

Title: E-learning in the English Language KLA: From a Home Button to an E-portfolio

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Introduction

Nowadays, information technology has developed by leaps and bounds. It has affected every aspect of our human life. Education is no exception. By harnessing the technology, teachers can better engage students in learning and prepare them to take part in the larger global society.

Teachers in *Salesian Yip Hon Millennium Primary School* are well aware of the values of technology in education and have made E-learning part of the School's development plan. Yet the teachers also realize that technology alone cannot enhance teaching and learning effectiveness. Technology has to combine with good teaching and valuable learning content to maximize its benefits. This article depicts the principles the English language teachers have set and the learning and teaching strategies and technologies they have deployed in the process of integrating e-learning in their curriculum.

1. Principles of designing the school-based e-learning curriculum

English teachers in the School started to incorporate e-learning in their classrooms in 2017-18. By the end of the school year 2018-19, they have come up with an initial vertical curriculum plan covering students from P.3 to P.6. The design of the school-based curriculum has evolved from four school-based e-learning curriculum development principles.

First, **information technology should help students to deepen and broaden students' learning of English language.** One reason explaining why digital technology can enthrall students is: there are plenty of fun elements. Students can be carried away easily by the interesting and exciting games and colorful pictures without actual learning. While incorporating technology into the curriculum, the teachers make sure that the digital tools can facilitate students to apply the English language they have learned for the purpose of consolidating and deepening their learning. This principle echoes the heuristic questions raised by Chun, Kern, and Smith (2016, P.70) which guide language teachers in determining how best to incorporate information and communication technology into their teaching practice.

Q1. What learning goals do I have for my students?

Q2. What language, culture, and instructional resources do I have available?

Q3. How can these resources be used and combined most effectively to serve the established learning goals?

Q4. How will I assess how effective students' use of these resources is in their attainment of the established learning goals?

In the process of designing the learning and teaching e-learning initiatives, the English teachers have constantly revisited the guiding questions and strategically matched the English language learning objectives with each of the technological tools used. Teachers have made sure that there are English language learning scaffolds, be it vocabulary, sentences or grammar, before students could meaningfully apply their learning into the wide range of reading, listening, speaking or writing tasks weaved into digital technology.

Second, **information technology should bridge classroom learning with the real world.** Digital technology is used to help people in every aspect of their life. Accessing vast amount of real time data and facilitating efficient communication between people are two of the benefits digital technology promises. The technology used in the English language classroom should simulate what people actually do in their socially situated environment. This relevancy of student learning to authentic life experience is fundamental to learning engagement. As highlighted by Parsons & Taylor (2011, P.12), *'Today's learners ask that their learning apply to real-life scenarios whenever possible as opposed to being theoretical and text-based. Working with authentic problems or community issues engages students and builds a sense of purpose to the learning experience'*.

While developing the school-based curriculum, teachers have purposefully chosen tools that people use in their everyday life. For example, **Google Map**, a tool that most people used nowadays to locate places, is used in the topic of 'Finding your way'. To simulate real-world tasks, students have used the app to find scenic places in Hong Kong. **Piccolage**, an app that people often use to send short holiday greetings, has been used for students to send real messages to their family members. The teachers have deliberately selected technological tools that help to close the divide between classrooms and everyday life.

Third, **the attitude of using information literacy should be part of the e-learning curriculum.** Information literacy refers to the essential abilities and attitudes that lead to effective and ethical use of information (Curriculum Development Council, 2017, P.8). While most people have invested time and efforts on the effective use of the hardware and software, teachers in the *Salesian Yip Hon Millennium Primary School* have been of the view that the attitude is essential to students' lifelong process of learning and application of technology. As such, starting from P.3, students in the School have been infused with the ideas that digital technology should be used in meaningful and ethical ways. In P4 and P.5, students have been constantly reminded of the appropriate etiquette on line. All the actions they do and the words they use on the Internet will leave digital footprint for other people to track. Along the way in the curriculum, P.6 students have to read about the importance of the appropriate use of technology and the consequences of malpractices. Teachers believe that the school-based curriculum should facilitate students' discussion and reflection on the behaviors they do online and guide them to think critically and evaluate the data or information on the Internet world.

