

# **ElectroLengua**

## **Upskilling language instructors for online teaching**

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**Project 2021-1-ES01-KA220-VET-000024863 KA220-VET - Cooperation partnerships in vocational education and training**

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In this desktop research we are arguing the need to recognize the problem of online methods in language teaching. The research covers general information of various kinds about online vs. offline language teaching and tackles the problem in the partner countries referring both to the current situation as well as how language teaching has evolved historically. We collaborated data from each partner country, compared the findings, understood tendencies and presented the results in a theoretical and narrative form initially, leaving the more practical approaches towards the end of the study. Our collaborative efforts have been done under the belief that this publication can offer a set of practical tools as well a wider perspective about teaching language to those who want to make a living by putting their linguistic knowledge in the service of teaching.

### **Aim of the research**

The aim of the research is to focus on the methods, strategies and approaches used by teachers in traditional vs modern teaching of foreign languages.

Each project partner analysed, at their country level, the methods used by the language teachers and to use the interview template for three language teachers with different teaching experience (one with 3-5 experience, one with 10-25 years of teaching experience and one with over 25 years of teaching experience)

This desk research includes identification of the existing methods, strategies and programmes or projects at each country level to create a digital sphere in language teaching.



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### **Research Objectives**

1. To present the historical approach to foreign language teaching in five European countries;
2. To present successful offline and online language teaching methods;
3. To understand the challenges and the opportunities the internet has posed for language learning;
4. To analyse student online performance compared to face-to-face learning



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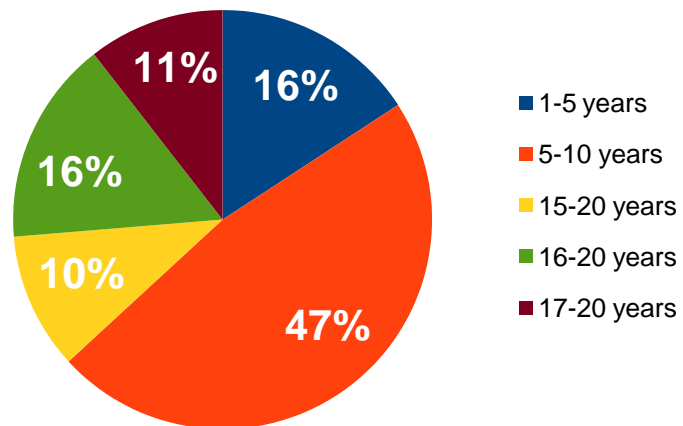
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## I. TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVE ON ONLINE CLASSES - SURVEY INTERPRETATION

### Teachers' perspective on online classes

To get a more grounded view on what the teachers' perspective on different aspects of online and offline teaching is, we inquired 19 teachers from 6 European countries, as follows: 3 from Cyprus, 6 from Greece, 3 from Ireland, 1 from Italy, 3 from Romania and 3 from Spain. Most teachers (9) who answered the questionnaire had between 5 and 10 years of experience in the field, with 3 having under 5 years and a couple over 25 years of teaching behind them.



One aspect that we inquired about was the evolution of the teachers' methods over the years and the answers have fallen in two main categories: those (8) with an emphasis on the interaction with the student – more playfulness and interactivity, more dynamic activities, more focus on the practicality of learning a new language, and those (7) which focused on the technological impact on the teaching process,



integrating smart devices and the internet with all its different platforms and apps with the potential to be used as educational tools; two of them mentioned elements of both categories impacting their methodology, while another two were rather vague.

Asked about types of printed materials they use in class, most teachers (15) named textbooks, workbooks, worksheets, books, grammar tools, different games; a couple of them, though, expressed that they avoid printed materials as much as possible, for ecological reasons. This leads us to the less numerous (5) category of teachers who focus on digital teaching tools, either for the convenience or to avoid paper waste.

When asked what kind of digital platforms they use, only two of them reported “none”, the other 17 respondents naming either dedicated platforms (Kahoot, BBC learning, Duo lingo, ClassDojo, Quizlet etc.) or other platforms that can serve as tools in class (YouTube, Google translate, Netflix etc.). Four teachers reported they use digital tools once or twice a week, while three others presented them as part of their daily routine.

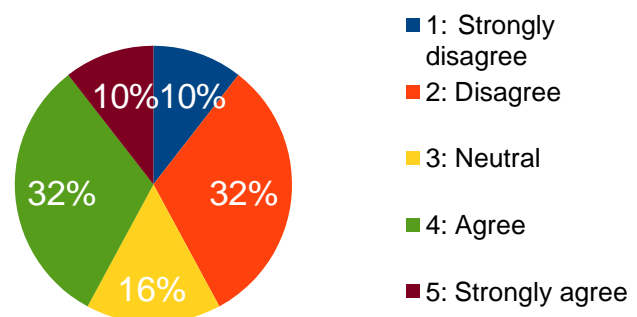
About the advantages of online teaching, the vast majority (over 14) agreed that accessibility (no location impediments), flexibility of time and enhancement of digital skills were among them; only 7 of them (37%) reported responsibility towards learning (more independent learners) as a trait, while a couple of them also mentioned “learning at personal pace and according to one’s own needs” and “more classroom control” as other advantages.

On the other hand, there are several disadvantages as well, “lack of social interaction” being the most cited, with 16 teachers backing it, followed by the uncertainty of the evaluation (it is difficult to make sure students do not cheat). With a similar number of votes – 9, 8 and 7 – come the poor logistics, the fragile balance between personal and professional life and less



classroom control, respectively. As other shortcomings, the respondents also mentioned a difficulty in keeping a balanced schedule, in order not to work 24/7, and the fact that online teaching diminishes the number of opportunities to practice speaking.

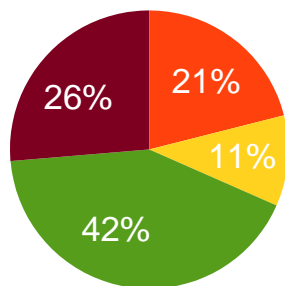
Asked whether the impact of online teaching differs from face-to-face, the responding teachers reported the following: in terms of the level and quality of language and performance, an equal number of them felt they differ (drastically or mildly) or on the contrary (8 teachers on each side), while three expressed neutralities.



