

special edition

ELTA Newsletter

focusing on
teachers' wellbeing
in the age of crisis

April 2020



ISSN 1820 - 9831 (ONLINE)

ELTA Newsletter:April 2020

Volume 14, No. 1

ELTA Newsletter, ISSN 1820 – 9831 (Online)

ELTA – English Language Teachers’ Association

Nemanjina 28, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

+381(0)63210460, office@elta.org.rs

Ivana Milošević, ELTA President, president@elta.org.rs

Editor-in-Chief:

Milena Tanasijević, ELT Lecturer, Belgrade Metropolitan University

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Editorial:

Aleksandra Jevtović, English Teacher, Faculty on Philology, Belgrade University

Design:

Marija Panić, ELTA – English Language Teachers’ Association

Website: elta.org.rs/elta.newsletter

Send your submissions electronically to: newsletter.elta@gmail.com

EDITORIAL

Dear Colleagues,

At the time when teachers are going above and beyond, we would like to offer support in our own small way by providing you with the forum to share your online teaching ideas, your examples of good practice in the time of Corona, your advice on teachers' wellbeing. This is the first such issue but we would like to make a few more while we are all on lockdown so send us your contributions.

We start this issue with **A Day in the Life of ... Chryssa Themelis**, an expert in technology enhanced learning. Chryssa was interviewed by **Vicky Papageorgiou** and talks about E-learning, surely something we are all currently interested in.

In her article **Distant Learning and Crisis Management**, **Marina Siskos** talks about a set of key strategies for effective distant learning and provides useful tips to consider when organizing an online class.

If you are looking for suggestions for online tools that you can use to make quizzes and storyboards or set homework as well as organize debates and edit texts, then **Vicky Papageorgiou's** article **Transitioning Smoothly to Online Teaching: Easy and Free to Use Online Resources** and **Olivera Ilic's** article **Using Learningapp.org in English Language Teaching** are for you.

If you missed **ELTA** supported webinar **Distance learning in Ten Steps** in March, now you can read what it was all about in the words of **Milica Vukadin** who ran the webinar with her colleague **Nevena Marković**. The article not only provides a summary of the webinar but also a link to the recording and to a number of useful tutorials.

When it comes to sharing personal experiences we have three stories from three countries: **Mary Sebastian** from Kuwait, **Gregor Pirš** from Slovenia and **Slavica Jocković** from Serbia. Different teachers, teaching in very different circumstances but facing the same problems. It feels good to share our thoughts and feelings and, in case of one of the stories, to find out that snail mail can come in handy even in this day and age of technology.

Students have also been active and you can read AND listen to what they have to say in this issue. **Milica Vojvodić** shares with us her students' feelings that may help us learn what our own students are thinking and how they are coping and **Marija Šalinić** her thoughts on

COVID -19 while **Anja Sretenović** waxes lyrical about life even in the time of Corona. You can also hear **Aleksandar Popović, Antonije Subotić** and **Vuk Simon Ovaskinen** talk about the golden years, i.e older people.

Last but not least we reprise **Nevena Stoilkov's** article **Easter Time!** containing classroom activities related to the topic of Easter because it is NOT all about Corona - we also rejoice with our students in Easter holidays.

Stay Safe and Carry On!

Aleksandra Jevtović for ELTA Editorial team

Distant Learning and Crisis Management

Distant Learning and Crisis Management in English Language Teaching

Marina Siskos, a freelance teacher of english for specific (ESP) and academic purposes (EAP), an associate translator and editor



Key words: Online teaching, distance learning, virtual teaching, crisis, unique, strategies, education, Bloom's taxonomy, L2 learners, activities, skype-teaching

April, 2020

Online teaching is now an established outcome of the lockdown measures which roughly one-third of the global population observe, due to the coronavirus outbreak.

A host of urgent changes includes the shifting from face-to-face to virtual teaching.

While a considerable percentage of teachers had been familiar with skype-teaching and its intricacies long before reasons of public health protection rendered distant teaching the exclusive choice, other teachers were called to acquire training and acquaintance with the methods and the procedure employed in an online lesson by the next morning light.

Distant teaching can widen the spectrum of educational choices; students and teachers alike are not limited to the population part that lives within physical reach.

Online teaching facilitates the integration of novel teaching and learning resources and means, which translates into an infinite array of tools and materials that might not have been utilized in the traditional lesson. Gradually, it inevitably leads to the shedding of obsolete means and processes preserved, yet serving no longer authentic and contemporary needs and goals.

Teaching and learning online saves valuable time and energy that otherwise would be expended on commuting. Following that no physical movement is required, it might be an opportunity to include students and teachers who are physically challenged into the same opportunities for work and study. The ability to move, or to do so unimpeded, is given to many, but not for everyone.

Ideally, the current crisis will be a turning point to the practical inclusion of teachers with physical disabilities into the community and the opportunities of the field. Hopefully, distant learning will eliminate restrictions that affect students (by use of synchronous or asynchronous education).

Closely linked to the aforementioned is the consequent saving of physical, mental energy and resources that will grant more time, either for the parallel covering of more than one job by the teacher- if one wishes or needs to, or personal, quality time that is of importance to others.

Transitioning to online teaching confers a range of benefits, only a fraction of which has been explained to this point.

Yet, the heart of the matter during the turmoiled times of the little-expected coronavirus pandemic, might not be exactly the successful shifting from the vis-à-vis to virtual teaching and the reaping of every benefit it can produce.

Primarily, the core issue lies within our ability to manage an unpredictable crisis. This is thought to be attained through the retaining of our main everyday aspects of life. To many, one such aspect has been the learning of a second or a foreign language. It is not suggested that online lessons are nothing but an effort to adhere to a sense of normality: on the contrary, distant education can be productive, pleasant and successful.

Still, let us bear in mind that it is the prevalent conditions that make the situation unique: the map of priorities has been fundamentally re-ordered and conscious understanding of that shift of focus might be the most invaluable accomplishment in times of upheaval.

Distant learning, in order to be effective, requires a set of key strategies. The cornerstones of quality education permeate every means and methods of teaching, this applying to online teaching as well. The signposts of a successful lesson are the same, such as the reference to Bloom's taxonomy during the planning and the conducting of an online lesson.

When first entering online teaching, instructors can be inundated by the multitude of simultaneous tasks and the need to manage different means concurrently-alongside the running and monitoring of the lesson. This majorly regards the technical aspects of online teaching: the installation of the software or the program, sound amplification equipment and their timely use with the student during the lesson, the sharing of the appropriate documents or slides on time, the digital adaptation of grading, assessing and evaluating, all elements integral. All parts of an online lesson home have one major achievement: to reach the L2 learner.

Once acquainted and convenient with the channel of the lesson, the teacher is ready to revisit the content of the online lesson, the other essential aspect of L2 teaching.

