HUPEzine

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HUPE

28th

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Editor's Note

Hello again, dear HUPEzine and Newsletter readers!

The last few months were probably the most challenging ever for the whole educational system in the country, and, as always, Croatian teachers and their pupils have shown the maturity and engagement that is unlikely to be copied or found anywhere else. Therefore, I decided to publish both issues of our HUPE magazines together.
In the first one, we are offering you a glimpse of life as it used to be before COVID 19 and where we dealt with the question of relevance of the English Language competition ran by AZOO. We also followed beautiful stories where entire schools were turned into museums as well as kept track of all our colleagues experiencing new Erasmus adventures throughout the world.

When the pandemic came, the focus was shifted elsewhere. That is why this issue is dedicated to all the amazing teachers throughout Croatia who are constantly struggling to master all the digital tools that they knew something about or have never heard of, who are constantly sharing their materials on different websites or social networks, wishing to help whoever they can. I must emphasize that this note is being written while the coursebooks for the upcoming year are being chosen. Why is this of any relevance? What these teachers have shared for free is probably enough material to write several coursebooks more creative and more ingenious than anything you have ever spotted on the market.
HUPE wanted to go beyond English and that is why we asked all Croatian teachers to join forces once more and to let us see their virtual classrooms from primary schools and 7-year-olds to vocational schools or high schools. We also wanted to cover all of the subjects in order to give you a clear picture of what is happening in virtual schools as we speak which was difficult to predict or even imagine only three months ago.

I hope I gave you a good reason to open the issue, read every article carefully and take a minute to show appreciation to the people who left their classrooms, and in only a couple of days exchanged them with screens wishing the best for their pupils.

So, my dear colleagues, as a teacher and also as a mother, I thank you not only for the greatest issue of HUPEzine and Newsletter ever, but also for demonstrating the skills, the strength and tons of understanding and support, thus showing all our students the path to follow.

Anita Žepina, editor

life before covid 19

Nikolina Pranjić

Photography project in the classroom

The New York Times

A Fisherman in New York's Sea of Faces

'Humans of New York,' by Brandon Stanton

By JULIE BOSMAN NOV. 6, 2013

Brandon Stanton, left, photographed and talked with Jonathan Cummings, who was restocking an East Village bar on Tuesday.

Here's how Brandon Stanton spends several hours each day: He walks up to total strangers in New York City, requests permission to take their pictures and then asks questions so personal they might make Oprah Winfrey blush. "What was the saddest moment of your life?" Mr. Stanton asked Jonathan Cummings, a 29-year-old from Queens who was loading crates of beer into a restaurant in the East Village on Tuesday. Mr. Cummings, who had just agreed to be photographed and seemed charmed by Mr. Stanton, didn't hesitate before giving an answer. (It involved an arrest after a brawl in Las Vegas.)

With a combination of disarming folksiness and passable — though admittedly inexpert — photography skills, Mr. Stanton has achieved one of the most unlikely success stories in a city filled with them. After posting pictures and quotations on his Facebook page, Tumblr blog and website, HumansOfNewYork.com, he has amassed more than one million fans in three years. Now, hundreds of those pictures and interviews have been compiled into a book, "Humans of New York," which has become an instant publishing phenomenon. After its first week on sale last month, the book landed in the No. 1 spot on the New York Times hardcover nonfiction best-seller list, catapulting past Bill O'Reilly's "Killing Jesus." During an event at the Barnes & Noble in Union Square, Mr. Stanton attracted such a crowd that the store ran out of his books. Mr. Stanton — a hybrid of interviewer, photographer and eager chronicler of street life — said this week that he was still stunned by the runaway success of his book, which has more than 145,000 copies in print. "It seemed like a stupid idea, just taking pictures of people on the street," he said. "But there's a comfort, an affirmation, a validation in being exposed to people with similar problems."

Mr. Stanton is a 29-year-old Georgia native with no training as a journalist. He has owned two cameras in his life and admits he has never learned the technically correct way to use them. When he moved to New York in 2010, he was friendless, nearly broke and recently relieved of his job as a bond trader in Chicago. In the three years since, he has transformed himself into a recognizable face (who is approached by fans several times a day) with a healthy income unusual for a young, inexperienced photographer. Mr. Stanton grew up in an Atlanta suburb and attended the University of Georgia. After graduating as a film major, he found a job in Chicago as a trader, and on the weekends, he spent hours photographing that city. But after he was laid off in 2010, Mr. Stanton decided to shift to a completely new career. He moved to New York, where he didn't know a single person. Much of his time was spent on an ambitious project he dreamed up, photographing 10,000 people and mapping their whereabouts as a sort of virtual map of New York. After several months, he began moving in a different direction, interviewing his subjects and asking them about their lives, their struggles, their disappointments and their hopes.

The New York Times

Most people brushed him off. "It was very emotionally draining at first," Mr. Stanton said. "I'd be really disappointed when people would say no."

But his project gradually attracted an audience, mostly people in their 20s who left enthusiastic comments on his website. When his Facebook page had collected more than 200,000 followers, Mr. Stanton decided it was time to collect the pictures into a book. St. Martin's Press, part of Macmillan, was the only publisher willing to print the book in hardcover. Yaniv Soha, the acquiring editor, said Mr. Stanton has the rare gift of being able to connect with random people. "It's about the stories as much as it is about the photos," Mr. Soha said. "It's really about his ability to relate to people and convey what makes them individual." Amazon named his photography collection, which features 400 faces, a "best book of the month" for October. In a starred review, Publishers Weekly said, "There's no judgment, just observation and in many cases reverence, making for an inspiring reading and visual experience."

On Tuesday morning, Mr. Stanton set off on the sidewalks of the East Village in search of material. While he has taken pictures in every borough, he tends to focus on Manhattan for its density and varied street life. He does everything he can to warm up his potential subjects, wearing a backward baseball cap, gray hoodie and New Balance sneakers to look casual. When he approaches a stranger, he hunches over or squats down, sometimes sprawling his 6-foot-4 frame on the sidewalk.

"It's all about making myself as nonthreatening as possible," he said. "I lower my voice, I get down on the ground."

The first person Mr. Stanton approached was Ruben Lora, a 43-year-old maintenance worker, who was sitting outside a bar with four large bottles of laundry detergent at his feet. He instantly agreed to be photographed, telling Mr. Stanton about his previous life as a would-be major league baseball player, when he played in the Dominican Republic until he was in a motorcycle accident that ended his career. Hiking up a leg of his paint-flecked jeans, he showed Mr. Stanton a scar on his calf. The accident, Mr. Lora said, "ruined my life." He paused. "I don't know why I'm telling you this," he said.

Shortly afterward, Ignacio Quiles, a 60-year-old haberdasher, stopped while walking his dogs to talk to Mr. Stanton. Within a few minutes, he was reminiscing about the death of a close friend and the twists and turns his career has taken.

It is that intimacy, combined with photos that are plain and straightforward rather than high concept, that has made Mr. Stanton's fan base so fervent. As Mr. Stanton was preparing to wrap up his wandering for the day, Jessica Ruvin, a student at the Fashion Institute of Technology, approached him on the street and asked him to pose for a picture with her. "I'm such a big fan," she said. "He exhibits the best part of New York — people on the street."

To introduce you to the story, first I have to tell you why I decided to try this type of project. This story, or project above, motivated me to try to do something similar. Brandon Stanton's project 'Humans of New York' was a project that I admired. Walking up to total strangers, taking their pictures and telling their story from his personal angle was something very brave and new, and something that I wanted to incorporate in my work, in my lessons. I started reading different ideas and articles about photography and an idea was born.

Photography is a great tool for teaching. It is a fantastic skill for children of all ages to learn. It can help boost a student's creativity and imagination. Moreover, it can also give them focus and help improve their concentration. Finally, it is a valuable skill that they can use in later life. Creative educators can also look for ways to tie photography into different subject areas like science, geography, math, and languages.

Visuals have the power to bring the outside world into the classroom. Photographs, with their realistic depiction, have even more potential to do so than, for example, drawings. What is more, photographs are easy to create these days, so learners can decide in what way they want to capture reality, which can be particularly useful in case their drawing skills are not that good.

Reasons why teachers might be discouraged to use photographs in their teaching is because of the time demands. However, if there is no space or time for taking photographs in a lesson, students can be asked to bring in their favourite photographs to work with. Also, many people these days are equipped with phones that can take photographs, and they enjoy taking them on a daily basis. Nowadays, nearly everybody is able to preserve their photographs in digital form, so these images can be used later in presentations or videos, serving either as a follow-up to the previous lessons or as completely new material. Once teachers have their own set of photographs, ideas of how to use them will start flowing. What is more, special personal meaning of the photographs will make teachers use them to their full potential in contrast with some random anonymous teaching materials.

Hopefully I will provide you with some great ideas on how you can use photographs in your classroom.

1. Photo novel

The first thing you have to do is to take the camera and take some shots. Have your students come up with an idea for a short story plot. Take a sequence of photos of your students acting out different scenes of the plot. Print them out, assemble them into a book and write captations bellow each one. Also you can make a book of poetry where students have to invent some lines that are suitable for each photograph.
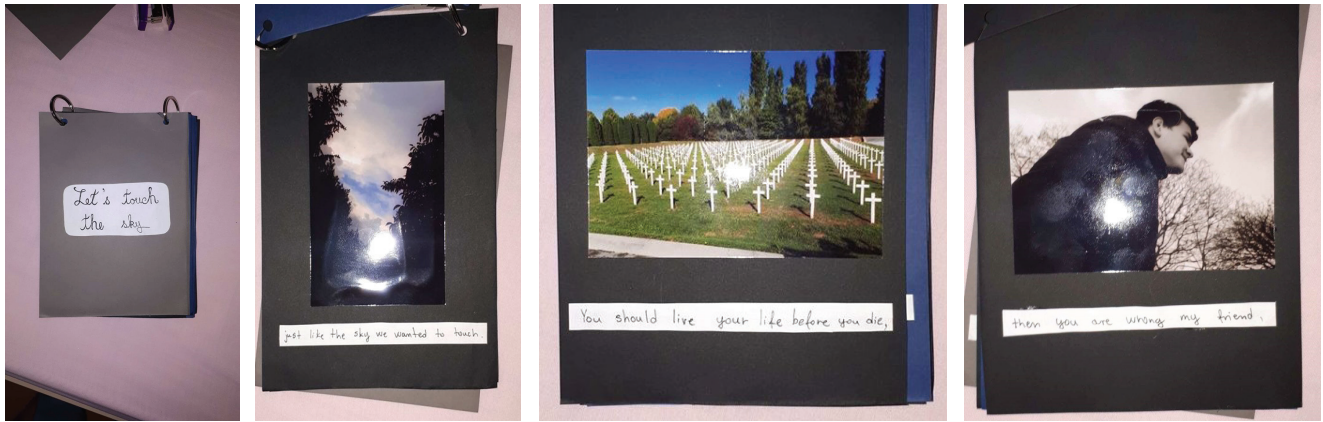
Additionally, with activities of this kind, where students create something on their own, it is always possible to discuss their masterpieces as they are proud of their work and usually happy to share.

2. What's wrong with this picture?

You can have a lot of fun while practicing modals like should, shouldn't, must, mustn't. Take a few pictures of objects or things around the house in places where you wouldn't ordinarily find them. For example, shoes in the fridge, a pizza on a pillow… First ask students what is wrong with each picture and then they have to tell you where this item should be: *The shoes shouldn't be in the fridge. They should be in the hall*.

3. Optical illusions

This project uses forced perspective to play tricks on a viewer's perception of the relationship between differently sized objects in a photo. The best way to approach this is to shoot a recognisable subject and get them to pretend that they are interacting with a much larger object or subject, which is actually in the background. Choose a small aperture to provide a large depth of field that will enhance the effect.

4. The 365 project

A classic photo project - shoot a photo a day for a year. There are two paths to follow with this one. Either restrict yourself to a single frame (tip: shoot in raw so you can make adjustments later) or choose one photo from a series you manage to squeeze out each day.

Your students can also come up with some lyrics or just describe their life through a series of photographs.
Encourage them to share their memories and their dreams.
Talking about something personal is a great way for them to relax and practice communication.
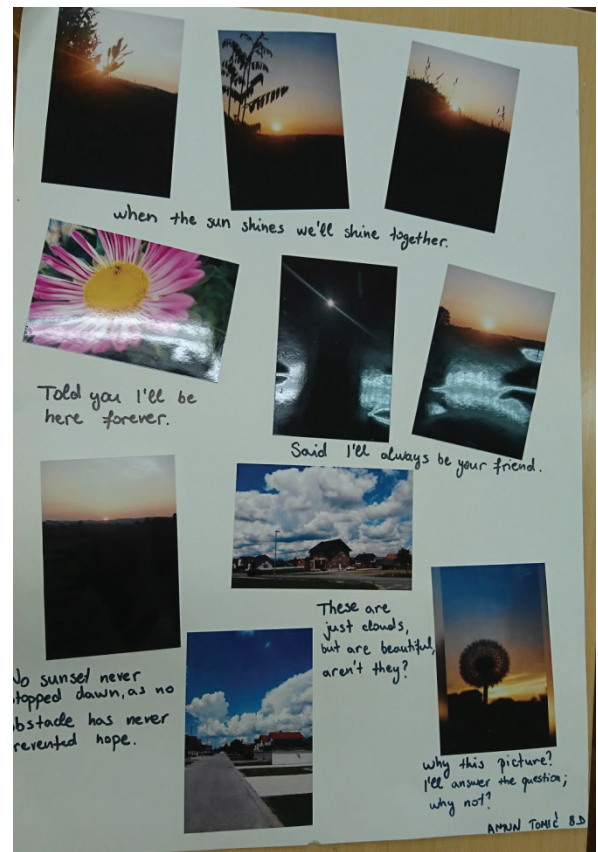
5. A Day in Life

This is an extremely fun project that all your children can partake in. Furthermore, it is an activity that is not confined to the classroom. A Day in the life is exactly as the name states. Your students must take various photos throughout their day. This aims to show a personal snapshot of their life and the type of things they do. A day in the life can really inspire creativity in your students. Many of the shots will be simple such as photos of food, or photos of their house. Some students will go out of their way to create interesting photos or put themselves in fun positions.

The use of photographs provides a way to engage in analyzing text. Students can verbally describe their observations and ideas which is completely opposite of listening to the ideas of their classmates.
The epistemological function of photography is the use of photographs as a source of new knowledge. Through individual and collective study, reflection, and analyses of photographs, teachers access the epistemic potential innate to using photography as part of the process of teaching. Teachers, who use photography as a language of inquiry, have a chance to continually construct new understandings about children's learning and to better understand what they want to know and "how they come to know it."
Photography as a language of inquiry conveys and provokes meaning. Thus, photography can be a powerful research tool for educating students and teachers in the construction of knowledge about the processes of teaching and learning; and as well, photography is one way to make visible these same processes.

Jakob Patekar

"The standard you walk past is the standard you accept."

- David Morrison

How the competition in English fails students and teachers

Since I became a teacher some thirteen years ago, I have been listening to teachers bemoan the competition in English organized by the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), whether at elementary or high school level. I know a number of colleagues who have sent letters of complaint throughout these years, and I know a few who were at some point members of the National Committee for the Competition and who tried to change the system from within. Obviously and unfortunately, the letters and the attempts were in vain.

What are the major complaints? That the tests are too difficult, that some tasks are inappropriate, that there are answers that should be accepted, but aren't, that elementary school students only get to compete in grade 8, and – perhaps most important – that a great number of fantastic students don't feel they "know" English well upon taking the test.

My discontent with the competition was dormant for a couple of years as I no longer worked in elementary school, but it culminated in 2020 when I realized that nothing has changed in more than a decade. That is when I thoroughly analyzed the test for the school level of the competition in grade 8 in 2020, as well as the regulations regarding the work of the Committee. The whole investigation is available on my site, so I will not go into all the details here. Rather, I'll focus on the key findings in the form of a list that shows all the ways the competition fails students and teachers.

1) There is **no** record of the **goal** of the competition. Is it to test grammar, to identify talented students, to measure communicative competence? How can a student work toward a goal if they don't know what it is?

2) Similar to the previous point, there is **no catalog** of what students need to know or be able to do in order to do well in the competition. This means that students and their teachers know neither what the goal is nor the means to achieve that goal; in other words, they don't know what to do to prepare for the competition.

3) Tests in the competition include tasks that are several **levels above** the students' target level. Some may say this is fine because the competition is for the best students who we presume are above the target level, but that level should be defined, along with the goal and catalog of knowledge and skills.

4) Many tasks on the tests in the competition are inspired by those found in Cambridge ESOL exams (FCE, CAE, CPE). Each of the Cambridge exams has a very specific format, and a number of tasks found in those exams are usually **not used** in regular English classes in Croatia. Learners who want to take a Cambridge exam know well that they have to prepare for it – not just by learning the language but by learning the format of the exam as this has a major impact on how well they will do on the exam. Hence, the tasks in the competition are not very familiar to our students who are not preparing for a Cambridge exam.

5) We don't know the goal of the competition so it is difficult to ruminate on which tasks would be appropriate for it, but I'm sure they should be aimed at testing communicative competence and not **isolated skills**, such as grammatical competence. Students are taught in line with the communicative approach, but that is not how they are tested in the competition.

6) The instructions for the competition state that culture is an essential part of the test in the competition. We all know that culture is intertwined with language – there's no question about it. Thus, intercultural competence is considered a part of overall communicative competence and should be developed and assessed. However, the culture task in the competition **doesn't assess intercultural competence** but rather tests students' knowledge of historical and geographical facts. In 2020, it tested students' familiarity with London, exclusively. After eight years

of learning English, will facts about London help the student get their message across in English? (Consider this question especially in light of the fact that there are three times more non-native than native speakers.)

7) The work of the Committee is **not transparent**. The Agency has confirmed that the Committee doesn't keep minutes of their meetings and that the reports on their work are – lost. Without these, it is impossible to know which issues they faced and whether and how they addressed them. Furthermore, there are around twenty members of the Committee, and it is not clear who does what; for example, I know that one person deigns the test, and one more takes a look at it, but this isn't public information. Some members have been on the Committee for ages, which would only make sense if they were doing a good job. Perhaps if more people were rotated annually or every couple of years, the competition would benefit from new perspectives and ideas.

