

F2F2D and back - How to effectively transfer F2F language courses to online/distance form in a short time

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IO1: A comprehensive roadmap of types of courses and its transfer needs



IO1.A5 **Report of the analysis**

Edited by PRISM

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Introduction

F2F2D and back – “How to effectively transfer F2F language courses to online (distance form) in a short time” is an EU-funded project which aims at developing a conceptual framework for transformation of various types of courses into sufficient online/distance form. The project is thus not simply a guide to use an online tool or to transfer a course with an online tool. Rather, it offers a matrix to find out the best possible combination of tools from a variety available for a particular course, enabling the teachers and facilitators to overcome the time burden and react:

- quickly enough to not miss the students and time;
- effectively, so with the selected combination of online/distance tools, the class can keep up with the original schedule;
- with selecting relevant tools and methods that fit both teacher and students of a particular course.

The project objectives are:

- to enable the target groups with a methodology and didactic tools for a smooth transfer of language courses into online/distance form successfully;
- to preserve basic time schedule and content and to aim to the same goals that have been set at the beginning of the course (e.g., obtaining a certificate, passing an exam, a visa or a job interview, etc.);
- to equip teachers and students with scenarios to develop distant and online support materials for language learning, which widens options to overcome absences or delays and be prepared for unexpected complications in the learning schedule.

During its life span, F2F2D will develop the following resources:

- Comprehensive study of types of courses and its transfer need;
- Teacher guide to available tools and methods of transfer;
- Step-by-step guide for transferring courses;
- Self-assessment and assessment tools for students, teachers and facilitators;
- Digital platform for distance/online education;
- Course Guide for Facilitators and Trainers of Teachers.

IO1 “A comprehensive roadmap of types of courses and its transfer needs” is a map summing up the key features of the most common language courses, together with the map of the most common and specific needs of learners and trainers, habits and behaviour of the target groups in the perspective of changing the language courses into on-line courses. The analysis concentrates on particular components of each course (listening, practicing, explanation of grammar and language architecture, individual exercises, vocabulary, communication and use of active language, group tasks, etc.) and provides a detailed description of the basic types of language courses. The IO was divided in 5 sub-activities which contributed to the achievement of the final results. O1.A5, this final report containing the analysis of the collected findings:

- O1. A.1 Preparation and creation of the target groups and stakeholders’ engagement plan;
- O1. A2 Mapping of the stakeholder's and agreements;
- O1. A3 Desk-based analysis on language courses;
- O1. A4 Focus groups with target groups and stakeholders;
- O1. A5 Report of the analysis.

All partners prepared a “target groups and stakeholders’ engagement plan”. The plan was created as guidelines for a common approach in the identification, research and mapping of the target groups and stakeholders. Every partner listed, according to the instructions provided by O1-A1, the potential stakeholders and target groups operating in their territories. Specific agreements ensuring their involvement were prepared and signed between project partners and stakeholders/target groups.

An important part of this IO was the desk-based analysis on language courses. A particular attention was given to the investigation of the key aspects of the language courses (such as listening, practicing, explanation of grammar and language architecture, individual exercises, vocabulary, communication and use of active language, group tasks). These aspects were analysed separately, but also in a modular way, taking into account the possibilities of combination of them, leading to various basic types of language courses.

Another fundamental part of the implementation of this IO were the focus groups (O1.A4) Special questionnaires were prepared by PRISM and used in the FGs. Skype meetings were held to define the methods applied and set the structure and content of the FGs which involved:

- Language teachers/trainers;
- Representatives of language education institutions;

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- Trainees of language courses;
- NGO employees and volunteers.

Aim of the FG was to identify the target groups' needs and point of views on the topic addressed by the project.

This final report includes all information collected during the previous activities. It is a public and internal document that will be used to comprehend the needs and constraints of the target groups and specific problems, and to shape the next outputs of the project.

Desk-based analysis on language courses: a compared analysis

Bulgaria

In Bulgaria the desk research highlighted some types of online education that have been most widely-used during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing out their advantages and disadvantages.

Types of online education:

I. Self-study with ready-made videos

II. Video link via Skype, Zoom or other similar tools

III. Platform with free access to classrooms with a teacher

IV. Platform with access to a specific course – group course or individual one

Another article summarises the support needed for teachers when going online and two connected issues:

- 1) How to provide technical support for teachers
- 2) Organisational support for teachers

The desk research in Bulgaria provides proven strategies shared by teachers on how to keep track of the efficiency of the distance learning:

1. **Setting clear rules**
2. **Gamification and linking the lessons with real life examples**
3. **Tracking time, leadership roles and sound signals**

Another interesting finding is about cooperative learning within the system for interactive learning of a foreign language and its main principles:

- **Positive interdependence** - when each student in the group performs their task well, the group succeeds;
- **Individual responsibility** - when working in a group, each student has a different task;
- **Equal participation** - each student has the same time for speaking or performing a task;
- **Simultaneous interaction** - when all students are involved in the task.