Fourth, **the technological devices should be affordable.** Like many government subsidized schools, *Salesian Yip Hon Millennium Primary School* cannot afford to offer every student a tablet, not to mention installing and purchasing expensive apps. In this academic year of 2018-19, there are only 80 iPads in the School. The School is on tight budget in acquiring hardware and software. As a result

of this, the School can only choose free apps in the planning and implementation of school-based curriculum.

2. Implementing the curriculum

2.1 Primary 3 Curriculum: Enhancing information literacy and use of the Piccollage app to write ‘e-cards’

To enhance the information literacy of the P.3 students, the English teachers started with the technical front. P.3 students had to learn the basics of different parts of the tablet, such as ‘the home button’, ‘the speaker’ and ‘the volume keys’. The English teachers also found that the use of a video recording to introduce the different buttons and functions of an iPad very efficient and helpful. While students were thrilled to see the English teacher on the home-made video, the English teachers could help them locate and use the iPads. Apart from the learning the basic keys, teachers agreed that students had to learn how a keyboard is arranged. Teachers considered this an essential step to effective use of technology as experience has told them that without the awareness that the keys are not arranged in order of alphabet, students would spend tremendous of time looking for the right keys. That actually slows down the teaching and learning. Additionally, students needed practice on using the keyboard for creating multi-modal texts.

On the attitude front, P.3 students learned some ground rules for using the technology in classrooms in English. They should be aware that using iPads at home should be different from using iPads in their school. Teachers agreed that the rules below are more important than others. They are:

- I know a lot of interesting games app. I cannot play them with my classmates in English lessons.
- I use the sites or apps approved by my teachers.
- I use the iPad for learning not for playing at school.

Teachers reported that with the incorporation of understanding the basic buttons and functions and the discussion on rules on using the technology, the P3 students showed better attitude, readiness and behavior when using the latest technology.

In the P.3 school-based English language curriculum, there is a module on ‘Caring and Sharing’. Students learn names of various gifts they could share with their loved ones and read a story about a lovely family who give each other presents. Based on these resources, teachers then deepened students learning further: Students have to use of the Piccollage app to design and write an e-card to their family members. The Piccollage app allowed students to express their feelings through text of different fonts, real pictures and highly lovely and colorful stickers. Prior to using the app, students learned the use of ‘Past tense’ which has been the main focus of P.3 curriculum. Past tense has been useful for students to talk about activities they did with family members who they felt really grateful for. Additionally, teachers extended the learning to incorporate a wider range of ‘thankfulness’ sentences which have not been included in the textbook. Also, teachers provided students with basic card writing format which includes a three-part structure of the recipient, the content and the sender. With all the language support and the right mindset, the students were seen totally hooked by their writing tasks. In the classrooms, teachers were impressed by the engagement of students, the

efficiency that students could produce e-cards and the high standard of the final e-cards.

2.2 P.4 Curriculum: Use Google Map and Draw and Tell app to support students' learning of giving directions using real world maps

In P.4 English language curriculum, there is a module on 'Giving directions'. Students learn the language of giving directions such as 'Walk along', 'Go out of ...', 'Turn right/left into..... street'. The design of the textbook with fake maps, made-up buildings and places has not been very successful in engaging students in the learning. Teachers then made use of the real maps from Google Map to link up classroom learning with the real world. With the help of Google Map, students could easily complete the tasks of going to different scenic spots in Hong Kong including Space Museum, Cultural Centre, Ladies Market and Goldfish Market. More interestingly, students had to design a conversation between two animal characters in Draw and Tell app to create a multi-modal dialogue about routes going to different places.

In the lessons, students showed tremendous interest in creating the multi-modal dialogue. They were willing to make the recording of the English dialogue again and again. Some teachers regarded the students' behavior in the classroom as self-directed learning.