8) Looking just at the test at the school level of the competition in grade 8 in 2020, it is obvious that the person who made it did **a poor job**. The test-makers should be versed in test development, and more members of the Committee should be involved in providing feedback to the test-maker before the test is released. In fact, all the members of the Committee should be trained in assessment matters.

9) In the midst of the 2020 debacle, three exceptional and very qualified professionals (a top Croatian scholar and ELT methodology professor, a textbook author and pre-service mentor, and a curriculum developer, to name just a few roles) left the Committee because their expert opinion, which differed from that of the Committee President, was ignored and suppressed. A committee in which a person's **expert opinion isn't acknowledged** simply because it is different from the centrally enforced one is a committee that stifles critical thinking. We have already established that there is no external evaluation of the committee (see #7), and it is clear that any attempt at change coming from within is quickly thwarted.

10) It would be easy to live with the fact we have a subpar competition because it takes place only once a year so you sort of get it over with and get over it, but the problem is that such a competition has **a negative washback effect** and thus could influence the way students are taught and assessed. Do we want students to think that knowing English is mostly about knowing how to transform sentences and words and being more informed about London than the Queen herself? Or do we want them to understand that English is about getting your message across to two billion people who speak it?

For all of the reasons above, I find the system of competition in English ill-conceived – it fails bright students and hard-working teachers. We have let it to fester for too long.

Gorana Babić
Erasmus visit to schools in Ireland

Gorana Babić and Vanja Sokol, the Croatian Language and Literature teachers at Primary School dr. Franjo Tuđman in Brela, attended the Erasmus KA1 course called 'Structured Educational Visits to Schools/ Institutes' and training seminars in Ireland from the 23rd February to the 1st March 2020. The focus of the courses is on the European Dimension (sharing, openness, connectedness and networking). The courses are a combination of seminars, lectures and workshops. The special value of the 'English Matters' courses is a group of activities called 'Field Project Context4Content' (an approach to cultural, historical, geographical and social experience with a curricular focus).

English Matters has selected a number of educational institutions related to the participants' educational level so that the participants could benefit better from a wider selection of good teaching practices. As it is said by English Matters employees, this model has shown to be highly satisfactory for both the visiting teachers and the institutions visited. The European Dimension in Education, within a sense of community, is also supported in this way. This structured course is organized with the intention of efficiently combining pedagogic visits to schools/institutes, workshops and seminars. It is implemented during the academic term, when schools and institutes can show the vibrancy of their daily life and operation.

On the 23rd February 2020 at 4 p.m. our introductory lecture at Clayton Hotel Ballsbridge started. All the participants of the various Erasmus courses being held that week were sitting together in the same room. We were kindly greeted by Mr. Eduardo from English Matters. There was a presentation on Irish history and culture. There we first heard of hurling. It is an Irish national sport - an outdoor team game of ancient Gaelic-Irish origin. The game has prehistoric origins, so it has had a long tradition (since 1272 BC). It is a stick and ball game played on the grass by teams of 15. Later we were listening and playing an Irish instrument. The Irish claim a traditional musical heritage that might well be their greatest export, along with Guinness beer.

After the cultural introduction, we were instructed on which tasks to do to track our new knowledge related to the school system and culture of Ireland. The individual task was to write a reflective journal and the group task was expected to be done and presented at the end of the course. The group task consisted of making 3 slides for a presentation of our learning there.

We had dinner at the O'Connell pub. Our guide told us that the pubs are not just places of intoxication as we had thought. There are various types of pubs, from those specializing in sports and watching sports events on the big screens, to smaller and more intimate places where you can sit with your friends for a chat or sit on your own and read a book with a pint of beer or glass of whiskey, or both. This one is for both. He also said that some pubs, however, are so large that they are known as small theaters where you can watch a variety of performances, musicals or concerts with a pint of cold beer. Cool! The beer is ordered at the bar. If you sit at a table hoping that someone will serve you, you might get old and thirsty. We were warned by the guide that sitting at a table was like a signal that you had come to eat. If you order a drink without food, you could easily be asked to go to the bar. That doesn't mean you can't sit there and drink beer, but you'll have to bring it yourself. If you came only for a drink, first you should go to the bar, pay for a drink and then you could walk, take a table or the position that suited you best. If you stay at the bar, don't be surprised if a stranger comes up to you or the barman starts a conversation with you. Irish people are talkative and communicative and also extremely helpful to strangers, which we experienced a lot of times during our stay in Dublin.

The second day, we had a lecture by a professor from Limerick and we found out a lot of interesting facts related to Ireland and the Irish educational system. For example, preschools are governed by the Health Ministry while paid maternity leave lasts 6 months, and fathers can take 3 months of unpaid paternity leave. There are a little more than 3000 primary schools in Ireland- many of them are small, gathered around the country (with 30 students and 2 teachers). It is difficult to close a primary school in Ireland. Schools were Church- controlled until 1831, when the Stanley Letter was published which expressed the need to denominate the schools. In other words, it was written that there shouldn't be any more religion in schools.

Today, schools are supported by the state, but they are not owned by the state. The pupils generally pass the class, they rarely repeat the year (because of insufficient knowledge). This is the case only under exceptional circumstances. The pupils get special support in mainstream schools to achieve the expected sufficient level of knowledge. In Ireland there are 30 000 assistants who support pupils with special educational needs. In Ireland, teachers are not dismissed until they stand for the school ethos. Primary schools are attended by children aged 4-12. Post-primary schools are mostly Church-owned and operated. Most schools have a fee, but parents are not obliged to pay it. (The state pays the teachers'salary.)

Generally, schools are Catholic. Even in the Protestant schools you find mostly Catholic pupils because Catholics send their children to schools which are considered to be good schools (meaning that the curriculum is the same in Ireland, but the quality of teaching is not). The average class size is 30 students (it varies from 25 to 30) with 1 teacher, while in fee-paying schools, the average class size is 15 students. Fee-paying schools can hire more teachers. When it comes to vocational schools, there are 260 of them operated by training boards. It is a 2-year course focused on vocational skills

where pupils become apprentices upon graduation. There are also Community / Comprehensive schools mostly formed as a mixture of Secondary and Vocational schools (with 50- 60 pupils).

Something special in the Irish educational system is also the Transition Year (for the pupils aged 15–17). It is compulsory in some schools and optional in others. During this year pupils take part in activities such as charity work, work experience placements, project work, international trips or exchanges and excursions. Students are then allowed to participate in courses such as creative writing, film-making, public speaking , etc. It is actually an opportunity for students to become more mature and more engaged in self-directed learning. This year is also the opportunity for them to explore career options and to choose subjects for the senior cycle which comes after the Transition Year.

When it comes to foreign languages, in some primary schools children start learning it at the age of 11-12, but very few. In Croatia, the school year is broken into 2 terms, while the school year in Ireland is broken up into 3 terms. There is a mid-term break (one week) around the public holiday at the end of October, two weeks off for Christmas - generally the last week in December and the first week in January, as well as another mid-term break in February, two weeks off for Easter and the summer holidays.

The first school we visited was a secondary school in Dalkey. The typical school day starts at 7:30 with activities such as basketball, choir, hockey, etc. The school usually finishes at 3 p.m., but some pupils stay longer (until 7 p.m.) for extra-curricular activities or sports. Quite a few students with autism specter disorder are also integrated. There are many interesting clubs (83 of them), but the ones which most attracted my attention were: Ukulele Club, Blues Brothers, rock-climbing, horse-riding, Irish/ Spanish/ Model UN Debate, Apple Classroom, Coding, Dungeons and Dragons group and Board Game group (Cludo, Monopoly contests) created on the basis of pupils'needs (which means that the attention is paid to students' interests). All the students have iPads and they are used every day in school for various tasks and exam results are shown in so-called leak tables, which are lists published in newspapers.

The next school we visited was in Limerick, situated in the western part of Ireland, close to the Atlantic Ocean. Limerick is the third-most populous urban area in Ireland. The third school we visited was Dominican College. In all of the schools the teachers encourage the pupils to speak, and they constantly tell them that mistakes are desirable because people learn most easily through their mistakes. There also posters on the walls with affirmative messages on them, which I really liked and I will stick similar ones on the walls of my classroom. During English classes they discuss 2 or 3 texts, or 2 or 3 books at the same time in terms of the topic. The emphasis is on critical thinking. After reading the text, pupils exchange their opinions among themselves moderated by the teacher. The importance is on reading between the lines (finding the hidden meaning). Teachers don't yell, they are very quiet and calm with voice intonation. Student assessment is conducted twice a year, in December and June. In the meantime, students do not have tests. They are graded by the percentage of exams completed, not by a grade.

Since 1831, English has been compulsory in Irish schools. Because of such a decision and the complicated history of Irish-English relations, the Irish language is slowly disappearing. In elementary and secondary schools, it is taught as a compulsory subject, but most young Irish do not speak Irish or know only a few phrases. It was a very nice experience which I recommend to everyone.

Alenka Miljević

Museum Night at School

It all started three years ago when I applied for eTwinning mobility „Update Your History and Culture" that I attended in Riga, Latvia, and learned about how to use technology, web tools and various innovative methods in teaching art, history and languages.

If you want to take part in any of the eTwinning mobilities, your task is to prepare a project idea that should include the knowledge to be acquired during the mobility. This is exactly what I had done before applying. I created an eTwinning project idea that received the highest number of points and earned first place in this call for proposals.
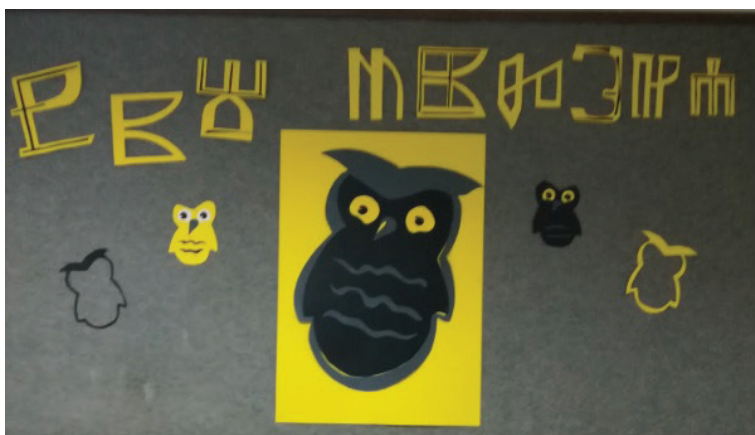
The mobility was really exciting and inspiring both professionally and personally as I had the opportunity to visit Latvia but also Estonia and Finland. We learned about Virtual reality, Thinkercard and other interesting tools. The course proved my own thoughts about the use of new technology with students. New technologies are an important tool we should use to update our teaching in order to wisely encourage our students to learn about history and culture.

The platform I have been using for years is the eTwinning platform where I collaborate with colleagues on projects together with students. The project that I had created to apply for the mobility came to life on the eTwinning platform. My colleague from Portugal, a history teacher, found the project interesting for his students and we started working together. We called the project Time Machine as we traveled through history to explore our culture and our past.

The first activity in the project was meeting each other so we organised a Skype meeting. Our students prepared questions and while one student was talking to his partner from Portugal the other student had to make notes. Later, they used these notes to create ID cards of their project partners in Canva.

The activity that had the biggest influence on my students and our school was The History of the Internet project. The task was to find old photos of the first computers and explore how Internet Safety is important. It was November and while we were working on the activity I came across a notice by the Croatian Museum Society in which there was a call for applications to participate in the Museum Night. I polled with my students and they voted „yes". This is when we started collecting old things. During the winter holidays we organised a workshop where students use an old typewriter to write the names of the items for our school exhibition. We collected over one hundred items, borrowed national costumes from the Cultural Artistic Society Jedinstvo and Museum of the City of Split lent us some old items, too. Our local cultural society performed at the opening ceremony but we are most proud of the collaboration with one of the mums who cooked old traditional meals for our Museum of the Senses.

https://spark.adobe.com/page/iWRS9ctyslQJX/

The event was a total success, so our students wanted to organise a Museum Night this year as well. I created an eTwinning project called The Sound of History and we decided to explore music and musicians of the past and to perform with our school choir. As some of our students attend music school in Drniš, we invited them to be our guests at the opening ceremony and they agreed. This year we borrowed Renaissance costumes from the National Theatre in Split, and we sang the Beatles and ABBA songs. Our students prepared a workshop where the visitors could learn to dance the twist and one of the classrooms became a disco with music from the seventies and eighties.

The exhibition included biographies of famous people of the renaissance that our students prepared in QR codes and with Thinglink. The visitors were given a quiz so they had to scan the codes or explore the Thinglinks to answer some questions to take part in our prize game.

Our plan is to continue with this tradition as our school is a rural Montainy School with the special status of difficult working conditions and our students don't have a chance to visit museums very often or at all.

In January 2020, I attended the BETT Show in London where I took part in the International TeachMeet and presented our Museum Night at School.

https://tmintbett.wordpress.com/line-up-2020/fanpage-alenka-miljevic/?fbclid=IwAR2HR0WYkj7XYgEMTikwu9DacSpzImVkzwlQPxPRAuAjKztjGwqNA26MZuA

We applied for an Erasmus KA2 project this year and we hope to have an International Museum Night next year together with our project partners from Greece, Slovenia, Slovakia, Finland and Spain.

Our students who worked on the eTwinning project Time Machine received European Quality Label awards and prizes that were handed by our colleague and Assistant Minister for Strategy and General Education, Lidija Kralj.

ONLINE TEACHING

Top 5 Tools for ELT

- Wordwall
- Liveworksheets
- Kahoot
- Wizer
- Microsoft Forms

Other popular digital tools: Padlet, Learningapps, Quizlet, Vocaroo, Bookwidgets, Quizizz, Adobe Spark...

Jakob Patekar

Based on the opinion of 150+ Croatian teachers of English polled in April 2020.

Agata Lukić
Osnovna škola Benkovac

Croatian Language in Distance Learning

Summary: The article presents a review of distance learning in the subject of Croatian Language. The purpose of Croatian Language is briefly presented, as well as an overview of the language activities that achieve that purpose. The role of circumstances that is the cause of distance learning is emphasized, and it results in questioning the methods and approaches of work by which distance learning is performed and thinking about the ways and reasons for using different tools. He mentions the role of digital competencies of teachers and the role of teachers in virtual teaching. The article presents the author's personal view of the situation, which is still ongoing and has no scientific conclusions.

The layered purpose of the subject Croatian Language is defined as "enabling students to clearly, accurately and appropriately communicate in the Croatian standard language."[1] It presupposes a distinction, but also an interweaving of four levels[2]:

- Educational level (mastery of concepts)
- Educational level (initiating the will to learn the Croatian language; encouraging a feeling of love for the mother tongue)
- Psychofunctional level (logical reasoning, but also abstract thinking necessary for understanding language laws and rules)
- Communication level (includes all forms of oral and written communication)

In all subject areas, communicative language competence is developed and the mastery of language activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing and their interaction is encouraged[3].

After determining the purpose of the subject Croatian Language, it is necessary to determine the conditions and ways in which this purpose is achieved. Long ago, methodologies listed the teaching foundations for achieving the purpose of language teaching. These are the student, the teacher, the language and the circumstances. They are all interconnected, and success in teaching depends precisely on the strength of that connection. The role of life or life circumstances as the fourth part of our didactic quadrangle is the topic of this article. Usually, the circumstances in the teaching had a different role from the current one. Methods and approaches differed depending on the geographical area (large differences between developed urban areas and geographically neglected areas), historical-political circumstances (my generation was educated in basements during the Homeland War), cultural (collision of different language habits). Coronavirus is a circumstance that has resulted in the organization of distance learning.

Croatian language classes in the fifth and sixth grades take place five hours a week, and four hours in the seventh and eighth grades. It takes a lot of effort and skill in designing activities to achieve outcomes in virtual teaching that will not turn students away with their quantity and apply active learning methods. It is necessary to point out at the very beginning the difference between the use of tools in regular classes and in distance teaching. The preparation of materials in digital tools does not imply the activation of the working atmosphere in the virtual classroom per se. So the biggest challenge of this kind of teaching is not mastering technology, but using technology to activate students to use our information from digital classrooms to gain knowledge and experience that will be used outside the virtual world. Digital technology is changing blackboard and chalk. We prepared all the materials that would be on the board, and we replaced the living word with a presentation in Loom. What is different then? We set all the conditions for the reverse classroom. Students study the materials and then participate in the discussion. Teaching planning is different, it is different to adapt the content we teach. All the time we balance around different needs and abilities, and the individual needs of each individual student. According to these needs, it is often necessary to change the method of delivery of

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[1] Kurikulum Hrvatskoga jezika, Narodne novine, 2000.
[2] Prema Stjepko Težak, Teorija I praksa Hrvatskoga jezika, Zagreb, 2000.
[3] Kurikulum Hrvatskoga jezika, Narodne novine, 2019.

learning materials - this is the most visible and demanding in working with students of a special program.

Working in one of the experimental schools in The Republic of Croatia, we were relatively ready for the challenge of conducting distance learning. At least in terms of equipment (all students have tablets), internet availability, and technical support. Also, as a team, we were quite trained to create materials for distance learning because we used different tools in regular classes for formative evaluation. Before the schools closed, we organized ourselves, made a plan, and formed virtual classrooms in Microsoft Teams. We started with the rules of communication in virtual classrooms. As in the classroom, students should be offered clearly set rules and expectations in virtual teaching. The first few weeks passed in system crashes, interrupted video calls, negotiating plans, and changing those plans. Collaboration and dialogue flowed mutually and harmoniously all the time, aided by WhatsApp groups, emails, and even telephone connections as needed. The teaching content of the Croatian language is rich and diverse and is based on communication layers (various texts and sources). We must also look at the subject layering through the student we are teaching. The path to language communication starts from listening, to speaking, reading and writing. We add understanding between each level. When learning the Croatian language and achieving the set outcomes, one should pay attention to the methodological approach and the choice of methodological procedures. It is necessary to include the media role of words, functional styles, not only from a theoretical point of view but also in practical use. We are aware that language learning is not only possible through the teacher's living word, and yet we are well aware of the great absence of a living word from the educational level, but perhaps equally important from a pedagogical point of view. We build the methodology of teaching the Croatian language on the creative use of tradition (local dialects of more modest areas) and the gradual introduction of grammatical / spelling / vocabulary standards, especially having in mind the student's readiness and understanding.

