Teaching English as A Foreign Language During the Pandemic, Evaluated by Student Teachers

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Abstract: In Slovakia, education was utterly different during the three school years of the COVID-19 pandemic. While primary and secondary schools were managed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Slovak Republic, regulated by the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic, universities commonly responded/reflected to the number of infected students, following the governement's regulations. As distance teaching and learning was not a new format for them, they responded to a new situation quite quickly, being prepared for using modern technologies effectively. This study explores the views of student teachers who observed English classes taught online in four different schools during their practical teaching in the academic year 2021-2022. Based on closed-ended and open-ended questions, the questionnaires focused on seeking information on English teachers' preferences in delivering their online classes as effectively as possible. To make research more valid, it was essential to take into account the experience of student teachers with online teaching and learning while attending academic online courses at Trnava University. Based on the achieved information, our study reveals the discrepancy between language teachers' claims and student teachers' experiences gained during their observations.

Keywords: The pandemic, Digital technology, Observations, Teaching English.

Introduction

Over the past decade, the attitude of language teachers towards digital technology has significantly changed. Despite the prior experience when the use of laptops and mobile phones was considered distracting, the philosophy of language teachers has gradually changed after they acknowledged that digital technology enables students to download the materials they need, consult dictionaries and grammar-reference books, or search for sources necessary for task completion. This way of language learning is in line with the post-method approaches, which emphasise the concepts of an action-oriented approach, learner autonomy, authenticity, contextualisation, etc. (Richards, 2006; Piccardo & North, 2019).

In the 1990s, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) started to be used due to its benefits, such as supporting interactivity and creativity (Sokolik, 2014). Practical classroom techniques focused on the pedagogical issues of CALL were presented in methodologically-oriented books (Chapelle, 2005), and the computers were used in face-to-face classrooms, online teaching or online interaction. However, providing learners with detailed feedback on their previous learning or their mistakes (Grgurović & Chapelle, 2007) made computers an inseparable part of language learning. The practice of computer-mediated communication employing computers and mobile telephone devices has become commonplace due to the functionalities that are currently available. This great advantage was reflected during the pandemic situation as online teaching of English had already been practised prior to Covid-19, and teaching English online cannot be considered a new phenomenon (Erarslan, 2021). However, online teaching is different from using the internet in the language classroom as both learners and teachers can be overwhelmed by technical difficulties, and then this kind of teaching is not likely to bring about the desired results (Warschauer & Whittaker, 2012).

In general, the emergence of COVID-19 in March 2020 found the world unprepared, and its rapid spread forced the countries to close their borders to protect their inhabitants from being infected. Nevertheless, the countries started to be locked down one by one, which impacted all aspects of social life, including education. Schools began to be closed, and this new situation has shifted the entire learning system to distance learning. The length of this closure was varied in particular countries due to the local intensity of COVID-19 reflected in governments' decisions.

Education in Slovakia during the Pandemic

In Slovakia, language education was utterly different during the three school years of the COVID-19 pandemic. While in the first year (2019-2020), all the schools were closed entirely since March 2020, and all the external examinations were cancelled, in the second educational year (2020/2021), all the secondary schools were closed from the beginning of October and primary schools from the end of October 2020 until March 2021. These regulations resulted from the decisions made by the team of epidemiologists to make the virus spread slower. The transition from face-to-face teaching to a distant form of education was done without any specific preparation, and the implications will become visible over time. The worsening situation in the number of infected people in the autumn of 2021 caused face-to-face education at universities to be quickly replaced by online classes and other forms of distance learning. However, the situation at primary and secondary schools was regulated by the COVID automat system. The closure of schools, or better to say, mainly single classrooms, was based on the data of the infected pupils or students of the school.