Bloom's taxonomy can guide the instructor in the same structured fashion as in the traditional lesson plan drafting, that is, during the skype lesson the teacher can bear in mind all the constituents that are unique to skype teaching: students' concentration

span is considerably shorter compared with the concentration span in face-to-face teaching. Maybe as a result of the humans' innate design to focus on other humans instead of equipment. Students' ability to maintain intense focus is noticeably affected. Therefore, the teacher needs to ensure that there is a timely alternation of the lesson activities and the employment of different sources of L2 input: visual and audio, for example. Those can help the teacher to hold the learners' attention as long as this is possible in the virtual environment.

Activities allocated in skype-teaching need to be concise; a necessity also derived from the same function (i.e. the shortening of concentration span in online settings). Lengthier assignments can be allocated as homework tasks. Upon their completion by the L2 learners, assigned homework can be analyzed and explained fragmentarily, during online sessions - make provision of five to fifteen minutes' stretch, on a weekly basis for the homework revision. Avoid revising one paper in one session, as it is important to prevent monotony.

To efficiently reinforce online teaching, create lesson plans by choosing the presentations (that can be in the form of PowerPoint presentation, a customized video, whereas some resourceful teachers have even created memes for teaching grammar) and follow the natural circle of introducing, explaining and practicing, having in mind Bloom's taxonomy.

Creating, composing and utilizing activities in the following hierarchy can act as an axis when online lesson preparation and running feel overwhelming.

1. Remembering: Does each session include an activity igniting retrieval, recognition from the students' long-term memory?
2. Understanding: Is each session rich in meaning from oral, written and graphic messages through learners' mental participation (i.e. interpretation, exemplification, classification, inferencing, comparison, and explanation?).
3. Applying: refers to the need of L2 learners for executing, completing activities during their skype-lessons.

Higher-order skills can be addressed by

4. Analyzing: the deconstruction into the constituents and the determination of their inter-relationship.

5. Evaluating: make sure that the plan and the lesson enable learners to make judgements based on criteria and by employing checking and critiquing.

Finally,

6. Creating: structure the online lesson oriented in the final act of composition: ensure that the layout results into putting elements together in the formation of a coherent or functional whole.

As it applies to every end of educational effort, the focal point is the learner. The attention needs to remain placed upon the student. Physical distance makes dissociation easier: verify your constant attachment to the learner. When distractions arise, preventing them from interfering with the flow of your communication-apparatus is a means to an end, not the end in itself. Let the learners develop and expand their output: make sure that you are a listener. Take the ground only after the learners have completed and only after they pause decidedly.

It is important to be pleasant and smiling: sympathize with the learners' mood and realize that this procedure is more challenging for them than it is for us.

Be open to communication, discussion and pay heed to their concerns. Learners need to be reassured -from a person of their trust-that their progress will not be damaged.

To a large scale, we might need to reconcile with a bereavement: time has been lost, examinations have been postponed, ambitions and goals are pending.

Our collective effort might not be concentrated upon the fulfillment of the originally (i.e. September)-set goal. Priorities have been subverted but the goal of delivering high-quality education and constant support to our learners and each other is intact, feasible. It is worth witnessing this kind of goal be accomplished.

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David, R. Krathwohl. (2002). A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy: An Overview, Theory, Into Practice, 41: 4, 212-218. Doi: 10.1207/s15430421tip410-2.

**I certify that I have the right to publish the photos.*

Source of the first image: [Pinterest.com](https://www.pinterest.com)

Marina Siskos is a graduate from the Faculty of English Language and Literature, Aristotle University.

A teacher of English as a Foreign Language and associate translator, she has cooperated with private English-teaching institutes.

She holds publications on the ELT News magazine, the Journal of Applied Languages and Linguistics (JALL), Tesol Greece and IATEFL Slovenia, nurturing a sharp interest in understanding the workings of native language as related with English as a Target/ Foreign Language, the underlying working of SL transference and on devising educative strategies for TL facilitation of authentic conceptualization.

In the field of translation, she produces, on average, 700.000 words annually.

She is a year-long associate translator for *Flowmagazine* in a range of contexts, including, politics, current affairs, human relationships, psychology, popularized science, history, culture, education, entertainment, nutrition, etc. Published work is archived in the magazine's official website.



A day in the life of.....

Chryssa Themelis

by Vicky Papageorgiou, Metropolitan College, Athens, Greece



Chryssa is an educational researcher focusing on research that changes practice and thinking, teaching that transforms people's lives and engages actively with students, businesses and communities. She has a 20-year experience of teaching face to face classes, blended learning courses and vocational workshops in e-research and technology enhanced learning. As research assessor, she evaluates UKERI proposals for the British council and European Union proposals for H2020 FET Innovation Launchpad Calls.

Vicky : First of all, thank you for accepting the invitation for this interview. We are thrilled to have you here!

Chryssa : It is my pleasure.

Vicky : You are an expert in technology enhanced learning. And currently a staff member of the University of Lancaster. Can you share a little of your personal/professional story so far?

Chryssa : Before coming to Lancaster, I spent years working for EU funded projects and teaching at Hellenic American University and English language centers. I still run a foreign language center (EXThemeli.OE) in Athens as well. I coordinated the VocTEL conference aiming to promote TEL in Europe in 2015. I hold a BA in Economics from Deree College, an MSc in Networked Learning, and a Ph.D. in the field of "E-research and Technology Enhanced Learning" from Lancaster University (department of educational research). I review UKERI proposals for the British council and European Union proposals for H2020 FET Innovation Launchpad Calls. I blog regularly at [**AACE review**](#) (Association for the Advancement of Computing in

Education) and review papers at IRRODL, open praxis, education sciences, educational researcher, Ed-media conferences.

Vicky : Could you tell us about the various projects you have managed or you are currently managing, like the VocTel conference, ViLi project, etc.?

Chryssa : European funding was the only opportunity I had to work more on educational research and create a vision of a more inclusive education. Therefore, I have initiated several Erasmus + projects in the field of innovation in higher education, working closely with Prof. Julie-Ann Sime.

Currently, I have been working on Digital Wellbeing Educators that has a clear objective: increase the capacity of lecturers and teachers to integrate digital education in a way that promotes the digital wellbeing of students. Through building teacher capacity, the project will improve students' abilities to manage their online time, make the most of digital learning, critically assess the media they consume and create, and become responsible, confident digital citizens. You can Download our Digital Wellbeing Compendium which highlights 14 innovative examples and our analysis of the risks, challenges, opportunities and future directions: <https://www.digital-wellbeing.eu/learning-portal/compendium-of-best-practice/>.

My favorite project though is the CiELL project. The CiELL is a KA2 project, innovation in higher education. It focuses on inclusiveness in English language learning. An app is designed to offer informal, flexible, and alternative ways of English language writing using comics as a mnemonic device. The comic, mnemonic devices or the so-called stories have the potential to assist students remember writing structures of essays, articles, and reviews with close reference to Cambridge English examinations (IELTS & PCE). Comics could be a very effective pedagogical tool to teaching children and adults any subject in any level of education (Bessette, 2020)

The stories address the 17 UN sustainable goals that set targets and indicators to make the world a better place for all, by 2030. Issues such as poverty, homelessness, well-being, and climate change are turned into graphic narratives to inform students of the UN initiatives, picture the global challenges and raise awareness of social justice.