As for the impact on sociability, most teachers agreed it's a negative aspect of online teaching (13 respondents), while 4 disagreed and 2 expressed neutrality. They gave similar answers about the students' motivation towards the class: the vast majority (12 teachers) reported a decrease, 4 expressed neutral and only 3 teachers reported motivation was not affected.

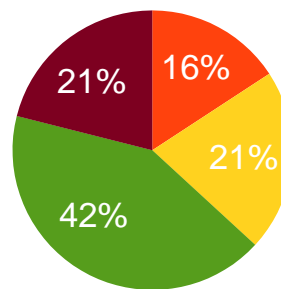


### Sociability



- 1: Strongly disagree
- 2: Disagree
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Agree

### Motivation for class



- 1: Strongly disagree
- 2: Disagree
- 3: Neutral
- 4: Agree

Only one teacher felt an e-curriculum would not help their upskilling and knowledge of online teaching. As for the topics such an e-curriculum should cover, the responding teachers gave a variety of choices: functional language: pronunciation; listening exercises; tips on how to use digital platforms, how to deal with unexpected issues, how to make students more active, ways to make the class more interactive; contemporary literary texts that can prompt discussions and comparisons with other art forms; real life situations, games and things that really have the pupils' interest.





## **II. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE AND CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING IN CYPRUS, GREECE, IRELAND, ROMANIA, AND SPAIN**

### **CURRENT SITUATION**

#### *1. Cyprus*

In 1960, the Independence of the Republic of Cyprus was declared, as a result two languages were considered as the official languages of the country: Greek and Turkish. Foreign languages are also considered an important part of the Cypriot national curriculum. The languages that the Cypriot education system includes in its curriculum is English (taught from preschool until lyceum) as well as languages such as French, German, Spanish, Italian, Russian and Turkish. Following the 1974 Turkish invasion in Cyprus, the Turkish language is taught as a foreign language even though is considered as one of the official languages of the country.

These languages however are not taught from a preschool level like English but they are available in the school curriculum from the first grade of gymnasium until the first grade of lyceum. From what it will be observed later as well, a great deal of emphasis is given to English language as it is the only foreign language introduced to students from a preschool level. The language curriculum in Cyprus is exclusively guided by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In each grade, there are specific guidelines regarding how the



language must be taught, what should be taught and how. As a result, it provides a cohesive and guided knowledge as to how students must be taught a language in the national curriculum.

It is not quite clear when foreign languages became a part of the national curriculum. However, after the accession of Cyprus to the European Union in 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004, a new curriculum was developed, thus it may be assumed that the European Framework of Languages was introduced within that period.

In a 2004 country report, it is mentioned how the European Framework for Modern Language Learning has also helped language teaching in Cyprus. The report mentions that in all three classes of gymnasium English and French are considered compulsory. Following, in the 1<sup>st</sup> class of lyceum English and French are still compulsory, however, in the final 2 years students are required to choose two languages as two of their core subjects. The languages included in their choices are English, French, German, Turkish, Spanish, and Russian (as also mentioned above, even though the Turkish language is considered as one of the official languages of the Republic, it has been classified as a foreign language following the 1974 Turkish invasion). Within their school timetable, students can be involved up to 4 to 6 periods per week in language teaching if they decide to do so in the last 2 years of lyceum. However, without a doubt the English language can be considered as the most popular one in Cyprus as a great emphasis to each teaching is given from preschool level ("Country Report Cyprus - Language Education Policy Profile", 2004).

In a 2005 report it is mentioned that the curriculum aims to include English as a second Language distinguishing it from a second 'foreign language' and thus explaining the emphasis given in comparison to other languages. In gymnasium the English language is allocated under 3



periods per week and two for French as the second compulsory foreign language ("Language Education Policy Profile-Cyprus", 2005).

In the preschool first and second grade English is introduced to the students in time periods of 10-15 minutes two to three times per week up to 25-30 minutes. ("ΞΕΝΕΣ ΓΛΩΣΣΕΣ-ΑΓΓΛΙΚΑ ΠΡΟΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΗΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΗΜΟΤΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ", 2016) English is considered as a compulsory language for students within the 10-15 years age range, and it is the only foreign language that is compulsory in the national curriculum. Since the level provided to the national curriculum is not adequate for fluent language skills, the majority of students attend afternoon private lessons in order to enhance their language skills. Between the 12-15 age range both French and English are considered as compulsory within the national framework. Up until 2000 both French and English were considered as compulsory in Lyceum. After the first year of Lyceum students are able to choose two languages out of a range of various languages. Since 2001, a minimum of a languages is undertaken in the last 2 years of lyceum with also the option of increase in those periods ("Language Education Policy Profile-Cyprus", 2005).

## 2. Greece

The interest of Greeks in learning foreign languages is reflected in the Greek educational system, which provides comprehensive foreign language teaching in both the public and private sectors. More specifically for Greece and according to the Interdisciplinary Unified Curriculum Framework (DEPPS) of the Pedagogical Institute, learning foreign languages promotes three very important concepts, literacy, and multilingualism (as noted in above) and multiculturalism.



As typically mentioned in the text of this framework, on the teaching of foreign languages, "Foreign languages contribute to the development of the student's ability to respond to real communication conditions predictable or unpredictable, using linguistic, paralingual or even extralinguistic options".

The foreign language tuition was first introduced in the secondary education curriculum in 1836 with French as a foreign language being taught 4 hours per week (Dimaras, 1983). In 1987 this was extended to the last three grades of a few primary schools. In 1991, the elementary school curriculum was changed and English became the compulsory foreign language in all schools. More recently, in 2003, English was extended to the last four grades of primary education and in 2010 foreign language instruction was introduced in the first grade in a selected number of schools. Moreover, teaching English language in the kindergarten became compulsory since the academic year of 2021/2022.

This is the pilot stage of a new language project aimed at introducing English language teaching to very young students. The curriculum for English as a foreign language and the textbooks used by public schools are approved by the Pedagogical Institute. It is a state educational institution owned by the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religions. The Pedagogical Institute mainly aims to provide advice in relation to educational policies and innovations. He is responsible for scientific research, design and development of educational material, design and implementation of training seminars for teachers and various educational projects in Greece.

