Ng, 2020) and new teaching strategies (Ho & Tai, 2020; Wong, 2020)
  - Focus on (re)shaping social actors' ways and views
- **Research gap:** (Re)shaping of the English curriculum (content and delivery)



# FRAMEWORK

## FIGURED WORLDS (HOLLAND ET AL., 1998)

- Figured worlds are “socially produced and culturally constructed” (p.60)
- Characteristics:
  1. Historical phenomena to which participants are recruited or enter
  2. Social landscapes where participants’ position matter
  3. Space that is socially organized and institutionally reproduced, where participants are assigned roles in interactions and intersubjectivity
  4. Site where participants’ identities are distributed
- How the figured world of online English teaching in Humanities and Social Sciences is shaped by and shapes social actors

# METHOD

## Site

- University of Santo Tomas (UST), a top comprehensive university in Manila

## Data selection criteria

- Documents by academic officials and/or teachers between Mar 2020 to Apr 2021, affecting the design and delivery of English units in the Humanities and Social Sciences

## Discourse analysis

- Identify dominant themes across the data set, validated through member checking



# DATA SET

Document type	Code	Author	Number
Institutional memos	IM	Academic officials	41
Minutes of meetings	MM	Academic officials, Faculty	5
Continuity plans	CP	Faculty	4
Orientation meeting presentations	OMP	Faculty	19
Course outlines*	CO	Faculty	19
Summary of weekly engagements	SWE	Faculty	115
<b>Total</b>			<b>203</b>

\*Two pre-Covid course outlines were reviewed for comparison



# FINDINGS

Themes	IM	MM	CP	OMP	CO	SWE
Exercising flexibility	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Heightened surveillance	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Increased collaboration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Recognition of realities	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Greater student-centered orientation	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Tension between flexibility and surveillance	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Emphasis on shared religious identity	✓			✓	✓	





# THEME 1

## EXERCISING FLEXIBILITY

- ...these implementing guidelines are **subject to change**, depending on the situation. (IM01)
- **Don't be overly restrictive with policies**, keeping an open mind to possible exceptions especially in this time of pandemic... (IM20)
- **Prioritize** outcomes and content by identifying **the most essential learning competencies** (IM02)
- Identification of **essential competencies in English**
  - Purposive Communication: Focus on listening and speaking skills particularly on public speaking, managing conflicts, and formulating and performing multimodal tasks (CO18)
  - Academic Writing: Focus on the introduction and methods sections of the research paper (CO12)
- **Flexibility** shall be rendered in requiring submission of graded outputs... **in consideration of the status of students**. (IM28)
- Provide **extension** in accomplishing alternative learning activities. (CP01)



## THEME 2

### HEIGHTENED SURVEILLANCE

- ...consolidate **reports** as regards the following: (1) **alternative** teaching-learning engagements conducted by faculty and students; (2) survey of the **health status** of faculty members, students, and support staff; (3) students who were able and unable to **access or complete** alternative learning tasks, lessons, and activities. (IM01)
- Conduct a **pre-survey** of students...together with information on their **internet connectivity** and **available electronic equipment** (IM11)
- A systematic monitoring through **data analytics of faculty performance** in the delivery of online services must be implemented. (IM13)
- As our response to the request of our students, we [academic officials] would like to gently remind the faculty...be **more considerate** of students who have unstable internet connectivity, strictly **follow** the schedule of asynchronous and synchronous classes... (IM23, emphasis original)



# THEME 3

## INCREASED COLLABORATION

- Collaborative writing, peer critiquing, small-group discussion, role-playing



## Examples:

### (1) Purposive Communication- Collaborative Writing (SWE31)

<p><b>3-4 February 01- 06 and February 8- 13, 2021</b></p>	<p>Week 2: Communication and globalization Varieties of English Philippine English Local and global communication in multicultural settings</p> <p>Weeks 3 &amp; 4: Communication for academic purposes (listening and speaking)</p> <p>Public speaking (introduction, types, strategies, presentation skills, argumentation, and persuasion)</p> <p>Presentation skills</p>	<p><b>February 01 (Mon.)</b> cybersavvy.ppt. Social Media.ppt. Online Debate: Is technology a boon or a bane? Why?</p> <p><b>*Meme-making and Presentation (asynchronous)</b></p> <p>Capsule Vocabulary- globalization, glocalization, culture, diversity, nuances</p> <p>Communication and Globalization.ppt Local and Global Communication.ppt. ILO3/AT3: Reaction Paper Mechanics ILO 1/AT1: Group Presentation on Cultural Awareness Mechanics</p> <p>Research Task for AT #1 : Writeshop 6 Groups on Cultural Nuances (Asia, Australia, European Union, Middle East. U.S.A.. Canada)</p>	<p><b>February 03 (Wed.)</b> Research Task for AT#1 on Group Presentation on Cultural Awareness</p> <p>Discussion Forum #2: Introspection 1. How does globalization affect language and culture? 2. Why do we need to be aware of cultural differences and be culturally appropriate?</p> <p><b>Consultation Session for ILO 1/AT1: Group Presentation on Cultural Awareness</b> via Zoom or Google Meet</p>
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## (2) Thesis 1 – Pair Critiquing (SWE36)