Traditional teaching offered a condition for mastering linguistic communication - mastering concepts. Modern teaching is based on immanent grammar. It does not limit the student to a strict form (which prevents the development of communication), it encourages them to make the most of the creative power of intuition, only then by careful selection do we offer theoretical support for speaking, reading and writing in standard language. Insisting on a strict norm stops the development of the language, suggesting that the language is stopped at some point, preventing the student from accepting a language that moves, grows, and changes, and that the student (and his communication) change together over time. Learning a norm must not be a way of knowing a language. The students we direct and train for linguistic creativity understand and respect the norm in accordance with the principle of elastic stability (stable elasticity)[4].

In recent years, we have tried various tools in the classroom to try to revive the teaching process, intrigue students who did not respond to common stimuli and also use the benefits of technology to more easily collect and share feedback for formative evaluation. This experience helped in distance teaching by the fact that we were accustomed to using the same. From the very beginning, we started with a clear plan (which we still follow). For every lesson within the virtual classroom, we share prepared material, which usually contains a video lesson, instructions and activities with which we achieve outcomes. Before the video call (which is held according to the school schedule), students study the published materials so that they are ready to discuss the topic during the call. There are always those who are not ready for the discussion (but there are several in each class and in regular classes too), so they get to know the topic during the video call through their classmates who lead the discussion.

We direct the teaching of the Croatian language to the ultimate goal, that is, the ability for language expression. Each activity was guided by:

- Listening: For the full success of speaking and writing exercises, the activity of listening should be developed. We began speech practice by listening. We have acquired the immanent grammar on which we develop and improve our listening. It is a tremendous achievement for a teacher to teach a student to listen. In distance learning, we develop listening skills through listening exercises combined with various tasks of oral or written expression, e.g. an exercise in Wizer with audio and text comprehension questions. We use the tool often because it is easy for students to use and offers the ability to write feedback with each student's response. In this way, the exchange of information between teachers and students is carried out quickly, which is necessary for the further planning of learning and teaching.
- Reading: New communication media narrowed the scope of the book, but also, these same media contributed to the popularization of the book. We are aware of how many fans around the world have films like Harry Potter, and then the focus shifts again to the books by which the film was made. In addition, reading is not closely related to books. Different screens are read, instructions, recipes, and the list goes on. Reading involves different media, and in addition, reading is not closely related to school and learning, but to different public places and needs.

[4] prema definiciji standardnog jezika Radoslava Katičića

The purpose of reading is to receive a written message completely and clearly - reading with understanding. I will mention reading the entire work here. In consultation with the active colleagues from the Croatian language, I have heard different ideas. After careful consideration, I decided to read one work in all classes for a complete reading of the novel until the end of the virtual lesson. The students in the customary program did not have the same task. We divided the work into smaller units and agreed on time periods for reading, and activities for each period. We read The Prince and the Pauper in the sixth grade (M. Twain) and Oliver Twist (C. Dickens) in the seventh. The novels are interesting enough for the students that they are happy to comment on them during video calls and encourage each other to read. In reading activities, the focus is on encouraging reading, thinking about what has been read, developing a critical attitude, and not checking the actual reading itself. We have presented the author in the Padlet tool. The students wrote one below the other and each new student had to enter some new information about the author. This gave us a very interesting biography that served as a topic for discussion in one of the following calls. In another activity, in a private message, they were given the name of a character they needed to draw as accurately as possible, paying attention to characterization. They posted pictures in the same Padlet and then deciphered each other's characters in the comments.

- Speaking: The verbal realization of reading in virtual teaching is indirect (recorded with different tools). Since it starts from the student's immanent grammar, ie. linguistic sense, carefully, according to the curriculum, we introduce speaking exercises in standard language. We choose topics for oral exercises in accordance with the needs, abilities and interests of our students. In the virtual classroom, students made a digital poster in Canva (there were also those who preferred to draw it in their notebooks and that's okay). The poster was prepared for Earth Day. They then presented their poster and recorded their speech. They were given a column with which we evaluated that speech, which served as a guideline for preparation and self-evaluation.

- Writing: Written expression is closely related to oral. We can use all the exercises as well in oral expression. Speaking has a dialogic interaction while writing is a one-sided expression. It requires the organization of more complete language content, writing and then correcting mistakes, or the loss of an idea or change of ideas after re-reading. What we point out to students is that we call a departure from the literary-linguistic norm a linguistic error. What is crucial is feedback. Correction must be regular, systematic and encouraging. The correction should also keep in mind the psychological side and let the student know that it is human to error. That proper mastery of the learned standard language is a lifelong process. That there is no room for negative emotions due to a detected language error. An error can occur due to any external elements (fatigue, illness, temperament, excitement, impatience, etc.). Although there are many tools in which students can send their written works, they more often write in their notebooks and send me a picture of their work. The negative part of this type of correction is the rather burdened vision, but the consolation is the established progress in student manuscripts and tidiness.

The ultimate goal of teaching grammar and expression is the ability to use the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. Expression skills are developed one by one in the ways already shown. The entire teaching of the Croatian language is aimed at achieving this goal. The student who reads learns more by reading than by explicit instruction. For this reason, we need to repeat exercises in which students will be able to apply the acquired knowledge, and in the background we need to put rules that have no direct connection with expression. The problem that has arisen in distance learning and which I deal with all the time, is evaluation and uncertainty in the evaluation of the level of achievement of outcomes. We have all become very adept at using technology, but determining the cognitive level that we are "allowed" to question with virtual evaluation is an issue I still deal with most of the time. In virtual teaching, I use a number of tools that have been well accepted by students and it is very easy to use tasks of different cognitive levels. Given the huge fund created as a result of sharing examples of practice among Croatian language teachers at the state level[5], it can be seen that tasks that test lower cognitive levels of knowledge are often developed and shared, and fewer involving analytical and critical thinking, are created[6]. Does this data reveal general uncertainty in the success of distance learning and the achievement of outcomes? The positive aspects of distance learning were very quickly demonstrated in students who began to adopt outcomes noticeably easier. This is the group of students who are willing to take the opportunity to choose when and how much they will study. This way of learning has increased the autonomy of students who are ready for self-regulation of their learning.

In the absence of a virtual teaching methodology, we worked by feeling. Teachers are always ready for the lifelong learning process, so in this situation we worked on strengthening teachers 'digital competencies to strengthen students' digital competencies: information and media literacy, communication, content creation, responsible use and problem-

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[5] razne Facebook grupe nakladnika, Loomen, nastavni aktivi
[6] prema Bloomovoj taksonomiji

solving[7]. The role of the class teacher always required a lot of effort. In virtual teaching, the (moral) obligations of the class teachers jumped to a climax. The class teacher became the first and strongest link between students, student mastery of technology, student collaboration with other teachers, constant assessment of the situation with the achievement of outcomes and assessment of the emotional state of their students. The class hour has never been more important. Work was done on improving information and media literacy, content creation, responsible use of tools, communication within virtual classrooms, but also in the virtual world outside of teaching activities. We learned about personal data protection and privacy protection, and about intellectual property.

After six weeks of distance learning, after a summative evaluation, after a virtual parent meeting, after endless communication with classmates, I dare say the feeling was good. We connected with the students on a different level. Time will tell how much this has brought good or bad. We also connected with parents on a new level. I talked to some parents at some point in virtual classes on a daily basis. Most often it was with the parents of children on a customized program, but sometimes we were also psychological help to parents in fear of the coronavirus. Something I am already highlighting at this point, while virtual teaching is still going on, is the deeper connection with colleagues. So much commitment and support for each other in this new, demanding, potentially stressful situation, has empowered me to be ready for any future challenge. With this, we naturally came to the place where I end this story that is still ongoing, thanks to the whole staff of my school for their great help in human and educational terms. I believe that together we have shown again what should not be underemphasized, so I end with the saying: "The teacher does not teach what he wants, the teacher does not teach what he knows, the teacher teaches what is."

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[7] https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=EN

Anita Damjanović

Distance learning

When the Department of Education announced that schools were closing and we were switching to distance learning because of the dramatic spread of the Coronavirus disease and the need for strict social distancing, teachers in Croatia were given three days to prepare for it. Just three days to set up their online classes, prepare digital materials, get acquainted with, and choose optimal digital apps and tools for delivering their subject lessons and providing feedback… And a funny thing happened - they succeeded.

So, what this experience is teaching us is that teachers in Croatia can adapt to almost any kind of dire circumstances! They are able to overcome any technical challenge you throw at them and will perform with flying colours in the most stressful and demanding situations; juggling their students, concerned parents, school administration and their own families at the same time and still be called slackers and 'uhljebs'. Kidding aside...

For me, at first, it felt strange not to physically commute to work or stand in the classroom face to face with my students, but I felt confident in my ability to teach in a new environment.

After all, I've used a lot of digital tools with my students -we've done a flipped classroom model and blended learning so this wouldn't be much of a change. Plus the outpour of support from all major educational platforms was just overwhelming and I was no stranger to using new technology.

The first week was a pure adrenaline rush for me and I could tell for my students too. I really admired their enthusiasm for mastering different tools thrown at them by teachers most of whom just got acquainted with them themselves. The level of commitment and engagement of both the students and teachers was just uncanny.

And the way that the teachers' community pulled their ranks together, shared their experience and materials and supported each other, is nothing short of miraculous.

As if the Corona threat and switching to distance learning weren't stressful enough, the earthquake in Zagreb additionally shattered our confidence and we had to both provide emotional support for our students and assign course material all the while trying to balance between the two.

Achieving the right balance of work materials from different school subjects and time management turned out to be the most challenging aspects of distance learning as, after a week or so, parents cried out that their children were overworked and overwhelmed with assignments, and the Child protective services said that children's rights were being violated. It seemed to me as if teachers, by assigning more material, overcompensated for their physical absence and the fear that they wouldn't meet the curriculum standards had overtaken them.

I, too, struggled with deciding what the right amount of schoolwork was and wondered how to differentiate the tasks for my mixed ability class and especially my SEN students. I thought about how to maintain meaningful communication, was it better to have synchronous or asynchronous lessons, should I use both English and Croatian in my instructions.... but when I asked my students, it turned out that there was just one thing they were missing a lot - our classroom and human interaction.
Indeed, with such improvements of technology that enable all aspects of teaching, including the disputed development of speaking skills and such advantages as flexibility, learning at one's own pace and interactiveness with the use of video conferencing software, one could argue that distance learning is the future of education and that old-fashioned schools might become obsolete.

But no matter how well different digital tools and video applications emulate real-life interactions, there is always an awareness of technology and I sorely miss the honesty and immediacy of genuine human contact and the exchange of authentic thoughts. That's why, after a month of distance learning and after being wowed by the vast possibilities of new digital technology, I still say onsite beats online at any time.

And whoever questions or doubts the role of teachers in modern-day education and sustainability of the present school systems, and is trying to enforce reforms based on installing digital education and virtual classrooms, I urge you to learn from this experience and listen to the students who, after a month of digital learning, are clearly saying out with the new, in with the old!

Dora Božanić Malić, MA TESOL
Prva riječka hrvatska gimnazija

Teaching in time of Corona

Apprehension caught up with me at the Belgrade airport. It was the end of February and two colleagues and I were on our way to an Erasmus project training activity in Katerini, Greece. We landed at "Nikola Tesla" and were faced with a number of airport staff and passengers wearing protective masks. News arrived that the long-awaited and meticulously prepared school excursion to Italy had been canceled and, on a very personal note, family members had sent messages of worry. Due to my family's history with cancer, I am no stranger to medical masks. Having a stash at home became a new norm a long time ago, along with wearing them just so family members would feel safe and not singled out. So, I put one on. I couldn't wait to go back home. A part of me knew that the vicinity of the outbreak in Italy would have its effect on my town, but my town is my home. Home means being safe. And it means being safe even now.

I wrote this at the beginning of April and the end of the fourth week of working from my living room. I'm incredibly proud of the fact that for my school and my colleagues this hasn't been a roller-coaster ride. Don't get me wrong, switching to an online-exclusive mode was demanding and exhausting, but deep down we were prepared to venture into this uncharted territory and we knew it. I work in a collective of highly dedicated people who have been at the forefront of innovation in curriculum design and educational ICT implementation for years. Learning from them has been a privilege and watching them all adapt to the new conditions was nothing short of impressive. There was a feeling of uncertainty, but its effect on us was diminutive in comparison to what we heard from other schools.

A team of teachers was formed on Wednesday, 11 March, and their task was to coordinate our transition to MS Teams. The exact date of school closure was yet to be determined, but by Friday evening, 13 March, classes had been set up, equipment had been distributed to the students who needed it, test lessons had been held, rules of conduct written, presented and accepted, and it was all down to us, the teachers, to breathe life into the tools. I am going to describe my approach to it all, but I cannot do so before I mention the oldest among us. Like us, xennials and millennials (supposed digital natives), on Monday morning, while most of the schools in Croatia were still figuring out how to approach the new conditions, my teachers, mentors and colleagues were teaching, setting up projects and assignments, sharing their screens with students and providing support through conference calls and chat boxes. A number of them are going to retire in a matter of months, but they dived right in and did so with style.

Now for the specifics of how our system works: Each of our classes is a Team and within each of the Teams is a channel for each of the subjects. Teachers, our school psychologist, librarian and headmaster are team coordinators and the students are team members. We opted out of the Ministry's proposed schedule. As far as I know, none of us rely on the TV programmes. Classes are in session in the morning and organized according to the regular morning timetable (breaks and morning recess included). We're autonomous in choosing teaching tools and strategies, but we need to be at students' disposal during our scheduled lessons and there must be a mark of our activity.

I decided against real-time voice/video-call based teaching early on. I do greet my students at the beginning of each lesson because I want them to know a real human is on the other side of the line, but I avoid using a camera. I mostly rely on my favourite tools, *Nearpod*, *Lino*, *Wordwall* and *Kahoot*, to create flexible and student-friendly lessons. Lino, "an online web sticky note service that can be used to post memos, to-do lists, ideas, and photos anywhere on an online web canvas" as it is defined by its own website, is free. *Kahoot*, a platform for interactive quizzes, made itself free for teachers worldwide during these testing times. And my school provided its teachers with *Nearpod* and *Wordwall* licenses, a little more than a year ago and a couple of months ago respectively. I've also come to use *MS Office* tools more often as the whole *Office 365* system adjusted to the "educational assault" it somewhat withstood in the past weeks.

I mostly integrate all the tools into *Nearpod* lessons. *Nearpod* is a student engagement system. In it teachers create lessons by adding *Nearpod*-based content (like slides, simulations, VR experiences, videos or audio recordings), web-based content (which can be virtually anything online) or interactive activities (like quizzes, memory tests, gap-fills, collaboration boards, etc.). I base the content of my lessons on the textbook but strive to make it as interactive as possible. If there's a reading activity, I'll programme a quiz based on the quiz in the textbook so students can check their understanding. If there's a grammar gap-fill task, I'll set up a mock test in *MS Forms* for them to do and see the answers upon completion. I create *Wordwall* crossword puzzles for them to revise vocabulary, and sorting and matching activities to pre-teach new vocabulary and clarify concepts or structures of writing tasks. I create a lesson within the Nearpod system and then share a student-paced version of it with the class after our call. While they work the system allows me to track their progress and intervene if there's a need for me to do so.

I've used lessons created by the Nearpod staff twice. I adapted one on Mindfulness and one about Covid-19. Mindfulness is a topic I had wanted to try with my class for months, but had never had the courage to, because I know a number of them would burst out laughing. Their own rooms provided a safe space for experiments with meditation. The lesson got pretty good feedback from the students. The latter was a base for integrated lessons of English, Biology and current affairs.

By the end of each lesson, I aim to set a short assignment for them to do - something that enables them to show off their skills and preferably have some serious fun. So far, they've created ads for charities, a promo presentation for a short story, their own perfect school manifestos, researched young activists and drawn idioms. I'm still waiting for some cartoons in *Animaker*. They have also had chat-discussions. We covered phrases for agreeing and disagreeing, so they formed groups, included me in each one and went over all of the aspects of topics like "wearing uniforms" and "doing a gap year". Even if they agreed I made them argue just for arguments' sake. Every time a class ventured on a chat discussion, I had to turn off the sound on my computer, because ideas flew and notification sounds rang at light speed. Through all this time an imperative for me has been to provide my students with content that's challenging enough for them to grow and also adapt to the fact that each class and each student work at a pace of their own. Another imperative of mine has been that students have to do their work. I'm doing my best to adapt to the situation, provide advice and support, but I expect nothing less in return. Sounds harsh? Maybe it is, but according to an internal survey the subject our students are least worried about completing successfully is English. And that's true even for the graduates – a fact the four of us English teachers are particularly proud of, because it shows we've come close to finding the balance between demanding and relaxing.

Where do we go from here? I don't really know. I don't think we can see all of the wounds or predict all of the scars. Our society is bound to change. As for schools, the novelty of the online environment is bound to wear off and we'll be faced with new social and emotional patterns among students and colleagues. Our working hours are unsustainable in the long term and the anxiety surrounding assessment is palpable. Even though we had been prepared for it, the exploration of uncharted territories necessarily leads to unforeseen adversities. We'll probably have to be the anchors for our students in times during which we'll need anchors too. We just mustn't forget nor allow our students and their parents to forget – that there are humans on both sides of the line.

*Attached to the article is a photo of my workspace and my teaching assistant.

