

APPLICATION OF ONLINE TEACHING TOOLS AND AIDS DURING CORONA PANDEMICS 2020

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Abstract: The corona pandemics forced the schools worldwide to move to distance forms of education. On an example of a particular school, namely a private language school seated in Nitra region (SK), the authors describe technical conditions of the transformation from offline education to online education and deal with feasibility of different kinds of exercises, used in foreign language teaching, in online education. The feasibility study is complemented by methodological comments derived from the experiences which the teachers of the school obtained while teaching under the pandemic conditions.

Keywords: distance education, online teaching, online teaching tools, online exercises, primary and secondary schools, foreign language teaching, coronavirus pandemics, teacher experiences

1 Introduction

Spring 2020 saw many of our lives change like never before. Coronavirus pandemics was not the end of the world, but rather the end of the way we understood our existence in the current setup of the world, the way we live, work and study and how all this affects our surroundings.

In the aftermath of the declaration of the state of emergency (in the Slovak Republic, March 16, 2020) teachers faced the inability to conduct face-to-face teaching, i.e. faced the inability to conduct teaching in the way they had been used to. In this situation modern teaching tools proved to be just the right ones to support teachers and enable them to manage the situation which had arisen. The stated is documented hereinafter through an analysis and discussion of the way in which the modern teaching tools were used in a private language school, seated in Nitra region, to ensure continuous provision of teaching to its students. A focus is given also to exercises that have proven to be efficient in the context of the new way of teaching.

2 Conditions for remote teaching

Language labs, computer rooms, multimedia labs and interactive whiteboards had long been known by foreign language teachers in Slovakia before remote teaching would have ever taken place. In fact, schools in densely populated areas with fierce competition on the market for 1st graders had already started their race to be more high-tech than their competitors a couple of years ago, which is one of the attracting factors for young teachers to take up teaching, on the long run. However, the teachers were not allowed in their schools and without the equipment ready to be used and considered vital for the online teaching of class-size groups it proved impossible for them teach many subjects not just in an interactive but in any way possible. There had long been discussions about the vanity of social networking sites, the negative effects of online communication tools to the detriment of physical contact and there were hard-core supporters of the uniqueness and inevitability of face-to-face communication and teaching, as well. All this had dramatically been put to a halt in Slovakia as of March 16 and in a month or so in the rest of the world when the one and only means of being able to stay in touch with relatives and friends and provide education for children became to be online. We quickly had to learn and adopt the use of the following expressions: e-learning, remote teaching, distance education or computerized electronic education, which are, in fact, identical expressions referring to learning utilizing electronic technologies

to access educational curriculum outside of a traditional classroom. In most cases, it refers to a course, program or degree delivered completely online.

By a remote teaching tool, we mean a tool belonging to the WEB 2.0 teaching tools, which is a group of Internet applications allowing sharing and collaboration opportunities to people and which helps them to express themselves online. Without the advent of WEB 2.0, teaching would have never been possible online as WEB 1.0 was like a shop-window, only showing information to the readers. WEB 2.0 enables for interaction and collaboration to take place within this shop-window, the world wide web. It enables for information to be altered, enlarged, manipulated with and therefore, the original shop-window stops being so and becomes an active meeting place for all parties, instead. And since the classroom is an active meeting place, in an ideal setting, it can only be replaced in the virtual world by a place which bears the same attributes as the original classroom: the virtual classroom has to enable cooperation, communication and active participation to reach learning goals (Azizi, Pavlíková, Masalimova, 2020; Khonamri, Pavlíková, Ansari, Sokolova, Korzhuev, Rudakova, 2020).

In the concerned private language school there are a lot fewer state-of-the-art devices as in state schools, as private language schools never have been eligible for state or EU funding from sources, such as INFOVEK or the Electronification of the educational system of regional schools which were projects through which 97 % of state schools countrywide received digital classrooms with IWBs, tablets, notebooks and printers.