<p><b>3-4</b> <b>Feb 1-6</b></p> <p><b>Feb 8-13</b> <b>(Feb 12 F</b> <b>Chinese</b> <b>New</b> <b>Year)</b></p>	<p><b>Weeks 3 &amp; 4:</b> Selecting an Appropriate Theoretical and Methodological Framework</p> <p>APA Documentation Style 1.In-text citations 2.Referencing</p>	<p>•Worksheets •Pair Critiquing •Journal Reading •Paraphrasing and Summarizing</p> <p><b>Consultation Schedule for ILO1: Advocacy Plan</b></p>
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### (3) Language and Law- Role Playing (SWE41)

<b>Week 7: March 1-6, 2021</b>							
<u>Section/Course Code/Schedule</u>	<u>Mon</u>	<u>Tue</u>	<u>Wed</u>	<u>Thu</u>	<u>Fri</u>	<u>Sat</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
3 ELS1 Eng 32519 Language and Law 8:30-10:00		Role Playing on Cognitive Interviewing (Part 1)		- Reflection Paper on Cognitive Interviewing			
3 ELS2 Eng 32519 Language and Law 10:00-11:30		-Role Playing on Cognitive Interviewing (Part 1)		- Reflection Paper on Cognitive Interviewing			



Considering that online instruction may reduce the interaction among students and may not allow them to practice their social skills at best, **working in pairs** and **in groups** still somehow gives individual learners the opportunity to speak and enhance their relationships with their classmates, thereby creating a **social learning environment**. As they pull their heads together to come up with bright ideas, this teaching strategy gives them **a sense of fulfillment** when they are able to achieve their goals.



# THEME 4

## RECOGNITION OF REALITIES

- ...considering that there might be further psychological, physiological, and technical challenges everyone has to contend with, it is deemed best that: only **reasonable** and **minimal asynchronous** engagements be held from... (IM21, emphasis original)
- In redesigning instruction, we acknowledge the **unique context of online learning**, the challenges of technology use, the physical and social factors that affect the learning environment, and the influence and distraction brought about by social media. (IM35)
- Most of them [students] would complain that **they don't have enough [money] for food**. Therefore, [they] would rather spend what they have for food instead of going to an internet café or buy data. **Some live in places with no internet connection**. And some other more personal reasons. (CP01)





# THEME 5

## TENSION BETWEEN FLEXIBILITY AND SURVEILLANCE

Faculty members are reminded to ***STRICTLY*** follow the schedule of synchronous and asynchronous classes... (IM18, emphasis original)

VS

Allow faculty members to modify the scheduled sessions (e.g., from synchronous to asynchronous) if this is in consideration of possible power interruptions and internet connectivity issues (IM28)

Student attendance shall be checked only for purposes of monitoring their status. (IM30)

VS

Class attendance (synchronous meetings) is mandatory. Good academic standing requires the presence of students at all synchronous classes and workshop meetings (CO07)



# THEME 6

## GREATER STUDENT-CENTERED ORIENTATION

- We reiterate our commitment to deliver the **best service** we can [give] to our **main stakeholders**, our students, and we need to help each other for this to be successful, **for the benefit of our learners.** (IM02)
- ...for students who do not have internet access, we urge you [teachers] to **go the extra mile** and contact them through phone so you can give them guidance on... (IM02)
- Apart from attendance monitoring, it is important for teachers to **probe the reasons why the student is unable** to participate in class so the faculty can make informed decisions on appropriate interventions. (IM16)
- ...understand the **students' situation.** (CP01)



# THEME 7

## EMPHASIS ON SHARED RELIGIOUS IDENTITY

- ...we **collectively** realize our goals as **one Thomasian community** and ensure that we remain consistent with our **identity as a Catholic university** ... Always be mindful **how our words and our actions affect our image** as a person, as a member of the academic community, and the image of the University we belong to. ...We can refer back to the teachings of the Church on **good behavior, ethics, and morals** as we discern what we intend to post or share. ...We take this opportunity to remind everyone that we are **Thomasians wherever we may be, whether in-person or virtual**. (IM40)



# CONCLUSION

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FIGURED WORLD OF ONLINE ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

- Simultaneous discourses of flexibility and of surveillance → site of ambiguity, tension, teachers' agency
- Pair work/group work essential as a teaching strategy to continuously create a social learning environment. While there are disadvantages such as unequal participation and difficulty in monitoring, collaborative work can still be beneficial in many ways including assessment which may be done individually, as a group, and as a class.
- Surveillance as a shared role of all social agents; teachers experiencing double surveillance
- Heightened recognition of students as primary client, 'go the extra mile' discourse, added role of teachers
- Catholic identity as device for regulation and impression management



# IMPLICATIONS

- English teachers' evolving identity with expanded responsibilities beyond curricular scope and double monitoring by academic officials and by students
- Collaboration (teaching and learning strategies) as central to increasing teacher-learner interaction in virtual mode; challenges linked to 'freeloaders'
- Need for more research to understand how the curriculum is evolving



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**Thank you very much for listening!**