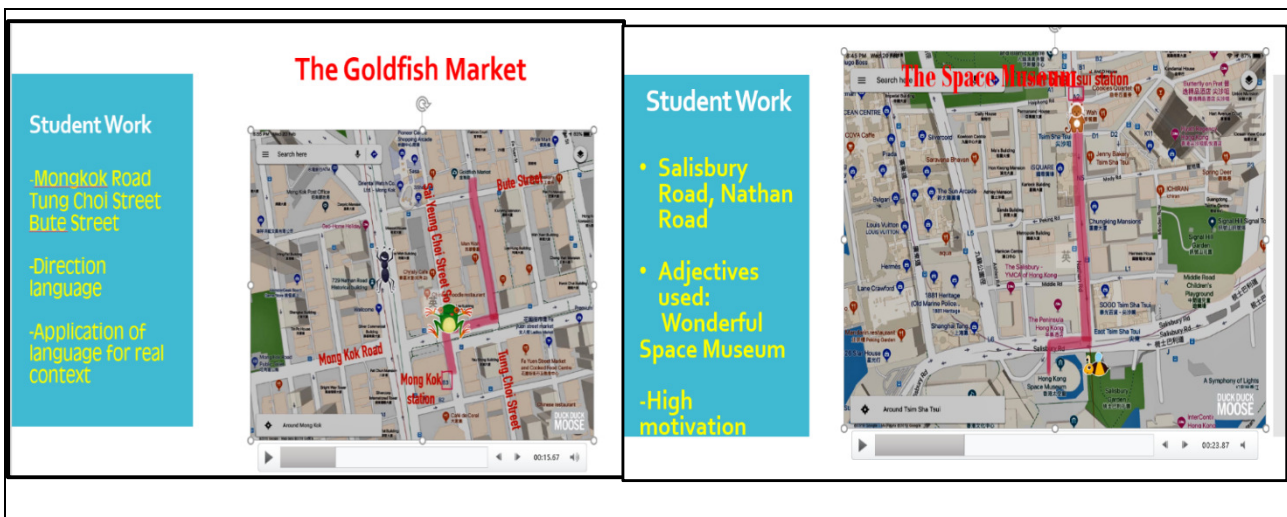


Figure 1: Samples of students work

2.3 P.5 Curriculum: Use the Padlet app to let students talk about their good deeds

'Good behaviour' is part of the P.5 curriculum. The original curriculum objectives have been to teach students some good behaviours in different social contexts and some adverbs such as patiently, loudly, quietly and politely. Teachers agreed that students should not just read about good behaviours. They should be the ones to do some good behaviours, observe the good deeds their classmates do and show appreciation. This idea actually goes well with the school mission. Teachers finally decided on using Padlet which is an online living wall for students to share and gather ideas. After observing their classmates' good deeds in school, such as helping teachers to clean blackboard, greeting a classmate with a smiling face and helping classmates with homework patiently, students wrote their appreciation down on the virtual wall using videos, texts or audio recordings. The Padlet walls provided opportunities for students to nurture positive values among themselves: They respect others and care

for others.

P.5 Topic

- P.5 (First Term)
- Chapter: Be nice to others

Language

- Use of adverbs e.g. happily, gently, politely
- Use of 'because' and 'as'
- Thankful expressions

Values education

- Showing appreciation of others' good deeds

Advantages

- Easy to use
- Students can see who is writing what instantly
- Students can make videos, record sounds, writing ideas and paste documents on the walls
- Students can see their writing over a long period of time

Padlet Posts:

- Friendly Hilley** (Barney 湛穎聰 9d): I think you are friendly as you say "Hello" to me happily in the morning. (2 likes)
- Kind KoeY** (Wen 溫嘉麗 9d): I think you are kind because you share your pens or rulers with me generously. (2 likes)
- diligent Albert** (李穎心 10d): I think you did a good job as you do your homework neatly. (5 likes)

Figure 2 Linking *Padlet* to a P.5 module and some student writing on Padlet

2.4 P.6 curriculum: Enhancing the information literacy and using Spark Video app to make an e-portfolio

P.6 students had the opportunities to read about and discuss practical issues related to the ethical use of technology. Using the e-reading platform, teachers read with students non-fictional books highlighting the importance of the appropriate use of the digital technology. In *Salesian Yip Hon Millennium Primary School*, teachers selected the book 'Cyberbullying' for students. Students learned the definition of cyberbully, the feeling that people have after being cyberbullied and skills to deal with cyberbullying. Teachers also found that a thorough discussion with students sizing up the pros and cons of different strategies to handle cyberbullying has been highly useful to clarify their misconceptions and thus prevent them from conducting inappropriate actions such as taking revenge.

