Online education and 'best' practices in foreign language teacher's education during the 2020/2021 lockdown period

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Abstract

The 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic generated substantial changes in education throughout the world. Rapid changes had to be executed without sufficient time for replanning the course of teaching. In addition to applying and extending familiar methods and techniques, instructors and institute leaders developed creative ideas for addressing this emergency situation. A crucial question concerns whether educators switched to methodological approaches and tools that differed from those utilised previously. In addition to providing an overview of the educational programme's methodological background, this paper presents some of the particular changes that were introduced in the context of courses in foreign language teacher's education at Eötvös Loránd University's Faculty of Primary and Preschool Education (ELTE TÓK).

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, higher education, foreign language teaching, teacher education, online teaching methods

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic reached Hungary in the spring of 2020 and immediately presented educational institutions with the kind of unexpected and difficult situation experienced in most countries (Rodrigez et al., 2020; Zhang, 2020; Lepp et al., 2021; König et al., 2020; Nugroho & Mutiaraningrum, 2020). Beyond weighing institutional, organizational and technical solutions, both students and educators had to adapt to changes in time management, communication and social functions while finding answers to the constant arisal of unexpected issues. In March 2020, only one week was provided for planning, preparing and organising all main changes in tertiary education in Hungary. Obviously, digital technologies and platforms had previously been present to some extent in higher education. Beginning in the early 2000s,

digital educational study systems started to spread and were gradually developed, thereby offering more and more opportunities as complements to in-class instruction or sites for online courses. Instructors used these extant platforms based upon their preferences and the needs of the students.

Upon transitioning to online education, an intense period of learning followed for both instructors and students. Although the students' generation is often viewed and referred to as 'digital natives', this period proved challenging for them, too, as research shows that they are proficient in using social media and entertaining media but much less good at handling practical, educational tasks (Malatyinszki, 2020). The routine for instruction had to be established from day to day and including the intensive contribution and in-put of both parties. As Hodges et al. (2020) point out, online education in the Covid Era lacks the conscious, thorough planning and design of teaching due to the rapid shift that was necessitated. Based upon historical examples when sudden changes and catastrophes placed restrictions on education, Hodges et al. therefore recommend that this subtype of education be named 'emergency remote teaching' (heretofore referred to as ERT). Given that this type of situation demands rapid and creative solutions, flexibility, improvisations, and the ability to adapt extant resources to these special circumstances Hodges et al. state that "We have to be able to think outside standard boxes to generate various possible solutions that help meet the new needs for our learners and communities (para. 14). Despite the harsh conditions, lack of time or resources, ERT can inspire human creativity and innovation, qualities that are indispensable for instructors when fostering self-development and collaboration, weighing experiences and sharing knowledge among both colleagues and learners. To evaluate this process, at the end of the semester, ELTE conducted a student questionnaire containing questions regarding the effectiveness of online education. Further research was carried out to reveal students' and instructors' experiences. Considering the given circumstances, the transition to online education was considered successful and the students' feedback was incorporated into the next semester's plans.

The autumn 2020 term began with a period of hybrid education before turning exclusively to online teaching in November, a decision that extended to the rest of the academic year. At this point, students and instructors managed the situation more skilfully and could even appreciate its advantages, for example the increased access to class materials or lack of travel. However, they also keenly felt the absence of certain factors, such as the fine elements of metacommunication, a more intensive level of socialising, and the stronger peer support. One of the most important aspects of the Faculty's pre-school and primary teacher education programme, the teaching practice, experienced some drawbacks. Although the mentor teachers and students strove for the most creative and flexible ideas in solving the challenges arising from the changing situation, by the end of the academic year many students expressed their wish "to see a 'real' child", or "to feel 'real'

teaching". Yet the interesting argument can also be made that, during their teaching practice, students also gained beneficial insights into the advantages, challenges and opportunities of conducting online education. They gained more knowledge about different forms of motivation, attention, concentration, or group dynamics, as well. They will be able to make use of this experience in their future professional life when facing situations that need special solutions.

At the beginning of online education, the instructors of the English Language team (EL team) at the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at ELTE TÓK had to answer the following, significant question: how can the guidelines and principles that they consider to be the basis of language teaching and their teaching methodology be applied? In addition to adopting new educational contents, it is understandably important for students to practise the target language: most classes were therefore held synchronously with the expectation that students would be active participants. Another reason for choosing synchronous online education was the students' need for face-to-face contact, thereby making teaching more personal and enabling instructors to look after the well-being of students at a time when they were likely to suffer from isolation.

The EL team share common principles and values in teacher training. Training teachers is executed in a way that is communicative, cooperative, collaborative and creative in its approach. Instructors teach in a way that also serves as a model for students in their future work as teachers. While teaching online, the EL team's instructors were determined to continue as much of their teaching practice as possible, despite the changing circumstances. Preserving this approach meant that the student trainees were able to go through their training process in a way that was as close to the original, classroom version as possible. This paper therefore compiles the EL team's insights into the good practices and creative ideas that they acquired throughout the challenging period of the 2020/2021 Covid-19 pandemic.

Overview of the English Language Programme for primary and pre-school teacher training, Department of Foreign Language and Literature, ELTE TÓK

ELTE TÓK provides two, main programmes for studying the English language as either a major or specialisation: future primary school teachers can choose to major in English-language training while pre-school teacher can specialise in English. The two main components of these programmes comprise classroom practice and educational and didactic theory. Students who graduate in primary education will be qualified to teach English as well as all general primary subjects and will possess the theoretically-based knowledge, skills and competences in pedagogy and psychology needed to com-

plete teaching and education service in Mathematics, Hungarian Language and Literature, Science, Visual Education, Music Education, P. E. and Crafts for the first four forms. With the addition of a subject specialisation, (English as a Foreign Language in our case) this qualification can be extended to the first six forms in primary school.

Respectively, the objectives of the modules for the primary and pre-school training programmes are to enable trainees to teach EFL to young learners from the first to the sixth form of elementary school or to educate kindergarten-aged children while applying the knowledge gained through courses in English language, bilingualism and CLIL, children's literature and bilingual (P. E., Science, Visual art and music) teaching methodologies. Last but not least, trainees demonstrate and develop their skills by means of practice modules. Throughout the practice module, students have the opportunity to teach at all class levels (forms 1 to 6) in schools under different mentorship. Pre-school education students attend practice at kindergartens.