The desk research also highlighted that the **effectiveness and quality of online learning depends to a large extent on the positive attitudes of teachers and their self-efficacy in the use of ICT in the learning process**. Improving teachers' attitudes and technological self-efficacy should be the subject of targeted efforts, such as organizing specialized training, sharing experiences and practices, as well as promoting cooperation between teachers on the use of digital technologies.

Italy

The desk research pointed out some elements of online courses such as:

- Virtual Class Zoom
- Tutor: mother tongue teacher
- Interactive teaching methodology: “Task Based Learning” and “Content and Language Integrated Learning”
- Groups divided by language and level

An interesting article talks about the shift needed to change the language courses from face-to-face to online. While the pandemic has pushed many professionals and students to postpone their language study plans abroad, from another point of view this situation has opened up new opportunities for more forward-thinking schools, accelerating the introduction of courses and teaching methods of the English language that serve young people and professionals in the post-**pandemic world**, which is much **more digitized, interconnected, automated** and “**green**”.

Some language schools have also bet on training in the field of **specialist English (business, financial, legal, medical-scientific, etc.)**. **The focus is on the so-called sectors strategic, those on which the EU funds will arrive.**

Also, in Italy desk research one of the main findings is that “creating specific training courses for language teachers so they can be able to digitally transfer their knowledge to students is a key topic for the next years”.

Poland

In Poland the desk research found an article describing three types of university language courses and the way digital materials are delivered to teachers:

- courses created by a team of language experts, teaching methodologists, IT specialists, technicians, sometimes also psychologists;
- tandem courses that include academic teachers conducting language classes at a given university;
- the university orders digital teaching materials from a language expert who is also an IT specialist.

An article underlines the situations in which it may be effective and distinguish the activities that **should be performed face to face** (speaking, basics of writing, understanding spoken language) and those that **could be done via online learning** (repetitions, self-study). The language course using blended learning is called complementary.

An important point emerged from the desk research in Poland is that while separate training module works perfect for adult learners, children prefer to get instruction directly combined with given activity.

Czech Republic

The pandemic has revealed a number of challenges for education and training systems related to the digital capacities of education and training institutions, teacher training and **overall levels of digital skills and competences**. The pandemic has accelerated an existing trend towards online and hybrid learning. The level of digital competences of teachers and pupils is important for the implementation of effective online teaching

Germany

Due to the global Corona crisis, language teaching has also been completely switched to virtual teaching, posing major challenges for many institutions and teachers worldwide.

The desk research in Germany found out which are the biggest challenges:

CHALLENGE 1: THE VIRTUAL SPACE

CHALLENGE 2: THE TEACHING MATERIALS

CHALLENGE 3: THE TEACHING DESIGN

CHALLENGE 4: KNOW-HOW AND TIME MANAGEMENT

Communication is a key factor in the transformation from face-to-face to online formats

From a foreign language didactic point of view, digital tools are based on the following principles:

1. **Reflection:** brainstorming or mind-mapping applications such as Edupad or Padlet support learners or teachers in reflecting on certain work processes (e.g. feedback on language performance).
2. **Modification:** tools such as Quizlet or Kahoot allow for to produce digital learning products (e.g. flashcards) and then adapt them to their teaching and learning needs.
3. **Communication:** with applications such as Edupad, Todaysmeet Tricider etc., communication about the learning process takes place between learners.
4. **Multiplication:** the learning products (e.g. collage with padlet) can be easily shared in a simple way with fellow learners and the teacher.
5. **Creation:** learners and teachers can create simple learning and teaching materials themselves (e.g. collages with Padlet, vocabulary flashcards with Quizlet). Learners are active producers of the learning process.

6. **Collaboration:** teachers and learners actively work together within a digital framework in order to complete lesson-specific and supplementary tasks.

Interesting to list from the desk research the 10 language trends in eLearning that are becoming increasingly popular:

1. **VR Learning** (e.g., use VR for "visiting" other countries, hearing people talk, and learning from their examples)
2. **Mobile Technologies** (e.g., connect with online assistants, forcing them to ask them questions and provide replies)
3. **Customized Learning** (e.g., allows various apps to filter the users' unique areas of interest)
4. **Social Learning** (e.g., language communities where people ask questions and brainstorm together)
5. **Educative Gamification** (e.g., labyrinths, wars, and competitions)
6. **Sample-Based Learning** (e.g., analysing what a translator has done as well as learning from it)
7. **Video Learning** (e.g., discussing the video content with others via comments)
8. **User-Generated Educative Content** (e.g., using education plans developed by other learners)
9. **Instant Learning** (e.g., short training periods where you receive a small bit of info before focusing on another task)
10. **Online Flash Cards** (e.g., make your own unique online cards or download someone else's)

Focus groups with target groups and stakeholders: main findings

Bulgaria

Challenges

- Lack of natural human contact; some hidden psychological distress caused by the isolation and lockdown
- Some technical problems caused by online providers, poor internet connection
- Some students did not have personal laptops and had to share them with their family members and the fact that all family members were at home at one and the same time, using the internet and sharing in many cases one room
- Problems with hosting more than 15 students in one online lesson
- Software and hardware issues often hindered the process and that led to additional fatigue and loss of interest among students.