The introduction of English in early childhood can be considered an advantage but in the case of Greece it seems to be lost during the transition of students to secondary education. An important part of the curriculum of the first high school is a repetition of the curriculum of the



sixth grade. This makes the transition from primary to secondary education problematic as it is not accompanied by corresponding progress at the English language level. Students, therefore, often lose interest in the English language lesson and choose to continue attending lessons outside the school curriculum. This paper aims to explore teachers' views on (a) problems related to the lack of continuity and progress in English language teaching from primary to secondary education and (b) their suggestions for teaching and learning English.

Along with English and French the other popular language that is taught along with French in late primary and secondary education in German language. More specific, Greece learn firstly English (48%), then German (9%) & French (8.5%) and lastly Italian (8%) and other languages.

### 3. Ireland

The Republic of Ireland has two official languages, English and Irish or 'Gaelic.' Irish is spoken as a 'first language' by about 3% of the population. The education system in the Republic is made up of primary schools followed by post – primary schools. Children get a minimum education from the age of 6 to the age of 16. There are two post– primary stages.

- The junior cycle for children aged between 12 to 15 and
- The senior cycle for children aged between 16 -18.

It is estimated that within post – primary education about 70% of students study a foreign language. It is acknowledged that Ireland falls below the European average for foreign language study. According to Eurostat 30% of the Irish population aged between 25 and 64 know an additional language, compared with the EU average which is reported as 35%.



Within the Irish primary school system, both the English and the Irish language are taught as mandatory lessons, however other languages are not currently as widely taught at this same level.

Previously between 1998 and 2012 there was a modern languages initiative in Primary schools, which, despite a significant amount of success, eventually ceased. This is set to change though, 'the Government is currently considering a reintroduction of foreign languages into Primary schools in 2024 – 25. (O'Brien 2020).

Within post – primary educational settings modern foreign languages are at present optional; however, schools do have the option of making them compulsory. Pupils can be asked to choose between French, Spanish or German when they move up from primary education. Approximately 90% of students study a foreign language within the first three years of post – primary education. Most commonly the languages offered in state schools are French, Spanish, German and Italian, whereas, private schools 'tend to offer a wider range of foreign languages' (Donnelly, 2020).

Many students enrolled in their junior cycle study at least one other language in addition to English and Irish. In 2015 improvements were made regarding the study of languages in Irish schools, with the implementation of 'the framework for junior cycle.' Further to this, in 2017 there was the introduction of a single junior cycle specification in modern languages. These moves aim to develop and enhance both teaching and learning modern foreign languages. It is not compulsory to study MFL, in state schools the most popular languages are French, Spanish, German and Italian. In Private schools additional, non- 9European languages are also taught, such as mandarin and Japanese. As Ireland becomes more multi-cultural with a growing population of people settling from other countries, awareness of the importance of learning



languages has begun to significantly increase. Languages connect is part of Ireland’s strategy to improve the countries language learning potential. Their four main aims are:

1. Improve language proficiency by creating a more engaging environment
2. Diversify and increase the uptake of languages learned and cultivate the languages of the new Irish
3. Increase awareness of the importance of language learning to encourage the wider use of foreign languages.
4. Enhance employer engagement in the development and use of trade languages.

*Languages connect* plans to reach its target of 100% of students taking a MFL examination by the year 2026.

At the senior cycle, in addition to the choice of European languages, there is also the opportunity to study Asian languages during the transition year and also available as part of their leaving certificate curricular subjects are Japanese, Russian and Arabic.

The average class size for the junior cycle is between 21 – 30, subjects such as Maths, English and Irish tend to have larger numbers compared to MFL. Over the three-year period of the junior cycle a total of 200 hours are allocated to learning an additional language. The specification for the junior cycle of MFL is set out in three integrated strands:

1. Communicative competence
2. Language awareness
3. Socio-cultural knowledge and inter-cultural awareness.



The republic of Ireland recognizes the importance of a plurilingual society, particularly amongst the new Irish. Ireland is in a unique position in that even from an early age, children are already exposed to both English and Gaelic.

The Irish Government understands the importance of encouraging additional language learning to encourage its citizens to understand other cultures and to ‘develop the skills and thrive in our modern and global economy’ (Briton, Richard T.D Minister for Education).

Before languages were introduced as predominantly as they now are into the education system, the country was reliant on the global dominance of English and additional languages were not perceived to be as important as they now are. Languages were believed to be ‘difficult to learn’ and as such there was a distinct lack of quality language teachers. In contrast with this it is Ireland’s vision that they will become a nation where the ability to learn an additional language will become ‘taken for granted’ because of the value it will provide for both individuals and the economy.

Ireland now focuses on creating a more engaging learning environment. They will achieve this by employing better qualified teachers and assistants, they will increase teacher exchange programmes and incorporate better innovations in ICT in order to enhance the learning environment. Ireland also hopes to increase opportunities on the Erasmus+ programme in order to allow students the best possible outcomes for their language learning.

#### 4. Romania

Romanian language is mostly a Latin language with strong Slavonic influences, a combination of eastern and western European cultures with intensive connections on both





sides of Europe, therefore the study of foreign languages was introduced in Romanian schools as early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly at university level.

The first languages to be studied in Romanian schools was Latin and old Slavic, which although were already considered dead languages by the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, they were still used in official documents and communications and were taught using the grammar translation method. By the middle 19 century the first Romanian Universities, the University of Iasi and the University of Bucharest, introduced the study of Russian and French in their curriculum, alongside Latin, Greek and Slavic, the former being labelled “modern languages”. Initially, the teaching method employed was the grammar translation method, but that changed situationally, not systemically, when the communication context involved native speakers in the position of teachers/ language facilitators.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a boom in the study of foreign languages, especially French, as our country collaborated closely with France, both culturally and economically. After the second World War, Romania fell behind the Iron Curtain, hence the imposed intensive study of Russian language in all Romanian schools.

English started to gain some recognition around the same time, so one of the most common combinations in the 60-70’s was English-Russian or French- Russian, as most theoretical secondary schools offered two foreign languages. Naturally, nowadays English is the most popular language to be taught in Romanian schools, with an early onset at the age of 6-7 years of age. Privately, the study of English commences even earlier, at kindergarten level, tuition being covered by parental contributions.