This first version of app will be ready to download on the 11th of May 2020. The innovative and experiential approach of the pilot design needs to be further investigated to better accommodate English language learners and storytellers of the world. More information about the project and the app is available on the CiELL project website: <https://ciell.eu/> and on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/CIELL-386234128802711/>.

All resources created by EU funding agencies are open access; so educators can learn about new pedagogies, approaches and tools at their own pace. For example, another research, the vili-project, could inform educators about visual literacies and the MOOC will be open for all for the next 5 years (<https://mooc.viliproject.eu/>)

Vicky : Can immersive technologies guarantee more active engagement in e-learning environments?

Chryssa : Immersiveness (bringing learning to life) is regarded as today's and future's essential knowledge and skills. It is widely used in medical fields, science labs, manufacturing, law courses (mock trials) and even language learning. Indeed, by 2021, 60% of U.S.-based higher education institutions will use immersive technologies to create an enhanced simulation and learning environment (Gartner,2017). The market for educational VR was worth \$269 million in 2017, and is forecast to reach \$1.7 billion by 2021, a 55% compound annual growth rate. North America is expected to be the fastest growing market due to heavier investment and a swifter rate of technology adoption, according to VR Education Holdings (Chawla,2018)

Given this backdrop, education providers should begin now to create strategies for immersive learning experiences. The world of immersive technologies is still unexplored territory for educators and their students especially in EU Universities, despite their immense potential.

Vicky : As technology becomes more and more integral to everything we do, it can sometimes distract us from the things that matter most to us. Isn't it true though that technology should improve life, not distract us from it? Are we in control of technology or is technology in control of us? What are the tools we need to develop a good sense of digital wellbeing?

Chryssa : Good point. Educating people about the side-effects of technologies in all levels of education starting from kindergarten is crucial. Raising awareness about digital wellbeing is very important for all of us and especially for the so-called 'generation z', that is, 'digital natives'.

Smart devices have undeniable benefits for productivity, social connections, entertainment and technology enhanced learning. The concept of digital wellbeing (mental and physical health related to the use of digital tools) assumes that private and professional life is saturated by technologies that do not always serve their purpose but may, at times, function as an obstacle, distracting students and educators from their daily tasks, damaging interpersonal relations and encouraging undemocratic values.

New words have been born, for example cyberloafing (Selwyn, 2008), which describes the practice of pretending to work on a screen but surfing the internet instead. Julie Aranda, a researcher from Google, stated: *"Across the board, mobile devices loaded with social media, email and news apps, were creating a constant sense of obligation, generating unintended personal stress"*. It is part of the so-called smartphone addiction, or Nomophobia (No mobile phobia), that embraces many adverse psychological effects such as stress, depression and anxiety (Gökçearslan, Uluyol, & Şahin, 2018). Relationships with colleagues and students, or personal relations, may become less meaningful due to lack of face-to-face communication and dialogue even though sharing (photos, tweets and documents) is a prominent cultural norm. Educators have become more and more aware of the collateral repercussions of digital overload and uncontrollable use of digital media.

Adults' Media Use and Attitudes Report (2018, p.8) found out that: In 2017, 88% of adults aged 16 and over go online, unchanged since 2016 (86%) and 2015 (87%). Facebook is still the most common site on which to have a profile, with 91% of social media/ messaging site users having a profile/ account. Adults are more likely than in 2016 to use a smartphone to go online (70% vs. 66% in 2016). This has been driven by those aged 35-44 (90% vs 82%) and 45-54 (83% vs.73%), those in the AB socio-economic group (77% vs. 70%) and women (72% vs. 66%). The 12th Annual Digital Learning Tools survey (2018) categorized the most used tools in 2018 as YouTube, Google, PowerPoint, Word, LinkedIn and Twitter among others.

On the other side of the argument, professor Benjamin Curtis from Nottingham Trent University, UK, among others, regards technologies such as Google as an extension of the mind. *“This is not science fiction, but an implication of what’s known as the extended mind thesis, a widely accepted view in philosophy, psychology and neuroscience”* (Curtis, 2018, para. 1). Since 1998, Andy Clark and David Chalmers, philosophers and cognitive scientists, claimed that: *“when we integrate things from the external environment into our thinking processes, those external things play the same cognitive role as our brains do. As a result, they are just as much a part of our minds as neurons and synapses”* (Curtis 2018, para. 5). In the same frame of mind, Ludwig (2015) states that tools such as Google and Wikipedia are forms of extended cognitive processes and lead to an explosion of knowledge.

The Economist’s front page of the 4th January 2018 claims that the next frontier is *“Using thought to control machines: Brain-computer interfaces may change what it means to be human”*. Brain-computer interfaces (BCIs) are helping people to make use of their artificial hands through thoughts, and this provides some evidence that mind-control can be done. Further, it is also possible that *“Researchers can tell what words and images people have heard and seen from neural activity alone. Information can also be encoded and used to stimulate the brain”* (Economist, para. 2). For example, over 300,000 people now have cochlear implants which convert sounds into brain signals. New tools integrated in Google such as Google Assistants, or Apple’s Siri, provide intelligent assistants that could rapidly become an essential extension of the mind. This means that a clear definition of digital well-being is needed to safeguard, or reclaim, our mind and psyche.

All in all, there is an increasing need to be able to promote digital well-being by adopting healthy and productive habits when using digital technologies in all levels of education.

Vicky: While online learning seems to be gaining ground, it is not treated with the same ‘seriousness’ as face-to-face learning, the latter being considered still the most effective way of learning. In your opinion, will online learning eventually overtake face-to-face learning altogether? What is stopping it now?

Chryssa: Learning is a never-ending process. Certificates and degrees capture, as photographs do, the moment. Knowledge flows rapidly and technologies advance at a crazy speed. To catch up, most professionals need to *learn for a living*. Therefore,

'anytime anywhere' (e-learning) education gives the opportunity to bring people together from different continents and build communities of practice.

Human to human interaction is a key element for learning but we have the technologies to support it with video conferencing, immersive technologies and even holoportation (Themeli & Sime 2020).

One barrier is, of course, the cost (cost of tools and training) but it is decreasing steadily. The second barrier is that people are afraid of changes and they are not aware of the fact that *unlearning* is equally important to *learning*. Unfortunately, some educators and policy makers are 'resistant to change'.

Vicky: How do you envision the future of e-learning?

Chryssa: One word describes my vision for education in general: Inclusion. Inclusion is defined in the UN framework as:

a process of systemic reform embodying changes and modifications in content, teaching methods, approaches, structures and strategies in education to overcome barriers with a vision serving to provide all students of the relevant age range with an equitable and participatory learning experience and environment that best corresponds to their requirements and preferences. (United Nations, 2016, para 11) RPD (United Nations).