Digital tools used

The tools used by the participants in the group are: Skype, Zoom, Meet, Hangouts, Google classroom, BigBlueButton. It was outlined that all of them have their pluses and minuses. BigBlueButton, which is not that popular in Bulgaria, was presented as a good one for bigger classes and also a reliable one, suitable even for holding state exams, though it does not offer the option to do Listening exercises and to solve the problem they had to use Google classroom.

Required support for teachers

Not all schools could provide teachers with good-quality equipment and that made our work more difficult. More technical support should be offered to both students and teachers and there should be some extra lessons or tutorials on how to use the digital tools. The education system needs a platform that can evaluate the work of our students properly. The participants found some discrepancy between the results students showed online and the ones they got during the f2f tests. It was mentioned that teachers/trainers would appreciate some theoretical and practical introduction to some new tools.

Response to the digital tools

The majority of the students feel comfortable with the digital tools as they belong to the digital era and are used to the new technologies. Others, however, still feel uncomfortable and uncertain which affects their performance and they need technical support and encouragement on how to work in this new environment.

Ideal platform

The most important thing is that it should be user-friendly, reliable and sustainable. The participants mentioned that they need a platform that can allow work in groups or peer practice. A platform that can offer reliable testing of the students.

Optional questions

- How has the Corona pandemic affected your work in general?

Apart from the well-known negative aspects regarding the educational process such as isolation, lack of f2f contact, various psychological and health problems, the Corona pandemic has made teachers and students come out of their comfort zone and find new methods to manage the educational processes and has made many of us accept new technologies and use them in the classroom.

- Regarding to you, can online course be as effective as the face-to-face type of course?
Why yes? Why not?

The participants in the focus group agreed that they all prefer face-to-face courses but at the same time they believe that the online teaching can also be effective. And the proof for that is the results we get from the international exams we have prepared our students for. At the same time they agreed face-to-face communication is the preferable one. It seems that a form of blended learning would live up to their expectations.

- Which added value do you think digital tools have in language teaching?

Most of the platforms are in English and that even helps the learning process of the English language. The digital tools help students be more active as well as boost their independence and peer teaching.

- In general, where do you find digital tools to use in the classroom?

In many schools or educational centres, the digital tools are offered by the organisation we work for. These tools are suggested after thorough research and after the approval of the teaches/trainers' body.

- Do you run any quality assessments of online courses?

If not, why?

The management of the school and the educational department are responsible for quality assessments of online courses. The results of the tests are analysed by the platform we use (Google Classroom) and

discussed with teachers/trainers. The assessments are done regularly in the form of unit or term tests after finishing the teaching unit in google forms.

- Do you measure students' progress? If yes,

We measure students' progress regularly, at least twice a month. The results are reported to students as soon as possible. Parents are also informed about the progress of their students via the electronic register.

Italy

Challenges

The lack of human contacts with students was the main challenge together with the lockdown imposed by the pandemic. The social divide has also increased in this period making distance learning more difficult. The online learning and teaching were an obstacle for students, the connection to the Internet was an issue and the availability of proper devices. The inclusion of disadvantaged students was a big issue together with the evaluation of the students which was complicated by the online distance learning. Spending too much time in front of a monitor was also hard to deal with. We had to change the activities from face-to-face to online to adapt to the new situation as the programmed activities were not suitable with online learning. Internet connection was a real issue. Socialisation issues were relevant, especially for younger students. Alternating face-to-face and online learning was an issue. Software and hardware issues really influenced the teaching process. In the first months, the new tools were unknown so it took a while to improve the performance of software and hardware to better manage online lessons. Doing online courses limited the possibility to break the barriers between students and teachers.

Digital tools used

Among the tools that participants use on a regular basis:

- Kahoot (2)
- YouTube (2)
- Google Jam board (2)
- Google Meet
- Google Forms and docs
- Google Classroom
- Microsoft Teams
- Wordwall
- Powtoon
- ZOOM
- Sli.do
- i-d-e-e.it (provided by a language publishing house Edilingue)

One respondent quoted an EU project, LEAP, which supplies many tools to work online:
<https://danilodolci.org/media/leap-io2-pbl-methodology-it.pdf>

Required support for teachers

In the evaluation process of the students, we had many problems. With the tools provided by our schools, we were not able to correct and evaluate the students' homework, both oral and written evaluation. Teachers need a better platform to evaluate students as students get support from online resources and the evaluation is not real, but falsified. With sli.do it is possible to set an evaluation process, but we need to pay for full usage of the platform. The LEAP project provides many platforms for online learning and teaching.