Teachers at the concerned language school only had their personal laptops at hand with IWB materials being used on these laptops before lockdown hit, which is the reason why many of students declined online lessons due to the fact that they had been very much used to paperback supported teaching. On the other hand, online teaching aids, such as youtube videos, wikis and pronunciation applications had been incorporated into the lessons, which is why not all students had turned down distance teaching. Nevertheless, the lack of possessing high-end computer labs did not prove to be a disadvantage when lockdown hit, since reaction time of the school to the introduction of remote teaching was literally one day. As EdTech webeditor points out, one only need to adjust his/her home a little bit, test his/her equipment, set up a new routine and open up yet unused or underused communication channels with all participants in the education process (messages, LMS, phone calls) to make it all work (Castello, 2020). And in a small team, like the school teams were, this was communicated and arranged during the weekend preceding total lockdown, which, looking back, was in fact a huge success of the school. As it is known, readiness to apply online teaching in practice depends more on the human factor than on technological advances (especially if there is no one who would use them).

The ability to teach using modern teaching methods, immersive education, experimental teaching, the flipped classroom, project-based teaching, cooperative learning, gamification, problem-based learning, design thinking, thinking-based learning or competency-based learning all of a sudden depended on every member of the teaching process possessing the hardware and software topped with high-speed connectivity in order to provide the vital framework for any lesson taking place. The importance of using online teaching aids as the only means to conduct lessons has upgraded to unseen heights provided that both parties (the teacher and the students) possessed the devices on which these aids would run. By modern teaching devices we hereby mean the physical hands-on devices we must possess (and not the online aids in the form of apps, such as Classcraft, Canvas or Seesaw) in order to be able to transmit and receive information, i.e. a desk-top computer, a laptop, a tablet or a touch screen mobile (Redaccion Realinfluencers, 2020).

As the *Teach for Slovakia* programme highlights, 10 % of all elementary school children live in poverty and, in all likelihood, do not possess a smartphone, computer or do not have internet connection (Teachforslovakia, 2020a). According to the Institute of Educational Policy this means that more than 32000 elementary school kids in Slovakia have no internet connection. Therefore, these kids may learn 90 % less than their counterparts living in average living standards, who learn only 30 % less when education takes place online and not in the classroom (Teachforslovakia, 2020b). Another research, conducted in June 2019 aimed at finding out what purposes students use the internet for, did not reveal such an alarming number of students lacking the necessary hardware and internet connection for distance learning but, on the other hand, claimed that almost every child in Slovakia owns a mobile phone with internet access (Janková, 2019). The study claimed to be representative of the whole country, however, the reality less than a year later proved this representative study otherwise.

Cutting edge technology with innovative educational tools like the Glogster App have proved to have a motivating effect for learners enhancing their communication skills, mainly English as foreign language learners (Martinez-Alba, Cruzado-Guerrero, Pitcher, 2014), and higher order thinking skills (Nazirah, Azira, Aziz, Woods, 2009; Khonamri, Azizi, Králik, 2020), too. Microsoft has started to conduct its own research and via the use of Office 365 and Microsoft Teams in real classrooms has proved that the “inside-out” teaching method can be applied with tangible results (Vámos, 2019). They have also proved that the Microsoft Innovative School programme has all that it takes to digitally transfer a school from bottom-up in one school year (Korompay, 2019).

Even though all the families of the students of the concerned school possessed some kind of digital devices (less the exceptions), due to the high frequency of their use for work and study purposes they were not always available for language learning purposes. If it was the parents who were the learners (i.e. students of the private language school), it was sometimes they who had to give up their digital appliance in favour of the needs of their offspring all of which had a negative effect on student numbers and hours taught per week. All of this goes to show that it is not only the finances, but also intensity of the use of tech devices that have an effect on the feasibility of teaching during pandemics.

3 Transformation from offline to online education institution

A very important fact, which has to be mentioned and understood, is that the school which is presented did not adopt Course Management System (CMS) or Learning Management System (LMS) to provide an online environment for course interactions.

CMS typically includes a variety of online tools and environments, such as: an area for faculty posting of class materials such as course syllabus and handouts, an area for student posting of papers and other assignment, a gradebook where faculty can record grades and each student can view his or her grades, an integrated email tool allowing participants to send announcement email messages to the entire class or to a subset of the entire class, a chat tool allowing synchronous communication among class participants or a threaded discussion board allowing asynchronous communication among participants. The reason was that the class materials had already been more or less already adapted to online teaching by the publishing houses, the students managed their homework individually with their teachers online as most of the group courses was broken down to shorter individual classes, teachers do not use gradebooks, there was no need for the teachers to send announcements for their own groups that would not have been sent by the central office to every student and chat tools or threaded discussion boards were embedded in more user-friendly internet communicators.