Gorana Babić

How I became an online teacher

I am Gorana Babić, a teacher of Croatian Language and Literature in two schools: Primary School dr. Franjo Tuđman Brela and Primary School Father Petar Perica Makarska. In both schools I have used the same ICT tools. Although I attended some courses on ICT tools online as well as part of the current Erasmus KA1 project 'Let's Improve Our Teaching', I have learnt a lot since online school started. In Brela we have used Yammer for virtual communication, while in Makarska we have used Teams for the same purpose. In the first days, there were several connection problems usually in the morning around 7:30 a.m. but it was solved very quickly.

Just a couple of weeks before this situation, I came back from an Erasmus course held in Dublin where I came across an interesting tool which I use now in Brela. I had the intention to use this tool in my classroom as an optional one, but this situation encouraged me to implement this in my teaching. As I said, I am teaching Croatian Language and Literature, so I decided to use this for essays, written assignments and the interpretation of literary work.

1. Google Classroom is the tool which is designed to help teachers and students communicate and collaborate, manage assignments paperlessly, and stay organized. Google Classroom is part of the Google Apps for Education suite of tools and by March it was only available for Google accounts. Owing to the COVID-19 situation, access is now available to Carnet users too. Google Classroom is available to everyone in my organization; however, not everyone chooses to use it. Typically, it is used to post assignments, have students turn in assignments, and communicate with them and their parents effectively. In my opinion, Google Classroom makes managing the classroom much easier than with pen and paper (and it's good for the environment!).

I like this tool because of the following reasons: firstly, it allows me to share files with all of my students regardless of their location. Secondly, it notifies my students via email when I share a resource or a file with them, so they are informed easily and quickly. But there is also the thing which I do not like at all- I don't seem to get email notification when my students post something in the classroom. From a student experience perspective, it is very intuitive and easy to use although some of them found it very difficult when we started using it.

2. Liveworksheets is the one which I have been using in both schools for poem interpretations, grammar exercises and grammar revision. It is a really amazing website. It has satisfied me the most, besides Google Classroom, because it allows each teacher to transform printable worksheets (doc, pdf, jpg...) into interactive online exercises with self-correction, which are known as "interactive worksheets". Students can do the worksheets online and send their answers to the teacher. This tool is good for the students (it's motivating), for the teacher (it saves time) and for the environment (it saves paper). The worksheets may include sounds, videos, drag and drop exercises, join with arrows, multiple choice... and even speaking exercises, that the students must do using the microphone (but I have not tried it yet). It is simple to use. Teachers can use liveworksheets to make their own interactive worksheets or they can use the ones shared by other teachers. There is a collection of thousands of interactive worksheets that cover lots of languages and subjects.

It's very easy to use. The teachers have to upload the document (doc, pdf, jpg...) and it will be converted into an image. Then the just have to draw boxes on the worksheet and enter the right answers.

The students' answers are stored without a time limit in the notebooks, but they only last 30 days if they are sent to our mailbox. This may be insufficient in many cases, especially in the present circumstances. But now they can be kept for one year by choosing any "premium" subscription. I have never seen this tool before- some colleagues recommended it in Facebook groups such as Croatian Language Teachers and I love the Croatian Language. Using this tool is interesting for the pupils so the pupils are more active.

For reading comprehension I used Testmoz, but I think it is better to use Myquiz because there, the teacher can set the time limit so the pupils cannot cheat while using this. But, I recommend Testmoz for comprehension checks so that you can get a general picture of the students' understanding, not the grade. It is a very quick and simple way to generate an online quiz for the students. The program has many options so the teacher can customize the quiz and the responses your students will receive. There is a possibility to create 4 different types of questions: true/false, multiple-choice, fill in

the blank and select all that apply, decide how many options you would like for each question, choose how much each question is worth (whole numbers only), set multiple correct answers for fill in the blank questions, and randomize the order of the questions and/or the choices. When students finish taking the test and push the submit button, the students can be allowed to instantaneously see their percentage correct or the teacher can add information on which questions they got correct and the correct answers. Testmoz creates a report of your test for the teacher administrator, including: names of each person with their grade, score, percent correct, start time, total time, average grade and average time. In a second section, Testmoz also lists, in table format, individual responses for each question (right or wrong) with simple checks and percent correct for each question, so that you can evaluate the student as well as the test question. Both sections of the report can be downloaded and put into excel where the teacher can further manipulate the data. I think these online lessons are possible, but the teachers can not get the exact feedback about the level of knowledge gained. I think teachers should take into account the activity of students and if they were consistent when it comes to doing the tasks.

Written by Elvira Vučković
Primary schools „Petar Zoranić" Nin; Privlaka Privlaka; Jurja Barakovića Ražanac

School Psychologist in Distance Education

I have been working as a school psychologist employed at three primary schools in Zadar County for 27 years and I often use ICT in my work. For many years, I have been conducting extracurricular activities for gifted students of the Creative Psychology Workshop, part of which also takes place at Loomen. As the head of the county Expert Council of Psychology Teachers and School Psychologists of primary and secondary schools in Šibenik-Knin and Zadar counties, I have often sought to present examples of good practice to fellow psychologists about the appropriate use of ICT in our field of work. Also, as a project coordinator at the Primary school „Petar Zoranic" Nin, I had the opportunity to work with partners at the national (CUC 2017) and international levels to gain insight into opportunities for collaboration and sharing of experience through ICT. However, in everyday work as a psychologist so far, I used ICT only as a supplement to in-person meetings as opposed to the current situation.

With the appearance of the novel Coronavirus in Croatia and the introduction of distance education, everyone in the education community had to quickly manage and agree on channels of communication with students, colleagues and parents, mutual responsibilities and cooperation. Despite the suddenness of the situation, extraordinary circumstances, high levels of stress in teachers, students and parents, we were all very active, each in their own field of work and in their own way.

I was fortunate that all the schools I was employed in chose the same application (Microsoft Teams) where I had a lot of experience, for the virtual staff room and the classrooms for distance learning in grades 5 to 8. It was so nice to see how willingly colleagues in all my schools selflessly shared their knowledge and experience with teachers who needed help. A sense of community was created, a positive atmosphere, despite the gravity of the situation, which continued in virtual staff rooms as we addressed the initial difficulties.

On the school website, I gave parents information about working with students, how to contact me to continue counseling (if they felt they needed it), posting information, tips, guidance, and recommendations that could help them explain and support their children in this situation.

After that, I set up a Psychologist Channel in all schools, and in all classes, in which I offered my help, support, advice or recommendation. Right from the beginning of distance teaching, I conducted a survey with students in which I tried to get information about how they experienced this whole situation, and what was the easiest and the most difficult for them. The results obtained in all schools are very similar. I believe that almost identical results would be obtained from both teachers and parents.
Assignment: Write 3-5 words that describe how they feel.
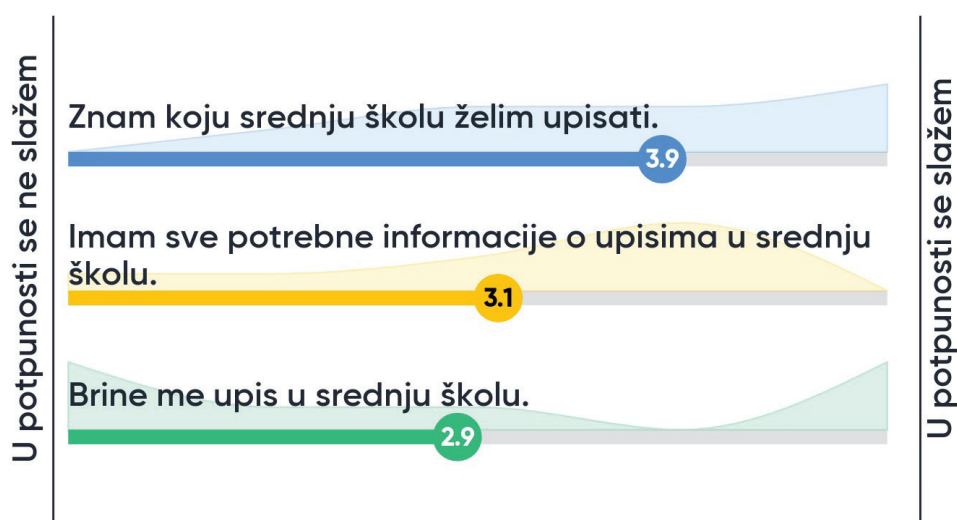
Positives and Negatives in Distance Learning (summary):

+	−
• More time with family • Learning in pajamas • Less work • I don't have to wake up early • It's easy • Tasks can be done anytime during the day	• Too much homework • Lots of schoolwork • I can't get everything done • I don't see friends, I miss them • Too much time in front of tablets • I feel better when I'm in school • Feeling lonely

It was explained to the students that it was quite normal for them to feel the way they do in an emergency situation like this, and for the teachers to feel that way too… I adapted the recommendations of my profession that we received through the Croatian Psychological Society and the Croatian Psychological Chambers for the students. Further steps in working with them were based on the results of that initial survey: I explained why it was important to maintain routines (waking up at the same time, maintaining hygiene,…), how to organize time and learning, how to learn in these circumstances, how to concentrate,….

Also, I regularly gave feedback on everything I had done with students to their teachers: individually, in class councils or in the virtual staff room. Together, we identified at-risk students: students with disabilities, high-anxiety students, students with working parents (health, police, salesmen, truckers, etc.), students with parents who lost their jobs overnight, students at risk of domestic violence and so on. We agreed on the next steps and created support networks (for students and teachers).

A large number of eighth-grade students sent me private messages about high school enrollment, so a survey was conducted to find out what information they needed and what worried them. After the survey, they had a presentation with the information they were looking for, as well as the support they needed in the Psychologist Channel. The survey was repeated and students were found to be significantly less worried than previously assessed (in the first survey the average grade for missing information and concerns were 4.5 - 4.8)

U potpunosti se ne slažem | U potpunosti se slažem

Znam koju srednju školu želim upisati. — 3.9

Imam sve potrebne informacije o upisima u srednju školu. — 3.1

Brine me upis u srednju školu. — 2.9

Students with special needs, students with dyslexia or dysgraphia have been estimated to be the ones most at risk, especially in conditions where it has been difficult to upload files, especially video lessons, to make video calls in Teams... Teachers and students were provided with instructions on how to use an immersive reader and dictation, how to use the
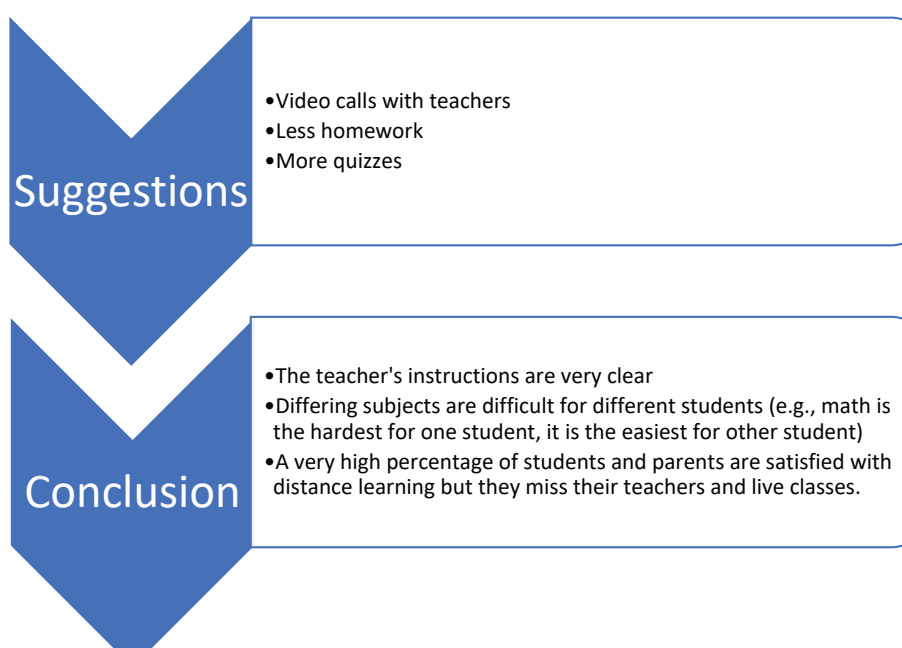
Omoguru application for reading eLektira, etc. The emphasis was on implementing the teaching guidelines according to the *Decision on the appropriate form of schooling* even in these teaching conditions.

On the first of April, I used the opportunity to create the Padlet Kutak +, as a place to be positive, to have fun, share their thoughts, to be supportive of each other or embark on virtual tours. Conveniently for April 1st, I shared some jokes and funny stories (this version of the padlet, a copy unanswered by students so I don't violate their privacy, is free to share further).
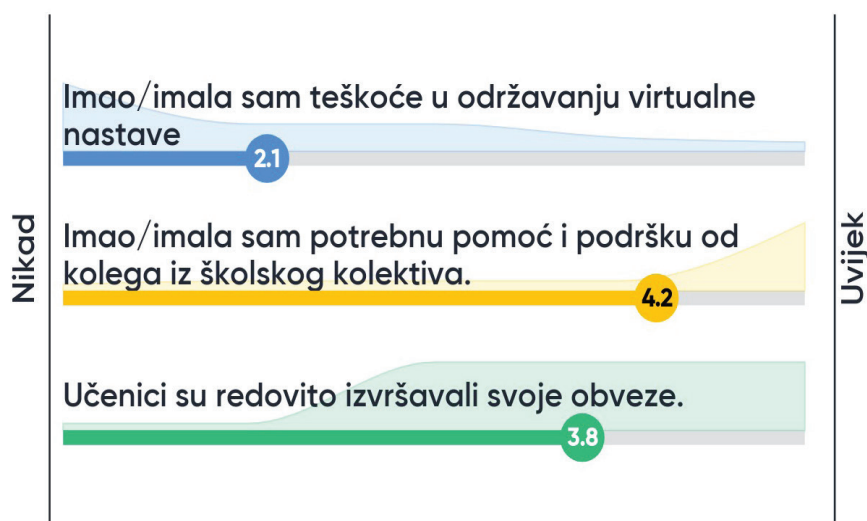
The message to the teachers in the Virtual staff room, and to the students in the Psychologist Channel was: „You have a new task ahead. Good luck in solving it!"
The following message was sent to our youngest students.
After evaluation by our parents and students, the conclusion of the virtual sessions of the Teachers Council was that we are on the right track with distance teaching. Here are their suggestions and conclusion:

Suggestions
- Video calls with teachers
- Less homework
- More quizzes

Conclusion
- The teacher's instructions are very clear
- Differing subjects are difficult for different students (e.g., math is the hardest for one student, it is the easiest for other student)
- A very high percentage of students and parents are satisfied with distance learning but they miss their teachers and live classes.

These conclusions were supported by a lot of good experiences from our teachers:

Nikad — **Uvijek**

Imao/imala sam teškoće u održavanju virtualne nastave — 2.1

Imao/imala sam potrebnu pomoć i podršku od kolega iz školskog kolektiva. — 4.2

Učenici su redovito izvršavali svoje obveze. — 3.8

It seems that, for now, we're on the right track with distance teaching and learning and I'm proud to be a part of it as a support to students, teachers and parents.

Ivana Bašić, mag. prim. educ, Teacher adviser
Opuzen Primary School

Distance Teaching in Class 3B of Opuzen Primary School

Distance teaching is a real challenge for me. We moved from the school classroom to the virtual one without any preparation. I didn't expect to do distance teaching one day. The distance learning mode is the only way to teach/learn due to the COVID-19 pandemic and I was prepared because I had developed my digital competencies on time. In fact, distance learning is also a path to professional development for teachers around the world.

The recommendation to stay at home makes full sense when it comes to us teachers. We really stay at home, but we prepare worksheets every day, we study various digital tools that could help us in the realization of the teaching process and it becomes our everyday life. Our task is to make this time easier for students and enable them to better understand and adopt the content, and above all to relax and entertain them. We should do our best to divert the thoughts of these little heads from what is happening around us and to be supportive of them.

The transition to a virtual classroom took place as follows:
First I opened a virtual classroom at Microsoft Teams which I use to communicate with the students. I added other colleagues to it who teach in my class. I made a film for students and their parents using Loom, on how to navigate a virtual classroom.

To ensure the creation of a supportive online learning environment, teacher-student interactions, as well as student-student interactions need to be encouraged. I asked them to make their communication with other students friendly and that we all help each other.

At the very beginning of the second week, I surveyed the students and found out that the students really miss their classmates and teachers. I find it important for them to feel that we are there for them, to feel our closeness and warmth. I decided to help them so I started teaching using Zoom. There was no end to their happiness when they finally saw each other. Zoom made it easier to teach because I quickly created an interactive discussion with my class by sharing a screen, presenting a lesson, and encouraging the students to ask questions. Zoom proved to be very good even in a situation where some students couldn't attend classes because there is an option to record. I sent the recording to the students so they could find out what we had learned and, if necessary, they could watch the recording several times.
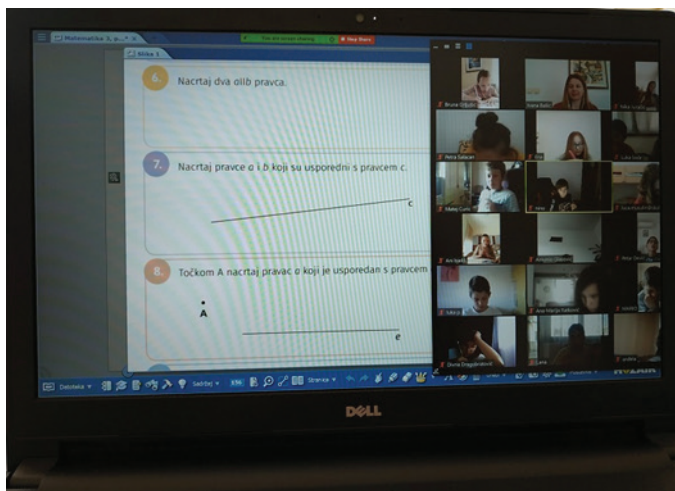

Fig. 1. Learning through Zoom

The real challenge is to provide effective distance learning with meaningful activities to help students focus on their learning goals and performance goals. This type of learning and teaching, more than any other, puts the learning process in the hands of the students. It is the teacher who prepares the teaching and the path that the student will follow, and the student is the one who travelles the path of cognition and directly feels the progress of what has been learned. To make the lessons as interesting as possible for the students, I used various Web 2.0 tools. I used Padlet the most because it has a variety of applications in teaching.