Response to the digital tools

With distance learning we were able to reach students from outside our city so enlarging our geographical outreach. Students with disabilities and learning problems did not respond positively to the online courses as they need personal and tailored support.

Ideal platform

The platform should have an evaluation section to support teachers in properly evaluating students, a platform with audio and video resources for language students to facilitate the full immersion of students in the language cultural and social contexts. These resources are very important for language teachers so a platform with these resources will surely facilitate the process of finding and providing learning resources for language students. A platform for teachers should be easily to navigate, very interactive and easy to use, with useful resources. Peer-to-peer learning with sharing of own experiences and best practices. A platform should be mobile friendly, easy to navigate so students can also use their mobile to attend online courses. A platform must be standardised to be usable by different institutions like language schools and universities.

Poland

Challenges

- Change of work system. Despite the fact that we have run online lessons before pandemic, it was still a big change to go online entirely. Before there were only few individuals who wanted to have online classes, but after march 2020 the entire offer went online and we had to do everything on our own. The biggest problem was, and still is - group classes. The platform also appeared to be a challenge, as not all developed the same functionalities in the same time. For example, Skype has stopped and did not evolve at all, while Zoom or Teams changed a lot.

- Technical issues. We never had online classes before, we lacked knowledge and skills. While it was possible for pre-schoolers to transfer f2f courses to online lessons, that is why for 2-year-olds such classes had to be suspended. We had to re-learn how to keep the students focused. Additionally, we had to make sure that the tools we use would not be used against us by the youth. We know that this group is familiar with the tools more than we – teachers are. I still think that the tools I use are not mastered by me as much as I would like them to be.
- Being creative to attract and keep your child's attention. Lack of physical contact made it very difficult. The tools do not facilitate building relationships and bonds, so we had to work very hard, jump around, etc. I built scripts to keep the children active all the time. I changed the previously prepared scenarios so that the lessons were not repetitive and boring. I had the impression that sometimes I was such a “cartoon” for children.
- Bugs in applications that made switching, sharing difficult, temporary lack of internet.
- Lack of skills on the part of the parents, who are also sometimes unable to help their children during the classes.
- When we have some courses, we meet in the public space, while online means that we let everyone into our homes. Despite the fact that we should feel safe at home, teachers and trainers are sometimes embarrassed by it. The privacy barrier is broken. This also works for young people - they are reluctant to share their image and real surrounding. Lots of people talk to me from their own bed, there is a new habit of these people that they can stay in bed and still participate in the class.
- The problem was sharing your image. In the case of my child, all lessons were recorded and I did not receive any information whether the recordings would be secured somewhere. Such things should be agreed in advance.
- I missed the tutorial at the beginning, everything was too new and I had to go through it all by myself.

Digital tools used

- Teams are already working well; the Zoom seems to have the most stable connection. After all, it seems to me that it is all a matter of getting used to the application, once you get to know it, you feel safe with it and you prefer to work with it. Functionalities or features that I find very useful are smoothness, screen sharing with giving control over the screen, another person can work on my screen, there are drawing boards, I can ask to fill in a task and it is done there, I can leave notes, files. Everything is treated comprehensively.

- The problem with Teams is that every institution and every position in the institution has a separate account. I am working for several institutions, in different roles, this multiplicity of accounts becomes very difficult to comprehend. Teams is very comprehensive, for tasks, for file transfers - yes. But for training meetings, I am an advocate of clickmeeting. Clickmeeting is a Polish product, it is not relatively expensive and very convenient.
- Skype is well suited for one-to-one tuition with one student. I have a student who lives in the countryside and problems with the Internet occur often. In this particular situation skype proved to be the best.
- Skype is good for adults, for one-to-one lessons, we just do what we do in the classroom with the textbook, without many attractions.
- I am a fan of Zoom for group activities, the division into rooms is a very useful solution.
- We can also divide students into groups on teams.
- Backgrounds are essential, kids don't want to show what their room looks like
- I connect Skype with Google tools - when one tool crashes, the other stays
- Quizlet - I had a lot of fun with my students and parents using this app.

Required support for teachers

- It would be worth presenting these tools more broadly.
- It would be good to have someone who will explain the working mode for each application and introduce us to supporting tools, e.g. Trello, mentimeter, quizlet
- Lack of basic computer skills. It turns out that if we have a problem with the microphone, there can be a lot of reasons for that.
- In the beginning, we had a separate person who was only dedicated to providing information and technical support, both for us and for students and parents. We have created the position - technical officer. I focused on teaching and the technical officer solved technical problems.
- We lack instructors and tutors related to these tools.