E-learning is a choice and it is important to give students choices.

Vicky : Thank you very much for your time!

Chryssa: Thank you for the opportunity to talk about my work.

Web-links

<https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/arts-and-social-sciences/about-us/people/chryssa-themelis>

https://www.aace.org/review/author/chryssathemelis/?fbclid=IwAR3Dz8ECxBHW3jXpFYEHaF_HtwCicvyuONU2_XJ0x8WUXEDLQ9wa_uRXmjE

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Vicky Papageorgiou is an ESL/EAP instructor and an art historian with approximately 20 years of experience, mainly with adult learners. She holds an MA in Education (Open University of Cyprus) and an MA in Art (Goldsmiths College, UK) and she was also awarded a PGCE in Technology Enhanced Learning with distinction from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David . She studied in Greece, Italy and the UK but also participated in an international project for the McLuhan program in Culture and Technology for the University of Toronto, Canada. Her fields

of interest are Technology enhanced learning, Art in ESL, critical thinking, Inquiry Based learning and teaching adults. She is also the website editor of the Visual Arts Circle. She currently divides her time between Athens (Greece) working as an ESL/EAP instructor and teaching EAP in the UK..

Transitioning smoothly to online teaching : easy and free to use online resources

By Vicky Papageorgiou, Metropolitan College, Athens

Keywords : online teaching, face-to-face teaching, Google classroom, Miro', Kialo, Kahoot, Quizlet, Adobe Acrobat Reader, Grammarly, Write and improve, ESOL apps

In response to the ongoing outbreak of coronavirus, all in-person courses were suddenly suspended last March in a remarkably big number of countries worldwide and most educators have had, or have been asked, to resort to remote instruction. Teaching remotely is of a different nature from teaching in the classroom. In a lot of cases, this unexpected development has led the educators to panic because there was not enough planning or training and a lot of teachers felt the transition as a kind of an experiment rather than a well-prepared move.

While adapting to any change generally is hard enough, having to deal with such a massive one in such a short time is a great shock to anyone. However, setting realistic expectations is a piece of wise advice, to begin with. Teaching online is quite different from teaching face to face. Different rules apply. However, on such short notice, the best thing we have to do is find practical solutions to cope with this new situation. This is the reason why this short guide has been created. It aims to give ESL teachers easy and free to use online tools that will facilitate their transition to online teaching and will allow them to organize their work easier.

This short guide has been organized depending on the various needs we have in a class. In other words, there are suggestions about apps that can be used instead of a whiteboard or for announcements, apps for quizzes, practical ideas for homework correction, etc.

Whiteboard and announcements

If you are not using a platform with an integrated whiteboard (for example Zoom) but you are using Skype, then you will need a whiteboard perhaps. So, there are some alternatives :

- Google classroom

You can use it to share announcements and assignments, presentations, create folders, communicate assignment criteria with students, let students ask questions privately and let them create their own digital portfolios of their favourite work. You can also share due dates with them. Access is tracked, which can help you look for patterns in student habits (who accesses assignments immediately, who consistently returns to work and communicate those trends (anonymously) to students to help them build best practices. It can be accessed here: https://edu.google.com/intl/en_uk/products/classroom/?modal_active=none

- Miro

Miro is an online collaborative white boarding platform that enables distributed teams to work effectively together, from brainstorming with digital sticky notes to watching presentations and interact with each other. It makes remote collaboration as engaging as face-to-face. Not all of its features are free but the core ones are free forever. It can be accessed here : <https://miro.com/>

Debates

- Kialo

Kialo is an easy to use, yet powerful tool to engage in thoughtful discussion, understand different points of view, and help with collaborative decision-making. Your students can join a pre-existing debate and contribute to the discussion, or they can create a new one and collaborate. It can be used in asynchronous teaching as well. You can find it here : <https://www.kialo.com/>

Quizzes

- Kahoot

Kahoot is a quiz generator which is fun, although a bit addictive. You can choose between the myriads of kahoots (but go through them before you use them in the classroom because some of them have a lot of mistakes) or just create one. Or (why

not?) ask your students to create one and collaborate with their classmates! Check it out here : <https://kahoot.com/>

- Quizlet

If you are looking for something more sophisticated , then Quizlet is definitely for you. You can, again, use one of the existing quizzes or make your own one. It can be questions and answers, or words/terminology and their definition. Once you upload your work, the app does the work for you, creates the templates and also several games based on your input. Enjoy! <https://quizlet.com/latest>

Homework

Marking homework and giving feedback can work easily if you use several tools.

- Adobe acrobat reader for pdf

If students handwrite their homework, take a photo of their homework and send it to you, then worry not! You can easily transform this into a pdf but make sure you use adobe acrobat reader. When you do so, you can add your comments in sticky notes you can find on the right side. Then you just have to send it back to you with the individualized comments. <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>

- Google docs <https://www.google.com/docs/about/>

You can ask your students to send you their homework typed. You can then upload it on your drive and edit it, correct it, leave comments and feedback. You can give access to your students. P.S. you can also ask them to collaborate together with other classmates to write something together, e.g. a story. They can work in a synchronous or asynchronous way and then edit each other's pieces. It is extremely handy! Another use Google docs can have is that of a whiteboard! You can invite and give access to your class if you are using Skype, for example, and you can use a Google doc as a whiteboard where you write your comments, rules, etc.

Storyboards

- Canva <https://www.canva.com/create/storyboards/>

You can choose from a library of professionally created templates, you can upload your own photos or use their image library and then add filters and edit text. There is a free plan which you can use.

Editing

- Grammarly <https://app.grammarly.com/>

If you are setting written homework, which you most definitely are, ask students to install Grammarly since it is a great free online writing assistant which will correct their spelling and grammar and will definitely teach them a lot and improve their writing. Particularly helpful to all struggling students!

- Write and improve <https://writeandimprove.com/>

This is for self-study but not only! You can have your students practise writing English, submit their work, get a grade for their written work in seconds. They are also given feedback and can make changes to improve! It can help them gain some kind of independence and initiative when they are using such an app. This is created by Cambridge, by the way!

Hopefully, all this information is useful to a lot of teachers currently. Not all of them are new apps/tools, of course, but they are all very easy to use and, above all, they are free. Above all, they have been listed according to their use so that educators can find easily which one to use and for which reason. Finally, it is needless to underline that this is, by no means, an exhaustive list. So, you are free to find and use the one(s) that suit you the most. Good luck and stay safe!

Vicky Papageorgiou is an ESL/EAP instructor and an art historian with approximately 20 years of experience, mainly with adult learners. She holds an MA in Education (Open University of Cyprus) and an MA in Art (Goldsmiths College, UK) and she was also awarded a PGCE in Technology Enhanced Learning with

distinction from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David . She studied in Greece, Italy and the UK but also participated in an international project for the McLuhan program in Culture and Technology for the University of Toronto, Canada. Her fields of interest are Technology enhanced learning, Art in ESL, critical thinking, Inquiry Based learning and teaching adults. She is also the website editor of the Visual Arts Circle. She currently divides her time between Athens (Greece) working as an ESL/EAP instructor and teaching EAP in the UK..

