ONLINE EDUCATION: TEACHING IN A TIME OF CHANGE

- **Paper / Proposal Title:** Seeking to Reduce Physical Distancing in Teacher-Student Interactions

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- **Abstract (300 words):**

The paper reports on strategies used by university educators to develop and maintain a positive rapport with students during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis conducting emergency remote teaching (ERT). Due to the transition from face-to-face classroom interaction to online teaching and learning, and the subsequent physical distancing, opportunities to develop close relations with students were reduced. One strategy to deal with this problem was to change the way written feedback to students was provided by using more dialogic communication based on Walker’s (2004) DISCOUNT coding system. Other strategies included organizing virtual consultations via Zoom, surveys on online learning or interviews with students to listen to the needs of students.

From these mechanisms, we learn that student concerns regarding total online learning include self-regulation, feelings of isolation, and the lack of a conducive environment for learning. Things that students appreciated for an effective online learning environment include clear instructions, timely teaching materials, lessons recordings for them to revisit concepts, opportunities for consultation and trials run for online assessment. Therefore, connecting with students through innovative methods and finding ways for them to connect to discuss lessons can promote engagement and reduce the feeling of being isolated during online learning. Additionally, familiarity of online networked learning may be deemed essential to cultivate better rapport with students.
Consequently, timely training for educators on digital literacy, the pros and cons of online mediated open learning, and designing online blended learning to facilitate optimum learning environment is crucial. In an online environment, though technology renders quick solutions for developing interactions and social networks, more research needs to be done to evaluate if these platforms are effective from the learner’s perspective.

- **Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Mark Brooke is Senior Lecturer at the Centre for English Language Communication, National University of Singapore. He currently designs and teaches undergraduate academic writing courses combining Sociology of Sport and English for Academic Purposes. In sport sociology, he has authored a book with Common Ground Research Networks, Champaign, Illinois, entitled Case Studies in Sport Socialisation; he has also published in journals such as Sport in Society; Communication & Sport; and the Asia-Pacific Journal of Health, Sport and Physical Education. He has also co-authored a book on academic literacy development entitled a Practical Guide to Project-Based Learning with World Scientific Publishing, Singapore. In the academic literacy field, he predominantly investigates practical classroom applications of Systemic Functional Linguistics and Legitimation Code Theory (LCT). He has published multiple studies on these themes in journals such as Reflective Practice; Teaching in Higher Education; The European Journal of Applied Linguistics and TEFL and the Asian Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning.

Misty So-Sum Wai-COOK is Senior Lecturer at the Centre for English Language Communication and Fellow at the College of Alice & Peter Tan, National University of Singapore, Singapore. Among the many embedded courses she has developed and taught, Misty is currently teaching a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) module using Psychology. Misty has won multiple university teaching excellence awards. She has also conducted multiple research projects and published papers on academic literacies, tutor and peer feedback in language education, English across the curriculum, and the use of technologies to enhance teaching and learning. She is on the Editorial Board for a number of peer-review journals such as Language and Language Teaching Journals, Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Education, and Asia Pacific Journal of Education.

Sheena Ramazanu is Research Fellow at Alice Lee Centre of Nursing Studies, National University of Singapore. Her research interests could be put together using the acronym LIFE: (1) Long term care for persons with chronic conditions, (2) International community based partnership research, (3) Family and dyadic care, and (4) Educational research. Sheena has published in international refereed journals. She is currently a peer-reviewer of an international refereed journal (Journal of Neuroscience Nursing). She served as a Registered nurse for 7 years in Singapore. During her service in the hospital, she embarked on the role as a preceptor and guided student nurses and registered nurses in their professional development.

Dr May Lim is an Associate Professor at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT). May oversees Centre for Learning Environment and Assessment Development (CoLEAD) that
looks after the faculty development programmes in learning and teaching at the university level. She won the university Teaching Excellence Award in 2016, 2018 and 2020. She actively looks for coachable moments to coach students for holistic development. In 2020, she led the team in developing a programme that equips university educators with coaching skills for students with academic issues or struggles in workplace learning. May has published books and research articles in international peer reviewed journals both in higher education and occupational therapy. She is interested in occupational transition, higher education research, developmental disabilities, self-efficacy and resilience. She has received two teaching grants from Ministry of Education, first to investigate the effect of experiential learning to improve students’ communication and empathy through learning from people with disability and second on the effect of a gamified platform to improve learning traits for at-risk freshmen. May is an experienced occupational therapist by profession, she has been working with children with developmental delay and disorders in Singapore and Australia.

Radhika Jaidev is the Director of the Centre for Communication Skills (CCS) at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT). She manages the centre and teaches academic and technical writing as well as presentation skills to undergraduate students. She also drives the university’s Communicating Across the Curriculum (CAC) effort which is a university-wide push to embed discipline and assignment-specific writing and presentation instruction, consultation and assessment. In keeping with this effort, she also drives the Writing-in-the-Disciplines (WID) workshop series for SIT faculty. Her research interests include writing transfer to the workplace, content and language-integrated learning through embedding. She’s part of an international team of writing researchers who are investigating Writing Transfer in Work-Integrated Learning or WIL. The study is part of the requirements of a Writing Beyond the University writing research seminar she was chosen to attend by Elon University’s Centre for Engaged Learning and Teaching located in North Carolina.