As far as we think about using a new tool in the lesson, this is usually the thing we do before, we have time to prepare and test it. However, with technical problems, we have to take action and solve the problem in a few seconds, a maximum of a few minutes. Therefore, a search engine where I can enter the problem would be a good solution. You enter the search engine

built into the platform, there you have “a check list”. I know you can google it, but it takes much longer this way

Response to the digital tools

- My students are always enthusiastic. For me, it is also a kind of excitement. I have developed a certain process, I start with testing the tool during individual classes, then I use the same in a small group, if it works, I introduce it to classes, with e.g. 40 participants
- For me, the biggest obstacle is the long registration process, so I encourage everyone to have Gmail account, because then everyone quickly joins the exercise. QR codes are a good example of a facility that helps to overcome this problem.
- Quizlet and questions designed to make everyone feel valued. Whenever the slogan "now there is going to be a quiz", everyone is mobilized and these reactions were very positive and encouraging all the time.
- If the group likes an activity or game, they keep asking, wanting and expecting to take advantage of it. Then I could base most of my toddler activities on this one tool because they like it so much.
- We, as teachers, are looking for new activities and new ideas ourselves, because we are simply bored. It's great that you just have to go to some forum on Facebook and there is always something new you can come across.
- At the beginning, my students were looking for various activities on the Internet, but when there was already the second lockdown, the surfeit was felt.

Ideal platform

- A well-functioning blackboard, a place where I could draw grammar rules, I usually open a word file and write it there. For example, how will the endings change during the variation. The Teams' board does not work so well in this area.
- Clear cockpit to make the interface functional and intuitive.
- There is always a problem between keeping it simple and providing a lot of functionalities. The cockpit itself should have the most frequently used functions, and the more advanced ones should be hidden or displayed on the different access level.
- Screen sharing is always a problem whether we are sharing a screen, screen window, or presentation.

- The issue of sharing audio is a nightmare. Apparently, the problem is if someone works on a McBook, if I turn on the sound, nobody hears anything on the McBook.
- The possibility of preparing and uploading videos, presentations and files to the platform in advance is extremely convenient. Due to that I do not have this problem in my head, I feel safe and I have a scheme and a plan to follow.

How is quality assessment arranged while online learning?

- At our university, all classes are recorded, then they are automatically uploaded into Moodle, I know that they are viewed by my boss. I know that the boss checks if all the elements are available, e.g., if there is a forum, etc. We did not have any host visit during the classes, but 100% of the meetings are recorded.
- From the student's point of view, the dean set up for us a separate thread in every subject that concerns pros and cons. This is where technical issues are reported – f.e. whether the lectures are displayed properly. The problems that are reported there are solved on an ongoing basis. This is the place for students' feedback.
- The evaluator is a parent who sometimes comments during the classes. This is something that on the one hand is very cool, because we have live feedback, but it is stressful because we are not able to predict everything technically. Our work is also assessed by parents from this perspective.
- We don't have grades; we don't test because we work with young children. As the owner of the school, I have never controlled my employees, I have never visited lessons. We often meet in the team and that's where we dispel any doubts, it helps us improve the quality of teaching.
- I personally hate online classes - I believe that I teach less effectively then.
- A lot depends on what the course is and what their expectations are, if they come and want to pass the state exam, there is a test after each fragment of the material
- As for people who care about learning the language for other purposes, I do not introduce tests. I can see how they talk to me, can they express themselves in more detail, or only in short sentences and saying generalities.

Do you use any surveys, questionnaires?

- The questionnaires are used once or twice a year and they regard the satisfaction with the quality of the activities and the willingness of the children to take part in them. The feedback was positive, which gave us wings. Then, in May, we conducted surveys, but it turned out that some tiredness was already felt.
- We also used questionnaires, and there was such an overheating at the end. The kids were fed up with computer classes.
- We did the surveys once a month, because we had thematic months, e.g., everything about animals, seasons, travels. We asked f.e. about the activities they like best.
- We do not have surveys, the measure of success is the success of our students. If they feel like it, we carry out exams in the manner of state exams. There was a large group of students who said in March that they did not want to learn online and that they would wait. In fact, only after returning to traditional learning, they returned. It was not a problem to suspend these courses for them with a convenient payment setting.

How did you attract attention of very young students (preschool)? (question of the participant)

- When it comes to keeping toddlers' attention – we had to concentrate on real objects for example showing my shoe, going to the fridge, showing them the contents of the fridge. The wheels on the Wordwall where they selected the item and then were asked to bring it and show it to others. Walking around the house and showing different activities. All the time in this direction of action, not just watching.
- It was very fruitful that we managed to develop a good and profound relationship between the students and the teacher. When it was time to teach online, the main motivation was to see the teacher, and this often made the children more eager to participate in the classes. The children could see their beloved teacher.
- We focused on reality; it built such truthfulness.