Easter Time!

Nevena Stoilkov, Primary School “Mosa Pijade”, Malo Crnice, Serbia

Keywords: Easter, Easter vocabulary, young learners, teaching material, workshop

Short description:

The class in which this lesson was taught consists of 9 students, from first to fourth grade. During the lesson, while engaging in different activities (according to their grade and knowledge), students learned about Easter, but also revised their knowledge on different teaching contents.

Learning outcomes:

After the lesson, student should know how to:

First graders	Second graders	Third graders	Fourth graders
1. Count to 10 and name colors in English 2. Answer questions about the Easter eggs' colors in English 3. Name clothes in English	1. Name body parts 2. Use adjectives big/small when describing animals 3. Follow the instructions in English 4. Answer the questions about house in English	1. Answer the questions in English 2. Name Easter vocabulary 3. Follow the instructions in English	1. Name Easter vocabulary 2. Answer the questions in English 3. Use adverbs „next to/ opposite/ between“ 4. Use verbs and adjectives to describe animals

Correlation: Religion, music, art

Teaching materials: poster, handouts, crayons, glue, scissors, puzzles, lap top

Students' age: 7 - 10

Time: 90 minutes

Beginning the lesson

Before the lesson, T had hid envelopes around the classroom for the students to find them: every student should get one envelope. The envelopes contain handouts and material for the students to work on/with and are marked with Easter eggs pictures: the number of the Easter eggs on the envelope corresponds to the grade for which the envelope is is.

Students look for the hidden envelopes. When they find all of them and exchange them among themselves, T uses a poster to present the lesson's topic, Easter, and teaches them Easter vocabulary. T also explains how Easter is celebrated in England.

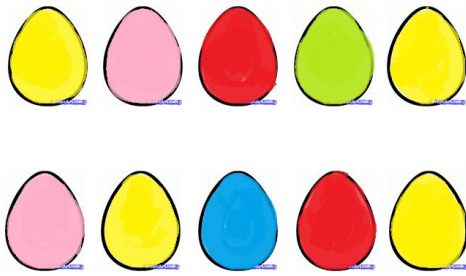


Main part of the lesson

Activity 1

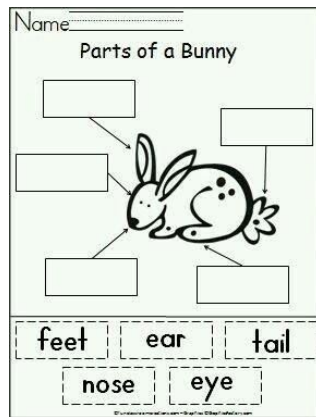
First grade

Students are presented with a picture of ten dyed eggs. They should count the eggs and tell how many of them are in the picture.



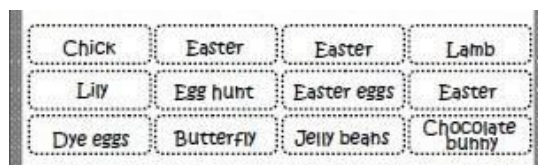
Second grade

Students are given a handout with a picture of a bunny and words about body parts. They cut the words and stick them next to the correct part of the bunny. When they finish, T checks the answers.



Third grade

Students are given a handout with twelve pictures – Easter vocabulary, and words that describe the pictures on the handout. They should cut the words and stick them below the correct pictures. In order to check the answers, T asks students questions: “What’s number 1? Is it a lamb? Is number 3 a bunny? What’s number 10?” etc.





Fourth grade

Students work on a handout: they have scrambled words (Easter vocabulary), and they need to write them underneath the correct picture. When they finish, students first check the answers among themselves, and then T asks them questions to check the answers with the whole class.



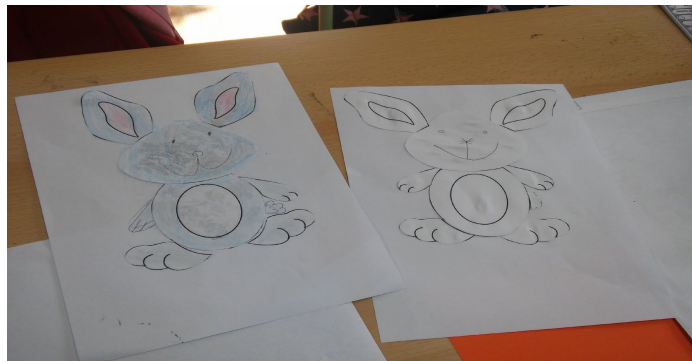
Activity 2

First grade

T asks questions about the eggs' colors: *How many blue/pink/green/yellow eggs are there?* Students count and answer the questions. When counting the eggs, students revise the expression "one more".

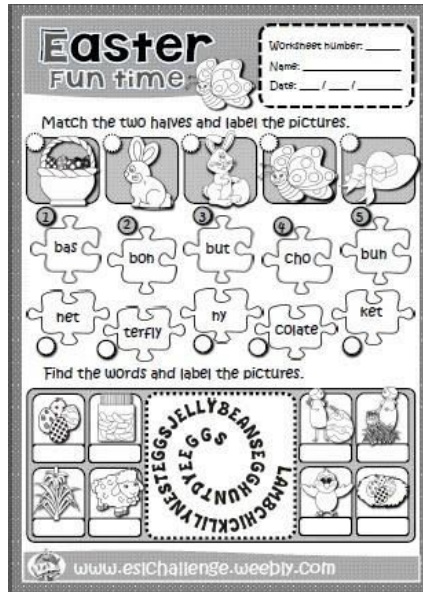
Second grade

Students are given body parts made of paper – legs, hands, ears, in two different sizes, and a one-sized body of a bunny. They listen to the instructions (*"I've got big ears/ I've got a small nose/ I've got a big mouth/ I've got small eyes/ I've got big feet/ I've got big hands."*) and make their bunny according to the instructions. Then they can color it if they want.



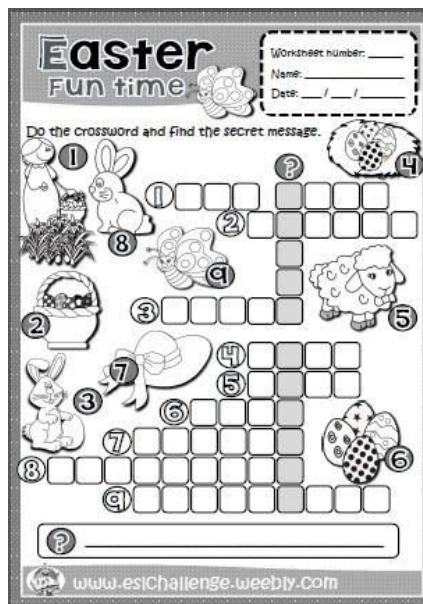
Third grade

Students connect the beginning and the end of a word and write it below the correct picture. Then they find words in a snake-word and again write it below the correct picture. T checks the answers with the class by asking questions: *"Is number 1 a bonnet? What's number 3? What number is the butterfly?"* etc.