LMS enables a school not just to manage but also deliver e-learning courses, which is a feature that would have made it useful for the school to adopt it for its distant teaching purposes. However, an LMS needs scrupulous attention from a central office which inducts the teachers about all its features prior its use. In addition, an LMS needs constant management throughout its use and a back-up office offering constant support while its use to integrated users, that is teachers and students alike. And since the school central office had to close down, there was no space whatsoever to set up and keep up such a means of teaching for the entire period of lockdown.

For all the above reasons the school declined the option of integrating a CMS or LMS into its teaching processes and from the available collaboration tools went with internet communicators as a means of delivering education during lockdown. The tools the teacher used the most often were skype and zoom mainly because they were required to be installed on the sides of the students by their respective schools and it is a precondition to have some kind identical tool to be installed on both sides for education to take place. Other tools students had been required to install in elementary and secondary schools were messenger and viber, and since they take up less working memory in a device than skype or zoom some students preferred to go by them. For this reason, messenger often worked as a back-up solution if there was no computer at hand or the internet connection was too weak to handle high-peak information flow on skype or zoom. In addition, many students, especially adults possess a facebook account, and in such a case messenger calls are automatically enabled. These students preferred using messenger as an educational tool in addition to those situations.

Each from the used online tools enabled and disabled certain types of exercises which otherwise may or may not have been possible to do face-to-face. The key to success was to quickly realize how to continue teaching all the courses using the materials at hand. It became evident that no ad hoc teaching would be possible and due to the closure of the school no copying or scanning could be realized. Even the basic contact between teacher and student was impaired. Only those students could continue learning who had some type of interface and a stable internet connection available at the new schedule times, which were negotiated between the teachers and the students themselves. Connectivity did not depend particularly on the financial background of the parents but more on the fact whether there were enough interfaces at a particular time available for all the family members needing them. Logging times were lengthy at times and that had limiting effects on the lessons, making them impossible to happen at certain times of the day.

Due to the limitations on the part of the students regarding the former conditions and the family limitations on the side of the teachers, the original schedule had to change dramatically and continued to be negotiated all the way until the end of the school year. Considering that not every teacher knew how to teach groups online and the fact that there were time limitations on the part of the students, most groups had to be broken apart and the available time was divided equally between the remaining group members, which was doable thanks to the small sizes of the groups. Timing was key for the school as many schools in the region were unable to provide any education for their students at all or provided them only in limited numbers as suggested by the Ministry of Education.

Language lessons had a tendency to be left behind in all the schools; therefore, the language school considered as its “duty” to continue providing language education and uphold a normal student-teacher relationship as part of healthy psycho-hygiene, too, when many people did not talk to almost anybody at all. The courses had to continue also due to the fact that some students were facing their final leaving exams in May or Cambridge language exams in June (Lalinská, Stranovská, Gadušová, 2020).

4 Teachers and taught topics

According to Murray (2013), in the USA already in 2013 almost three quarters of teachers preferred using modern technological aids (Murray, 2013) and the situation concerning teachers' interest in developing their tech knowledge was even then also very high. The situation in Slovakia is similar in that. Back in 2018 according to a survey conducted by the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements (NÚCEM) within the project *Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Key Competencies* (PIAAC) more than half of all the teachers participating in the monitoring felt a dire need and desire to be further educated in the area of teaching using IT tools. Although the target group of the monitoring were "adults", a part of the project was also an assessment of teachers' key competences related to reading and math literacy and problem solving with the use of information and communication technologies. The main goal of this part of the project was to evaluate the use of information and communication technologies by teachers both at school (in their teaching practice) as well as at home (Wirtz, Zelmanová, Galleé, 2018).

The lockdown caught Slovakia and many schools and teachers red-handed in their low preparedness to handle online teaching. The problem has been rooted in the low level of digitalized education in Slovakia, the concept for which was approved in 2014 with its planning process supposedly culminating in 2020 (*Conception of informatization and digitalization of the sector of education with a view to 2020*; MŠVVaŠ, 2014), but which never actually got transformed into action plans according to the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic. Even the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport (MŠVVaŠ) issued its first guidelines as to how to conduct teaching in lockdown only 43 days after the state of emergency was declared (*Guidelines to the content and organization of teaching primary school pupils during the emergency breakdown of school education at schools in the academic year 2019/2020*, MŠVVaŠ, 2020).