Czech Republic

Challenges

The first concern is that certain learners **do not have their own devices** (smartphone, tablet, personal computer etc.). It's typically due to the financial situation of parents or students themselves. Another challenge is **the poor internet connection**. Several students of the teachers who visited focus group did have a **low level of digital literacy**. Many students are

often **missing at the time** of online education, especially the young generation (postgraduate students) take the extraordinary situation like a holiday to learn from home. Teachers consider it difficult to **provide resources to each of their students who require further explanation and learning online** – it's hard to have e-learning opportunities dependent on the individual needs of each student. In addition, teachers find it difficult to engage timid and inactive students in distance courses environments. There are a small number of students who actively engage in the learning process. Some of the students don't concentrate and even prefer to sleep, whenever they are required to participate in a videoconference. Teachers were also highlighting the **socialization aspect of the online learning**. It seems to be difficult to improve the personal connection between the teacher and students online without physical closeness. Interaction among the students and the teachers are very significant for education. Moreover:

- Online student feedback is limited
- E-learning can cause social isolation
- E-learning requires strong self-motivation and time management skills
- E-learning is limited to certain disciplines
- Online learning is inaccessible to the computer illiterate population

Digital tools used

Most often used between participants:

- Moodle
- Skype
- YouTube
- Google Meet
- Google Forms and docs
- Google Classroom
- Microsoft Teams
- ZOOM

Required support for teachers

More support in **planning and preparation of courses**, mostly because it requires more time than traditional learning to function exactly as intended. Full support when it comes to **available online materials and resources** for our courses. Families of the students should be informed of their **involvement and interactivity in distance courses and monitor and maintain** their children. The **availability of facilities** for learners. Any **future educator training needs to**

integrate language learning new tech, technology-enhanced learning languages, telecommunications in language learning, and online courses in their curriculum, as technical implementation into language learning is unavoidable. We would also welcome the **support in evaluation process of students**.

Response to the digital tools

Although most of the students respond positively to the use of the digital tools, there are always two **extremes**. Small number of students are actively engaging in the learning process of each lesson and some students do not answer to the online education at all. This seems to be related to **student's lack of care, bad internet connection, poor communication skills, which prevents them from engaging in conversation and questioning and answering activities in the target language**. Some of the students simply prefer to be silent and do not speak.

Lack of self-motivation among students appears to be one of the primary reasons why students fail to complete online courses. In traditional classrooms, there are numerous factors which constantly push students towards their learning goals. In the setting of an online learning environment, however, there are fewer external factors which push the students to perform well.

Ideal platform

The ideal platform would be on the first place **easy to use**. There would be some kind of a repository of **online/digital resources**, complementary tools for teachers that would help teachers to complement traditional methods and enhance the learning experience to motivate students. **Video/audio content. Guidelines for teachers** on how to run the online course / how to use the available tools. The part of the platform would also be **evaluation and assessment tools**.

Germany

Challenges

- One of the biggest problems is still **technology**. Many don't have a camera or an adequate microphone. Often it reverberates because there are no headsets, for example. This fact reinforces it when people don't want to/can't speak.
- **Technical requirements** are not read and not checked in advance. As a teacher, you are forced to handle the technology on the one hand and to organise the lessons on the other. This is very exhausting. Especially with seniors, language teachers are happy if it works at all to switch on the computer. 1 ½ digital lessons is therefore enough.
- Usually, **one tool** in use is enough. The more tools, the more confusing or tedious it becomes. Participants are often overwhelmed by the flood of tools.

- EduDip is for example used as a tool by the vhs (adult education centre). The problem with ZOOM is that it is hosted in the USA, which makes **data protection** difficult.
- **Motivation:** It is also very difficult to find content that really interests and inspires participants. In face-to-face courses, motivation often comes from the group. This is missing in online environments.