Fourth grade

Students do the crossword: they write the words into the crossword according to the pictures, and at the end they find a secret message. T asks questions to checks the students' answers.



Activity 3

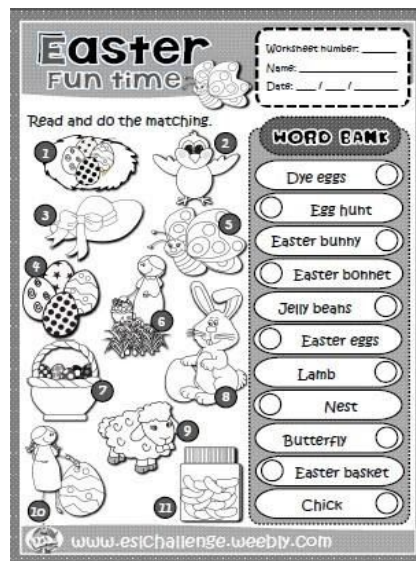
First grade

Students are given printed pictures of Easter eggs. They are supposed to color them and then put them in an improvised Easter basket. When they finish, they describe the basket: how many eggs there are, as well as the colors of the eggs.



Second grade

Students work on a handout: they connect words (Easter vocabulary) with pictures. When they finish, they check answers among themselves.



Third grade

Students should do the puzzle which consists of 12 parts. Every part hides a task or a question. When students successfully finish the task/answer the question, they are allowed to use that part of the puzzle.

Puzzle tasks: 1) Show me something green; 2) Count to ten; 3) Write number 19; 4) Have you got a car/bike?; 5) Do you like apples/oranges?; 6) Draw a boat.; 7) Number after 13

is... ; 8) Stand up! Sit down!; 9) Touch your head!; 10) How old are you?; 11) Show me the United Kingdom on the map.; 12) What's this? – Zebra crossing.



Fourth grade

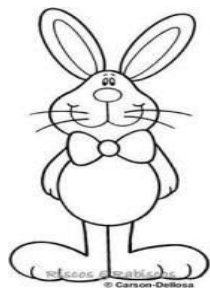
Students practice adverbs *next to/opposite/ between*. They get a handout with pictures, and then listen to the teacher's description of a picture (where a certain picture is in regard to others) – “I am next to the basket and opposite the Easter bonnet. What am I?”...”I am between the Easter bonnet and the egg nest. What am I?””I am opposite the jelly beans.””I am between the Easter bunny and the Easter Egg.” Students should guess the picture.



Activity 4

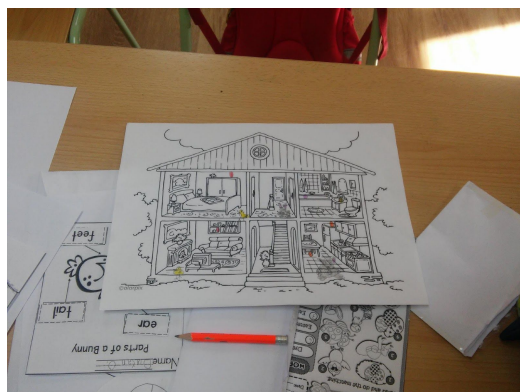
First grade

Students are given a picture of a bunny and clothes. They cut the clothes they want and dress their bunny up by sticking the clothes to the bunny. When they finish, they describe what their bunny is wearing.



Second grade

Students get a picture of a house. They should name the rooms in it and then draw eggs, bunnies and chicks in the house. When they finish, they exchange their pictures among themselves and then T asks questions about the picture they've got: "Can you see a bunny? Where is it? How many eggs? How many chicks? Where are they?..."



Third grade

Students describe their puzzle from the previous activity. T helps them with questions: *What can you see in the picture? How many eggs are there? How many butterflies? Is there a basket with eggs? Can you see any flowers? How many flowers are there? Count them.*

Fourth grade

In this activity, students should describe an animal (a lamb, bunny, chicken, and butterfly) to their classmates using the given cues. Every student takes one handout with the cues and T explains how the animal should be described. One student describes the animal to their classmates, and others listen and make guesses. The student who gets the right answer is the next one to describe an animal.

Cues:

Butterfly: (FLY, WALK, JUMP X, FRIENDLY, DANGEROUS X, SMALL, THIN)

Lamb: (FLY X, WALK, RUN, JUMP, WHITE, DANGEROUS X)

Chick: (SMALL, FAST, WALK, RUN, FLY X, YELLOW)

Bunny/Rabbit: (FLY X, WALK X, JUMP, FAST)

Ending the lesson

When students finish their “grade activities”, T informs them they will now work together. Students watch a video on how to make paper eggs and then make their own. While making paper eggs, students listen to English Easter songs for children.

When students make their paper eggs, they are all put in a basket: the final result of the lesson is an Easter basket.



**I certify that I have the right to publish these photos.*

The handouts can be found at the following website: www.eslchallenge.weebly.com

This is the list of the websites where the pictures were taken from:

www.dragoart.com

www.pinterest.com

flickr.com

growerland.com

www.madebyteachers.com

chiba-syaken.info

www.drawingskills.com

www.coloringpagebook.com

moziru.com

alabiasa.com

gettyimages.com

getdrawings.com

pinterest.com

Nevena Stoilkov graduated from University of Kragujevac, Serbia in 2011. She has worked as an English teacher since 2011. She is interested in teaching English to young learners and working with children of challenging behavior.

Using Learningapps.org in English Language Teaching

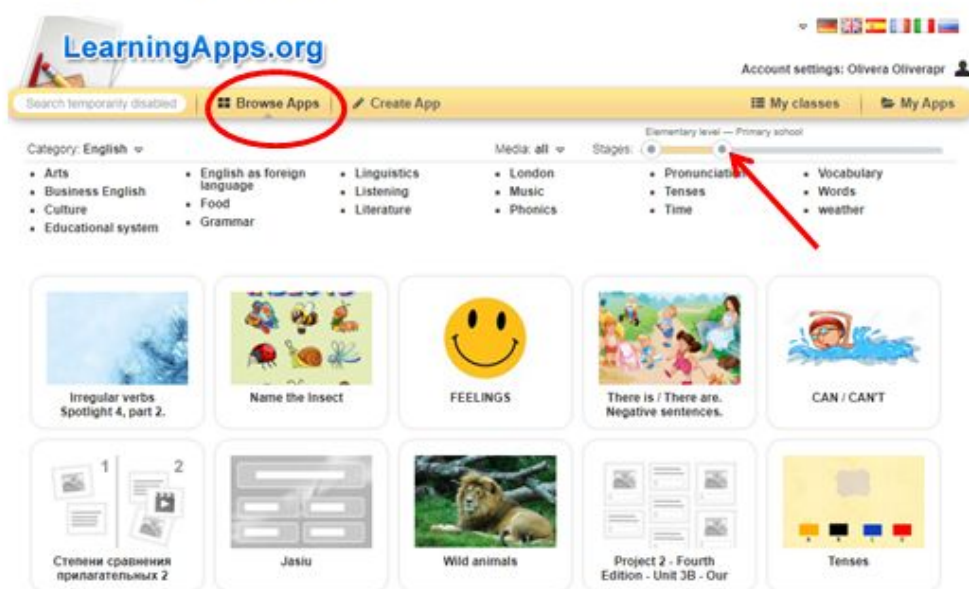
By Olivera Ilić, Primary School 'Sveti Sava', Požarevac