Currently, most foreign languages are taught in 2 classes per week, from zero to 12<sup>th</sup> grade. The first foreign language to be introduced in the national curriculum is in pre-school grade –



grade zero- and is usually English. The second foreign language is introduced in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade and continues to graduation. The most common second language is still French, while German is gaining more ground, especially in the Western part of the country. Spanish and Italian are also offered in some schools, but not many. Not surprisingly, Russian has lost a lot of ground after the Revolution in 1989 and now is taught only at university level, in rare situations.

The introduction of the European Framework of Languages has standardized the linguistic assessment and now the terms in which we describe linguistic proficiency are from A1-C2. The linguistic level expected at the end of secondary school is B2 for the first foreign language and B1 for the second. However, there are the odd bilingual programmes which offer 5 classes of English/week for groups of 12-16 students, where the level of linguistic performance upon graduation is usually C1 or even C2. The students in public and private secondary schools in Romania must pass a linguistic competence test as part of their Bacalaureate examinations, however, the linguistic level is assessed according to the European Common Framework of Languages (A1-C2) rather than the national grading system (grades from 1-10).

The method mostly used is the communicative approach to teaching, with very few references to the mother tongue.

### 5. Spain

Over the last few decades, especially secondary schools, have increasingly developed activities aimed at improving language acquisition by organising language trips, pupil exchanges and, participating in European programmes, pupil and teacher mobility programmes.



In Spain, language learning is mandatory during the educational stage. It begins at primary school, but it is more developed during secondary school. We can find different kinds of schools, each one of them teaches foreign languages in different ways:

### Mainstream schools

All schools teach a foreign language with the aim of providing their pupils with the best possible language skills to enable them to face their professional future in the best possible conditions. Teachers and professors are specialists in the language they teach. Languages are taught according to the current regulations according to which, throughout the entire schooling of a compulsory subject in our education system.

### Schools with language sections

It is an intermediate option between ordinary schools and bilingual schools. It consists of teaching some subjects in a foreign language. Unlike the bilingual model, pupils are taught in a foreign language without having the necessary skills to do so. It is therefore necessary to use two learning languages at the same time, which reduces the quality of the teaching provided and leads to the proper development of both language skills and knowledge acquisition.

### Bilingual schools

It consists of teaching some subjects in English, so that pupils not only learn a language but the foreign language becomes the language of learning, the vehicular language. The aim is that pupils not only learn a foreign language but that, by acquiring knowledge in another language, the foreign language becomes almost its second mother tongue. The level of linguistic



competence achieved is much higher than in ordinary schools and in schools with a language section.

The learning of a foreign language in Spain is compulsory from the age of 3 to 18. This means that our young people study it for more years than their counterparts in most of the countries around us, and therefore for more hours. Unlike in many countries, our teachers and professors are specialists in the foreign language they teach. The number of students per classroom is within the average of EU countries. With these data it is easy to believe that our system should achieve better results. However, the level of linguistic proficiency is low. The way languages are taught in Spain is not enough and it needs a renovation that improves the student's social and oral skills.

Expectations of language performance have changed and have come a long way since the introduction of these in the national curriculum. The very introduction of foreign languages is due to the globalization of languages such as English and the increasing need for communication between cultures. Foreign languages have changed both socially and pedagogically and these changes are due to their progressive presence in various contexts, new technologies as well as communication, political and cultural awareness.

After the 2006 Education Act, the teaching of foreign languages was included in the national curriculum on an almost compulsory basis in most of the autonomous communities.

In Spain, by far the most widely taught languages are English and French. It is true that there are schools which are trilingual or multilingual and which also teach or have the option of teaching German and Italian, but in general the most common are English and French.



### III. LANGUAGE TEACHING BEFORE THE INTERNET AGE

#### 1. Cyprus

The traditional language teaching methods in Cyprus include various elements such as communicative teaching and learning of the language, individual characteristics of the students, multicultural perspective, lifelong learning as well as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). It must be noted that these methods are mainly used for the teaching of the English language as the source used was specifically for the English language.

- Communicative learning and teaching of the language: Emphasize the ability of the students to communicate regarding various contexts and discussions of multiple themes. At the beginning more, emphasis is given to speaking and listening abilities while including all the elements of the framework. It must be noted that this element is mainly focused for children in preschool and elementary school level.
- Individual characteristics of the students: The teaching program acknowledges that each student has different needs. It is important to mention that it does not adapt a general approach rather a more adaptive one depending on the different needs of the students especially students with different learning styles and learning difficulties
  - Multicultural perspective: use all of the option available to bring children into contact with other cultures.
  - Lifelong learning: Students are taught how to learn while also learning essential skills in order to develop in a European society
  - Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)- The CLIL method addresses the teaching of a foreign language as part of the school curriculum. One of its philosophies is task-



based learning of the language. Students can gain new knowledge through the learning of a new language. CLIL can be considered as one of the ways to fulfil the goals of the framework. However, it is important to slowly increase the level difficulty level of the language and have constant communication with the language. As a result, a balance is created between the teaching of a foreign language through the school curriculum. In the preschool context, the CLIL method can be used in a more general context while during elementary school it may be best to focus on a certain context throughout the school year.

## 2. Greece

The method in the broadest sense also includes factors in the selection of learning material, its classification and its structure. One could say that it is a characterization of didactics. Methods motivate learning, mobilize learning activity, open a topic, control strategic thinking, acquire and ensure learning success. However, they are influenced by many factors such as:

- new knowledge in linguistics,
- the requirements that each student has but also the characteristics of the group,
- the handling of the texts used,
- the learning objectives of the group,
- the country's traditions in teaching and learning,
- the teaching methods used in mother tongue lessons and much more.

The method also aims to project the relationship between teacher and student. It includes the synthesis of learning and teaching processes and factors based on teaching such as: pedagogical plans, processes of physical and cognitive development, psychological mood and sociological principles. The methods also include the skills that the teacher needs to have for the lesson, the way in which he / she will transfer the content. In other words, they are the "tricks", which are used by teachers to stimulate the student's interest and motivate him to participate actively. In addition, they determine the way in which the student will achieve his



goal but also the way in which the teacher will make the lesson more "delicious".

### 3. Ireland

Because at present only 3% of the Irish population speaks Irish Gaelic as a first language – the opportunities for being able to use Gaelic outside of the classroom are limited in comparison to English.