The English-language modules utilise a combination of seminars, discussions and demonstrations with the aim of providing all students with a firm foundation in the principles and practices of either English-language teaching and learning or bilingual pre-school education. Constructed in adherence to the communicative approach, courses facilitate speaking skills and collaboration among students. English-language courses are communicative, interpersonal, wide-ranging and dynamic classes conducted in an environment that encourages interactivity, cooperation and socio-constructive learning. At the department, theory and principle are applied in ways that reveal their relevance to both primary and kindergarten classroom practice. Together with their instructors, trainees discuss and critically debate all subject areas. These discussions are not only important for the development of the trainees' English language skills, but also further the development of subject knowledge. Many practical activities are not only demonstrated, but also tested by students in class so they can both experience and test how given activities would work in their own classrooms. Other than the fact that classroom interaction, cooperation, cooperative activities, and practicality are demonstrated and applied in the classes, "to maintain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction" (Brophy, 1996, as cited in Macías 2017, p. 154), a constant attempt is made to model designing, implementing and managing activities, or giving instructions in the classroom. All the methods, work forms, aids, communication strategies, classroom arrangements serve the four main aims of, "establishing and reinforcing rules and procedures, carrying out disciplinary actions, maintaining effective teacher and student relationships, and maintaining an appropriate mental set for management" (Marzano & Marzano, 2003, p. 88). The classroom management that is deliberately applied in our teaching is best described and summarised by Scrivener: "Behind each selection of a technique is an intention – the thing that you want to happen" (2012, p. 1). As a result, all classroom

work is done interactively and by using the work forms that are suitable for and adapted to specific tasks and activities. The applied teaching strategies and social forms of teaching aim to enhance student participation and increase student talking time (STT). Yet another goal is to train reflective practitioners who can assess their own actions and thus engage in the process of continuous learning: that is, to become professional educators.

When faced with online education, the biggest challenge for the EL team was to translate our teaching policy into online platforms while continuing to teach during lockdown according to the aforementioned teaching strategies and classroom management principles. As was mentioned, the EL team decided to continue teaching mostly synchronously to keep up with students' groups to promote communication and interaction. After consulting with experts and attending online courses about various online applications and their usage, in March 2020, the EL team concluded that Zoom served their needs the best. Firstly, participants in a Zoom conference can use breakout rooms where smaller meetings can be held for students to work in pairs or groups. Zoom allows participants to share different screens, thereby making it an excellent platform for student class presentations. In Zoom, multiple people can share their screens at the same time thus students in their breakout rooms can also share documents (uploaded material, handouts). Secondly, Zoom also offers whiteboards where lecturers and facilitators can take notes or draw on screen. The host of the meeting, the teacher, can 'wander' amongst the online virtual workspaces and monitor students' work, similar to a 'real' classroom. However, to reduce the number of various platforms being used, ELTE supported the use of Microsoft Teams, which was gradually being developed to suit educational needs.

Given its screen-sharing options, Zoom enables participants to utilise other online platforms and applications, such as the following online applications which have proved useful: Kahoot, Rollthedice, Quizlet, Edmodo, Moodle, Mentimeter, LearningApps, Wordwall, Padlet, Prezi, Slideshare, PowerPoint, Spin the Wheel, Dangerously Easy, Quizizz, Crosswordlabs, Puzzel, Storyboardthat, Skribble.io, Jigsawplanet and Jambord, and many more. Different applications serve different purposes: some are ideal for student and teacher presentations such as Prezi, PowerPoint, Slideshare and Padlet. Others were perfect for vocabulary practice, e.g., LearningApps and Wordwall, which offer a good number of online vocabulary practice exercises. Rollthedice and Spin the Wheel eased the burdens of classroom management by expediting grouping or pairing. Kahoot, Quizlet, Edmodo, Teams and Moodle furthermore offer different types of tests that were only used for practice purposes in the beginning. For examination testing, the faculty used more and more online programs for traditional ways of testing, but also sought other means of end-term assessment, as will be discussed in some parts of the following section.

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## ‚Best' practices in online education

In this section, the instructors of the EL team present some practical ideas and approaches that could be called 'best practices', were it not for the circumstances produced by ERT. Given the rapid implementation time, the limitations posed by technology and a lack of experience, and newly arising difficulties that defined the situation, it is not sound to state that we will present optimal techniques: at most it can be said that the following practices proved 'best' in that they allowed the EL team to uphold their basic principles of instruction. When creating these tasks, the instructors' main goals were to present and practise new knowledge while keeping students interactive, creative, communicative and reflective, i.e., motivated.

1) Language Preparation Course for English-Hungarian Bilingual Education

This course aims to develop language competences that are necessary for teaching in bilingual primary education. There is a strong emphasis on speaking skills and vocabulary development. The course is organised around bilingualism, school life and subjects. Throughout the academic year, it was essential to achieve the broad goals of the course and keep its communicative and collaborative character.

‘My Lockdown News': An online warmer exercise on Padlet

Padlet offers opportunities for cooperative group work and sharing ideas or materials. At the beginning of the second term of the course, Language Preparation Course for English-Hungarian Bilingual Education, this forum was transformed into an online warmer exercise that operated as a pinboard for sharing students' memories of the 2020 autumn/winter lockdown period. This activity's aim was to strengthen group cohesion by means of memories while also letting peers learn about hobbies and how students had spent their time at home. Before the first class, each student was sent a link to a Padlet board generated for this purpose and asked to upload an image of something they had done for the first time or discovered in their environment during the second lockdown period spanning November 2020 and February 2021. One rule was for students not to attach names to the pictures. Students could then view the pictures and start guessing what the picture meant in the first lesson. Each picture was discussed before the 'author' explained what it represented. The emerging, lively discussion reinforced group dynamics and provided a smooth transition into the second term. Padlet proved to be a convenient and effective tool for displaying and viewing the pictures together.