Key words: tools, resource, online teaching, learningapps

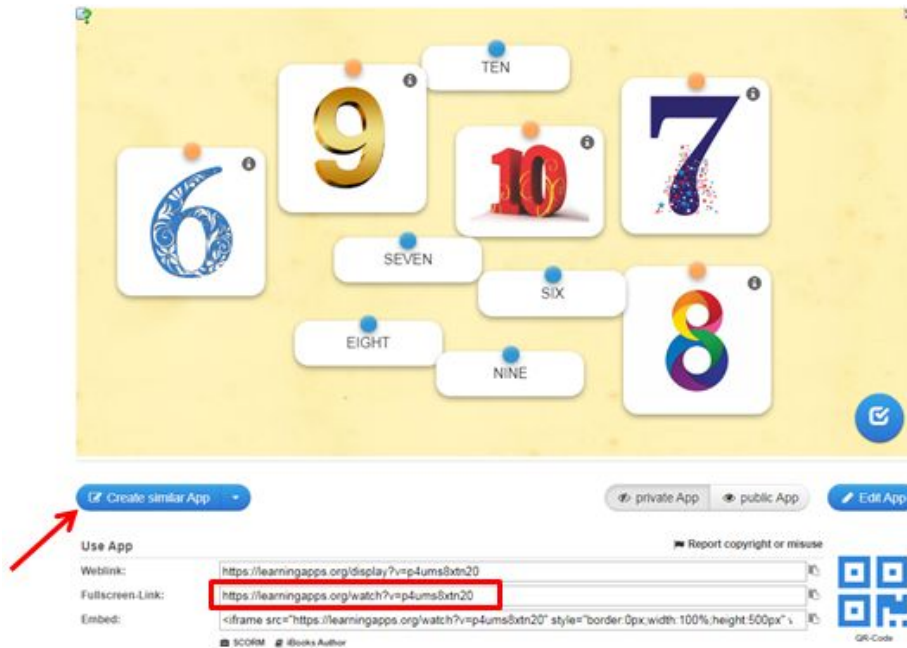
School lockdown has changed the way we teach these days. In just a matter of days, we have switched from face-to-face classroom environment to cloud-based teaching. All of the learning resources are now available in virtual environments and we are using various learning management systems in order to communicate, execute the learning process, record and assess students' performance.

Learningapp.org is a website which enables you to use or create more than 20 types of apps, such as puzzles, memory games, crosswords, hangman or millionaire games, different kinds of quizzes and tests. These apps can be accessed through a computer or a smartphone, they can be used as a part of the lesson if your students need additional practice; they can be used either by the whole class or by an individual student who needs extra support in learning. The website is free, easy-to use and available in different languages.

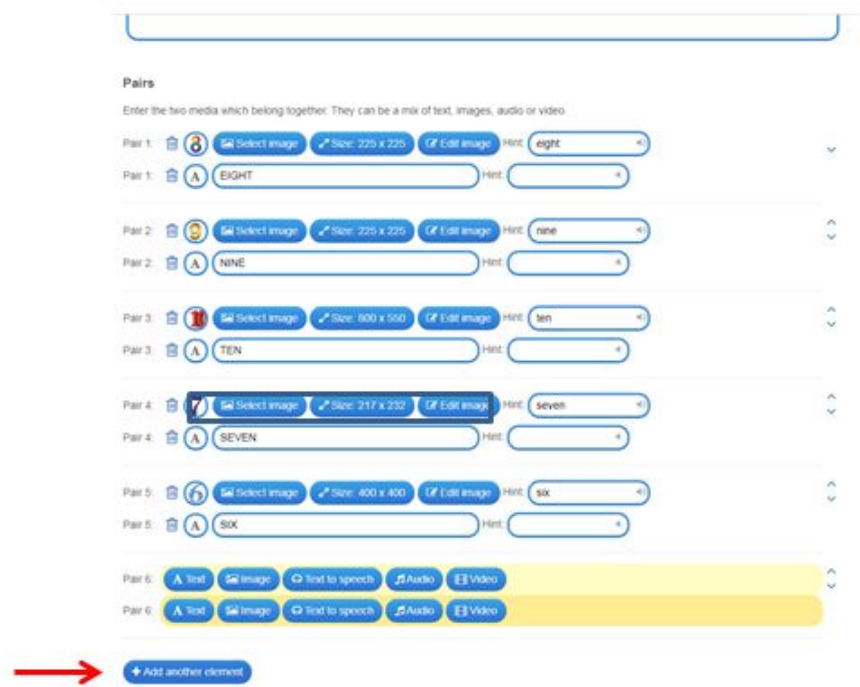
The easiest way to use the website is to check the abundant collection of already-made exercises. Just click on the *Browse Apps* button in the main tab and you will get a list of categories to choose from, such as English, Art, Biology, Russian, Music, etc. If you click on one of them, you will get another list of subcategories. You can also adjust the difficulty level for your students to get a more accurate search.



Once you find the app that you like, you can share it with your students by copying and sharing the *Full-screen link*, which is under the activity.



If the app is not exactly what you need, you can change it by clicking *Create similar App*. A new window will then open, and you can remove the elements that you don't like or add new ones.



You can also add a personalized message to your students.

Feedback

Provide a feedback text which is displayed when the solution is found.

Браво Оги! Био си одличан данас!