Learning about the Dubrovnik - Neretva County, they did research on cultural and historical monuments and famous people from our county. This was followed by a presentation of their work using Padlet.

During the educational work, the students achieved the following learning outcomes:
- the student uses the digital tool Padlet to present his/her research
- the student analyzes a simple adapted and original text about Dubrovnik of medium length when listening and reading
- the student names the sights of Dubrovnik
- the student, in the class Padlet, assesses his/her own work, as well as the work of one of his/her peers

Before they started working, the rules were agreed upon, and for the purposes of this paper, a recording was made in Loom on how to use Padlet, with the aim of making it as easy as possible for students to get used to this tool. We used Padlet to record reading, singing and sports activities. We also had peer assessment via Padlet. The students commented on each other's work, with the aim of achieving the highest quality of work.
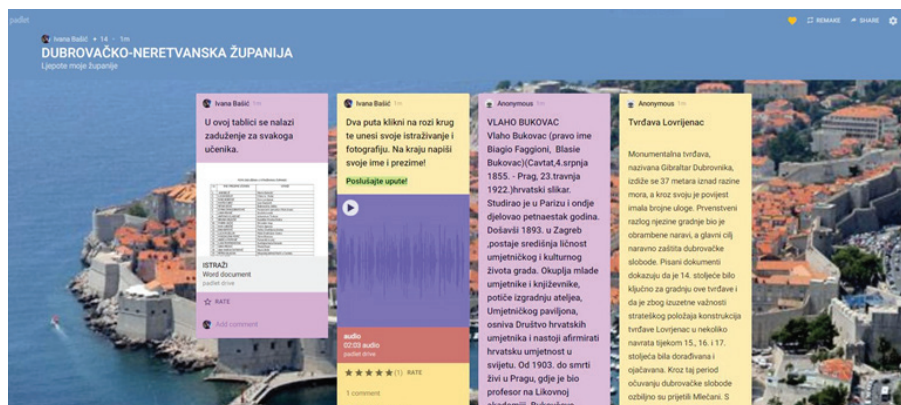

Fig. 2. My county

Fig. 3. My Dad

In addition to Padlet, we also used lino.it to correlate the Croatian language and art culture. The students had the task of describing and drawing their dad. They placed their work on the Lino board.

I wanted distance learning students to develop a competitive spirit, so I created various quizzes in tools such as BookWidgets, Genially, Forms and Kahoot. I included all students in Matific and assigned them regular math assignments.

In distance learning, I noticed several advantages and disadvantages. The biggest drawback is quality assessment because we are never sure if a student has done the task on their own. The advantages are that students acquire knowledge at their own pace and cover the material in a way that suits them best. In this way, they are encouraged to work even when they encounter an obstacle, because they have the opportunity to repeat something or to ask for new resources that will help them to adequately master the material. The teacher has the freedom to prepare many different activities for the same teaching unit, and it is up to the students to choose and use the ones that suit them best. The content becomes diverse and therefore inspiring, and the teaching is individualized to a level where the needs of all students are respected.

Fig. 4. Running Waters Quiz

Ivana Bokavšek, English teacher
Elementary school Spinut, Split

ONLINE TEACHING

The worldwide situation of being threatened by the COVID-19 infection has changed teachers' work a lot. At one moment teachers were leading their classes in real school-life conditions and all at once they had become online teachers, teaching from their homes and creating a virtual, learning environment.

A significant number of teachers have, during the last few years, due to the changes in educational approaches and demands of 21st century teaching, been trained to use and implement digital technology in their teaching. That way they have already been prepared, without having the slightest notion, to some of the challenges that online schooling itself carries.

Talking about teachers' preparation for this completely new and unknown situation, except for teachers in Australia or the USA where the Schools of the Air have been functional for years because of the remote places and the impossibility for students to commute to their schools, it is inevitably important to point out the meaning of that preparation. It means that teachers have learned the importance of digital technology and its advantages in the classroom, and they have learned to use mobile phones and tablets for educational purposes, which apps, tools, sites to use to prepare their lessons, make games, interactive tasks and formatively assess their students' knowledge. They have gotten used to a new system of being trained via webinars and online courses, and step by step, got into the world of virtually connected teachers and teachers' communities. Social networks have also contributed to teachers' training giving the possibility of making the burden of upcoming changes easier to embrace and removing the feeling of being left insecure in implementing sudden modern teaching methods and approaches. A great number of teachers have participated in Erasmus+ and eTwinning projects which started teachers' awareness of the importance of learning, what and how to use different online and digital educational tools. It could be said, that it is a nice basis for an ongoing situation, and it certainly is.

The fast switch to teaching in virtual classrooms is a new dimension that teachers are dealing with, day by day, very successfully. The skills and knowledge they gained, before this globally dangerous threat, helped them to adjust themselves faster and easier to something they have never been educated or trained to do. A crucial factor, that cannot be omitted at any point, is the psychological impact of being socially isolated. The influence of being deprived and limited of everyday activities and social face-to-face contact, leaves a burden that teachers need to ease in working with their students along with other teaching outcomes they need to accomplish. They need to help their students cope with the problem of missing their school friends, teachers, outside games and everything that growing up in normal conditions means.

Starting from that point, teaching under these conditions is a massive and stressful, surreal job that teachers need to deal with. Teachers carry the augmented role of real school and life mentors and they are putting themselves at their students' disposal without any possible doubts, selflessly, forgetting that they are also psychological victims of abnormal life conditions and an uncertain future.

Virtual classrooms have not been implemented as an option of 21st century teaching and learning environments until now. Despite all the challenges and problems such as unstable internet connections, being overcrowded by users, slow document and photo uploading, teachers being unable to physically monitor students' learning progress, overburdening teachers' role of being a constant, around the clock motivational mentor, teachers have provided psychological support and high-quality teaching. Teachers handle planning virtual lessons very well, knowing the right amount of content their students need to practice or study. So there are some good points that should be emphasized.

Students can show their creativity using digital tools and have the opportunity to do work that can be done only in digital form such as a blog, poster, web page, video clip, digital comic, story/book, music pieces, art show, etc. They need to

browse the internet more in order to find the needed information and they need to implement the knowledge they have gained from the "classic" school about internet safety and using reliable web sites. Writing e-mails and correspondence with teachers develops their digital literacy. That way their digital competence is being improved and developed faster than in the "real" school. Digital formative assessment tools enable easier and more frequent checking of students' comprehension and their learning process. All mentioned lead students to be more independent, self-sufficient and self-confident at acquiring the learning outcomes, of course, if it is fulfilled under one condition: the self-learning process must be without the students' family members' assistance.

My lessons are usually recorded and adjusted to my students, where I pay attention to the way I refer to them in this specific situation. I keep it simple and not too long (about 10-15 minutes), with positivity and liveliness in my voice. Once, at the end of a lesson about the USA, I was even singing the American anthem! I prepare the tasks and formative assessment using digital platforms and tools, but keeping in mind that the quantity and quality of digital activities are balanced. I want my students to write in their notebooks, read texts and answer the questions as well as if they were in "normal" school. I use different digital tools, but again I do not want to confuse my students additionally by using different tools too frequently. So, I usually use H5P to make different interactive tasks with the option of formative assessment feedback, allowing for the possibility for every student to see the results of their finished work, be it fill in the gaps, drag and drop, a multiple choice quiz, find the words, true/false, or memory cards via Classtools. net- a set of various tools to make games. I would also recommend a creative task "Breaking News!" where my students needed to make positive breaking news reports. They did it so successfully that it was beyond my expectations.

Every day I post a task in the virtual classroom for my students, always before 8:00 in the morning and they need to send in their work by 20:00 the same day. I keep the same routine because they have already gotten used to it and they know the rules.
I am "on duty", ready to help them and check their work all day and they know it.
So, every student who sends in her/his work gets my feedback within an hour.

In a 3-week-virtual classroom period I have learned some things about myself, professionally and privately, and about my students as well. What amazed me most is the unbelievable stamina that teachers can have. Ten to twelve-hour-working days of non-stop involvement in a virtual classroom, moderating students' work, students' lack of self-confidence, insecurity, bad mood, missing lessons, getting them to do their work, repetitively giving the same instructions and at the same time encouraging them to continue with good work, checking their work, word by word, and giving them, each of them, precise feedback about their work is an exhausting job and beyond every possible parameter of normal working conditions. As a regular teacher, a human being with my own fears, insecurities and worries for my family and for myself I have seen myself as a firm person who still stands fast no matter how much work is piling up or multiplying rapidly. My students (age 11,12 and 13) have mostly shown a great deal of responsibility and work discipline. They have been following my instructions and they have been punctual, collaborative and more or less successful at gaining the learning outcomes.

Despite all the problems and hard times, teachers have carried the day. We must not ever forget our importance in our students' lives. The awareness of being a significant factor in someone's life gives us, teachers, a strength to keep continuing our good work because its fruits give us hope for a better future and a quick return to our normal lives.

Ivana Valjak Ilić

Making the most of it

For the last four weeks, Croatian teachers have been teaching online due to the coronavirus pandemic. For the last four weeks, teachers, pupils and their parents have been learning how to make the most out of the current situation. I would dare say that a lot has been learned, not just concerning the technological, but also the methodical and psychological aspect of distant learning.

Distant learning is a great challenge for all of us. Working from home, learning from home, requires good time management skills, selfdiscipline, willingness to learn new things daily and a lot of patience. Patience not only with the technology, with our students, but with ourselves.

I teach German as a foreign language to students at the age between fifteen and nineteen. Teaching a foreign language is challenging, especially when the language is not omnipresent in the students' lives. It is also challenging when one needs to teach the learners communication, spoken and written, and teaching online offers limited possibilities to do so.

I am lucky to have been attending online seminars for the last six years, some of them organised as blended learning courses, so I have some sense of what it means to learn using only a platform and school materials, without momentary feedback and support. I have attended eight modules of a professional development programme for German teachers, called *Deutsch Lehren Lernen* (Learning to Teach German). Having this experience, it was clear to me that I cannot expect my students to finish their assignments at home as they would normally in school. I decided to give them fewer assignments and more time to finish them in order to keep them motivated to continue learning, to have continuity in learning and to have a feeling of accomplishment when done. The emotional side of learning is important and I am always trying to make my students feel good in my classes and to have positive feelings about the subject infamous for being „hard to learn".

The lack of direct interaction with students makes distant learning rather challenging. I find it difficult to plan and deliver lessons by communicating only through messages on the learning platform. Giving feedback is also harder because I cannot give it simultaneously to the whole group, but have to do it individually. The platforms are often encountering difficulties because too many users are online at the same time and video calls are thus not recommended.

Not everything is negative, though. Distant learning will teach us all many new things and bring us new skills. Not only various applications, platforms and digital tools, but also how to maximize the effects of long-distance learning without overwhelming and/or discouraging the learners. I asked my students in an anonymous survey what they thought of our online lessons. They were mostly satisfied with the number of assignments, their weekly workload and our communication. Some of them asked for more feedback. I am still searching for the most appropriate and least-time-consuming method of feedback.

A few days before our students had stayed home, I read an article with some tips for online lessons. The main tip was: „Less is more" and „Keep in mind that learning at home is not the same as learning at school, especially when it comes to time required." Time management is important, not only considering the number of tasks and exercises but also when organising the day. I still haven't found the recipe for how to organize my day and not feel drained in the evening.

Some of the problems teachers encounter are connected to students' online activities. A number of students do not take their assignments seriously, they rarely communicate with their teachers, ask for new deadlines or simply avoid work in any form. Sometimes the apps do not cooperate and a thoroughly planned activity fails because students cannot log in or access the online materials. On the other hand, some of the shy students find this form of learning more to their liking and constantly show interest, ask for frequent feedback, ask for extra assignments and, most importantly, show progress.

Progress assessment is a topic that concerns all included in the process: teachers, students and parents. The Ministry of Science and Education has published detailed instructions on how to assess and grade students' tests and work. The question of validity is still open. No one can be certain that a student has done his or her work by himself/herself, that no one in the family helped with the assignment or that the students did not exchange the answers among themselves. Another problem in foreign language learning and teaching is the assessment of productive skills, mostly speaking. If video calls are not recommended, it is unclear how to assess the students' speaking skills. Recordings or phone calls are not reliable enough.

In conclusion, distant learning in this form is better than no lessons at all. This form of teaching and learning brings us valuable experiences for the near future, when the technology will become an even more important part of education on all levels. Even though the teaching material needs to be reduced, our students will learn a number of new skills and hopefully use them in the future. Mastering all sorts of digital tools and new work circumstances will hopefully make us teachers more open to the new tendencies in methodics and education. The most important thing is to see what we can all gain from the situation and remain patient and, if not optimistic, then realistic.

Kristina Mijandrušić Ladavac, prof.
Osnovna škola Vladimira Nazora Pazin

An extraordinary situation – a chance for rediscovering (oneself)

I have worked as an English teacher in a small school since 2002. I work in grades 1 to 8 (in the European context known as the primary and lower secondary level, ages: 6-14). There are 18 years of teaching behind me. I have a compilation of classroom experiences; I have developed a style of teaching; recently I have also considered the possibility of changing my job. However, the years of experience have won over the omnipresent negative attitudes towards teachers. The COVID-19 situation has come as an opportunity to restart and reboot.

The virtual daily routine

Despite the general opinion among the masses, teachers (I know and meet) really do their job. So do I. I have never stopped learning; it is the way I am. And I have used ICT tools, skill improvement activities and cross-curricula approach in my lessons; it is the subject I teach that can have it all. The daily routine during the online lessons starts almost fairytale-like: in pyjamas with a cup of coffee on a sunny day (I use the metaphor most of the teachers have heard in the media recently.). However, the pyjamas are rarely my uniform and the coffee gets cold. And it is not because there is no work to be done. Online teaching is extra time-consuming. It is almost a fact. It is needless to say, the sunny day is not enjoyed. The daily routine on the outside is accompanied by the unavoidable inner neurological activity happening in my brain. The thoughts I have create almost hearable buzzing sounds. My mind is conveying my own personal survey about the process of teaching and learning in the time of the COVID-19 epidemic. Before I state my conclusions, I want to share the problems I am facing and thinking about since the Croatian schools have "evaporated" into virtual classrooms. Here they are:

1. I have used ICT tools for many years and my school is well-equipped. I suppose most of my students are digitally competent. But are they really? And what to do with those who always need extra help? Do all the stakeholders possess the needed digital literacy?
2. At school, I can help my students, give explanations and show them. In the virtual classroom I rely on the students' capability of understanding my instructions and the help of their parents. But is it enough? Am I clear? Are my lessons too demanding? Do all the stakeholders possess the needed skills?
3. Even though it is teaching and learning online, it is real-time. I try to be present for all my students and I do my best at giving them timely and additional comments. My "real-time work" consists not only of teaching. I manage housework and family time. When I mix all together, my "non-sleeping" part of a day is an 18-hour-long working day. There is always the possibility to pretend nobody is around. (The last sentence is a joke, of course.) Do I possess the needed competencies?
4. There is an overflow of apps, online tools and materials. Not just for the students but for the teachers as well. What to choose? How to make sure the students (and parents) are able to use the materials? Moreover, to see it as learning? Is it healthy, though?
5. I need to share my thoughts with my colleagues. I want to compare my ideas with theirs. I want to share my ideas. I still believe in humanity. Do humans possess the needed emotional intelligence?

From theory to practice

To make it seem like a real survey, I searched for professional development titles we all have in our Documents folder. My rebooting issues should be described somewhere, right? The topics I went for were: online teaching, making a great lesson, the impact of ICT in the classroom and the proper way of organizing screen-time. But as it usually goes, searching for one thing eventually leads to a totally different topic. So, loads of thoughts and loads of data should somehow get organized and come out like a usable and useful piece of information that should help me create appropriate online lessons with S.M.A.R.T. outcomes.

During the first three weeks of online schooling I have primarily confirmed some basic principles I have come to notice

during my years of teaching. But it is only natural that these new circumstances lead to acquiring knowledge and developing the skills. Here are my ideas and opinions about online teaching and learning, in order of appearance in my mind:

1. Intrinsic motivation can only partially be enhanced by the teachers' ideas, planned activities and assignments. However, this is where ICT can serve the purpose and, from my experience, tasks relating to a student individually, a question that has to do with an aspect of a student's life or attitude or opinion or creative tasks about the topic discussed during the lessons. I prefer cross-curricular project-based tasks for individual or smaller group work.
2. In my head, everything is clear. But don't forget to check the students' understanding of instructions, criteria, terms and skills. This is also known as formative assessment.
3. Students' attention span is shortening, extremely. In order to keep the students' attention, I like to use graphics, pictures, gestures and sound in my (usual and online) teaching. At the moment, I find video lessons (not longer than 7 minutes) are a suitable way for me to say what is needed and for students to hear and see it (because they are unwilling to read with comprehension any text longer than 20 words; this, however, is not a scientific fact, just my opinion). Just a simple Powerpoint presentation turned into an mp4 video does the trick.
4. As a spontaneous idea after the previously mentioned lack of reading comprehension comes the principle: Less is more. I think this should be the number one rule. A teacher should keep it simple – from the way a lesson is presented to the way the tasks are given and planned. I want my students to be able to do my tasks by themselves. I came upon a piece of information while googling online and distant schooling – the rule of three activities per lesson. And the lessons should fit on a post-it. "If the plan doesn't fit, then I'm being over-ambitious", says Katherine Bilsborough on teachingenglish.org.uk.
5. This is not the time to try out something new. The change in the way we teach and the way students learn is stressful enough. Even though the general practice was to follow the official instructions and to use the virtual classrooms we use, I keep on using Edmodo for my classes because it is a well-known "place" for them. I have used Edmodo for more than 10 years in my school and I can only recommend it to everybody.
6. Working time versus hobby time? It should be properly distributed. Not only in the lives of students but teachers as well. And we have to learn how to breathe properly. It fights stress. My younger students like the "balloon" breathing exercise.
7. Screen time? Have we done the calculations? The necessity of physical movement needs not be repeated. Ranko Rajović has said it so many times in a very simple way. And your yoga instructor or your masseuse/masseur, I'm sure.
8. I miss my students. I care about them. I need to go beyond the letters on the screen. In the "online" weeks, I tried using video conferencing with the older students. Or I just talk to some of them on the phone when needed (to explain a grammar rule or to give instructions on how to log in or…). Video conferencing was something new for me. We needed a couple of lessons to get used to the buttons and icons on Zoom but just seeing the faces and hearing the voices made the difference. A simple talk. Not a huge and well-prepared lesson.