The pandemic found Slovak primary and secondary schools unprepared for new ways of teaching. The problems started with insufficient numbers of computers in classrooms, and teachers mainly were not equipped with laptops. The first weeks of the pandemic in 2020 were organised by individual approaches of teachers who had to stay at home and decide what to do to provide learners with materials and continue teaching. In general, schools were ready to use the EduPage system, installed mainly for schedule purposes but enabling teachers to

share their materials with learners, distribute homework or use the system for e-learning. In less-developed economic areas, teachers delivered materials in person, and after a short period, they had to collect the students' assignments. However, this model became insufficient due to many factors, and many pupils and students remained uneducated or not systematically educated. This caused the minister of education to cancel all external ways of measuring learners' knowledge of the mother tongue and mathematics in primary schools Testing 5 and Testing 9, which are based on two levels of ISCED and the results of which were considered very important for further education.

Being astonished by the new situation, English teachers stagnated for some time as they were used to teaching from very well-designed British coursebooks, complemented by various supplementary materials, DVDs and videos. The 2020 spring was mainly taught from home by sending materials via EduPage or conducting irregular online classes if teachers wished to do so. It was challenging for many teachers as they had never used online teaching at these levels of education. Learners were without online teaching most of the summer term, which resulted in the minister's decision to cumulate previously achieved results, and the final marks on learners' reports were calculated as the mean of previously achieved marks on the final reports (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2020). The same key was used in the school-leaving examinations, and students expected to complete their secondary education did not sit external tests and internal oral examinations.

Since the pandemic occurred again in the autumn of 2020, the minister of education urged teachers to use online teaching and the Microsoft Teams platform. However, being supported to start using Microsoft Teams, teachers could still use any platform (zoom, Gmail) they were familiar with. Many workshops were organised for teachers to make them become knowledgeable and more skilful with modern technologies. Although education significantly changed in comparison with the previous year, the school-leaving examinations were cancelled again, and students were admitted to universities without being able to submit any external certification (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, 2021).

Redesigned Approaches to Teaching and Assessment

After these two years, the third pandemic year was organised differently. The schools were not closed, and teachers were expected to deliver their classes either face-to-face or online if the class was officially recognised to learn at home due to the number of infected students or the quarantine principles (https://gov.sk/covid-automat-na-slovensku). It was quite difficult for teachers as they had to change teaching techniques several times a day. Later, hybrid education was officially recommended, and teachers had to accept this new situation very quickly. This teachers' effort was officially recognised by the minister of education, who sustained the pressure of the final-year students who protested in front of the ministry, requesting not to be externally tested. After several modifications related to testing time prolongation, the students were externally tested, including a school-leaving examination in English on 17 March 2022.

The presented reasons for not being externally tested were numerous, such as not being properly taught in the

years 2020 and 2021, not being forced to practise the language, and so on (Plus JEDEN DEŇ, 2022; PETÍCIE, 2022). To be objective, it is necessary to mention that all the English tests, having been administered in the previous 16 years, are available on the website of the National Institute for Certified Educational Measurements with answer keys, topics for testing written performances, audio scripts in case learners would like to test themselves either at home or at school.

One of their requests was to use dictionaries while writing their essays. There is little evidence about the efficiency of using dictionaries while being tested in English. Still, some researchers suggest that students could have less time to develop and express their ideas in the target language (Weigle, 2002). Once a dictionary is available, students start thinking in their mother tongues and spend a lot of time searching for more complex language in the dictionaries. In addition, the marking criteria used in the country are based on measuring learners' abilities to use appropriate language regarding grammatical patterns and a range of vocabulary, as well as the appropriateness of their choice. On the other hand, prolongation was given twice: fifteen minutes for the external test to measure learners' abilities to comprehend both as listeners and readers and use language in contexts and fifteen minutes to test their written skills (NÚCEM, 2022).

After the administration of the tests, the reactions of the students and their teachers were primarily adverse. However, the perception of the external examinations is commonly negative as test-takers and their teachers focus mainly on what they could not do rather than what they have done. Then, they start speculating what else could have been accepted as correct. The first days are demanding for the assessors and the team responsible for what should and should not be accepted, consulting the items with native speakers. The officially approved answer key is then made public.