- The grammar translation method is a long standing ‘traditional’ approach to learning language. Since Gaelic became compulsory in both primary and Post – Primary education this method has been used heavily, however it has been used in conjunction with other methods. One of the problems with the grammar translation method, particularly when it comes to learning Gaelic has been the focus being more on the grammar of the language and an ignorance of speaking and listening skills. For today’s youth this can be tedious and holds little appeal. Increasingly learners want to experience more enjoyable language learning through things like immersion.

As Ireland becomes more populated by speakers of other languages, it has become widely recognised that there is no one single method that suits all learners. Many learners do not feel confident about learning an additional language because a method that they have previously been exposed to has not worked for them. By using a combination of methods, the language learning journey can be tailored to the specific learner and the experience enhanced so they can reach their full potential.

- Audio - lingual methodology dictates that language acquisition is simply a matter of forming certain ‘habits’ using repetition and reinforcement and rather than concentrating solely or heavily on grammar it instead places emphasis on speaking and listening, this approach has been commonly adopted, alongside the grammar translation method within the Irish classroom setting.

- The Direct method has over time become the most popular method for teaching foreign



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languages in the classroom. The philosophy behind the direct method is that learners will think about the target language in the same way they do their native language. This method does not rely on translation, it promotes learning through visual materials or ‘realia.’ This method works well for many learners particularly younger, ‘fast’ learners.

#### 4. Romania

The Romanian education system is transitioning towards the student-centred approach and this has had a significant influence of how foreign languages are taught. Traditionally,





foreign languages have been introduced in class by means of grammar translation. All official textbooks from the 50' until the 90' are conceived on the grammar translation approach, which was the only established method of teaching a language in schools. The result was a population who would know grammar rules very well but were unable to communicate efficiently in the given language. This reality did not use to be a disturbing one, considering the limited to none travel opportunities the average Romanian had and the forbidden contact with foreigners imposed on all citizens. Therefore, when there was no need for foreign language communication, there was no effort put into finding more productive teaching methods.

The direct method was used in pockets before the 90's and was mostly used by non-officially trained instructors, in environments outside schools. The direct method did not produce results which were competitive enough for standardized exams as there was not special focus on language accuracy, the limelight being stolen by language production regardless of the grammar mistakes involved.

The audio-lingual method was quite popular in the 80's, once the technology allowed for linguistic labs to be installed in schools and universities. Much focus was laid on pronunciation of individual sounds rather than on production of lengthy communicative exchanges.

The communicative approach was introduced in the Romanian language teaching programmes in the late 90's and was mainly focused on English. The British Council supported the publication of the first English textbook based on the communicative approach in 1996. Ever since then, language teaching has changed dramatically, the communicative method creating a decent balance of focus between language accuracy and production. Currently, German and French have adopted the same approach, thus ensuing more linguistic performance among students.



The communicative method in the age of student-centered education is the main path towards the achievement of the second key competence of the lifelong learning, i.e. communication in a foreign language, which stipulates “the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions, both orally and in writing”, as well as mediation abilities (summarizing, paraphrasing, interpreting and translation).

### 5. Spain

The grammar translation method was one of the first methods of language teaching and it is still being used nowadays when teaching classical languages such as Latin and Greek. The lessons have always been focused on learning grammatical rules and then applying those rules by translating sentences between the target language and the native language while the student memorizes vocabulary. These lessons have always focused on reading and writing rather than speaking and listening. Teachers have taught in the students’ mother tongue, in this case Spanish.

The direct method was developed in order to overcome the deficiencies that the grammar translation method had. This direct method considers that oral expression takes precedence over written expression. The teaching of grammar is put on the back burner, with more emphasis on vocabulary, dialogues and oral interaction.

The audio-lingual method emphasizes the teaching of listening and speaking before reading and writing. It uses dialogues as the main form of language presentation and drills as the main training technique. Mother tongue of students is discouraged in the classroom.



Students repeat different sentences until they learn it and then they can start using their own ones.

In recent years, the grammar translation method is no longer the most popular one since the focus now is on the importance of interaction and pronunciation rather than grammatical rules.

#### **IV. ICT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

Historically, e-learning is based on a long tradition of teaching and learning experience. Informatics sector and Education and Training sector have influenced the term e-learning, making it a subset of them. According to Efthymiou and Vitsilakis (2007), during the 1980s, research began to be conducted on the fact that the PC cannot just have only informative character but also interactive. As a result, applications for two-way communication (modern and asynchronous) between those involved in the educational process began to develop. At the same time, multimedia began to be used, which had the ability to integrate information in the form of video, audio, image, animation, etc.

Computers have been used for foreign language teaching since the 1960s following three stages: behaviouristic, communicative and integrative (Warschauer & Healey, 1998). Nowadays, Distance learning (DL) is widely spread in Greece. Nevertheless, it all started at the beginning of the last century, when DL courses were being offered via mail. Today Information Communication Technology (ICT) has transformed education (e-learning, lifelong learning,



continuing education and is almost totally bonded with ICT and the internet (Anastasiades et al, 2010, Pange et al, 2011).

Recent research on factors that influence educators' and learners' decision to turn to online courses, their attitudes towards this kind of courses as well as the advantages that they have recognized and potential fears and difficulties within the Greek EFL context, reveals that this type of education liberates students from impractical schedules and commuting. Thus, essentially, students and educators have witnessed the independence and detachment of education from any factors that may have constrained it in the past. Courses are provided either synchronously (i.e. in real time) or asynchronously (Michalopoulou, 2019).

For the integration of e-learning in Greece, the inclusion of the course of Informatics in the Detailed Curriculum for each level of education can be set as a milestone, as this course is a new science and a constantly evolving information medium (Dimitriadis, 2015) which is also developed in parallel with e-learning. Below, we list chronologically how the Informatics course was integrated in all levels of education.

Historically, the first Greek Higher Education Institution which incorporated Informatics in the Curricula was the University of Patras in 1980 following the creation of the faculty of "Computer Engineering & Informatics" which deals with teaching and research in Computer Science and Technology, as well as the study of their applications (University Patras, 2021). Then, as Dimitriadis (2015) reports, in 1983-1984, the subject of informatics was included in the Technical and Vocational High Schools, while in 1992 the secondary schools followed and at the same year the branch of Informatics teachers was established.