I have been to many lectures held by professor Korado Korlević. Those who have heard him speak know that his lectures cover so many topics. Whenever I listen to him, I end up with the same question: "What about ethics and morals? His answer is: "They shouldn't cease to exist." When it comes to teaching, no education can be properly done without the presence of an (alive, human) educator, of a teacher. So, keep it simple, social and human.

Lidija Šaravanja
Challenging Distance

The utter truth of Preradović's quote, *Stalna na tom svietu Samo miena jest*[1] 'The only constant thing in this world is change', has nowadays been a hard-core challenge even for English teachers. We have been hit by this new situation on a global level, without timely warning and in an undercapacitated educational system. Being a teacher of English as a foreign language, I feel that I am a member of a group of intelligent, hard-working, creative and innovative teachers, excellent team players and creative thinkers focused on outcome. Yet, nothing could have prepared us for the current situation of distant teaching in various kinds of virtual classrooms. We have been provided with some of the necessary empowerment by the School for life project, but it was no more than beginners' steps.

True support has been arriving from the publishers and Carnet, who responded rather promptly providing us with webinars, unlocked materials, and all kinds of digitally oriented support. During the shock and struggles in the first week of distant teaching most of my colleagues started searching for tutorials and new applications to helps us make lessons. Publishers and numerous educational sites that have unlocked their accessibility have been significantly important since the very beginning. The Ministry of Education has promptly organized a kind of TV schooling as well as a repository of video lessons created by competent and hardworking colleagues. Otherwise, the messages sent have often not been to the point, but rather confusing and, as many colleagues commented, detached from reality. But making virtual lessons is only one of many challenges. Even more demanding is keeping track of students' activities, homework assignements, questions, and different problems regarding technology, digital competencies, the Internet, their capacity for learning, time management, etc.

We have chosen Yammer as a platform for grades 5 to 8. Teachers who teach grades 1-4 have agreed on Viber, but some of them have started using other platforms like Edmodo or Google classroom. As an English teacher who teaches all grades except for the 6th, I have been in Viber groups with parents (4 groups altogether – two first grades, one combination of first and third grade and one combination of second and fourth grade.). I soon realized that Viber groups are not a solution I can depend on for social, technical and practical reasons. Namely, they become overcrowded in a short period of time and you must scroll through the conversation to find somebody's homework, question, comment, etc. Not to mention that Viber names are parents' names, nicknames or initials, so all of a sudden I had to relate a parent's Viber name with the appropriate child, times 45. To avoid Viber as much as possible, I asked parents to send homework via e-mail, but very often there were problems uploading videos or tapescripts they had made, so we were back to Viber. Currently I am exploring Google Classroom and I added all my Viber parents there. I am not completely comfortable with it yet, but I am hoping for more structured communication there and am looking forward to an upcoming webinar. My Viber parents are often supportive of their children, but some are frustrated by the new role imposed on them. The younger the child, the greater the role of the parents. It turns out that parents have different time management skills and social skills, so teachers have to address a new moment in teacher-parents communication. Another concern that troubles parents is grading at the end of the school year. This is also a layered problem involving parents' expectations, their participation in the process of learning and teaching, their objectives and education-related ability to evaluate their child's achievements, and the list goes on.

I have four Yammer classes, two fifth grades, one seventh and one eighth grade. I find Yammer classrooms easier to handle, eventhough some students reported that they had experienced some problems with it at the beginning. It might be due to slow Internet (a local issue), system overload (which has eventually been fixed) or their lack of IT skills. Sometimes, as it turned out, the issue is solely the same as in traditional classrooms – low motivation or ability to learn and skipping classes and obligations. The truth is that a great majority of children have the conditions for remote schooling, but unfortunately not all. It appeared that a couple of children from our school do not have a Wi-Fi connection, and children in one certain neighbourhood have a really bad Internet connection. An exceptionally fortunate circumstance in our school are our IT teachers who have been available both to students and to school staff regardless of their own working hours. This makes it easier to handle some of the technological problems and definitely provides us all with a sense of security. Additional problems are children with special needs, who usually have assistants in class; now they only have their parents and siblings who often do not have the capacity to support them.

Another important aspect of distant learning is emotional. At this stage, after four weeks, children have various emotional experiences. Some of them miss school from the very first week of remote learning and refer to nostalgically it as 'our

[1] Preradović, P. Izabrana djela. Zagreb: Matica hrvatska, 1997. str. 165.

old school'. Some of them miss teachers and have no problems articulating it. Some of them are less active and need encouragement and additional motivation, some are more active and for the first time hand in their assignments on time. Some of them are distracted by technology, some are frustrated by it. Most of them have the same patterns of behaviour as in traditional schooling. Children who have stable families are for obvious reasons in a far greater advantage than those who live in troubled families.

Despite and/or along the issues mentioned and skipped in the text, a whole range of new skills have been gained both by my students and by myself. To my surprise, some students (aged 11-15) were struggling with logging into some applications, but none of them had any difficulties with recording sound or making videos. Uploading them on Yammer was a horse of a different colour. Others, better equipped with IT skills, made same extraordinary presentations and videos using various tools I have never tried working with. This appeared to be an opportunity for my students to teach me new skills and an opportunity for me to learn something practical from them. Being a teacher with over twenty years of experience, I know that there is no written explanation, no matter how methodologically impeccable it might be, that can replace an audible and visual lesson a teacher can provide. And the questionnaire in Forms that I made for my students has proved that I am right. Except for the closed questions referring to how successfully they are managing their English lessons and how content they are with their work, I added two open questions: 1) What do you like best about distantly learning English? and 2) What do you miss the most in virtual English classrooms? Most of the answers to the first question confirm that students generally like gamelike activities, making videos and recording their voice. They like to hear me giving thorough instructions and helping them with pronunciations in the recordings I send them. A couple of students do not mind this type of schooling and they do not miss their classrooms a lot. Most of them, on the other hand, miss their friends, their teachers, additional explanations during lessons and immediate responses, jokes and an encouraging environment. Closed questions suggest that most of my students do not think they have excessive homework, they can follow the instructions and do homework (except for a few of them who think that English is too difficult to learn anyhow and impossible to learn virtually). Some of them think they achieve less than they would in the real classroom, but most of them believe that the kind of tasks and homework they get (mostly listening and reading activities and gamelike quizzes) continuously enable their language progress. The questionnaire, with both closed and open questions, tells us that we have been on the right track so far (with enough space for improvement), given the sudden circumstances and considerable lack of preparations. Time will show where the track will lead us.

A similar questionnaire has been made for the teachers' perspective and it would be interesting to make one for parents (especially those who have children in lower grades, 1 to 4) and also to make one for the systems that provide support, like Carnet and publishing houses. This would provide a broader picture and material for analysis when this whole adventure is finally behind us.

Maja Labaš Horvat

My school's virtual classrooms

When you start your teaching career, older colleagues usually tell you that it is a wonderful job which requires life-long learning and dedication. This year, due to the pandemic and school lockdown, it took more than dedication to successfully work in a virtual environment which offers an abundance of sources, digital tools and platforms, but with only twenty-four hours in a day to dedicate to school work, family and staying mentally healthy. Since it's been a long time since I have written something which is not for my students, the best choice is to focus on the positive and negative aspects of the situation that we are still struggling with.

As in every well written State Matura For and Against essay, I will start with the positive side, which is always my personal preference when it comes to teaching and life in general. I work in an experimental school so I had a sufficient amount of time to get acquainted with the various digital tools and platforms. Since I have started using Project Based Learning and Flipped Classroom teaching methods some time ago, I have already used many of them with my students and did not have a problem getting them all enthusiastic about the idea. Even though there was some resistance to Loomen in Croatia, I really found it useful as a supporting tool because the topics covered were really helpful. Yet, the most important thing was the support we got from the mentors who were always at our disposal and really proved that we have excellent teacher trainers who were, first of all, our colleague practitioners. Our IT teacher also suggested starting our own Loomen courses. The first reactions from students were really great because some of them worked better online than at school and showed us the importance of giving our students a choice when it comes to their work and progress. My school colleagues were also supportive and we started a school network for sharing examples of good practice on our school's webpage. Our principal and supporting staff organised various workshops held by teachers from the school, equipped our classrooms with technology and materials needed to help us in the transition from classwork to an online environment, and we were, in my opinion, good at balancing between the traditional classroom approach and online teaching and learning. We are blessed with smaller classes and can really focus on the needs of individual learners, as well as introducing new teaching methods and practices. My students could always choose between a variety of learning tools, be they digital or real-life like flashcards, worksheets, posters, songs, books or something else prepared for a certain class. Most of the classrooms have smartboards and laptops so we could try out various digital tools for different skills and this gave us a certain advantage when the schools closed down in March. Since then, I have the feeling that most of my days are the same and include using various tools and activities, planning classes, filming lessons, answering their questions and assessing their work, but I really don't mind it because I have learned so much more in the process, not only about teaching in an online environment, but also about my students, their thinking processes, abilities and emotional intelligence. Every virtual Zoom meeting was partly devoted to keeping our students safe and sane, and caring about them, not only thinking about the outcomes and assessment.

Unfortunately, there are some downfalls to the online classroom concept due to the social circumstances of some of our students. We have some students coming from poor families, some living in foster care, some with grandparents or some distant relatives and there is a significant number of Roma children, so the first couple of weeks were solely dedicated to providing them with the equipment needed for schoolwork. Our principal and some teachers spent days driving around our county delivering laptops, tablets and sim cards to students, and could see the struggles of some of the families with three or four schoolchildren trying to work and to learn in really challenging conditions. Primary school teachers have a mixed blessing when it comes to parent support, while we usually have to get through to students directly because some parents do not know how to help their children or do not want to take part in supporting their children in an online learning environment. It is especially difficult to contact some of the students because they are of age and make decisions without consulting their parents first and most of them, due to family conditions, want to leave school as soon as possible and start working in order to get some independence and security.

All in all, my feelings connected to online teaching and learning still remain positive due to so many excellent projects, videos, songs, recipes, presentations and homework from my students, although I cannot wait to see them all again in person and to thank them for showing me that their will to learn new things is much stronger than the circumstances surrounding us at the moment.

Miranda Barac
Obrtnička škola (Vocational school)

HOW I HAVE BECOME AN ONLINE TEACHER

It's been almost a month since I suddenly became an online English teacher. I have never planned to be an online teacher and I have never been attracted to such a career opportunity, but due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus, I was forced to move my teaching online and embrace my new digital classroom. And how do I cope with the new situation? Well, it's been quite challenging. I had already known what a flipped classroom was, but I have just realized what a 'flipped family' is. If you are not familiar with that expression, I am going to explain what it is. It happened at the beginning of my online teacher's career during lunchtime. I was texting a message to one of my students when my son entered the living room with an angry expression on his face and yelled at me: 'Mum, if you don't leave your laptop and mobile phone right away, I'll grab them and throw them away! Are we going to have lunch or not?' It suddenly occurred to me that I had heard these sentences so many times, but it was always me who uttered them, and they were always addressed to my son. That time the roles changed. And it was not the only time that a similar situation happened. Suddenly I have become an addict who can't live without my laptop or mobile phone. When I am forced to leave both of them, usually when their batteries ran out, in such tough times I try to find comfort with my tablet. I have never taught an online class before. Therefore, this transition requires many hours of work and a great deal of patience. I have to learn the technology and identify the best digital tools and teaching tactics in new circumstances. How do I manage to do that? Well, I start early in the morning trying to figure out how a certain digital tool works and how it can contribute to my online teaching. When I finally discover all the wonders of the particular digital tool and create new content that can be applied in my new lesson, I feel extremely happy and proud and ready to go to bed. I feel so excited that the first thing I do the next morning is to post it in my virtual classroom and share it with my students. All happy and satisfied I am about to have a morning cup of coffee while waiting for my students' feedback when I start receiving messages like 'Teacher, help! I can't open the link.' or 'Teacher, something went wrong with this'. And what am I supposed to do? Of course, first I finish my morning cup of coffee as I never give it up and then, I roll up my sleeves, scroll up and down with my mouse and I am determined to face the new challenge in the world of technology. It takes another day and a lot of patience but when I finally find a solution and my students confirm that it works, I feel over the moon. As for the digital tools that I've been using these days, I find Edpuzzle very useful when it comes to checking listening skills. Vocaroo. com is a great tool to record speaking. I ask my students to record a speech on a particular topic and send me the link via Vocaroo.com application and it works very well. I also use Wizer.me for interactive worksheets, Wordwall to check vocabulary, Microsoft Forms and Testmoz to check grammar, listening and reading skills. I also record my lessons using the Loom application and I teach online with Zoom.us application when necessary. As you can see, with time I am getting better and better at IT and becoming more and more confident. As a matter of fact, my self-confidence has been boosted so much that I sometimes question whether teaching should have been my first career choice, or should I have tried my hand at Information Technology. Luckily for IT experts, I am joking about questioning my teaching career. More than ever, I am convinced that teaching is meant to be my first career choice because if I didn't have so much passion about teaching I would never spend so much time trying to find the best way to reach my students and deliver my lessons online in the best possible way. This is the same passion that is present among all our teachers who are working tirelessly to ensure that the learning continues in these hard times. And if you are wondering how the story about 'flipped family' finished, don't worry, my son didn't end up hungry. During this 'stay at home' confinement my husband has suddenly revealed his culinary talent and has taken control over our kitchen and our family cuisine. I can't complain. Don't take me wrong, but sometimes I even wish that Covid-19 had happened earlier. Everything happens for a reason and every cloud has its silver lining. I hope that you have also found your silver lining in this cloud that has loomed over us. I wish us all a quick and safe return to our real classrooms and in the meantime let's stay healthy, keep calm and let's keep teaching online the best we can.

Goran Podunavac

A View Through the Virtual Window

Bearing in mind the fact that I teach ICT, I was ready for distance learning when I found out that we were about to start with it. After creating virtual classrooms for all subjects in both schools in which I work (Popovac Primary School and Drenje Primary School), I helped colleagues that were less experienced in the virtual world and then, dedicated myself to my pupils.

During the first week, I encountered many difficulties due to a system overload caused by the signing in of all participants, but, later on, things got better and I am happy to see that most of my pupils are able to follow our classes and take part in our virtual travels. My pupils are familiar with the content of digital ICT coursebooks from the first day of this school year, so crosswords, quizzes and all other digital materials created for revision or testing weren't new to them.
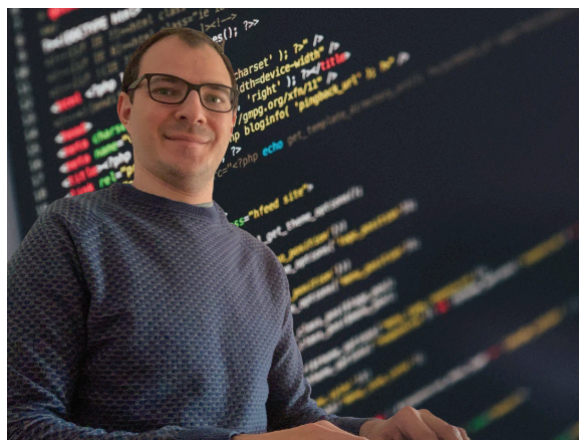
In ICT classes in primary school, it is extremely important for pupils to do some practical work on their computers. To avoid having online classes that would include reading something in the coursebook and then doing exercises in the workbook, I decided that the best option would be to make video lessons. I publish them on the YouTube channel of Popovac Primary School (some tasks are public and some for my pupils only). Through my video lessons, pupils observe the mode of operation in certain programmes. I bear in mind that no lesson should last longer than 10 minutes. It is my opinion that I manage to highlight the most important elements of the curriculum that I have constructed before the beginning of the school year.

I publish a link to my recorded content every morning before 8 o'clock on the days when pupils have ICT in their schedule. All of my lessons mostly consist of four or five activities. The first part consists of watching the recorded material, but pupils are always instructed to refer to their digital textbooks if something is not clear enough or if they simply want to expand their knowledge on the subject. The second activity is to solve a practical task on their computer or tablet by following short and simple instructions. For example, I have recently covered text editing tools with fifth-grade pupils and they were instructed to edit a given text, save it to their devices and send it via e-mail. Pupils' ability in the use of digital tools increases with their age because they have covered the mode of operation of most tools in their classes, so eight grade pupils have no problem in creating a web page. The remaining two to three activities are primarily focused on short digital quizzes and games in order to revise and assess their knowledge.

Pupils who have good grades generally have no difficulties in working at home, but pupils who lack skill in the use of digital tools do have problems. Also, there is a small number of students who lack motivation and are rather irresponsible. We are all faced with a new experience, so I am convinced that we will attempt to find better and more efficient solutions to include the pupils who are not sufficiently involved in the fulfillment of their obligations.

I find working with pupils with learning disabilities very difficult. Besides the fact that their assistants are not present, whenever they reach an obstacle while working, they often do not understand the on-line instructions I send them. Even though, some of them have on-line assistants at their disposal, they are also not successful in explaining the tasks which I am certain they could solve in normal circumstances. I believe that their parents help them according to their abilities, but I am also grieved by the fact that I give them much easier tasks than I would give them in the actual classroom which results in failing to achieve the previously targeted level of progress.