All the mentioned is supported by the European Commission's Education and Training Monitor 2019 paper, in which the National Programme for the Development of Education (NPDE) stressed the necessity to extend ICT use in all classroom settings and highlighted that the ratio of teachers aged under 30 reaches a maximum of 9% in secondary schools and 7% in elementary school (Course Management Systems). This information is important as only the young generation of teachers is likely to use ICT tools at home and therefore, will use them in their jobs and the classroom, too (EC, 2019).

Concerning the average age of the analyzed school teaching staff, it is 35. At least half of all staff members had experienced some form of online education before March 2020 either due to the fact that they had continued teaching from their home countries (e.g. Ukraine, Spain) during their summer holidays or because the language school had some students sign up from outside the premises (central Slovakia, Hungary, Austria). For all these reasons almost all staff members had active skype accounts set up and did not experience hurdles connecting to the internet or communicating through the screen.

Besides the teachers and technology means they have at disposal another aspect influencing efficiency of distance education is content of this education, suitability of topics which are going to be taught in this way. The basic precondition for effective distance education to take place is a carefully selected area of topics suitable to be taught online, as well as their special didactic processing in electronic form (Mišút, 2013). Based on the findings of the Supreme Audit Office of the Slovak Republic it may be stated that the accessible online curriculum does not suit all schools in the same way and during the lockdown it was up to the creativity of teachers what content from other sources they could provide for their students. The Office states that the digitization of the educational processes and access to digital educational content is stagnating in Slovakia, a good example of which is the Digiškola portal, whose content has not been

updated since the beginning of 2016 (Najvyšší kontrolný úrad SR, 2017).

Regarding the content of teaching in the courses provided by discussed school, a huge advantage of learning in it is that the subject matter is adjusted to the individual learner's or the relatively homogenous group's needs and, therefore, given that the materials to teach from are well-chosen at the beginning of the course there is no difference in teaching the same content face-to-face or online. Actually, there is more up-to-date content available online than in a book and given a strong internet connection, a creative teacher and a responsive student, a book-based course can be significantly livened up through state-of-the-art online tools, which can take the topic of the book further or make it more colourful and memorable, as a result.

5 Feasibility of online exercises

In the majority of cases the lessons continued to be based on books open on the desk, both parties facing each other on the screen and to a certain extent, this method worked, making online lessons very much conversational. However, there were many exercises which were almost inexecutable online. These had to be dropped, due to either the nature of the exercise itself or the limitations of the features of the application used for e-learning. These hindrances could not be solved to the satisfaction of all parties oftentimes due to the unwillingness of the students or their parents to adjust to the prevailing limitations, which resulted in student number decline (student numbers declined due to financial implications as well, which was a typical case for company lessons; less than 5% of the lessons lost in the case of natural entities was due to lack of finances or future job loss fears).

5.1 Exercises almost inexecutable online

Online almost inexecutable exercises have been mainly the ones presented hereinafter.

Total Physical Response (TPR) Activities

Kids are hard to control even when they are in the real classroom. Simultaneously, they respond very well to each other's presence in games, which enables for group learning to take place. Total Physical Response games take place in groups and kids often do not understand all the words or sentences the teacher uses but they mime the teacher and each other, too, which is a prerequisite for total physical response. Since there were no classmates nearby, these exercises could not take place.

Backup solution

In case that the parents of kindergarten-age kids had agreed for their kids to have individual online classes in the length of 20 minutes, total physical response activities worked to a certain extent if the kid was willing to mime the teacher doing the same physical activity in the room.

Listening activities

The most straightforward and user-friendly application the teachers had had previous experience with was skype. For this reason, the school suggested on the eve of the lockdown that every student and teacher download this application or refresh it, so that after the exchange of telephone numbers and the rescheduling of the timetable everyone would be able to seamlessly continue their language studies. The teachers, however, did not foresee a hindrance, which lies in the current form of skype being unable to play a listening activity real time.

Backup solution

The way how listening activities were substituted in real time was by sending the recording to the students in files on skype, which the student then downloaded to his/her computer and did the listening activities on his/her own unaided by the teacher. This process depended on, however the teacher having the teacher's CD, uploading all the files into her/his computer (if s/he happened to have a CD-player embedded computer) and having the time to send all the files to the student's skype

address. The student then had a couple of days to download these files after which the programme disabled their further downloadability.

Another solution was to transfer the lessons to zoom, which company has been able to upgrade its features, including perfect, undisturbed sound transmission to adjust to the needs of 200 million users on a daily basis by March 2020 (Yuan, 2020). Some students, however, were unable to install this programme and their education process had to adjust to the features offered by and available only on skype.