In the 1990s, computer technology was introduced in homes before being introduced in schools. This underlines not only the importance of non-formal learning but also the potential



that this new form of learning can offer (European Commission, 2000, p. 8). The creation of the World Wide Web in 1992, combined with the new ICT, made education increasingly accessible (Harasim, 2000), having this as a result its use as a tool to promote knowledge, employment and consequently the development of "Human Capital".

In 1997 in Greece the institutional Unified Curricula Framework of Informatics/ICT was developed in school education, which incorporated pedagogical models and took into consideration modern learning theories, depending on the specifics of each school unit (Goudi, 2015). The adoption of informatics and ICT in primary education, however, was still a demand, as it provided only for the optional integration of informatics in the last two grades.

In the same year - 1997, the co-financed project by the European Structural Fund "Odyssey" of the Operational Program of Education and Initial Vocational Training (OPEIVT) began, which was completed in 2002 (Darantoumis, 2015). The strategic goals of OPEIVT were the access of all young people, aged 15-20, to education and vocational training as well as the improvement of infrastructure and the upgrading of the education system in order to be connected to the new needs of the labour market. The ultimate goal of the "Odyssey" project was for ICT to be integrated and supported as a teaching and learning tool in Greek education, as an integral part of the daily learning process (CTI, 2002).

This effort was one of the first ones for e-learning to be integrated in schools through the continuous training of teachers and the provision of appropriate software and activities.

Subsequently, in 1998 the subject of informatics was introduced in the Unified Lyceums and then in 2003 in the Primary education/Kindergarten with the Interdisciplinary Unified Curriculum Framework (IUCF), (Dimitriadis, 2015) (IEP, 2003).



Recent developments in education due to the Covid-19 pandemic have influenced the way of thinking and acting in education and the benefits of distance learning were highlighted, reinforcing the need for further dynamic educational design models and the acquisition of new skills (Karachristos et al., 2020). According to unofficial data, e-learning in Greece, in 2015, corresponded to 8-10% of the total Education Programs offered in the country. Historically, in 2006, the Ministry of Education established the “Electronic Classroom Management Service” (e-class). This service enables teachers and students to make good use of ICT daily. The service also aims to support the teaching work of teachers, to facilitate the way in which curricula is organized and planned and to utilize the school timetable. Through electronic classroom management, teachers can publish electronic notes, cite helpful resources, schedule their courses, create exercises for self-assessment or even manage the traditional book electronically (Roumeliotis, 2016).

Students have free access to the Electronic Classroom Management. On the other hand, those teachers who wish to enter the Electronic Classroom Management must create an account so that they can manage their courses on the platform.

E-learning can take the following forms: asynchronous, synchronous and mixed-combined (Anastasiadis, 2012; Bonk & Graham, 2006; Moore & Kearsley, 2012). Asynchronous e-learning is carried out with advanced technologies and enables students and teachers to interact at different times regardless of where they are located. Examples of asynchronous e-learning are considered to be the Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as the Moodle platform (Ellis, 2009) and Content Management Systems (CMS), which disseminate content over the Internet, such as Joomla, Drupal, etc. (Browning & Lowndes, 2001). Synchronous e-learning is carried out with advanced technologies and provides the opportunity for students and teachers to interact at the same time regardless of where they are located (Anastasiadis, 2008, Kampourakis &



Loukis, 2006). Finally, mixed-combined e-learning includes both asynchronous and synchronous e-learning (Anastasiadis, 2008).

### *Emergency e-learning due to Covid-19 pandemic*

Today, the most widespread e-learning is the online one due to the coronavirus pandemic. In any case, Emergency Distance Learning is not exactly e-learning, although it is used as a tool for its implementation. Schools and universities in Greece suspended their operation for the first time on March 11, 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic as part of government measures to prevent the spread of the disease. The Ministry of Education responded immediately to this emergency and gradually implementing distance learning, offered students the opportunity to stay in touch with the educational process. Without intending to replace face-to-face learning, the Ministry of Education has activated digital platforms and tools that are offered free of charge by ICT providers that are addressed to students of all levels of education: primary, secondary and higher education (Karachristos et al., 2020).

The distance learning program of the Ministry of Education includes synchronous and asynchronous distance learning. Synchronous learning was offered and is offered to students of the Third Grade of Lyceum who are getting prepared for the panhellenic exams and then it was applied to the other grades of secondary education and all grades of primary education. The educational program is developed by the principal and the teachers of each school unit according to the specific needs of each grade. During synchronous learning, the teacher can share files, presentations and even its screen and notes with its students, while it can allow them to ask questions or just talk, thus participating in an interactive course.

As for the asynchronous learning, students and teachers can use the existing digital tools and platforms already provided by the Ministry of Education, such as the Interactive Textbooks,



the Digital Teaching Materials ("Fotodentro") and the Advanced Electronic Scenarios ("Aesop"), that are organized at educational level. E-learning videos are also uploaded to the platforms so that students can watch online courses at any time of the day.

The IT companies CISCO, Google and Microsoft have offered for free three digital platforms to the Ministry of Education and the Greek Universities in order to cover the increased needs in distance learning under these exceptional circumstances. Greek universities already had e-learning programs and for this reason they could adapt more easily to the new needs that arose.

Taking into consideration the possible technological restrictions on access to the digital platforms, the Ministry of Education has provided the possibility of connecting to digital classrooms through a simple telephone connection. Special ICT applications and learning techniques are also used where possible in order for the digital classrooms to be adapted to the needs of students with disabilities and/or special needs (Greek News Agenda, 2020).

Languages have always been taught face-to-face in all five countries where the study was conducted. It is an instructional method where learning materials are taught in person to a group of students, so it is a teacher-centered method. This kind of education allows dynamic interaction between instructor and students.

However, when Covid-19 arrived, it changed the traditional teaching and learning methods as we knew them. The digitalization of the world made it easier for both instructors and learners to keep teaching and learning through electronic devices. Thanks to this, long-distance learning via online has become more popular.





Some of the reasons of the popularity of online learning is that students can listen and study the lesson as many times as it is necessary from any location. That means that one can attend lessons anywhere and on different devices: smartphone, tablet or computer. Thanks to this, students can review or study the learning material at any time of the day as their schedule allows and learners do not need to spend extra money going to a school.