As regards secondary-school students' complaints, it is relevant to find out what was happening in the country last year and how these procedures might have influenced language teaching and learners' preparation for their final examinations. On the other hand, it is necessary to mention that schools were not sufficiently equipped with modern technologies, which can be considered as one of the main constraints of quality distance teaching. Language teachers were not provided with computers or laptops, and whatever they did was done at the expense of their family budgets.

Method

The aim of the study was to identify the effectiveness of technology in teaching English during the pandemic. Based on the researcher's negative experience while observing primary school teachers of English in the 2020-2021 academic year, the idea of getting data from other school contexts rose. In the school year, as mentioned above, most teachers used the EduPage to share their materials with students, providing them with detailed feedback. The extent of feedback was based on teachers' availability as language teachers commonly have many classes per week, more than other subject teachers. Traditional teaching influenced online teaching, and the

comments of English teachers that language classes can be taught online without any problems were considered inadequate after observing learners' insufficient engagement in the learning process. They spent all 45 minutes filling in the gaps in three grammar and vocabulary-focused exercises.

Modern language teaching is not only linguistically oriented, but other competences need to be developed, such as sociolinguistic, pragmatic, strategic and intercultural. To save time for learners to be engaged in tasks of real language production or interaction, the provision of correct answers can be done more efficiently, for example, by displaying an answer key for several minutes during which the learner can self-correct their assignments or exercises, and then spend more time for justifying some of the answers. Language education is currently based on involving learners in their language learning and acquisition as they are expected to practise the natural use of a target language, using it for real-life purposes outside the classrooms. Microsoft Teams offer practising language in smaller groups, using the function of break-out rooms with the teacher's support, as they can enter any group and monitor the process by providing feedback. Thus, the system supports conversation classes, and language can be taught effectively.

Observing English Classes in Pre-service Teacher Training

The 2021-2022 school year was organised under new conditions. The minister of education followed the pandemic situation in particular regions, and some classes were online while other classes were taught face-to-face. This situation was demanding for teachers as they were expected to teach both forms, being present in the classrooms and ready to teach online from their offices. Student teachers were sent to schools and followed the regulations the regional health care offices recommended. Their supervisors directed them on which classes could be observed face-to-face or online.

To make data more valid, it is essential to specify the respondents and their previous experiences with online education. Trnava University teachers were systematically trained, enabling them to broaden their experiences with online education, which positively affected their readiness to shift from face-to-face to online teaching. Since the first decade of the 21st century, many universities have introduced blended learning, in which technology is used to supplement classroom teaching. Trnava University was engaged in the project called *Developing a Virtual University – The Development and Innovation of Study Programmes Using Modern Forms of Education* (2010-2014), which enabled university teachers to design their courses for the students who cannot attend regular courses due to their professional duties or long distances (Bérešová, 2014). The positive impact of blended learning was evident not only in the increase of students' achievements but also in the decrease in worsening the weighted study means of students achieved in their bachelor's programmes and master's programmes (Bérešová, Pokorný, Peterková & Hic, 2015).

The modernisation of teaching at Trnava University continued in 2018 when Moodle as a platform for online learning was introduced, and university teachers were trained on how to design online courses, add assignments, and keep an eye on their students' progress. This experience appeared sound when the coronavirus pandemic

began in 2020, and the university was able to provide education without any significant breaks. However, teaching with Moodle did not turn out to be significantly effective. Therefore, when the second pandemic wave started in the autumn of 2020, the university immediately trained its pedagogues to use Microsoft Teams and continued delivering lectures and seminars without interruption.

As a multiplatform operational system, Microsoft Teams allows for textual communication, video calls, data storage, etc. Thus, most Slovak universities immediately changed their teaching procedures, and therefore, the winter semester of the academic year (2020-2021) and one academic year (2021-2022) were sufficiently ensured, and university students were not deprived of regular lectures and seminars. However, several problems should be mentioned, such as students' self-discipline, less intensive cooperation, insufficient learning from each other, and the validity and reliability of their examinations.