Figure 1

Padlet board: My Lockdown News
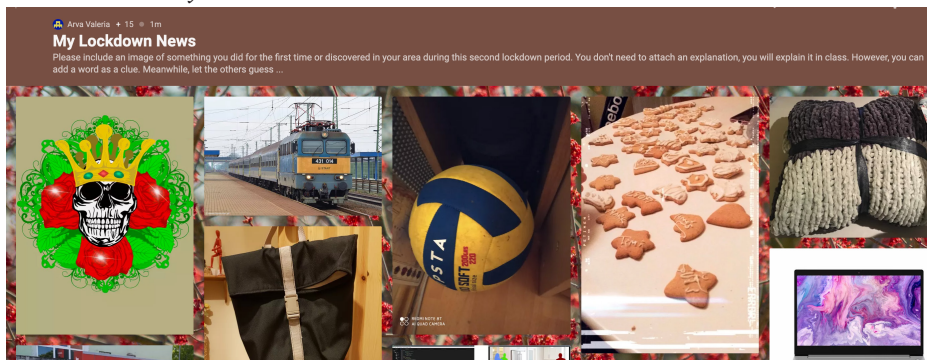
Online school-visit projects and reports

When holding this course online, one of the greatest challenges was maintaining the 'School Project' (exploratory visits to schools), a core aspect of the course that enriches first-year students with valuable, first-hand experience in bilingual and international schools, institutions where they are likely to seek employment following graduation. For legal and health reasons, visiting the school buildings were out of the question, even though primary schools were only online for two months in March 2021. Thanks to the enthusiasm and cooperation of the EL team's school contacts, students were able to continue the course's 'School Project' with the help of online technology. Organised into groups of four, the students managed to complete the project and explore four schools. The project consisted of the following stages: 1) A brainstorming session discussing what to look for during visits by means of an online whiteboard and Zoom live meeting; 2) Organising ideas in an online mind-map (group work) via Zoom breakout rooms and an online mind-map application; 3) A Zoom live meeting for establishing guidelines and reviewing how to write a report; 4) Sending an email to contact teachers/principals at the schools; 5) Conducting virtual visits or interviews on Zoom live meetings or via streaming; 6) Holding group presentations about the visits while gathering peer questions and feedback during a Zoom live meeting that also utilised Power Point; 7) The writing of group reports that were shared on Moodle; 8) The instructor's feedback regarding the reports was likewise posted on Moodle; 9) Reports were sent by email to the contact teachers at the schools.

In addition to the tasks listed above, student groups prepared video interviews with their contact teachers. It must be mentioned that one international school went out of its way to provide a rich experience for the student visitors: on top of the interview with the principal, a number of sixth-form pupils were assigned to help the student visitors. With the help of an ipad,

these pupils not only guided the visiting students around the building, but also made it possible for them to participate in a real lesson. Upon returning from their school visit, the four groups shared their information with the rest of the group through oral presentations that were supplemented by power point slides. These presentations took place on Zoom and led to lively exchanges of feedback, questions and discussions. Finally, the written reports were submitted and (following review) sent to the teachers at the respective schools.

2) Early Childhood Language Development and English for Specific Purposes

Feeding babies: Be a YouTube influencer

The aim of this course is to develop students' professional English and general language skills and some aspects of English children's culture. One goal is to improve students' listening skills in a way that is integrated with their topic-based language development. Among students, YouTube videos by British influencers are popular listening comprehension exercises. To wrap up the topic of 'Feeding Babies', students were required to present a baby-food recipe in the form of a short video in which they recorded themselves preparing a healthy meal suitable for a young child. Students took great pleasure in performing this task: they chose suitable recipes, paid attention to describing what they were doing and copied the language and style utilised by real-life influencers. They also demonstrated their IT skills in terms of video editing and providing the recipes in subtitles.

3) Young Learner EFL Methodology

The programme's EFL methodology classes may comprise the best examples of implementing the EL team's policies since all methodological elements – from classroom management to teaching grammar, developing skills, and assessment, etc. – are all taught according to an interactive, practical approach wherein trainees can both familiarise themselves with the underlying theory for teaching young EFL learners and put this knowledge into practice through micro-teaching sessions or demonstrations.

Figure 2

A drawing on the Zoom whiteboard used for demonstrating verb tenses when presenting how to teach grammar
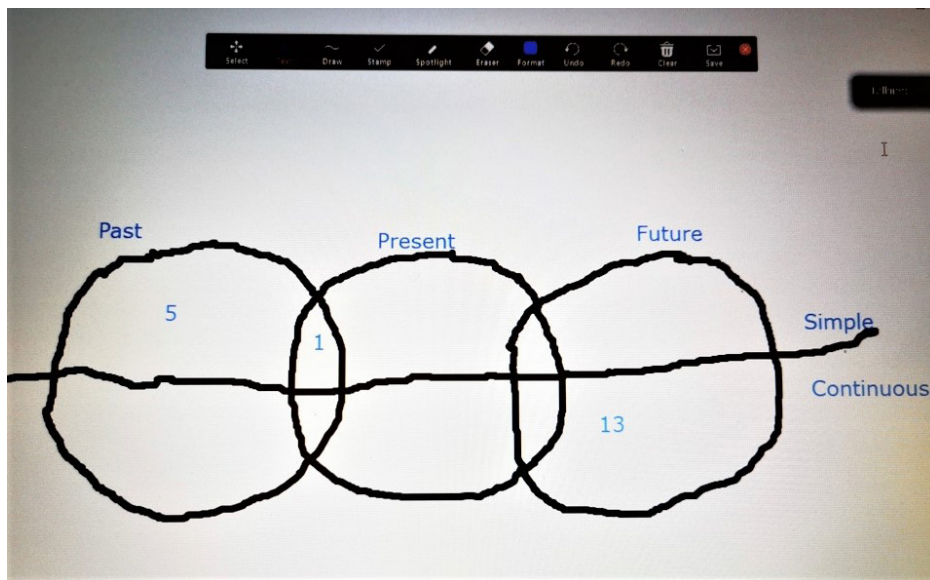
The entire course is therefore mainly practical in nature. The different work forms, skills work, written exercises, games, etc. could all be transferred to the online world. In fact, some activities could be conducted without any alterations. A good number of tasks, activities, and games, however, had to be adapted to the online world and needed far more preparation and thought compared to in-person teaching. Once the teacher has photocopied the cards and handed them out in class, role cards, for example, can be easily implemented in face-to-face teaching. In online teaching, role cards had to be scanned, uploaded (usually in different files so as to keep the provided information secret from other role players) or sent to individual students. Every task became far more complicated and time-consuming, but was naturally worth the effort. It can be concluded that one of the most difficult tasks during the course was to adapt live activities to online teaching without using web applications.