Different ways of measuring the face-to-face and long-distance learning outcomes is through rates of abandonment and the academic results of the students.

Long-distance learning has a higher percentage of student withdrawal. Recent researches prove that it is easier for face-to-face instructors to deter students from quitting, as motivation is more easily created in face to face lessons. This is because the classroom setting provides more direct interaction and encouragement. While face-to-face instructors may be able to adjust the teaching methods and style to improve student retention, online instructors are limited to electronic devices. It must be considered that most online students are adults or people whose schedule or personal situations make it difficult for them to attend face-to-face lessons. So these personal situations may sometimes be the reasons for the high dropout rate among long-distance students.

Regarding the academic results, face-to-face students as well as long-distance ones, show similar performances and academic outcomes. However, it should be kept in mind that there are some aspects of long-distance learning that are difficult to control, like the use of additional materials to take the exams.



Student performance is influenced more by the design and strategies used than by modality. With rigorous designs, regardless of method, the results should not differ significantly.

The development of teaching platforms has had a hugely positive impact on the education experience. Firstly, the fact that these platforms have taken away almost all limits on education must be pointed out. This means that students are no longer limited to learning what's available for them in a physical classroom or library, they have access to these teaching platforms which allow them to learn in a comprehensive manner wherever they are in the world. These platforms support and enhance the educational process, help to create collective spaces for learners, enabling them to communicate with each other from a distance, exchange information and solve problems. It also helps create a more personal relationship teacher-student since the interaction between these two takes place privately.

In addition, teaching platforms have made accessible language learning for those people who could not attend schools due to their job or daily tasks. This is possible thanks to the flexibility that it gives to students. They also allow students to dip in and out at times that suit them. Therefore, these platforms achieve equal educational opportunities for all. In conclusion, language learning is more attractive now than ever due to the development of these platforms.

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## **V. ONLINE LEARNING**

Online teaching was introduced in Europe after the breakout of the Covid-19 pandemic in order to ensure continuity of learning. Although systems and schools were insufficiently prepared for such a crisis, the prioritization for student learning and well-being inflicted the demand for a successful educational recovery, one that builds resilience and inclusion and entrusts that every child and youth learns meaningfully and sustainably. As a subsequent measure, the educational policy makers reinforced the use of distant learning and European



Ministries of Education offered teaching and learning provisions in varying proportions. Greece for instance refunctioned already established platforms e.g., e-class and e-me, which had been left undeveloped and had acknowledged very limited use by most teachers and school principals until then. The same applies to other European countries such as Denmark, according to the REDS data collection and based on a survey by UNESCO (Meinck, Fraillon & Strietholt, 2022). However, educators, schools and principals along with students themselves were unprepared for such a leap and seemed to lack any substantial expertise on the field of online teaching. Seminars were offered by various organizations, either the Greek Ministry of Education or within the spectrum of projects funded by the European Commission such as School Education Gateway. Those seminars provided teachers with newly presented digital tools in order to facilitate the task of maintaining their students' interest in the learning process.

In terms of the school curricula, very little has been adjusted to the new model of teaching and learning. Subsequently, the need for a further modification of textbooks and their transformation into digital books arose, thus, leading to further action that had to be developed. An additional reason that led to the growing need for distant learning is related to the decline in child and youth well-being during the disruption to schooling. As children and youth were deprived of face-to-face interaction with peers, they started feeling emotionally affected by what was happening in the world due to the pandemic and anxious about the possible changes in their schooling. Furthermore, as revealed by surveys carried out, while some students did receive help from parents on learning topics along the disruption, there was a significant number of others who received no aid at all, expecting any possible help from their educators and urging the system to come up with new solutions in order to achieve their inclusion.



The prospect of further closures due to any probable crisis, whether that refers to a hygiene crisis or even to an environmental crisis, uncovers the need for further preparedness of European countries to provide for the child and youth learner with the essential means for learning continuity and develop mechanisms or digital tools to support, teachers and schools in the future.

## **VI. THE ROLE OF THE ONLINE TEACHER**

Online teaching has become a new reality for both students and teachers. However, without acknowledging, this massive shift in teaching is occurring since both teachers and students need to first become accustomed to online classes. Both parties are on new territories: teaching online- little control over the act of teaching itself and online learning – baffling for younger students whose sense of responsibility is yet to develop.

- How does the online environment differ from the face-to-face medium?

It is obvious that online teaching and face to face teaching have various common elements that need to be adjusted differently based on the teaching context. The table below demonstrates how common elements of both ‘face to face’ and online teaching differ in each case: (8)



	Face to face	Online
Communication	Communication takes place through physical presence. Voice and body language are used in order to support what needs to be communicated	There is a need for enhancement of communication skills in order to create a connection within a virtual environment. The teacher must be patient and really careful of any signs by the students. Active listening of the students is also extremely important. In regard to tools a good quality camera and microphone is useful.
Time management	The time needed to reach the lesson must be acknowledged, thus working hours are limited due to traveling to work.	Lessons seem stronger and thus it is easier to get of track. It is important to stay on schedule.
Organization	The teaching material must be organized through folders for easy access	Teaching files must be organized while it will be helpful to save your favorite links in case you need them for a lesson.
Computer use	Teachers usually use a course book which guides them to the lesson. Usually there is need of knowledge on	Prior knowledge is required such as sharing of audio, video, files or sharing screen. It is important that the teacher has knowledge regarding



	PowerPoint presentations or sometimes use of a whiteboard.	the use of the needed tools and features for the lesson. Also, lessons must be recorded
Assessment	Assessment can take place through either interview or questionnaire.	Needs analysis is extremely important in order to be on track with the level of the student

(Anggrawan et al, 2019)

Furthermore, it is extremely interesting to observe that even though there are significant transformations from a ‘face to face’ to an online context several studies expressed that there is no major difference in the outcomes between the two different teaching types (Anggrawan et al, 2019).

What sort of new skills does a teacher need to be proficient in the online medium?

It is of absolute importance that teachers engaging in online teaching acquire certain skills that will help them deliver their lessons online. One of the most important elements is for them to be aware of the technology that is used. It would be extremely useful if the teacher navigates and explores with the tools used in order to seem familiar during the lesson (Nobre, 2012).