Data collection

The questionnaires related to collecting data about language education were sent to student-teachers who experienced online teaching at university and were knowledgeable about how languages can be taught through modern technologies. The number of students was 46 and they were distributed to four schools (3 secondary and 1 primary), in which one English teacher supervised 3-4 students. The first questionnaire (Appendix A) was aimed at university students' attitudes towards online teaching as, from October 2020, all the academic courses were delivered only online, using Moodle and Microsoft Teams, till March 2022. This regulation was based on the fact that university students usually have to travel across the whole country to the university premises, so saving their health and providing them with regular academic courses was essential. The second (Appendix B) was intended to investigate the student teachers' experience of teaching English at primary and secondary schools while observing their supervisors' classes.

Results

As mentioned above, student teachers were administered two questionnaires that enabled them to perceive online education from two perspectives. One referred to their personal experience of being lectured and conducted during their seminars online. Based on the supervisors' claims that there are no significant differences between in-person teaching and online teaching, student teachers were expected to judge the quality of online teaching while observing English classes in four different types of schools.

An Analysis of Student Teachers' Attitudes towards Distance Learning

The questionnaires were administered to 46 student teachers, out of whom 33 were observing online teaching, which was in line with the study's aim. The accepted questionnaires reflected the teaching procedures at each school in which student teachers were officially allocated. As far as a questionnaire related to university online

education experience is concerned, the overall feeling of distance learning was judged as excellent by only three university students. Nevertheless, student teachers were provided with more than only one device for learning online. In contrast, most students (58%) labelled online learning as average. 24% of student teachers found this way of learning better than average, while 18% disliked it. Student teachers were inconsistent in choosing the ranges given to the time spent each day on distance education. This inconsistency resulted from the fact that some students were English major students while more students majored in English in combination with other academic disciplines. However, another reason was likely to be their style of learning. Item 5 referred to the effectiveness of remote learning, which was judged as moderately effective by 52% and slightly effective by 30% of student teachers. Only one university student considered it highly effective. None of the prospective teachers evaluated distance learning as not at all effective.

The university students openly admitted stress as the university was closed all of a sudden, and they were not prepared for online learning either mentally or technically. Technical problems also made students work under pressure, mostly since it was winter, which can be harsh in some areas of Slovakia, and students had poor internet connection or electricity. Another problem was that all the family members sometimes had to work or study from home. Therefore, the collection of electrical appliances, lighting and electronics exceeded the wiring to power all the gadgets. The most stressful factor for some of them was the examination period, as each time, they were scared of losing their connection and being unable to pass the examination.

The university is situated in southwest Slovakia and hosts students from all over the country. A large number of students used to commute. Still, since the university opened its new dormitory, besides students living far from the university, some students preferred to stay in the dormitory to avoid morning rush hours while travelling in fully occupied trains with working commuters. Therefore, when they had to return home as a result of the dormitory closure, they started to live with their families and got the feeling of 'too many people in one place', as one of them called it.

Another negative aspect observed by university students was that university teachers gave them more assignments than they had been given in face-to-face education. They commented that teachers had thought that 'being at home means having lots of free time'. However, they admitted that they had enjoyed their time at home and considered it comfortable. They did not have to take care of themselves and had more time for doing the activities they could not do while travelling or going to school every day. 42% of students did not consider the courses stressful, mainly lectures, and emphasised that they had been able to take notes using their laptops or computers. Only three students out of this group mentioned seminars as a stressful experience on the grounds that they had to be available and alert all the time.

There was a significant move regarding oral examinations in the 2021-2022 academic year compared to the first year of distance learning. The summer term of 2020-2021 was based on teachers' approaches to online education. More university teachers exploited Moodle, presenting lectures and tasks, and at the end of the course

they evaluated students' term work. Others examined them orally but online. On the other hand, the 2021-2022 academic year started in the form of contact classes and gradually transferred into online teaching; however, this time university teachers had to use Microsoft Teams for both lecturing and conducting seminars. The form of examinations was based on the choice of students who were offered two options. Students' knowledge was either measured face-to-face or online, but both possibilities required spoken forms. Even though most students complained about being examined online due to their limited preparation time after drawing a question, they all chose this way of the examination. Nonetheless, many of them wrote in their questionnaires that they had missed time for being prepared to answer their drawn questions, which is typical for face-to-face examinations, and students commonly have about 15 minutes (at least) to write down some notes (ideas) that can navigate them in their oral performances.