Digital tools used

- My absolute favourite is Storydice (<https://davebirss.com/storydice/>). These are online cubes that people can make talk online by, for example, having to tell a story. There are different pictures on them, which can then be connected to each other.
The problem is that sometimes the pictures don't match the vocabulary of the participants. Self-labelling cubes would be great. That way the level could be adjusted.
- Digital textbooks (Klett and Huber Verlag and Schubert Verlag) are also great. Audio and video are integrated here. However, they are problematic for SUSi languages (rarely taught languages such as Norwegian and Japanese). There is too little or no material here. Also nice, the self-creation of interactive exercises and learning videos.
- Explanatory videos: For explanatory videos, good experiences have been made with simpleshow (<https://videomaker.simpleshow.com/de/>) and vyond (<https://www.vyond.com/goanimate-for-schools/>). Videos are good for interactivity. For example, audio from students can be recorded and integrated into videos. This way students get their own animated film. In combination with Padlet, you can fill a board with your own films by/for the class.
- Storytelling approach: By creating stories with digital tools, participants also improve their language skills. This is also very well received. One tool for this is, for example, Trixmix (<https://trixmix.tv/>) with which pupils can create their own animated films.
- Self-creation of exercises: Tools like Quizlet (<https://quizlet.com/>) and Learning Apps (<https://learningapps.org/>) are also great for creating your own exercises. These are then particularly well suited to the level of the learners and you can ensure the quality of the materials. (Caution is advised when taking exercises from the gallery. There are also many exercises with poor quality). The advantage is that you can create learning groups there. Quizlet also offers print versions or PDF versions. In this way, digital and presence can be combined.
- School TV ([Planet Schule](https://www.planet-schule.de/)): School TV also offers a large number of films that can be watched together. It is possible to cut out and export snippets.

- Tandem partners can be found in the respective mother tongue on the eTwinning site: <https://www.etwinning.net/de/pub/index.htm> It offers everyone (teachers, head teachers, librarians, etc.) working in a school in a European country a platform to communicate, cooperate, develop projects, exchange ideas and be part of one of the most exciting learning communities in Europe.
- PowerPoint: PowerPoint is also a good option to prepare lessons. Presentations can be created in advance and sent around. Readability is great here because you can zoom in, unlike other apps. Large font sizes are possible.

Required support for teachers

- **Exchange of experiences:** I miss the exchange with other language teachers. Also to address and **discuss negative** experiences. We talk too much about things that went well, but it would also make sense to focus on negative aspects. What do I do, for example, when a participant always turns off the camera? What do I do with demotivated participants who are difficult to inspire? It would be good to have a regular exchange here, also with other organisations.
- **Information about innovative tools and new approaches:** The digital world often evolves so quickly. Here it would also be good to have a section where new concepts and approaches are introduced to keep language teachers up to date. I don't just mean new tools, but also **new ways of working together** in a group or **giving feedback**.
- **European aspect:** It would also be interesting to gain insight into other countries. How are courses run in Italy, for example? What works better there? That would interest me personally as further training and development.

Response to the digital tools

- **Levels of learners:** Many of my learners are at different language levels. Many online resources are not suitable for beginners and have, for example, vocabulary that has not yet been taught.
- Setting **communicative tasks** in particular is difficult. How do you get participants to speak? One option for me is so-called tandem learning, e.g., with a native speaker. However, this is less helpful for beginners.
- In addition, many are **inhibited to speak**. They don't dare to speak the foreign language online. Here I have found that role-playing helps. For example, people are given new personalities or I send instructions in the chat (example: make an appointment with a

colleague). This works better in small groups. Pictures can also be given, which are then described to each other.

- **Feedback and control:** In breakout rooms it is difficult to control what is done. It is also difficult to give feedback. This means that teachers need more support from additional staff.

Ideal platform

- **Exchange with other language teachers:** The most interesting thing would actually be the possibility to exchange with other language teachers. In our team, for example, we tested one tool per month and then exchanged ideas about what worked well and what didn't work so well. It would be great to have such an opportunity to exchange experiences digitally.
- A collection of **best or worst practice** examples would also be good.
- Not only show a collection of tools, but also give some **background**. E.g., where/how long was the tool used. What might you have to watch out for and where does not work. That would be exciting to know.
- Information on topics such as motivation and basic technical knowledge, which are important for designing an online course, would also be helpful. In other words, to **map the big picture**.

MAIN FINDINGS

Challenges

- **Lack of natural human contact;** some hidden psychological distress caused by the isolation and lockdown
- Some **technical problems caused by online providers, poor internet connection**
- Some students did not have **personal laptops** and had to share them with their family members and the fact that **all family members were at home at one and the same time, using the internet and sharing in many cases one room**
- Problems with **hosting more than 15 students in one online lesson**
- **Software and hardware issues** often hindered the process that led to additional fatigue and loss of interest among students
- **Alternating face-to-face and online learning was an issue**
- **Social and digital divide**
- **Lack of skills on the part of the parents**, who are also sometimes unable to help their children during the classes

- **Online student feedback is limited**
- **E-learning can cause social isolation**
- E-learning requires strong **self-motivation and time management skills**
- E-learning is **limited to certain disciplines**
- Online learning is **inaccessible to the computer illiterate population**