Figure 3

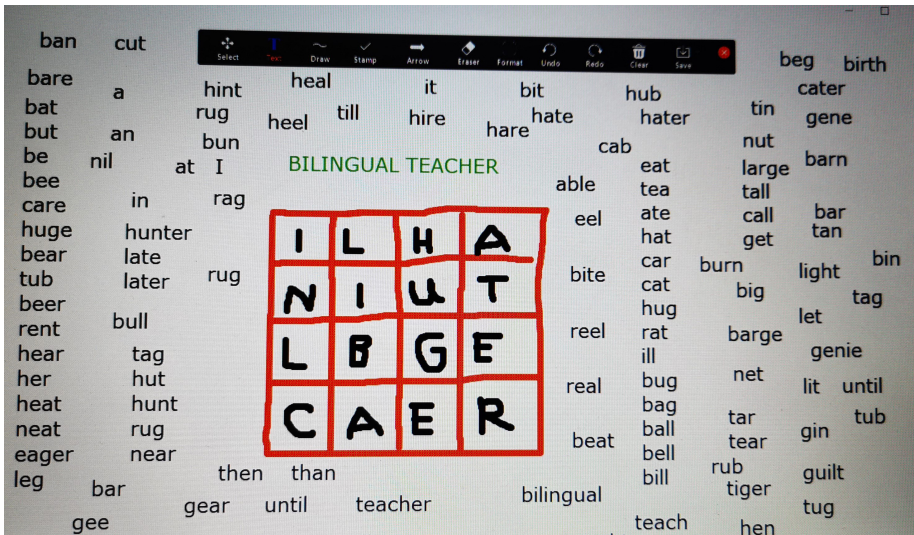*Online wordsearch using the Zoom whiteboard*

Figure 4

An example of how to play the 'Fly Swatter' game online. Instead of placing cards on the floor, a picture is taken of the cards. In lieu of a fly swatter, learners touch the picture on their screens. This solution may seem trivial, yet it is a good example of how 'in-person' activities can be adapted to online teaching.
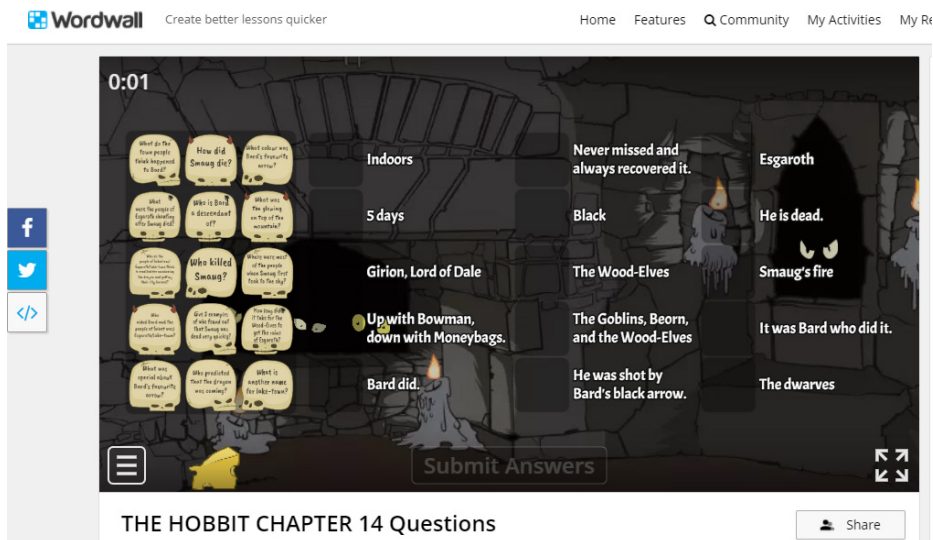
4) Juvenile Literature

The aim of this course on Juvenile Literature is to acquaint students with the most outstanding pieces of juvenile literature read by the English-speaking world.

Figure 5

A Wordwall Hobbit: Chapter 14, 'Questions and Answers' pairing game

During the course, students are expected to give presentations on the life and work of the authors of the novels discussed. As one of the requirements of the classes held during lockdown, students had to choose one piece of juvenile literature from the course and prepare a two- to three-minute-long trailer to entice viewers to read the book. These trailers were to briefly introduce the main characters, capture the book's atmosphere and relay the basic premises regarding the content of the literary piece. This exercise served as yet another opportunity to revise course content.
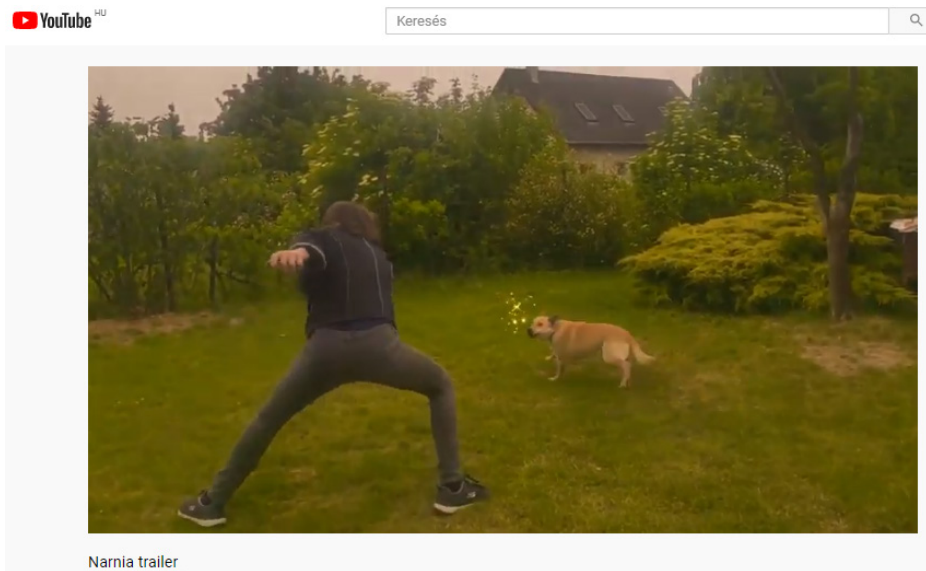
Figure 6
A trailer of Coraline (E. Várhelyi)

The trailers were presented via screen-sharing while the audience was filled in and edited a grid that was specially created as both a while-watching and feedback document for the trailer-presentation.