Focusing on male students' answers, one of them did not consider distance learning stressful. In contrast, two others admitted that it had been stressful due to some technical problems, the internet connection and concentration spans. One of them was utterly negative, emphasising that his kind of learning is not suitable for him, defining it as 'very tiresome, boring and a waste of time' since his preferred style of learning is being active in a face-to-face class, cooperating with the others and being counselled by teachers.

An Analysis of Student Teachers' Attitudes towards Online Teaching

The questionnaires provided to student teachers who were making observations during their practical training became the ground for using numerical data. Student teachers are expected to observe the classes and take notes in line with the framework in which they need to focus on time management, using different techniques, learners' involvement in activities, classroom management, etc. Each year, the students are distributed according to the number of teachers who would like to supervise student teachers. The university used to have contracts with many schools situated in the city. Still, the pandemic caused some schools not to agree with university students being present in their classrooms due to the increasing number of infected pupils. However, one of the fundamental reasons for rejections was the unpreparedness of teachers to use different forms of teaching alongside contact classes. Since practical teaching is a prerequisite for completing the ELT course, it was impossible to wait for the minister's decision to open the schools for contact teaching. As mentioned above, the schools were closed for half a year, which resulted in cancelling the school-leaving examinations, and the marks on learners' reports were the means of the achieved results. The university students were expected to meet all the requirements to be able to complete their semesters.

In the 2021-2022 academic year university students started attending schools at the beginning of the school year. This time primary and secondary schools were not completely closed. Still, the regional health care office decided to close only those classes with high numbers of infected. This process was based on the system for monitoring the pandemic development and receiving anti-pandemic restrictions depending on the intensity of COVID-19 transmission. University students majoring in English or English in combination with other academic disciplines were distributed into four schools: a primary school, a secondary technical school, a

secondary grammar school and a bilingual school. Therefore, the following analysis is based on the questionnaires related to particular schools.

Table 1. Student teacher distribution by school type

Primary school	Secondary technical	Secondary grammar	Bilingual school
5	7	14	7
15.15%	21.21%	42.42%	21.21%

Primary schools in Trnava are a common type of school in which English is taught three times a week from Year 3. These schools also provide lower secondary education (Year 5-Year 9). Still, the best students commonly continue their lower secondary education at the *8-year gymnasium,* part of the secondary grammar school, in which university students experience their practicum. Therefore, they can observe teaching young learners there as well. However, due to the entrance examination, the quality of education here is different from the one provided in primary schools. Technical schools in Slovakia prepare students for their professional careers or university studies. Before 1998, students from these schools were expected to study at technical universities. The current situation is different and reflects students' choices, and they can thus choose any university. The supervising technical school is specific. The admitted students are obliged to sit language placement tests, which distribute them into two groups: those whose preferences are to sit for a B1 final examination and those who intend to apply for a B2 final examination in English. All the students studying at secondary grammar schools are supposed to sit a B2 external test, while those attending a bilingual school are obliged to take a C1 test. The bilingual school in Trnava is a private school, and students are taught English and other subjects in English primarily by native speakers. In this school, student teachers could observe language and other subject classes in English conducted by three native speakers and one non-native-speaking teacher.

Observations of English Classes at the Primary School

Prospective teachers commented on online classes both positively and negatively. The most positive aspects of online teaching were that distance learning enables teachers to use different tasks using electronic devices and different ways of presenting new material such as PowerPoint and videos. However, effective English classes are commonly based on learners' engagement in tasks, working in groups or pairs, which is technically possible but was not used by teachers as their preference was to discuss topics with all the participating pupils due to low numbers of those being connected and taking an active part in English classes. The student teachers concluded that face-to-face teaching is less demanding and more creative and enables teachers to monitor better learners' work and their active participation in task completion.