Another important element is to provide information for the students regarding technical support. If the students face problems with their tools, they must be aware of who they should ask in case the teacher is unable to help (Nobre, 2012).

Since the use of technology may sometimes not be in line with our plans, it is important for the teacher to remain flexible and expect everything. Technical challenges may occur at any



time with the simplest example: unstable internet connection. It is important that the teacher knows how to handle such situations while also feeling confident to solve the issue at that time (Nobre, 2012).

When teaching online, students must be aware of the teacher. Due to the non-physical proximity between the teacher and the students, the teacher must teach in a way that keeps the students engaged. Within this same context, the teacher must establish a connection with the students so that they feel comfortable sharing their concerns. Online teaching may feel isolating and lonely, thus it is important for the students to feel the support and that they are a part of the community.

Regular assessments can also be useful in order to provide some self-reflection to the teacher and anything that should be improved from the perspective of the students. (Nobre, 2012)

## **VII. ONLINE LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS AND TOOLS**

There are many online resources available for teaching and learning second/foreign languages. As people become more aware of the tools, researchers and practitioners in computer-assisted language acquisition are required to develop and use them extensively by investigating, choosing, utilizing, and assessing the tools in a range of scenarios.

Some methods and their use in the context of distance teaching of English language will be presented.





- **Online Whiteboard**

An online whiteboard helps teachers interact with students in real-time via the internet. They offer the same experience as a traditional whiteboard but are connected to the internet

and facilitate digitizing the content written on them. This helps teachers explain things in a better way in an online classroom setting.

In the following video you can learn which are the best free virtual whiteboards for online teaching and how to use them:

[The Best Free Virtual Whiteboards for Online Teaching - YouTube](#)

- **Live Online Classes**

A virtual classroom is an online classroom that allows participants to communicate with one another, view presentations or videos, interact with other participants, and engage with resources in work groups. A virtual classroom allows both learners and instructors around the world to participate in live classes to collaborate and interact.

Online classes also allow for the ability to record class as it happens, including any presentation audio and visuals. This means that the content is accessible even after being delivered, an added benefit for those who want a quick refresher, or perhaps did not fully understand the first time.

If you want some tips to start your online classes, watch this YouTube video:

[3 engaging ways to start your online class - YouTube](#)

- **Pre-Recorded Video Lectures**

When it comes to pre-recorded media, the first rule is the hardest: don't make the media



too long. Try breaking long lectures into short chunks of around 15 minutes, mixed in with activities that help students process each chunk of content.

The key choice you will make in recording lectures is whether to use video or other media. Video is good for representing visually complex information and enhancing the human

presence of the instructor for students. On the downside, video is harder to produce than most media, go for the easiest media that will get the job done.

In this video you can learn how to pre-record a lecture in Zoom. Have a look at it!

[How to Pre-record a lecture in Zoom - YouTube](#)

- **Flipped Classroom**

The flipped classroom, sometimes referred to as the inverted classroom, is a modern instructional strategy that offers student-centered peer-assisted learning.

Simply put, in a flipped classroom what is traditionally done in-class is done at home, while what is done as homework is now done in-class under the guidance of the teacher.

As opposed to the traditional classroom, where the teacher takes the center imparting new information to students who passively absorb it, the flipped classroom technique focuses on providing students with learning material in the form of pre-recorded lectures, videos, presentations, tutorials, and other web-based material prior to the actual class. This method requires students to familiarize themselves with the new information and prepare for in-class activities with the teacher and peers, ahead of time.

Learn more about the Flipped Classroom Model watching this video: [The Flipped Classroom Model - YouTube](#)

- **Game-Based Teaching/gamification**

Game-based learning is one teaching strategy that's growing increasingly popular to help



students achieve their learning objectives. Game-based learning is a teaching method that uses the power of games to define and support learning outcomes.

A GBL environment achieves this through educational games that have elements such as engagement, immediate rewards and healthy competition. All so that while students play, they stay motivated to learn.

The great thing about game-based learning is everyone can reap its benefits, from preschool all the way up to post-secondary education and beyond.

In this TED Talk, Scott Herbert talks about the power of gamification in education:

[The Power of Gamification in Education | Scott Hebert | TEDxUAlberta - YouTube](#)

- **Class Blog**

Blog is short for web log. It is a bit like an online diary or journal, except blogs are not necessarily private, instead they are created for an audience. And just like a diary or journal, a blog is relaxed, making it an easy and comfortable way for students to get writing.

Teachers can use blogs to publish assignments, resources, and keep students and even parents up to date on class events, due dates, and content being covered. Teachers can also use blogs to help students master content and improve their writing skills. Students can use blogs to publish their writing and educate others on a particular topic.

Do you want some more information about what a blog is? Check out this video: [What is a Blog? - YouTube](#)



## VIII. CONCLUSIONS

The current study corroborates the desk research conducted by five organization in five different European countries: CESUR in Spain, EUROSPEAK in Ireland, ACTA in Romania, RESET IN Cyprus and EEPEK in Greece.

ACTA is the partner who coordinated this research and we have done so by drafting the research guidelines, which covers all the aspect of research stipulated in the application as well as a series of power point presentations as part of the content we put together to create a theoretical base for speakers of foreign languages who wish to attempt a career in teaching a language online. All partners have contributed to the theoretical handbook by first conducting a survey to have a starting point of our research. The next task was to complete the main points of the national research and to produce a ppt presentation of practical tools to facilitate language teaching online.

While compiling the result we noticed the aspects in which language teaching had a similar development in all partner countries, such as the transition from the grammar translation method to the communicative approach or the use of online platforms as well as aspects in which we differ, such as the languages our educational systems find most suitable to introduce. There is a general agreement that English is the first foreign language to be taught from primary or early middle school in all partner countries, however in terms of the second language, things differ slightly, still the most cited second foreign languages are French, German, Spanish and Italian.

There seems to be a consensus about the need to upgrade language platforms, most teachers who were interviewed pointing out the need for more practical tools as well as



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practical steps to the new technologies. Therefore, as a follow up of this guidebook, the electrolengua website (<http://electrolengua-erasmus.site/>) also features ppt presentations aimed to assist the language instructor both technically and in terms of content.



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