Figure 7
A trailer based on the Narnia series (G. Ostorházi)

5) Bilingual Pre-School Music Education

The main aim of this course is to develop bilingual music vocabulary and terms, read music-related literature in English, and acquaint students with songs, circle games, music games and rhythm games from the English-speaking world. The course involves a lot of singing, playing games, and preparation of handmade musical instruments. Due to the latency online teaching has to face, singing or playing any kind of instrument only works when one participant is unmuted. During collective song-learning, singing or musical sessions only one participant was unmuted while the others had their cameras switched on and sang muted. Although TPR songs were acted out, the movements practiced, and games were played, everybody was sadly completing these activities alone. A video of all the songs and music games learnt in the course was provided and uploaded to Microsoft Teams class material.

Figure 8
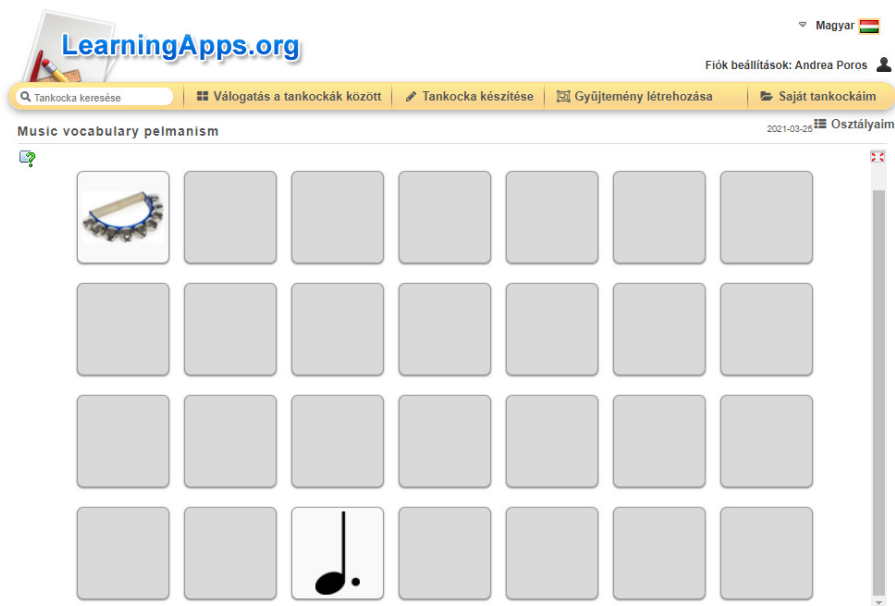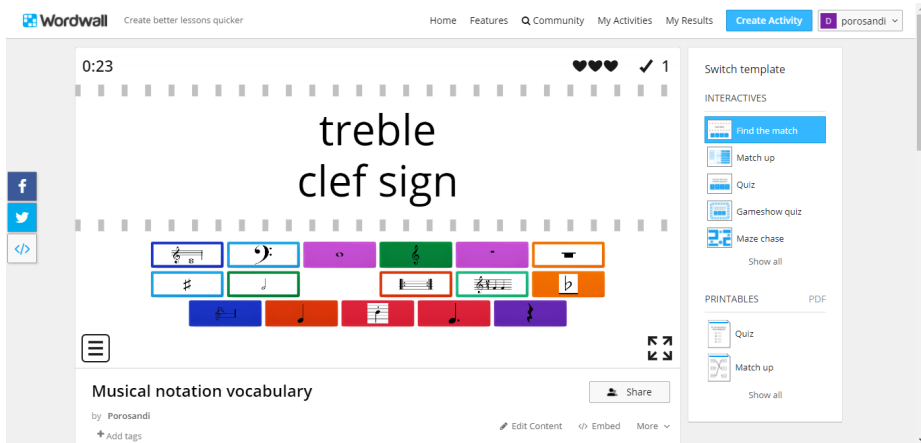*A LearningApps music vocabulary pelmanism game*

Figure 9

A Wordwall Musical notation 'Find the Match' game

6) Bilingual Pre-School Visual Arts

The Bilingual Pre-School Visual Arts course develops visual arts vocabulary and terms while familiarising students with the related literature in English. Students are required to design and hold visual arts sessions to demonstrate successful language acquisition. During the pandemic, online craft activities were carried out in breakout rooms. Students prepared various craft activities after the materials for each activity had been uploaded to Microsoft Teams well in advance. Students were expected to acquire all materials. The steps and instructions were provided by the students who were in charge of the art sessions. With their cameras on in order to show what and how tasks were being conducted, the teacher students commented on their peers' work and talked to their 'class', thus enhancing acquisition.

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Figure 10

A Wordwall Art vocabulary practice, 'Labyrinth' game
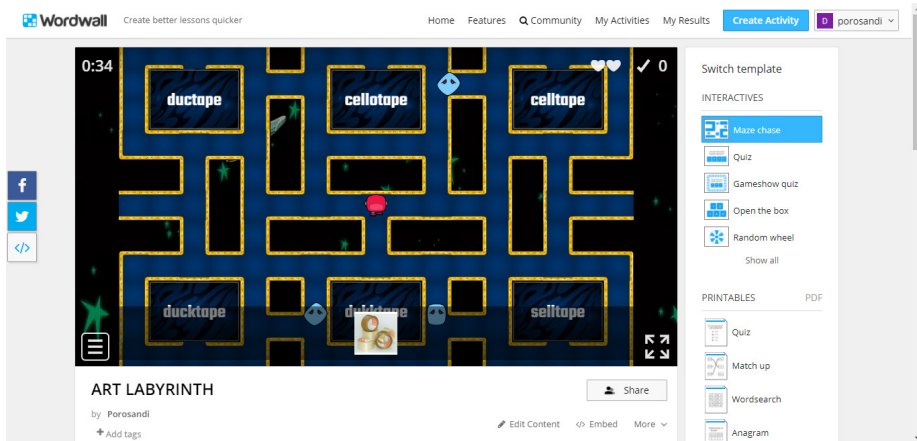
Figure 11

Visual arts projects from the online Easter lesson, 2020

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7) Methodology of Bilingual Pre-School Session: Physical Education

During the lockdown, one of the most difficult tasks was to teach the methodology of bilingual physical education for primary and pre-school student teachers. It is essential for students to attempt the planned activities in the form of microteaching to ascertain whether the instructions are precise, easy to understand, and tasks are sufficiently challenging, interesting, well-organised, and safe. During lockdown, students had to plan activities and present them to peers online, then reflect upon one another's work. To amass ideas, more focus was put on the Internet as a resource: students were asked to gather activities from websites, although some features were given to create an 'activity profile' for each game or task. These features included a name, a short description and picture, a list of skills the task develops, possible, anticipated problems, and variations or alterations of the task in preparation for different pedagogical situations. When listening to one another's presentations of the session plans, students chose ideas for different categories, such as 'the most interesting/challenging/creative activity', or 'the best at using tools' or 'the best for developing social skills', or the ones they would try in class. Students were therefore pushed to pay attention, make personal choices, and broaden their stock of ideas while developing listening and speaking skills.