Young learners (YLE) exam preparation

The teachers had to suspend all exam-preparation endeavors as part of their general language exam courses due to the fact that they would not have been able to conduct face-to-face group mock exams regarding the hygienic limitations in place at that time, without which the students would have felt unprepared and anxious to take the exam. Mock exams are, as embedded in their name, mock exams and if the exam is conducted face-to-face, online exams don't provide the same objective conditions nor the subjective feelings a student undergoes.

Backup solution

All the young students have been offered the autumn 2020 dates as a substitute for the June 2020 dates and every accepted this suggestion.

Picture-prompted vocabulary exercises

If students do not know a word, the teacher has the chance to show them the picture of it and then oftentimes no translation is needed whatsoever, especially if the problem is a concrete and not abstract word. Due to the lagging of computers and teaching applications it is often time-consuming if not impossible altogether to step out of the programme and look for a picture of the word and paste it to the screen of the ongoing lesson as this process may freeze the programme being used and the lesson has to start all over, like in case of skype. Even though zoom enables picture and sound sharing, it is not user-friendly enough to enable the lay teacher to switch screens while keeping the student connected. In other applications like messenger or viber there is no screen sharing function at all.

Backup solution

Pasting the pictures of the new words in the chat flow once the lesson is over is an elegant solution, as it serves as a reminder of the new vocabulary learned during the lesson plus it is a sign that the teacher keeps the interests of the student truly at heart on the long run. A prerequisite of this is the necessity for the teacher to keep track of the new vocabulary learnt during the lesson a separate sheet of paper.

Paper-based activities

No physical activity which is based upon choosing from a pile of cards, closing the eyes and hiding, board game, ordering words into a sentence mixed among more members of a group, and no pair work activities which involve cooperating using cut-up pieces of paper can be done online. For this reason, the human interaction part is greatly cut out from the online lesson plan just like suspense and excitement, which naturally accompanies the process of playing games.

Backup solution

There are educational games that can be played online but sophisticated programmes are needed to make them accessible online for multiple players, which simple collaboration tools do not support. There are however, a number of games not necessarily for teaching foreign language (English) but even more so suitable for this purpose (bearing in how useful CLIL teaching is proving to be). Any games aiming at teaching or testing the basics and even more advanced knowledge in natural sciences designed for English native speaker kids in elementary schools worldwide will do for English as second language students as long as they understand the game to be played. The greatest advantage of playing online games is their in-built try-and-error feature, which enables the stress-free learning of facts

and the grammar surrounding it. The possibility to repeat an exercise over and over until the student reaches full points predestines every learner to be a winner, a straight-A student and to stay motivated for the next game to take (and the next level to master in English).

5.2 Methodological considerations due to technical problems

There are such hindrances to teaching online that no backup solution is capable of offsetting. In the following there are summarized the most common problems the teachers of the presented language school came across during teaching under the pandemics.

Poor or no internet connection

This problem is very difficult to solve. If such an issue arises there are some ways out of it: one, move the lesson to a less jammed time, when information transmission quality may improve due to fewer users; two, check the software and hardware issues or change internet provider altogether; and three, replace online teaching with phone teaching.

Backup solution

Teaching through the phone solves this problem instantly. The teacher places her/his phone in front of her/him, calls the student on face-time and they can see and hear each other while conducting the lesson mainly from the book.

In the case of the caller not being subscribed to such a package that would enable unlimited calls or lengthy calls for an affordable price, one can try putting together a quick offline e-learning course. Since many coursebooks have special student interfaces accessible by the teacher too, the teacher may design a short learning programme based on the materials available for the student from the website of the publishing house of the coursebook being used, set a reasonable learning pace for the student shown, ideally on a time schedule too, regularly send homework and tests by e-mail and require them to be sent back by a given time. Such a programme, however, may be established only if there are elaborate reading and listening exercises available for the student, as they must replace the teacher's tutoring role. In addition, offline e-learning cannot go on forever as there must be meaningful conversation taking place between teacher and student.

Poor voice transmission

Speaking is the most vital part of a lesson. Without speaking there is no instant communication available. A problem which can occur is that there is internet connection but voice transmission is weak.

Backup solution

The teacher can try moving to zoom, which has an embedded state-of-the-art software audio processing programme designed specifically to suppress room noise and reverberation (Yuan, 2020). Should this app not work either due to hardware issues the teacher may still move to teaching on face-time or the phone.