Observations of English Classes at the Secondary Technical School

Four English teachers were supervising their groups consisting of three student teachers. Since the majority of technical school students are male, the observing university students were mainly negative about online

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teaching. They could experience that the boys were not actively participating in classes and were doing something else, having their cameras and microphones switched off. Therefore, teachers asked questions and answered their questions to disrupt students' quiet. One of the respondents emphasised the situation, using words such as 'teacher's communication was punctuated with uncomfortable silences'. Nevertheless, prospective students positively evaluated various forms of used materials. They emphasised that they had been able to experience better preparation for classes regarding the choice of materials or time management.

Observations of English Classes at the Secondary Grammar School

The most significant number of respondents was represented by student teachers who attended classes at secondary grammar school. They were supervised by three highly experienced Slovak teachers of English. However, a new situation was sometimes negatively reflected in the university students' comments about technical problems caused by teachers' insufficient familiarity with modern technologies. On the other hand, prospective teachers could experience working in break-out rooms but could witness that this teaching was not always effective. Once the teacher left the break-out room, students started speaking Slovak instead of practising their English or stopped working together, discussing their family matters. Some students considered filling-gap exercises boring because it was mostly a teacher working while students were passively waiting for the correct answers. It was impossible to check whether participating students were taking notes or working with a teacher.

Observations of English Classes at the Bilingual School

Although eleven students participated in practical teaching at this private school, only seven submitted questionnaires. Three students observed a Slovak teacher of English, while the rest participated in the classes conducted by native speakers. This Slovak teacher spoke very fast and did not allow students not to work, asking them questions systematically and in balance. Native speakers were evaluated as technically skilful. However, once students did not want to participate, they became silent or apologised for poor internet connections, and their teachers did not insist on their responses. In common, bilingual school students use modern technologies in their face-to-face classes, for example, different applications on their mobiles while looking up words in a dictionary app or using their tablets to seek appropriate information for discussion, etc. Native teachers used materials available on the internet to make students' learning more attractive and exciting. Visualisation made learning more accessible, and teachers prepared PowerPoint presentations full of visuals as inputs for discussion.

Discussion and Recommendations for Pedagogical Implications While Teaching Online

The observations at four different schools were analysed and discussed with student teachers. In each description of teaching practices at a particular school, the most typical aspects ‒ based on the most frequent comments of the students participating there ‒ were mentioned. After an intensive discussion, some

recommendations for language teachers can be concluded. They can be classified into three areas:

A) Teacher-oriented:

- Teachers should prepare as many visual materials as possible to make students attracted to the subject matter.
- Teachers should ask their students to have their cameras switched on as being exposed to learners' reactions can provide helpful feedback.
- Teachers should not use traditional teaching, such as reading aloud, translating, and doing exercises one by one.
- Teachers should enable all the students to contribute to discussions.

B) Learner-oriented:

- Learners should know that online teaching is only another way of learning, and not being involved in the process is the same as not learning in a face-to-face class.
- Learners should also be encouraged to use modern technologies in their face-to-face classes to become more knowledgeable and skilful.

C) Government-oriented:

- Intensive in-service teacher training will make teachers more self-confident in using modern technologies.
- Helping schools equip their classes with up-to-date appliances will make language teaching more effective.
- Helping families in need be equipped with laptops or computers (at least older ones) can be done through donations or when big companies replace older devices with new ones.

Although language teachers tried to continue teaching communicatively, they did not employ many possibilities that allowed teachers to be more creative. Attractive forms of language education enable teachers to involve learners in their learning processes. The most challenging seems to be hybrid learning, which can also be very attractive for younger learners and adolescents. The webinar *How to Hybrid: A guide to setting up a pain-free hybrid class* by Harry Waters, held on 15th March 2022 , became an inspiration for English teachers teaching in Slovakia and the Czech Republic on how not to make learners learn a target language but how to make them want to learn it.