8) Science Education in English in Pre-school Settings

Beyond broadening their vocabulary and methodological knowledge about science education, in this course students familiarise themselves with the scientific thought process and the ways in which children explore and construct knowledge. Creating mind maps, concept maps, and topic webs around different central concepts helps students not only to reflect upon their extant or newly acquired knowledge, but also plan teaching procedure. Students were additionally required to find aspects of science in rhymes or stories in order to develop an eye for linkages between different contexts. Particularly for pre-school teachers, topic webs proved a great help in connecting different fields of development or planning projects.

Figure 12

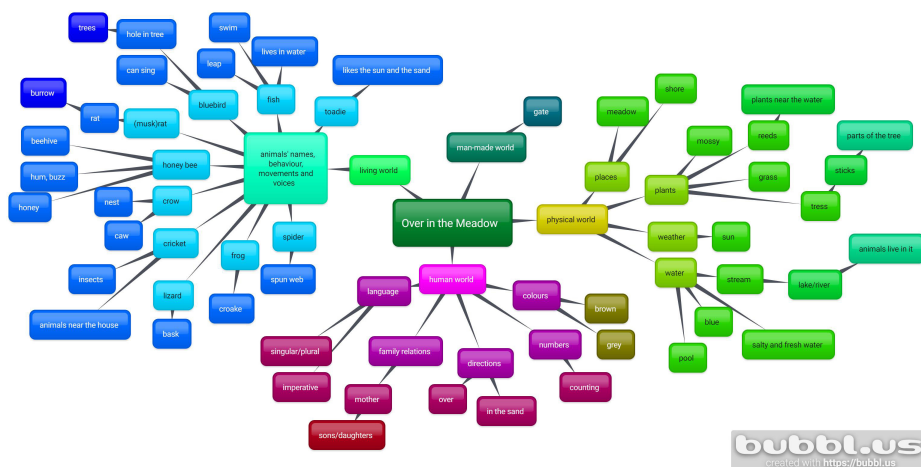*A mind map created online in connection with the song, 'Over in the Meadow' (R. Garai)*
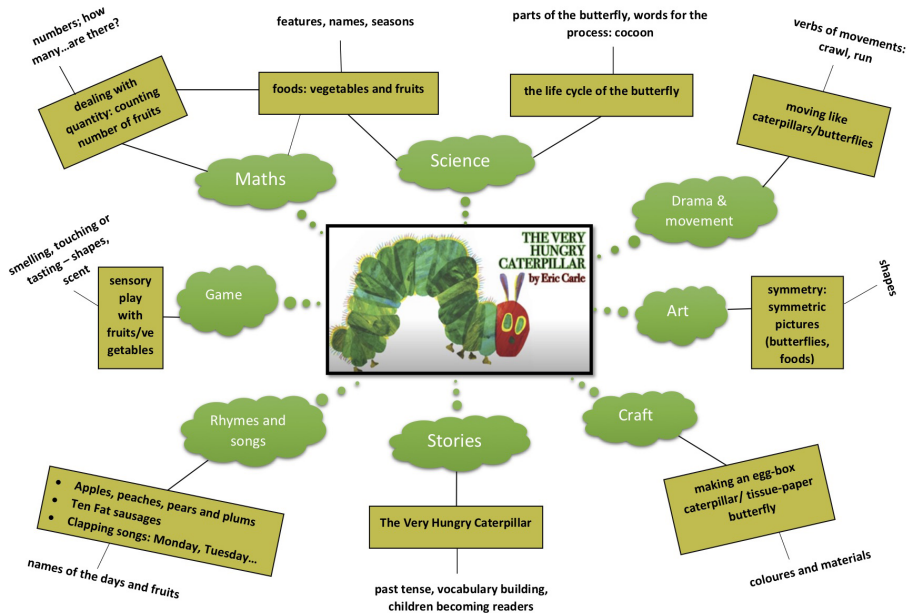

Figure 13

A topic web of Eric Carle's The Very Hungry Caterpillar (R. Garai)

9) *The Theory and Practice of Bilingual Education*

Most teachers would likely agree that assessment, evaluation, and testing comprise the most severe challenges in remote teaching (Munoz & Mackay, 2019; Dendir & Stockton Maxwell, 2020). The following section contains a compilation of a few examined techniques for diverse assessment forms, including self- and peer assessment.

At mid-term, the instructor introduced students to an Open Book type practice quiz with the aim of revising course content, supporting students' awareness of the learning process, and furthering their development. Students could ascertain to what extent they had acquired the competencies needed to accomplish the course while the instructor received a clear image of achieved vs expected learning outcomes (LeO) (Vámos, 2011). Students were informed in advance that the assignment's purpose was merely to practise and prepare for the end-of-term exam. In the beginning of the lesson, students accepted the following terms: they can use all their resources, i.e. the coursebook, notes, the uploaded materials, and everything shared in the collaboration space, but must complete the tasks alone. Although students could also consult Internet sources to create their answers, they agreed not to use the Internet to search for exact answers and solutions or 'copy-paste' paragraphs, article excerpts or Wikipedia pages. Instead, students could consult several sources to create their own answers. After understanding the rules, students completed the quiz with their cameras and microphones turned off. The instructor remained in the conference call in case information or technical help was needed.

The quiz questions were all related to the course and the topics discussed during online, synchronous lessons. The quiz aimed to trigger memories, check knowledge and understanding, inspire imaginative, logical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity while investigating preconceptions, opinions, decisions, and demanding reflections. Several professional and personal competencies (knowledge, skills, attitudes, autonomy and responsibility) and beliefs related to CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) (Coyle, Hood, & Marsh, 2010) and bilingualism were targeted and challenged. The practice quiz included tasks that varied in complexity, type, and content area, thereby challenging both lower and higher-order thinking skills (HOTS and LOTS). It utilised students' cognitive processes identified in the revised Bloom's taxonomy, i.e. remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating (Anderson & Krathwohl et al., 2001; Krathwohl, 2002).