Digital tools used

- Skype
- Zoom
- Hangouts
- BigBlueButton.
- Kahoot
- YouTube
- Google Jam board
- Google Meet
- Google Forms and docs
- Google Classroom
- Microsoft Teams
- Wordwall
- Powtoon
- Sli.do
- i-d-e-e.it (provided by a language publishing house Edilingue)
- Quizlet
- Moodle
- Storydice (<https://davebirss.com/storydice/>)
- simpleshow (<https://videomaker.simpleshow.com/de/>)
- vyond (<https://www.vyond.com/goanimate-for-schools/>).
- [Learning Apps \(learningapps.org\)](https://learningapps.org)
- Trixmix (<https://trixmix.tv/>)

Required support for teachers

- Not all schools could provide teachers with **good-quality equipment**
- **More technical support should be offered** to both students and teachers and there should be some extra lessons or tutorials on how to use the digital tools

- The education system needs **a platform that can evaluate the work of our students** properly
- Teachers/trainers would appreciate some **theoretical and practical introduction to some new tools**
- A specific person who is only dedicated to providing information and technical support, both for us and for students and parents. The position of the **technical officer** should be created
- More **support in planning and preparation of courses**
- Support in the **evaluation process of students**
- **Exchange of experiences with other language teachers**
- Information about innovative tools and new approaches
- **European aspect:** It would also be interesting to gain insight into other countries

Response to the digital tools

- The majority of the students feel **comfortable** with the digital tools as they belong to the digital era and are used to the new technologies
- Others, however, still feel **uncomfortable** and uncertain which affects their performance and they need technical support and encouragement on how to work in this new environment
- With distance learning we were able to reach students from outside our city so enlarging our **geographical outreach**
- **Students with disabilities and learning problems** did not respond positively to the online courses as they need personal and tailored support
- **Lack of self-motivation** among students appears to be one of the primary reasons why students fail to complete online courses
- **Levels of learners:** Many of my learners are at different language levels. Many online resources are not suitable for beginners and have, for example, vocabulary that has not yet been taught
- Setting **communicative tasks** is difficult
- Many are **inhibited to speak**. They don't dare to speak the foreign language online
- **Feedback and control:** In breakout rooms it is difficult to control what is done. It is also difficult to give feedback. This means that teachers need more support from additional staff

Ideal platform

- The platform should have an **evaluation section to support teachers** in properly evaluating students
- A platform with **audio and video resources for language students** to facilitate the full immersion of students in the language cultural and social contexts
- A platform for teachers **should be easily to navigate, very interactive and easy to use**, with useful resources
- **Peer-to-peer learning** with sharing of own experiences and best practices
- A platform should be **mobile friendly**, easy to navigate so students can also use their mobile to attend online courses
- **A platform must be standardised** to be usable by different institutions like language schools and universities.
- **A well-functioning blackboard**, a place where I could draw grammar rules
- Clear cockpit to make the interface functional and intuitive
- **Screen sharing is always a problem** whether we are sharing a screen, screen window, or presentation
- The possibility of **preparing and uploading videos**, presentations and files to the platform in advance is extremely convenient
- There should be some kind of a **repository of online/digital resources**, complementary tools for teachers that would help teachers to complement traditional methods and enhance the learning experience to motivate students
- **Guidelines for teachers** on how to run the online course / how to use the available tools
- **Exchange with other language teachers**: The most interesting thing would actually be the possibility to exchange with other language teachers
- A collection of **best or worst practice** examples would also be good
- Not only show a collection of tools, but also give some **background**. E.g. where/how long was the tool used. What might you have to watch out for and where does not work. That would be exciting to know
- Information on topics such as motivation and basic technical knowledge, which are important for designing an online course, would also be helpful. In other words, to **map the big picture**

Description of the basic types of language courses

Based on the results of desk research analysis and focus group results under IO1, a matrix can be filled with basic defined types of courses, using variables such as:

- **structure of the curriculum;**
- **method of learning;**
- **number of students;**
- **intensity;**
- **level of current/desired knowledge of the taught language;**
- **specialised/general content;**
- **ability of students/teacher to work with online tools;**
- **evaluation methods;**
- **Other useful information.**

This information will be used further to define a particular route for transformation of the course to online/distance course.

Map of the most common and specific needs of learners and trainers

From the analysis of the focus group findings, this is a list of needs of learners:

- suitable technical tools for online learning (internet connection, proper device)
- training on online tools used by teachers
- lack of skills on the part of the parents, who are also sometimes unable to help their children during the classes
- new ways of working together in a group or peer coaching

Relating to trainers, the most common and specific needs are:

- ability to handle more than 15 students in one online lesson
- how to engage students for longer sessions and keep their motivation high
- teachers/trainers would appreciate some theoretical and practical introduction to some new tools for online evaluation methods/platform
- how to include disadvantaged/disabled students who require special assistance
- being creative to attract and keep children attention
- how to improve the personal connection between the teacher and students online without physical closeness
- more support in planning and preparation of courses

- data protection skills and regulations
- how to improve the exchange of experiences
- new ways of working together with other teachers in a group or giving feedback