Poor picture transmission

This is a typical issue in case of poor internet connection, where data transmission capacities are overloaded by transmitting picture and voice at the same time.

Backup solution

The solution in this case is to keep on teaching but turn off the picture, which might be a solution in case of skype or zoom lessons, where picture and voice are transmitted on separate routes. A huge advantage of both programmes is that both of them enable the use of the chatbox while communicating without picture transmission overloading the system, and therefore all the advantages of the chat may be used – supplementing the whiteboard, to a certain extent.

Unavailability of printed materials

When classroom teaching has to move to remote locations, it is not always possible to ensure that all participants have classroom

books to learn from or have a chance to print copied materials sent via e-mail.

Backup solution

If, however, at least one party (either the teacher or the student) has the book, it is viable to conduct the lesson by one party sending a picture of the relevant page to the other on *messenger*, *viber* or *whatsapp* keep that page open on the mobile phone and conduct the lesson on the computer using a different programme, such as *skype*, *zoom* or *Microsoft Teams*.

Visually impaired students

Some students, which do not use Braille writing, depend on their magnifying glass to learn at school. Even though there are magnifying options online and offline too, it might be so hard for the learner to constantly switch over between the words to magnify or the teacher to see that without a special computer for the online learning needs of such a student it might simply impossible for such a student to engage in online learning.

Universal speaking exercises

Online teaching is geared mainly towards oral teaching and therefore almost all verbally conducted exercises are suitable to be executed online. A fine exercise for which no extra prop is needed except for a timer is when a student has to talk about a given topic for a minute. A picture-based speaking exercise may be timed, too, as it is done at language exams, where students have to speak about a given picture for a minute. The picture is shown to the camera of the teacher for a given time (e.g. 10 seconds) after which the student has to describe what and how s/he remembers about the picture.

Storytelling is also possible either one-to-one or as a group in which each member says a sentence as part of a common story the beginning of which is started by the teacher. A modification of this exercise may be when the members of the group have to tell a story, but the teacher keeps interrupting them with linkers based on which they have to modify each sentence but keep the topic. Applications enabling multiple speakers to hear each other well are *skype*, *messenger* (sound transmission problems may occur), *zoom*, *teams*.

5.3 Further methodological comments

An advantage of synchronous e-learning is that it enables exercises to be conducted that would be otherwise impossible. One must acknowledge that remote teaching tools and devices possess different features from a physical classroom and that by getting acquainted with them using them to the advantage of foreign language lesson content one can greatly foster motivation towards learning and deepen the learning experience in unforeseen ways. Following examples of exercises serve as proof of this statement.

Video-based exercises

It is great fun to take the devices the parties use and show them around their house or a certain part of, and then compare each other's dwellings. It is fun for the teacher, too, if they also must remember details about the student's house. The excitement part of it is the fact that the video shown is real, on-the-spot and will not repeat (Petrovič, Murgaš, 2020). The programmes enabling it are *skype*, *zoom*, *messenger*, *viber* and *whatsapp*.

Asynchronous assignments

Once a physical class emerges to its end the teacher has to have a clear idea about what kind of homework s/he will give to class, if it has not been prepared or copied even earlier, but what can happen is that such a hardware may not be in line with what has actually happened or been achieved in class and, for this reason, might need a lot of explanation or should even be dropped.

The instance of online teaching enables the teacher to examine the content of the lesson and send the most relevant HW also being able to choose from the wide variety of online games, acting as possible basis for HW. Online exercises enable for multiple repetition and therefore HW is learnt much more

thoroughly. Programmes one can access this way are *skype*, *messenger*, *viber*, *whatsapp*, all CLMs and LMSs.

In a regular class usually there is a problem to ensure conditions in which groups of students do not disturb each other. To ensure groups of 3-4 do not disturb each other in a regular class the teacher can separate them by sending them into different classrooms if there are some available. If not, groups are likely to listen to each other wanting to overhear great ideas. Even pair work is hard to do with 4 students if space is cramped and the teacher does not want to waste time moving around classroom objects. Solving this problem is perfectly possible teaching online due to the fact that there is programme *Microsoft Teams*, which enables the division of a group of students into small groups. Within this setup communication is enabled only within the designated group members, which is a great way to solve puzzles, for example, and compare the results at the very end. Students may also prepare exercises for each other and do them within a given time. They will never know the answers for the exercise they receive from the other group as the control button for opening or closing the communication channels is in the hands of the teacher (*assignments for groups with zero disturbance*).