Students were allowed to work on and finish the test after the lesson and could even resend the completed assignment if they wanted to review it later. To maximise the learning potential of the practice quiz, peer assessment was initiated and organised, providing everyone with the chance to revise course content, learn from one another and practise their teacherly skills.

Students corrected and reflected upon one another's assignments in pairs. A blank certificate was provided to fill in with the relevant name and the achieved scores (Figure 14).

Figure 14

Blank certificates congratulating students on completion of the practice quiz
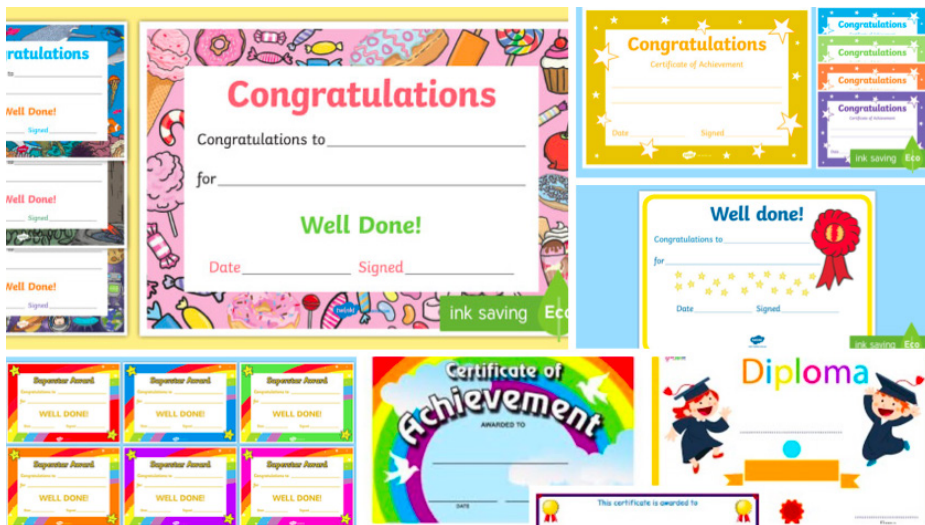
At the end of the term, the students had to fill in a self-assessment grid that served as a checklist to define whether and to what extent they had fulfilled the course requirements listed in the first column. Next to each particular task, assignment or condition, students had to write their comments and reflections regarding the completion in the second column. This assessment tool helped both students and the instructor to see each student's work, energy, effort, time, and enthusiasm put into the course. The categories ranged from active participation during live classes (including detailed parameters such as camera usage, oral and written interaction, involvement in the activities) to homework tasks and various assignment types. While individual students commented on their performance in cooperative activities and assignments, they were unconsciously practising peer assessment by referring to their group mates. When they identified their top three choices by selecting particular classmates' online games and CLIL videos, they evaluated their peers' work while proving that they had accomplished the task of playing the others' games and viewing their videos.

Assessment in CLIL is frequently accomplished with the help of meaningful tasks, such as a project or experiment that demonstrates and evaluates competencies in both areas of focus: content and the target language. In the CLIL foundation course, it is important to model the relevant methodology

to be used in early childhood education for students. During remote teaching, online games, group presentations, and videos played a significant role. When the instructor invited the students to play games and participate in fun activities, they showed great interest. When they were tasked with creating a similar game, most students displayed extraordinary talent and were genuinely eager to find and use innovative applications and game types. One of their tasks was to design online games that exercise a given theory (see Figure 15). In their reflections, students commented on the value of learning theory by means of games and playful activities.

Figure 15
Online games created by students

Other assignments included creating metaphors, writing a children's story, compiling a recipe, giving titles to pictures, pretend-visiting, and introducing bilingual kindergartens. One of the students' favourite tasks was making, editing, and sharing a narrated tutorial video on a self-chosen CLIL topic, a science experiment, or an art and craft activity. This video replaced the usual, offline micro-teaching sessions. The students' excellent tutorial videos demonstrated outstanding teacherly personalities, advanced professional competencies, great ideas, thoughtful planning, and thorough preparation (see some screenshots in Figure 16).

Figure 16

Tutorial videos created by students
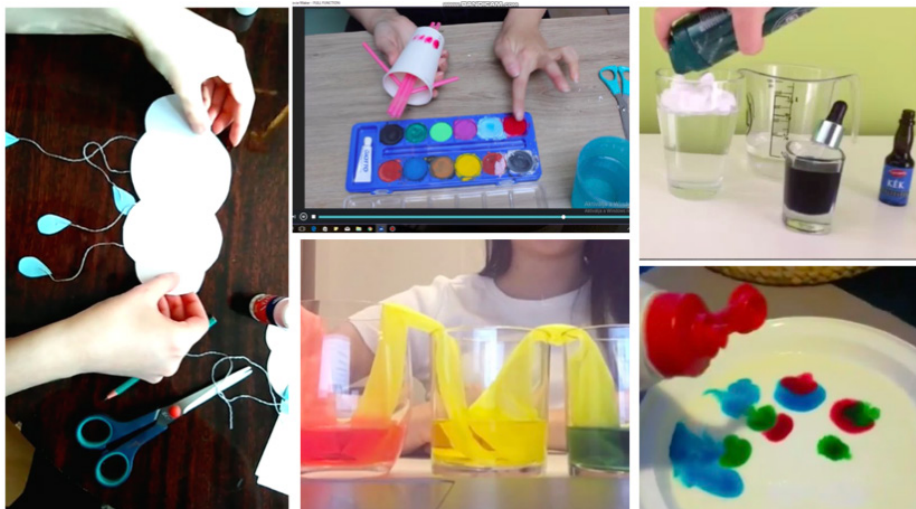
At the end of the term, an oral exam summarises the teaching-learning process. Throughout the past ten years, students of this course have always prepared a visual mind map for the exam to help them share their knowledge and insights. This custom was no different in the online context either. Similar to the offline exam practice, these mind maps took many forms: some were digitally made with the help of various applications, others were drawn, some looked like posters or puzzles, while others were 3D objects or video clips. Since the students were asked to send their mind maps before the exam, the examiner could prepare for the discussion. The mind maps' complexity, structure, choice, and use of technical terms, topics and subtopics, as well as their appearance, showed the students' knowledge of the course content, their way of thinking, and the amount of work, energy, thought, and creativity they had put into making them (see Figure 17). According to the students' reflections, making the mind maps effectively helped their exam preparation since they had to understand and link relevant connections. The mind maps also proved to be an invaluable support in the oral discussion at the exam.