Conclusion

Languages play an essential role in any educational context due to their necessity in cognitive and social human development. Their teaching is crucial as languages are necessary for effective communication, and becoming aware of cultures leads to sensitivity to and respect for each other. The European community is proud of using many languages in their member countries (multilingual societies) or by one individual (plurilingual repertoire). Learning languages has implications for individuals and communities, supporting the concept of learning through languages.

In Slovakia, pre-service teacher training has a long tradition. University education has been divided into courses presenting and practising a subject matter (the English language and the literature of English-speaking countries) and subjects related to the teaching profession. While the former are core courses in the bachelor's programmes, master's programmes entail the latter. However, basic pedagogical theory and class observations are part of the bachelor's degree programme. Language teachers are expected to be professionally trained in language and teaching. Practical teaching (practicum) as part of the ELT course is intended to encourage prospective teachers to reflect on the didactic knowledge and skills necessary to teach languages, monitor their progress and record their teaching experiences during their teacher education.

One topic in the course syllabus aims to identify and evaluate coursebooks and other materials appropriate for the learners' age, interests and language level. The ability to design learning materials and select and use ICT materials and activities are part of the ELT course (Theory and Practice of ELT). Language teachers are used to guide their learners to use the internet for information retrieval, which aligns with communicative practice and the concept of authenticity. Richards (2006) argues that authentic sources are the basis for classroom learning alongside activities that mirror the real world. However, this new situation with the pandemic aroused a need to develop the ability to critically assess ICT learning platforms and help learners choose the ones that are most appropriate for their language learning and acquisition. Due to the restrictions in the country, language teachers were expected to facilitate various learning environments such as discussion fora, web pages, etc. Based on the student teachers' questionnaires, these environments were not recognisable while observing their supervisors' teaching.

Nevertheless, student teachers highly evaluated a practicum, which enabled them to get insight into the professional responsibilities of language teachers. On the other hand, they recognised that online teaching limited their supervisors' use of various teaching techniques and strategies. For this reason, the learners' needs were not met as many learners did not participate actively, either misusing the situation or not being given enough space for their involvement. Teachers need to be aware of the complexities which can arise in Internet usage and be trained to prevent themselves from being overwhelmed by technical difficulties. On the other hand, they need to be mindful of the main goals of language education, even though online learning is not suitable for all students.

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Appendix A. A University Online Education Experience Questionnaire

Gender: male   female

1 How did you feel overall about distance education?

    Poor Below Average   Average   Good   Excellent

2 Did you have access to a device for learning online?

    Yes   Yes, but it doesn't work well   No, I share with others

3 What device did you use for distance learning?

    Laptop   Desktop   Tablet   Smartphone

4 How much time did you spend each day on an average on distance education?

    1-3 hours   3-5 hours   5-7 hours   7-10 hours   10+ hours

5 How effective has remote learning been for you?

    Not at all   Slightly Moderately   Very   Extremely

6 How helpful was Trnava University in offering you the resources to learn from home?

    Not at all   Slightly   Moderately   Very   Extremely

7 How stressful was distance learning for you during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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8 How effectively could you manage time while learning remotely? (Consider 5 being extremely well and 1 being not at all)

    Free-time activities   Academic schedule

9 Did you enjoy learning remotely?

    Yes, absolutely   No, there are quite a few challenges

    Yes, but I would like to change a few things   No, not at all

10 How helpful were your teachers while studying online?

    Not at all   Slightly   Moderately   Very   Extremely

Appendix B. An Observation Online Education Experience Questionnaire

The student teacher's school of practical teaching:

   a) the secondary-grammar school

   b) the bilingual school

   c) the secondary school

   d) the primary school

The observed teacher of English:

   a) a native-speaking English teacher

   b) a non-native-speaking English teacher

The observed classes

   a) face-to-face classes (FF)

   b) Microsoft Teams classes (MS)

   c) hybrid classes (HC)

   d) EduPage classes (EC)

   e) Other forms – describe

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……

Which classes do you consider the most effective? Why?

……

……

ONLINE CLASSES

The pros of the observed classes

……

……

The cons of the observed classes

……

……

Your own observing experience with online class(es)

Good Practice

……..

……..

Bad Practice

………..

………..

………..