P.6 is also a stressful time for secondary school interviews. Teachers in the School have organized interview classes for students, taught students ways to summarize their achievements in schools and brushing up students' speaking skills, hoping that their students are in their best shape for their important moment. Teachers in the School translated this tedious task into a highly meaningful and interesting task with the use of digital technology. With Spark Video, students created an e-portfolio. In their e-portfolio, students used English to talk about their personalities, their education in the school, their strengths and the books they read. Students also used the app to show pictures of the certificates they got, the medals they were awarded, videos of their favourite activities and pictures of their best friends. The e-portfolio helped the P.6 students to encapsulate their 6 years' experience in school. One

student reviewed, 'I never get tired of doing this again and again'.

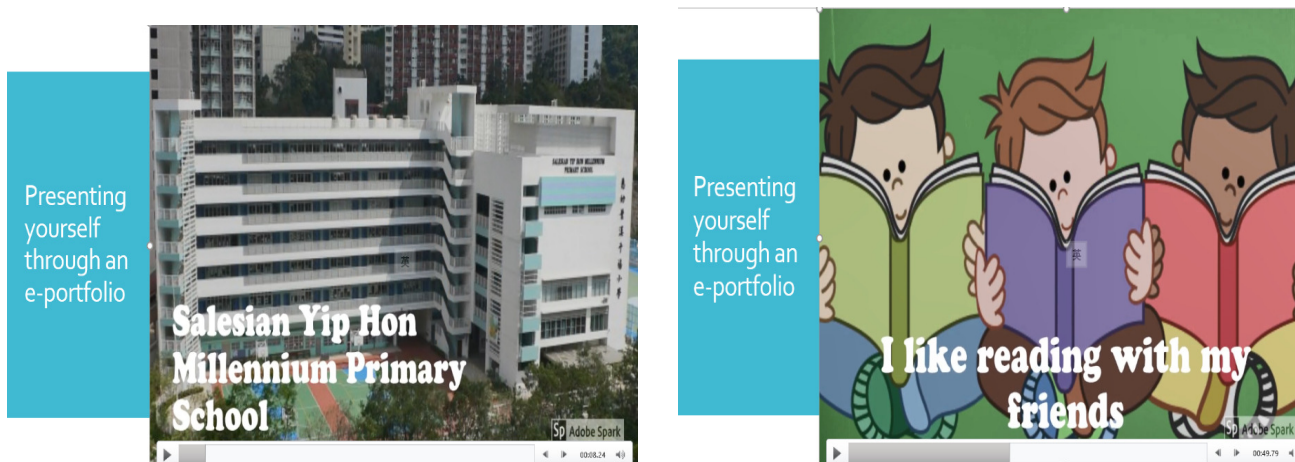


Figure 3: E-portfolios produced by students

Below is a table summarizing the e-learning tasks at each level from P.3 to P.6

Level	E-learning Task
P.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding the English terms and functions of different keys in the iPad. ● As part of the information literacy, students have to learn the different purposes of using digital devices at home and at school. ● Use of the Piccollage app to create an ecard with thankful phrases, write a short event using past tense and send the card to parents.
P.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use Google map and Draw and Tell apps to support students' learning of giving and listening to directions using real world maps. ● Students can apply the language they have learned to produce a short video with cartoon characters to talk about how to go to some scenic spots in Hong Kong.
P.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use the Padlet app to let students talk about the good deeds their classmates have done in school. ● Values education is involved in this e-learning task as students try their best to appreciate the good deeds other classmates do for a period of time in their school.

P.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of the Spark Video app to make a portfolio for students to sum up the achievements they have made in the past 6 years of their study in the school. ● Read the e-book “Bullying” to raise students’ awareness the wrong behaviour of bullying and learn ways to deal with bullying on the Internet world. This is part of the information literacy initiative.
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The e-learning experience in *Salesian Yip Hon Millennium Primary School* has been a highly rewarding one for both students and teachers. The process benefits students in terms of learning motivation, engagement and effectiveness of learning. The teachers have built their professional capacity which has enhanced their readiness to embrace the fast changing pace of digital classrooms.

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