Figure 17

Mind maps (made by P. Ságodi, E. Józsa, B. Gaál, Zs. Répás, and K. Forgács)

10) Games in English for Children

Designing structured learning based on video games

An adapted version of the course, Games in English for Children was available in September, 2021 and offered to all teacher trainees and students who are interested in early childhood English-language acquisition. Not only about games, the course is a game in itself as students complete quests (in the form of presentations or research), defeat enemies (quizzes/tests), and earn experience points to attain course completion. Designing the syllabus and lesson plans as game-designed documents renders the creator of the learning process a Game Master.

As Lee Sheldon states (Sheldon, 2012), the easiest point system can heavily impact both students and teachers. Every serious game has a final goal, thereby providing the player's motivation to overcome all obstacles. The story behind the goal and quest imbues every act by the players during the game with a sense of purpose while making them feel a part of something special (Fromann & Damsa, 2016). The goal of this course is to aid students in becoming a professional, bilingual teacher who ultimately contributes to world peace and understanding by teaching children English. To accomplish this aim, a classroom is needed.

Figure 18
The empty classroom

The empty classroom allows students to build the entire story while basing their feedback and rewarding system upon smaller, more easily achieved goals that comprise levels. Every level (module) ends with an award ceremony during which the protagonist (student) receives an item denoting the completed quest. The higher the levels, the more goals must be met, therefore students are increasingly exposed to more positive experiences (Kovácsné Pusztai, K., 2018). Starting the course with zero XP (Experience Points) may sound challenging, but this 'struggle' gives students the opportunity to experience and visualise growth and progress throughout the semester. Different levels can only be completed by reaching a given XP: this transparent reward and feedback system (Rigóczki, 2016) builds upon collection, a method that develops motivation for effective learning (Kenéz, 2016). Students acquire extra points for solo quests (extra assignments) which then allow them to skip other assignments they may not like or find difficult to complete. A special aspect of this game-based learning experience is that the classroom items symbolise some of the characteristics and skills necessary for being a good bilingual teacher.

Figure 19
The fully equipped and furnished classroom

Upon completing all the levels and collecting all the items for the classroom, the protagonist has everything to make the world peaceful by educating children.

Instagram as an education platform for teacher candidates – @ examoninsta

Using smart phones in education is not a new concept. Embedding smart phones into the learning process may develop students' attitude towards learning and improve their working moral during classes (Havassy, 2016). Research has shown that social media has a positive effect on the learning outcomes and complacency of students (Cao, Hong & Ajjan, 2013) while also having a significant effect on the quality of joint work, cooperation among students and their commitment towards the task (Al-rahmi, Othman, & Musa, 2014; Chugh & Ruhi, 2018). The goal of @examoninsta, an Instagram account where students can post the results of research they have conducted based upon articles, papers, podcasts, videos, etc. in a chosen area, is to expand upon the weekly topic. This practice allows students' thinking processes to unfold, thereby leading to future research goals.

Figure 20

A post from @examoninsta (own editing)

Only a smartphone with Internet access and the Instagram app is needed. The teacher sets up an account, such as @examoninsta, where the students can log in. By applying for a topic, they become the influencer for that week. The students' (the influencers') task is to create five posts, one each day in the chosen topic. After reading, listening and/or watching the mediums they previously found, the task is to highlight one important and interesting thought from each one. This message should be short but powerful, yet contain the most important details (see Figure 20-1). The influencer's goal is to draw the audience's attention to the topic, thereby enticing them read or listen to the whole article or podcast.

The influencers have the opportunity to complete the post with some of their own thoughts or questions (Figure 20-2) or use an '@' to tag their own Instagram account. The hashtags reference the keywords for the content which are needed for information management. By indexing the information and clicking on it, the audience has the opportunity to look at other posts in the same topic (Figure 20-3). Finally, students must include a list of references to identify the work cited (Figure 20-4).

By using social media, each student has the chance to receive social feedback (Poore, 2013). When testing the method for the first time, students had

to mobilise competencies such as, 'Native language communication', 'Foreign language communication', 'Digital competencies' and 'Learning to learn'. This method provided an opportunity to broaden the interests of students on an individual level, gain more knowledge in a given area, practise citation, and to get to know one another better.

Conclusion

The pandemic proved a very difficult period not only for teachers, but also for learners and parents alike. Teachers had to learn how to use, apply, and control a good deal of different applications so as to convey the teaching material, transition between live and online teaching, and promote the learners' growth while supporting them both mentally and emotionally. Despite their more mature status, even university students experienced loss as regards their personal and professional relationships. This is especially relevant to students in pre-school and primary teachers' education, a field that demands face-to-face practice and the self-experience of teaching techniques and methods.

Although the situation has certainly involved certain hardships, the situation has also opened up new opportunities, an aspect that contains its own advantages. Like the rest of the world, the instructors of ELTE TÓK's EL team have reacted to this emergency situation. Like teachers around the world, they have increased their mastery of the online world and discovered what opportunities online education provides. The abundance of online applications aided them in generating very useful exercises and tasks that may be later incorporated into F2F or blended learning, too. Despite the stress and the pressure on educators, the EL team has gained in self-confidence and self-efficacy while feeling positive about managing the difficulties and answering the challenges. As a part of this process, student teachers were offered a different kind of self-experience: exploring and learning about digital and online teaching. When given additional opportunities, they made creative individual or collaborative products that displayed their special knowledge and skills. Teaching practices have therefore been extended and enriched during the pandemic as previous 'best' practices have been tested and adapted. These experiences may lead to new ways of organising courses, including online elements and parts, which, for example, could decrease costs and save time for those who need to commute or economise on paper usage. In foreign language teaching, it has been proven that all aspects of language acquisition can be developed online, too. However, further research must be conducted to ascertain what effect the lack of personal presence and experience, or the necessity of autonomous learning have had on learners' knowledge and attitudes.

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