After two weeks, I introduced video conferences to my class. I am aware that pupils have gotten to know and use some new digital tools through other subjects, and also that they spend much more time in front of their computer than they usually do. The difference is in the fact that this time their spending time in front of their computer is not related to entertainment but to the fact that they are obliged to use this technology for their learning process. It is extremely important to me that we maintain communication through video conferences in order to talk about the problems that they occasionally encounter. We attempt to find solutions or simply to express support for each other in these unusual and difficult circumstances. A single video conference has much more power in communication, laughter and

an atmosphere of a classroom than communication via e-mail or the exchange of information within the confinement of our ICT virtual classroom.

For the first two weeks I have given the pupils a chance to adapt, but I have sent them return information regarding their attitude towards work and the completion of their assignments, which I still do. I have written notes in the e-Register for each pupil so their parents would have an insight on their activity and work. Due to the fact that the Ministry of Science and Education gave us guidelines for assessment, I am able to give a summative reward to pupils who excelled in the creation of web pages, presentations, digital comics and other assignments. I have informed the pupils that oral, as well as written examinations will not be given – the demonstration of their knowledge and skills is clearly evident through the previously mentioned assignments.

I have conducted a survey among pupils to find out how are they managing their online courses, do some of them still have technical issues while following classes, how much time do they spend in doing the tasks, does anyone help them... 80 percent of the pupils answered 15 questions and even though the survey was anonymous I suppose that the 20 percent of the missing answers are the pupils who don't do the tasks and aren't active in virtual classrooms.

My results were sent to the school psychologist because pupils complained that they had too much homework and also asked for certain teachers to lower their demands. Even though no teacher was specifically pointed out, it made me think do I, myself, possibly exaggerate while creating online tasks? I didn't think so, but I am waiting for a staff meeting where the principals of both schools I work in, are going to give us the results of another survey that was distributed among the parents, and that should give us more detailed insight into the quantity of homework that is delivered to the pupils.

I truly think my teaching methods through and I try to improve them to make my pupils more creative in solving the problems and tasks I send them. The results show that most of them are successful, but I am going to make an extra effort to try to reach (again) those who still haven't mastered online classes. Just as the web reporters have written in their letters of support, the data shows that most of the children want to go back to their schools as soon as possible. Many state that they miss their school, even though they never thought they would.

Throughout this story, I have to admit that it's actually easier for me to prepare digital content and record video lessons. They have ICT classes once a week, so I manage to design and record all of them practically in one day, and the rest of the time I send feedback and help them when they get stuck somewhere. Where do I spend the remaining hours and hours of time? I don't want to complain, but trying to solve their problems with the use of certain applications, and the problems they are having with their tablets, so far, has taken up the most of my time and at the same time drained my energy. The difficulty is that in some villages the signal is worse so that some have problems with the internet connection, or some installed applications simply stop working or become unresponsive. So far, I manage to fix the problems they are having with their tablets during telephone conversations or long online correspondence with students and parents. The camera on the tablet is also not the best, so I often have to explain to students that the problem is not their way of taking photos, but simply the technical lack of the device. It is for these reasons that I try to explain to my colleagues that when designing digital materials, they should take into account the fact that students in certain classes do not have the technical ability to solve cetain tasks. In doing so, I always tell them that we must not forget our twenty or so students who received tablet cards and only have 2.5 gigabytes of data traffic. As much as teachers are creative, I have to emphasize that we must design digital content for these students (or use the existing ones from publishing houses) which the ministry has approved so that students will not be charged for data traffic. As always, whoever wants to, can find a way, so that even in this difficult situation we should be able to find solutions to the problems. Other teachers also watch numerous webinars and learn how to apply certain tools to improve their teaching and make it easier for students. I support them too when they need it; sometimes I feel like I'm working at a switchboard. And then there are days when everything goes smoothly, we are all in a similar situation and we have no choice.

Everything I have written shows how distance learning has its advantages and disadvantages. It is important for me to give children the opportunity to show their creativity because I know that they can do a lot, and today's technology can help them do that. I am happy with the students' work - I encourage them to continue to be diligent and I praise them for successfully solving the tasks. I am proud when students with lower grades do excellent work and I admit that they continue to amaze me. I continue to listen carefully to what they tell me and I try to find ways to make it easier for them to learn. Despite the fact that I can use digital tools even better than before, I am encountering distance learning for the first time. And that's why we are all learning and adapting together day in and day out!

The fact is that my teaching, by the very nature of my work, is more focused on the digital world and yet, I can't wait to get back to the classroom. I look forward to standing in front of my students so that we can sail forth from our real classroom into new learning adventures.

Nataša Grčar, a primary school teacher of English and Film Studies, Slovenia

SHORT ANIMATED FILMS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

Being a bookworm and a film buff at the same time, I never run out of ideas when it comes to finding alluring materials for either grammar/vocabulary teaching or language skills practice. In this article I'm going to share with you ten examples of good practice which will help you integrate short animated films into your language teaching.

The basic reason why a foreign language teacher would use short animated films in the classroom is that contemporary students feel the need to be taught with the help of modern technology. I am far from saying that good old traditional methods should be put aside, but from time to time we should indeed let our students indulge in some more entertaining language learning activities. Animation captivates children and youth; therefore cartoons can be used as perfect motivation to make students alert and learn the language without them even realising it. Additionally, there are numerous short animated films you can choose from, covering a wide array of topics. At YouTube or Vimeo, you will have no difficulties finding ones that meet your needs. All the titles used in this article can be found on YouTube. Finally, with animated films, you can use almost any pre- and post-reading materials that we all have galore.

The films you choose depend on the lesson aim. Most short animated films are silent, with little or no dialogue, some are narrated, and some have dialogues. As you will see below, even silent animated films can be put to good use and must not be overlooked. Try to choose high-quality films that bear a message. As a film studies teacher, I also want my students to encounter different animation techniques (hand-drawn, stop-motion, or computer animation), but this is not a must, of course. Just as importantly, try to use a film that your students (either children or youngsters) will be able to relate to.
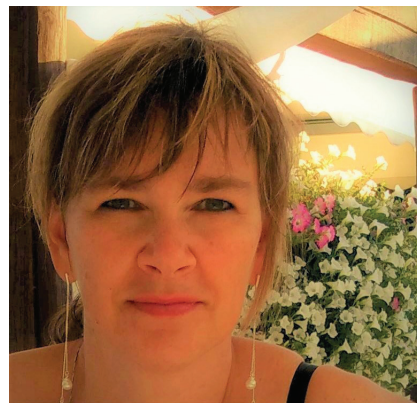
I'm all ears

The activity that I call *I'm all ears* involves some running; therefore it is more suitable for younger pupils who need a lot of action. You can try it out with older students as well but be prepared for some whining. Before the lesson, type out a few quotes from the film they are about to see. Print them out, paste them all around the classroom, and let the students in. Ask them to find and read the quotes, leaving them where they are. After that, they watch the cartoon and listen carefully. When they hear one of the quotes, they run to it and take it off the wall. The pupil who manages to collect most quotes is the winner.

Voice actors

If you want your students to practice listening and speaking, choose a short animated film with simple dialogues and a simple plot. Let them watch the film once or twice and ask them to remember as much of the dialogue as they can, since the third time you will mute the sound and they will be asked to dub the characters. In one go, you will need as many students as there are characters. If you want them to be even more creative and the task even more enjoyable, choose a silent cartoon and ask the students to make up their own dialogues. I did this speaking activity with *Leaving home,* a short animated tragicomedy, and we all had tons of fun.

Subtitling

If you consider yourself a digitally competent teacher, you can ask your students to subtitle a short animated film. First, download a free version of Subtitle Workshop or any other subtitling app. I suggest you choose a cartoon with simple dialogues. Before you start, make sure they understand the basic rule of subtitling: make it short. They can translate the dialogues into their mother tongue, which would be the easiest way to start. Once they master the drill, you can also ask them to translate into English. The only downside I see to this activity is that it can be quite time consuming plus you will need to get hold of a fully equipped IT classroom.

A cartoon club

Book clubs have been a very successful way of spending quality time. Why don't you start your own cartoon club and watch a short animated film once a month? If you want to encourage your students not only to practice speaking English but also to develop some critical thinking and/or convey their emotions, choose films that include a message. Such

films can be a good starting point for a discussion. For this particular activity, I used Kobe Bryant's Oscar-winning *Dear Basketball*, which teaches students about trying to live out childhood dreams.

A newspaper report

Divide your class into groups and tell them that after the screening each group will have to write a detailed newspaper report on what has happened in the story. Show them a film either full of action or elaborate scenery. Choose a few words that should be in their reports, but do not reveal them to the class. And the group that uses most of »your« words is the winner. To make the task even harder, the words that you choose do not have to be key words (which are usually nouns) but any other random word, maybe a verb or an adjective. Students will have to be thorough if they want to find your words. Here I recommend watching *Koyaa: Pancakes* or *Koyaa: Broom* by a Slovenian author Kolja Saksida.

A cartoon commentary

Short animated films are also useful for the revision of grammar tenses. For the Past Tense revision, first watch a film and then ask your students to pair up and retell the plot, using narrative tenses. If you want your students to practice the Present Continuous tense, the best option is to choose a film without dialogues and let students comment on what they are seeing. For this purpose, I like to use an episode of *Simon's cat* series. An Oscar nominee *A single life* is also worth watching.

Test your memory

Ask your students to pay attention to all the details in a film and, after the screening, test their memory. This is a nice exercise for vocabulary learning. Ask them to pay attention to numbers, colours, actions, things… If your current topic is by any chance cooking or food, I recommend watching *Western Spaghetti, Submarine Sandwich* or Oscar-nominated *Fresh Guacamole* by PES. To make the task even more fun, write the questions on small slips of paper and hide them around the classroom. The pupil who finds the most memory questions and answers them correctly, is the winner.

Gap-fill

Short animated films are also more than suitable for a good old gap-fill exercise. Before the lesson, prepare a short summary of the film, leaving out some keywords. Pupils' task will be to try and guess – before they see the cartoon – what the missing words are. Every year, I let my students watch Roald Dahl's *Revolting Rhymes: Little Red Riding Hood and the Wolf.* They are appalled by the surprise ending.

The way I see it

Put your students in groups. Each group should have as many members as there are characters in the film you choose. Each student should be then assigned a role from the film and when you finish watching, ask them to retell the story from their point of view. For this task, try to use a film with a controversial story. A good old *Tom and Jerry* episode would be a perfect choice. Tom will tell the story from a totally different point of view as Jerry.

Putting sentences in the right order

This task will take some more preparation before the lesson. Write a short summary of the cartoon they are going to watch, cut it into sentences or paragraphs and mix them together. Arrange students for group work. After the screening, ask them to put the sentences/paragraphs in the correct order. If you want this task to be a bit more difficult, ask them to guess and do the task first and watch the cartoon only after they have all finished. *Mr. Bean's Animated Series* has little dialogue but just enough action for this kind of activity, plus it is quite popular among children.

In the long run, once you find short animated films an effective and fun means of language teaching, you can include other types of short programmes into your language classroom as well, for example film trailers, feature film clips, song videos, TV commercials, how-to tutorials, and the list goes on and on. I can guarantee you your students will appreciate the change.

Literature

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Romana Rusek

In between the earthquakes and pandemic

My name is Romana Rusek and I am a professor of economics at the First Economics School in Zagreb. I teach two professional subjects, namely Accounting and Marketing. After 3 weeks of distance learning, I need to tell you what it looks like. I will say that this is a lot more work for the teacher than in normal teaching. My workday starts at 7:30 AM and ends at 08:00 PM.
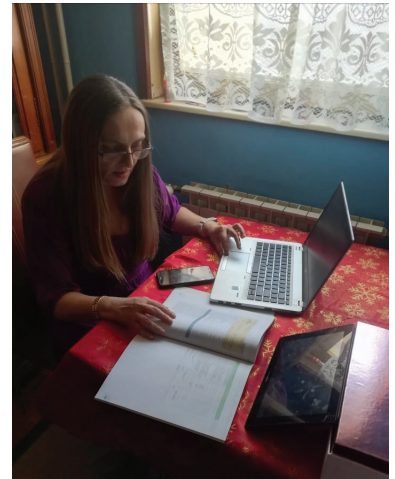
I put my students into virtual classrooms through the Google Classroom platform. In the morning, we log into the classroom, both students and professors. I assign tasks to the students in different ways. Since I teach a subject, I record videos and post them to my YouTube channel, and the students watch the video and follow the instructions. After watching the video, they usually make some infographics or mind-maps using digital tools (Canva, Piktochart, Popplet…). After submitting their work, the evaluation is in the form of an interactive quiz, which I usually do in Quizziz or Wizer.me. After that, I send the students feedback in the form of replies to their work or notes in G-Class. For some difficult teaching topics, especially in Accounting - I organize a real-time video conference via the Zoom.us platform.
Students collaborate, but find it difficult to keep track of commitments across 14 different subjects. They hand in their tasks on time, but they often complain that their eyes ache from looking at a computer screen all day, just like me. I spend about 12 hours a day on the computer. I often feel a headache and lack of concentration because of so much time spent on my computer.

On top of all that - at the center of a pandemic and distance teaching, Zagreb was hit by a large and powerful 5.5 Richter earthquake. After the initial shock, overturned things in the apartment and the damage check, it took a lot of willpower and concentration to go back to the computer and calm the students who were also stressed.

The biggest problem of distance schooling is the lack of IT skills of both the teachers and the students alike. Some do better, some do worse. Also, a big problem is IT equipment because some students do not have computers and are all forced to work using their mobile devices. And the last problem is the fact that the internet connection is unstable and there are often interruptions which lead to the frustration of all participants. Initially, the instability of the platforms we were working on was also a problem, but now it is somewhat normalized after three weeks of operation.
Vocational secondary schools are a big problem because they have no way of evaluating the students' skills because the students cannot demonstrate practical work.

Conclusion: For the time being everything is working thanks to the great enthusiasm of all teachers, but also the students and their parents.

by Suzana Mihelčić
Primary school Vinica

Life-saving digital tools for busy teachers

Distant learning in the time of a pandemic

With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers, pupils and parents worldwide are facing a major unexpected challenge. The Coronavirus has significantly affected not only our private lives, but it is also challenging our ability to adapt and perform distance learning in the best possible way.

Worries of an English teacher

At first, I had been struggling for some time with finding the most appropriate way to teach English while being away from my pupils. The higher graders could adapt quickly, I was aware of that, while at the same time I was worried about the youngsters, their parents' inability (in most of the cases) to help them study English and my lack of experience to pass on the knowledge virtually. I wasn't afraid of having problems with finding the best tools. My fear was about teaching English to the lower graders – they have to be able to hear the English ponunciation and they definitely learn better while seeing their teacher. I will elaborate on that.

Little digital helpers

If you're simply in love with digital tools, like I am, but still believe in the efficacy of traditional methods, using only one digital tool is not an option. I've been using numerous tools during the period of distant learning, so here's the list of my current favourites.

Luckily, after spending some time wondering about the best solution to monitor their progress, I remembered **IZZI** – a digital platform launched by *Profil Klett* that offers interactive multimedia digital content. It contains interactive textbooks which create a multi-sensory space that helps younger pupils learn izzily, quickly and at their own tempo. Pupils can experience learning by doing multiple-choice tasks, grouping, matching, or doing crosswords, and they develop their listening skills by watching videos and listening to interactive texts and plenty more. I'm getting messages from satisfied parents about making their life easier while learning IZZI English with their children. What I like about it is that you can combine learning by using textual books and multimedia content which IZZI provides. I particularly appreciate the adjustable feature of using a font for dyslexic readers which I haven't seen in other programmes that I've used before. The most useful feature is that you can track progress by forming a class and asking your pupils to join. That way they can do the tasks at their own pace while the results of their learning-while-playing instantly come to your account whether they use their laptop, tablet or mobile phone – for free. How brilliant is that?
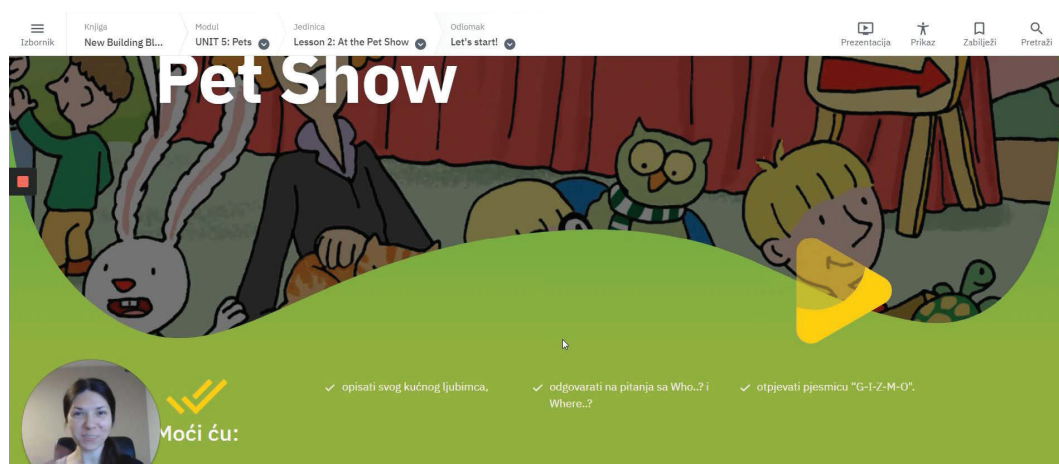
Wordwall is one of the tools at the top of my list these days. It is the perfect tool to try if you are short of time and want to make an interactive task or a worksheet, even if you're not very confident with technology. It is simple to use: choose one of the templates and create a multiple-choice task, ordering, grouping or matching activites. You can also try playing fun games such as "whack-a-mole" and there is much more for your pupils to try. You can track your pupils' scores by using the assignment feature. Wordwall if free to use but you can create only a limited number of activities. After that it's a paid version only. I'm in luck since our school has bought the license. My pupils' parents compliment the tool since it gives their children the possibility of learning while playing at their own tempo.
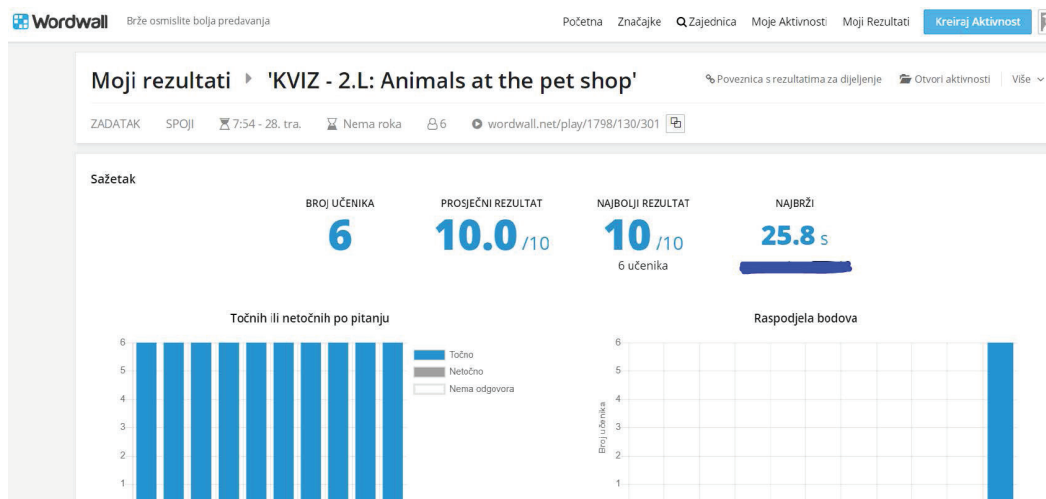
Loom is a tool for making video lessons I couldn't live without these days. It saved me tons of time while preparing for the youngsters and giving them the possibility to see their teacher and receive all the necessary instructions. It helps me teach grammar to teens more easily and they've given me feedback about understanding the subject better. It's free to use. You can make numerous video lessons by either recording yourself as well as the computer screen, recording the screen and your narration, or use a camera only. Pupils can react to your videos by sending emojis as a response – I like that super cute feedback option.