One of the problems a teacher has to deal with while teaching is *correction of continuous speech*. Teachers tend to struggle with trying to balance out the amount of correction they supply and the amount of correction students demand during so-called free-style speaking. Teachers might believe that leaving a student to speak with mistakes will embed those mistakes within fluent speech on the long run, which is partially true. For this reason, if there is a topic to talk about, some teachers have a tendency not to let the student speak with mistakes, which might result in the student never acquiring high enough self-esteem to become a fluent speaker. A great solution for this problem is teaching using a chat-enabled online tool. While the student speaks about a topic or gives a lengthy answer the teacher has the chance to record the mistakes and (given s/he is quick enough) correct them all in the chat box. Once the student is done, the teacher sends all her/his notes in the chatbox in one go and the student has a chance to review all the mistakes s/he has just made in a non-intrusive way. If the teacher wants to correct the student while the student is speaking, doing so by sending the correct sentences, words, expressions in the chatbox is a non-intrusive way of doing so, because the student is not stopped by the voice of the teacher just the notes s/he receives from the teacher. The student may still decide to ignore the teacher's notes in the chat and refer back to them once s/he is done, if reading the notes would divert his/her thinking from his/her main line of thought.

It is impossible to precisely review what has happened during a lesson without a lesson plan. If a teacher asks a student to try to recall what s/he has done, what were the highs and lows and what s/he has learnt the likelihood of the student responding fluently is meager. Yet, if the teacher keeps recording in the chatbox what is going on during the lesson (meaning s/he acts like a tape-recorder by speaking and writing at the same time) the student is perfectly capable of recalling all the exercises and by reflecting on them embeds the information learnt during the lesson more than without this recap phase at the very end (*self-reflection*).

A great tool in *skype*, and less so, but to a certain extent in *zoom*, too, is the ability to conduct the communicate process in three ways simultaneously: verbally, in writing and via emoticons. Verbal communication takes place through the screen, written communication takes place in the chat (works excellent in *skype*, but shows as one speech flow in *zoom*) and feelings are expressed by the use of emoticons appearing either on the screen for a short time as the teacher's positive or negative reaction what has been said or a positive or negative reaction to what has been written in the chat (*triple communication channel*). The usage of emoticons is enabled on both sides of users therefore opening up a wider communication channel on the side of the student if the teacher is open enough to receive emoticons from the students as evaluations of the exercises being done.

The fact that all e-learning tools enable lesson recording takes online teaching to a whole new level (Kobylarek, 2018, 2019). As the more we practice the more we learn, there is no better tool for a learner than listen to a lesson at which s/he has participated and live through the same experiences thereby coding the lesson into the brain as many times more as the student listens to the lesson. In addition, this method is free of charge and can be repeated endlessly.

Since in the *Teams* app the teacher may enable the student to take control over the lesson using the teacher's screen, the student is empowered to take lesson planning into his/her hands thereby fostering his/her higher order thinking. The shared control function, however, requires and is conditioned by mutual trust. Nevertheless, if the teacher is willing to let loose of the grip of the lesson, the student in charge of managing a game for the whole class in place of the teacher might gain such motivation to learn the language that no other activity may ever replace.

And the last but not least advantage of e-learning, to be mentioned, is that e-learning enables otherwise inaccessible teaching routes to build as the road that connects teacher and student does not have to be physically taken. For this reason, the physically disabled but mentally all the more interested students are able to take up such courses that they could never do in the real world due to the hindrances their physical problems might cause them to have to overcome.

6 Conclusion

Although formation of professional digital literacy is in some way included in curricula of teacher trainees study programs (i.e. in teacher pre-gradual training) the pandemic situation has pointed out some weaknesses of this preparation. Teacher trainees have been trained usually to work with some particular software applications, and this mainly as users, without any special focus on appropriate implementation of these means into their future practice (i.e. on application of these means in teaching their majors). The corona pandemic has caused that education is moving into the virtual reality. To support distance form of education at all its levels, digital multiplatform tools and teaching aids are used. And in this situation, based on the experiences already obtained, we see how important is to train teachers to work with different on-line systems, what has been a marginal issue of teacher trainees didactic-technological preparation (Záhorec, Hašková, Munk, 2020).

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