Recently I've been using **Wizer.me** for making online worksheets. I've been using it mostly in open question format to check text understanding, but it offers other options such as multiple-choice questions, matching, sorting, starting a class discussion, etc. Instead of typing their answer pupils can record their explanation or the answer to a question. Teachers can record voice instructions as well which is sometimes helpful. It provides a cute set of background designs which is important, especially for lady teachers and male teachers who enjoy decorating. You can set up a class and assign homework, but the free version offers only one class. You can also give immediate written or voice feedback to your students.

Padlet is a wonderful canvas that works like a piece of paper – you give your students an empty page, preferably with instructions, and allow them to create beautiful presentations in different themes by sticking post-it notes on it. They can upload a video or a file, stick a selfie, write an article and much more. I usually use it for written assignments and revising content. My last padlet, made

for 7 and 8 graders, was filled with tasks, quizzes and open-form discussions for them to answer. It also had grammar questions, and they could express their opinion about the level of understanding of the unit that was about to be tested. Their feedback was positive and in that way everybody was able to see everything and all the information was in one place.

One of the disadvantages of distant learning, despite not being able to see your pupils, is the lack of oral communication.

The main aim of language teaching is to teach your pupils to speak English, which is a very rare option these days. So, once in a while I give them an optional task for which they use **Flipgrid** – a user-friendly tool for developing speaking, expressing opinions on a topic, giving explanations, etc. Teachers can create a grid with a task and send a code to their pupils to join. They then record their own video in which they complete the assignment. Pupils can use cute stickers to put on their faces in the videos to distract themselves from thinking about being watched while speaking. Others can like their recording and comment on it. The responses immediately come to your application and pupils can use any device for recording themselves.

Nearpod is new to me and, so far, I love it. It's a free interactive slideshow tool which enables you to combine presentations, written tasks, voice instructions, videos, 3D video projections and much more all in one place. You can upload your own worksheets that become interactive so that pupils can solve them, they can do polls, or various types of other tasks, and you can even take them on a virtual round trip to a certain country. It's easy to use and enables pupils to work at their own pace.

There's more…

To sum up, it's been pretty hard to choose from the list of many extraordinary tools I like using in my virtual classrooms, but these are at the top of my six-best-tools list these days. They have tidied up the mess I had in my head a few weeks ago, made my life easier, my relationship towards students stronger and comprehensible hence the feedback much clearer. I could write on and on about other tools that I'm fond of such as *BookWidgets, Microsoft Forms, Liveworksheets, Zoom, Kahoot, Quizlet, Socrative* and many more. The list could go on. The key in distant learning is finding the best way to allow yourself to use a wide range of tools you're probably discovering every day, and to maintain simplicity in your lessons so as not to stress out the ones on the other side of the screen.

Post-corona teaching experiences

Every teacher, pupil and parent has by now, become aware of how irreplaceable teachers are. Nothing can offer the pupils warmth, affection and knowledge, as teachers can. Someday we'll return to our most favourite teaching spots, our classrooms, but will we be smarter, wiser, and more experienced or perhaps less adaptable? I somehow believe our pupils and parents will appreciate us more and I'll, personally, have a whole new perspective on my pupils. They have been extremely hard-working and eager to learn, willing to use digital tools and experience new learning methods. In my opinion, they will be more adaptable and independent in studying while they'll value the importance of social interaction and communication like never before. Therefore, this distant learning period might be a rewarding addition to our standard lessons. I'm sure of one thing – pupils will definitely ask for more fun online homework which can easily be assigned in one of the digital little helpers from my list.

Tatjana Bedanjec
Having a screenager at home

Three weeks ago, our lives went on hold and our work online. After three weeks, teaching online is proving to be as difficult and as challenging as we expected it to be.

I teach history and geography and my students are 10 to 14 years of age. I started making video lessons on March 16th. I had no idea how to do it. Luckily, my sixteen-year-old son knows everything about making videos. He found an appropriate tool online and showed me how to use it.

My first video lessons got a lot of positive feedback from my students, but I felt they were lacking one very important segment. I thought it was important for my student to be active while watching videos, so I began to add tasks and activities within the video lessons. I tried my best to find a fine balance between an underwhelming and an overwhelming approach. As a later poll would show, that balance is hard to reach. The majority of my students found the workload not too demanding yet interesting, but to those who lack work habits even the simplest tasks proved to be too difficult.

Reaching all 175 of my students was hard enough. Some of them were not able to create and send an email or to attach something to it. They had to learn or just refresh their knowledge very quickly. Once again, I came to the conclusion that many don't read instructions carefully and some ignore instructions altogether. Misunderstandings are very common, much more common than in a real classroom. I put much effort into creating simple instructions but still I'm getting emails, even from parents, asking me all kinds of things. Most of the answers can be found just by reading or listening carefully.

I'm spending my days sitting at my desk, in front of my laptop. My day starts at 7 am and ends at 8 pm, sometimes even later. I'm answering emails, reading homework assignments, taking notes about my students' progress. I spend a lot of time creating tasks and activities that combine different ways of learning. I'm at home, but I hardly do anything else but my work for school. I decided to take full advantage of documentaries made by HRT (Croatian National Television) so my students get to watch and learn. Most of the time I'm asking for their opinion on certain subjects presented in a documentary.

I'm presenting my students with digital content (lessons) created to stimulate the process of learning. As an author of such content (lessons), I find them very suitable for learning in these unprecedented conditions. For example, while learning about the population of the Americas, I recommended to my students that they explore some digital content about Native American civilization. My students can watch videos and look at photographs, read historical sources and analyse the destruction of the Maya, Inka and Aztecs. They can also test themselves at the end of a digital lesson. I never told them I was the author of those lessons, but they found them very interesting and refreshingly different, anyway.

A special aspect of a teacher's work is being a homeroom teacher. I tried my best to be supportive of my class even before we all ended up in our homes. They found it very difficult to imagine not going to school. On Friday 13th March we were in my classroom for what could possibly be the last time because they are about to finish primary school. If we don't go back to our classrooms before the end of the school year, they'll be devastated. They were looking forward to wearing matching T-shirts with our class insignia and some funny verses. It is unlikely that the Covid-19 crisis will end in time for one, last party. We had to cancel the planned fieldwork and trips. That came as an especially hard blow.

I created a private Facebook group for my class where we communicate daily. They can reach me whenever they have a problem or a question. Most of the time we are simply giving each other support and comfort because we are all in the

same predicament. Things got even more complicated after Zagreb was hit by a 5.5 magnitude earthquake. I could sense fear and uncertainty in my students' group, so I thought long and hard about my actions.

I finally decided to send a compassionate message asking my class to continue working in virtual classrooms. It was my opinion that we had to avoid feelings of despair by continuing to perform our duties as best as we could. I wanted to emphasize the importance of taking responsibility in difficult times. The only true responsibility my students have is their education. By taking care of their tasks and homework, they were helping their families to deal with the crisis. I thought I should remind my class that we all had duties, no matter how young or old we were. My message had the impact I was hoping to achieve and after the initial shock, we were back on track.

In spite of all the effort to reach every single person in my class, I still have a couple of students who are ignoring any work in the virtual classrooms. I do my best to inform parents regularly and to keep in touch. Every week I send an overview to all parents via email. I ask for their opinion and suggestions and in some cases I phone parents if a student is not active in a virtual classroom. Still, some students feel like they are on the spring holidays. None of the parents stated problems like not having a computer or an Internet connection, so none of the students has a legitimate reason not to take part in this unconventional way of learning. It's coming down to accepting responsibility and adapting to the current situation.

I take the time to praise my student's achievements daily. In these weeks since we started working online, I have received close to 700 emails. Each contains at least one attachment. I take time to examine everything that comes from all of my students. I write back, give explanations, send encouragement, give thanks when they deliver more than I asked for. My eyes hurt, by the afternoon I see double and sometimes I have to move away from my laptop even if it is just for 5 or 10 minutes.

Communication online has brought me quite a few surprising emails. I usually have a couple of timid and shy students in the classroom, and they are more often girls. They tend to be quiet and modest but now they have a chance to write what they sometimes find difficult to say in a full classroom. The most surprising are emails from my youngest female students whom I have known for less than a year. One of them wrote very personal praise for my video lesson asking me very politely to do more. I promised her I would, and I got even more emotional response from a girl that usually speaks very little in class and often avoids eye contact. So, something good can come out of something bad.

Being a teacher and a parent of two children (7 and 16 years of age) I get to witness the way virtual classrooms work. I witness great effort from so many teachers. Unfortunately, I get to do very little for my own children, but this is a unique opportunity to teach them to be less dependent while preforming tasks and activities at school and at home.

The most satisfying part of my job is to observe my students while they explore and solve tasks on their own or in collaboration with each other. I firmly believe that's my mission: creating conditions for active learning even now, while working online. We are all doing our best to make it interesting but sometimes learning is just that – learning; and sometimes it's hard and demanding. Just like life during a pandemic.

Željana Đevenica, teacher,
Primary School Nikola Tesla, Zagreb

Fourth grade first online class

My name is Željana Đevenica, I am a teacher with 19 years of experience, and a mother of three elementary school children aged 12, 15 and 16. I started my working career at Nikola Tesla Elementary School in Zagreb as an extended school program teacher (učiteljica u produženom boravku), and 6 years ago continued at the same school as a primary classroom teacher. I teach pupils from 6 to 10 years old, this year I am the classroom teacher to fourth-grade students.

I have never been superstitious, but that Friday the 13th, the news of school closures and the move to virtual classrooms came as a cold shower to me. Everything was going so fast that I didn't get around to the millions of questions that were swarming in my head. The coming weekend was a busy one, I was available to all my colleagues, students and parents from 0-24 like a kind of 24-hour mini-mart. We all had the same questions and doubts about how students would accept the new situation, and how to prepare parents for virtual work, especially those less computer literate. My cell phone was literally glued to my arm. I tried to rationalize the situation from all sides, but I always came back to the same conclusion, which is that I am confident in using the web tools which I have been using since the first grade, and that my pupils are already big enough (in grade 4) that they will be able to use them too. I had also always been helpful to my parents and will continue to be now as well. The regular directives from the Ministry of Education, that we should follow the lessons taught on HRT3, also provided a form of security.

The first step towards online teaching was to create a virtual classroom on the Yammer platform, which we as a school, decided to use. I also created a group on Viber with my students for easier and faster communication. Suddenly we were no longer together for 5 hours in our regular classroom, but instead we were together for the whole day in virtual groups. The Viber group flashed continuously because of stickers, greetings and endless correspondence from early in the morning to late at night. I let them, I knew that they needed to let off some steam. The first day of online school was spent waiting for lessons on HRT3 to begin. During the program scheduled for the 4th grade, the students were asking all kinds of questions: should we do this, we did that, what now, are we going to do an experiment, teacher I don't have those materials…? After the first two days, I realized that the topics covered on national television did not fit my class because we had already covered them. Since then, the students have been using my materials because I know the situation in my class better and I can best adapt the content.

I build the content on already known foundations and then expand it with new concepts. Written instructions are accompanied by various quizzes, crossword puzzles and mind maps. Occasionally, I ask students to write down assignments in their notebooks so they don't forget to write, and I noticed that they take great care in their handwriting and neatness to make it easier for me to read their work.

The first two weeks of online classes were exhausting. I set up assignments in the virtual classroom in the morning between 8 am and 9 am, and then I was available throughout the entire day for all their Viber group inquiries and review of completed assignments. During the day, I also communicated with parents via email or by phone for any inquiries or technical support they needed. I spent the nights making quizzes, crossword puzzles, smart presentation folders with audio recordings… The first time we heard our voices was when we were reading a song to each other, and I experienced it very emotionally. I imagined each student in their spot in the classroom, I could see their facial expressions, their typical movements, for each individual pupil, then it became clear to me that only voice and text messages would not be enough for me to carry out this adventure. Researching and collaborating with colleagues, I uncovered information about the Zoom application, which is suitable for video conferencing and can be installed on both mobile phones and computers. Of course I tried everything with my colleagues earlier, so we started looking forward to the first live meeting. We have a video conference three to four times a week and we look forward to every virtual meeting. Our first virtual meeting was quite loud because of the excitement of finally seeing each other and parents were also involved. My students now saw my children, so far they knew only their names, and I saw their pets, brothers and sisters. We look forward to each new videoconference. We usually begin with an informal conversation and then continue to tackle the teaching materials we are working on.

After two weeks of online teaching, we introduced the rules of communication in the Viber group, reduced the number of stickers sent, began to read carefully each message we wrote, and agreed that by 1:0 0 p.m. they should submit their tasks for review. These rules have brought me a moment of peace during one part of the day when I fully devote myself to my family, without being distracted by school obligations. During the afternoons, I review assignments and give feedback to my students, and I spend the nights making virtual classroom materials and exploring new tools that will make students more engaging. We all miss our classroom and its atmosphere, but I think in the circumstances, we have all managed quite well. On this occasion I thank all the parents and my students for the kindness and support they give me.

Suzana Mihelčić, prof. mentor

Let's teach virtual

First, let me introduce myself. I teach English in an industrial and trade school. Why is that important for this article? Even in normal circumstances, our students need that extra push from their teachers in general subjects to get excited about i.e. English, the same way they are excited about fixing an internal combustion engine in their practical training. For that reason, I started using all the ICT and WEB tools as soon as it became technically possible. I thought that it would make this situation easier for me. I was wrong!

Problem number one. My students have dozens of e-mail addresses for different log-in purposes and don't know the password for any of them. Apart from that, I realised that as advanced as they are at using social media and the Internet for fun, when it came to using it for educational purposes (Wikipedia excluded), they were not the digital natives they were supposed to be. It was hard to grasp that a student who spends hours playing video games has problems with singing into a virtual classroom. This should be their natural environment but for a lot of them, it is the great unknown. It took us two days and a lot of patience but we were ready to go virtual.

Problem number two was time management. To make it easier for the students, we agreed to upload the materials according to the school timetable. So every day I upload a lesson I would have had with that class. By the end of that first, week I realised that my students acknowledged that they had a task but they weren't actually doing anything about it. All at once, they were given the freedom to manage their own time and education, and because they are teenagers of course they were bad at it. At about the same time, the parents realised that we teachers really do work and it is not easy to motivate the students to do their school work. Now at the end of week three, they have finally caught up with the rhythm and realise that they are not on holidays, and in most cases, I get the feedback from most of my students within the designated timeline. Being a homeroom teacher or forum teacher as well, I spend a significant amount of time reminding my students to do all their assignments in the other subjects and communicating with the parents.

Problem number three is materials. For the last eighteen months, I have been participating in an Erasmus + project about e-learning which helped a lot. There are so many tools and apps to choose from, so many colleagues willing to share their materials, and so many options. The result is that at any given time I have ten to fifteen tabs open trying to blend them into one meaningful lesson. I don't want my students to copy empty words into their notebooks but to be engaged in the learning process as much as possible. Mini projects, presentations, interactive worksheets, self-evaluation, quizzes, games… It all takes time, and a lot of it. And then you get all those opposing instructions from the experts: involve your students to explore and solve tasks on-line, and on the other hand, don't give them tasks that will make them stare at the screen all the time. Really trying my best to walk that thin line and balance the materials was difficult. Personally I have decided to focus on repetition so I make materials that reflect on everything we have learned so far. To strengthen the skills and knowledge they have so we can build on it once we return to the normal mode of teaching and learning.

Problem number four is motivation and evaluation. It is an enchanted circle. Motivation leads to being more successful and that means that your evaluation will be that much better. How to motivate them and keep them interested? Well, I prefer to give them a few smaller tasks that ask for different skills rather than a big demanding task. When they read a task description and see that it will only take them approximately ten minutes per task, it is much more manageable. If the task is a presentation, they have more time and straight forward instructions as well as points of reference. When they know that they can do it on their own, they stay motivated and are not overwhelmed by the mountainous task in front of them. As for evaluation, it also has to be motivational. Every time a student hands in their assignment I give them feedback that starts with listing all the positives and ends with a suggestion about how to make it even better. There are, of course, notes on students' activity and those will be crucial in my final evaluation. The important thing is that in this situation they know what is expected of them and what will be evaluated. You might say isn't that how it should always be? Yes, it is. But in this situation when we are honestly working more than usual, it is easy to lose sight of the most important thing, the students.