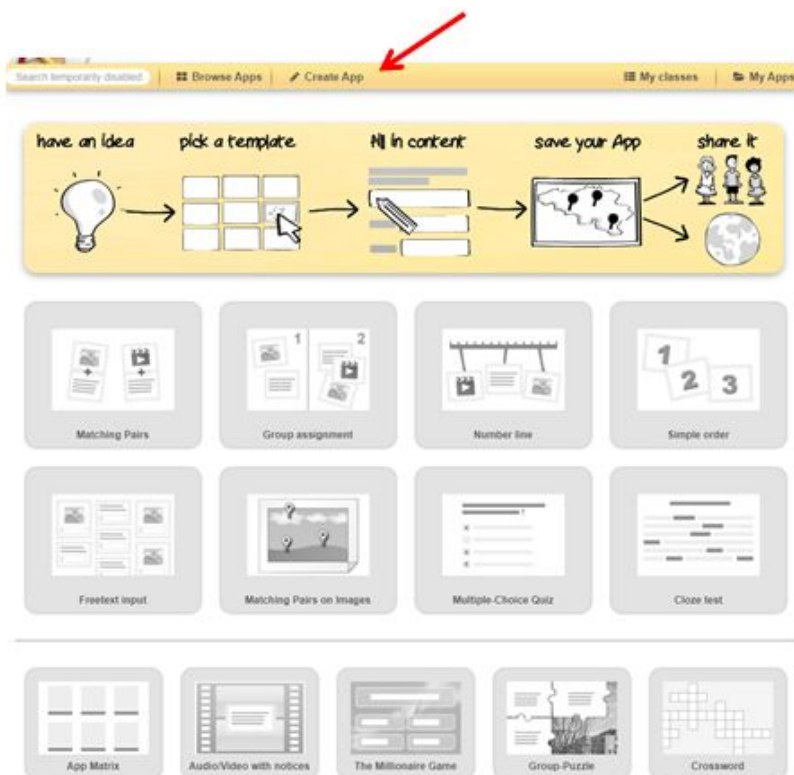
Help

Provide some hints how to solve the App. They can be viewed by the user via a small icon in the upper left corner. Otherwise leave it blank.



Once you are done, click on the *Finish editing and show preview*. Then you can either edit again or save the app and share it with your students.

If you want to create your own app, go to the home page and click on the *Create app* button. Then pick the kind of app that you would like to create, and add content, title, task description, hints and feedback message.



You can use Learningapps in many different ways with your students in order to practice different English language skills. You can practice vocabulary in a multiple-choice activity such as this one <https://learningapps.org/display?v=p1f7eptya20>

a matching activity for more advanced learners, <https://learningapps.org/display?v=ppyw5urnk19>

a hangman** <https://learningapps.org/display?v=pk1prdsnj20>

or a memory game** <https://learningapps.org/display?v=pr10eqewt20>.

Teaching grammar and tenses is one of the most significant components of foreign language teaching. Language teachers have always been encouraged to find creative and engaging ways of teaching grammar. Why stop now!? With learningapps you can create tests <https://learningapps.org/display?v=pkgkax11320>

or be more creative like in this app, where students are given the opportunity to practice Present Progressive while being introduced to Amalia Lindegren, a Swedish painter, and her work <https://learningapps.org/display?v=phm6ekrp320>

You can also practice listening skills like in this activity,

<https://learningapps.org/display?v=pd702so0t15>

or reading comprehension in putting the sequences of the text in order <https://learningapps.org/5619464> .

Summary

Learningapp.org presents a valuable resource for English language teachers that can easily be implemented in your lessons to enhance the learning and refresh the teaching. Their game-like nature can add the element of fun in your lessons and engage and motivate your students to practice different language skills. You can also register your class and monitor the students' progress. There are learning apps covering different topics, languages, skills, and difficulty levels. Apps can be easily implemented and creating your own apps requires very little time and effort.

** I hereby declare that I have the right to publish these photos.*

*** The author of these activities is Ms. Danijela Andrejić. I hereby declare that I have obtained author's permission to publish them.*

Olivera Ilić received her BA and MA degree at the Faculty of Philology at the University of Belgrade. She works as an English teacher at Primary School 'Sveti Sava' in Požarevac. She also works as an associate for different educational institutions in the country. She is passionate about teaching, travelling, learning and reading.

Distance Learning Webinar (ELTA Serbia) reflection:

Učenje na daljinu – refleksija vebinara

by Milica Vukadin, Head of Language Studies at B.Y.Mafit IELTS center

Keywords : webinar, reflection, distance learning

My dear colleague Nevena Marković and I, with support from ELTA, organized a webinar about distance learning for preschool teachers, primary and high school teachers. At one moment, we had more than 500 people present! This article is a reflection of the webinar, and it presents the methods and aspects we mentioned concisely.

Webinar topics

In the webinar, we talked about the following things:

1. Myths about distance learning;
2. What are the types of tools used in the distance learning process;
3. LMS platforms - Edmodo;
4. Live lesson app - Zoom;
5. Content creation tool - Genial.ly;
6. Student motivation;
7. Grouping and activities;
8. Interactive presentations and how to make them;
9. Classroom management or how not to lose your mind;
10. 10 minute Q&A session with the participants.

What are some myths about distance learning?

We started by discussing a few myths about distance learning and explaining why they are not correct. Some of the myths were:

Offline and online classrooms are completely different. A classroom is a classroom, no matter where it is located. Every teacher will succeed in managing an online classroom by transferring the skills and teaching methods they are already familiar with. Online classrooms require certain adaptations to be made, but rest assured that the basic concepts stay the same.

The learning is not good enough, and the learning process is not researched enough. Distance learning is a very effective method of instruction if planned carefully, and there is a lot of research dealing with distance learning. Effective distance learning courses take months to build, and distance learning has much higher quality than the emergency online teaching we are facing at the moment.

The students won't listen to me. Some students will certainly not follow the class, but this is nothing new. It happens in the offline classroom as well, which doesn't stop us from conducting the class and completing the planned activities with students who want to participate.

The students won't know how to use technology properly. In most cases, students love the use of digital tools and with that in mind, there won't be any significant problems in your online classroom. When it comes to classroom management, sometimes it is better not to control everything and try to foster student-centered learning in your classroom. A little bit of positive chaos can lead to the development of 21st-century skills in a natural and seamless way.

My level of English is not good enough, so I will not be able to use applications and platforms properly. Not knowing the language can be a problem, but if you learn the basic language used in applications and websites, you will be able to understand and use any application.

The goal of busting these myths was to motivate participants and to prove to them that they can all thrive in the distance learning environment as long as they keep an open mind.

Before we started with our session, we sent our participants to [mentimeter.com](https://www.mentimeter.com) and gave them a password for a live survey. They had to answer two questions:

1. What is your level of English?
2. What are your biggest problems in the classroom when it comes to distance learning?

Most teachers said that they have technical issues. This was an example of interactivity and how to include the participants in the webinar, despite the big number of educators who joined.

Here are the results of one introductory survey:

not platforms. They are applications used for the live lesson. Edmodo and Google Classrooms are distance-learning or LMS platforms (learning management systems platforms).

The distance learning classroom will be incomplete if we use only the video conferencing app. Also, the LMS platform is there to automate the process of learning and make all communication easier before and after the class, including testing and sharing resources.

LMS platforms 101 - Edmodo

When it comes to Edmodo, we created a training group and added teachers to it so that we can collect their questions to answer after the webinar. We explained how Edmodo works, how to add students, parents, how to use walls, assignments, quizzes, and how to make student portfolios by using small groups.

Live lesson app - Zoom

Since we were having a webinar, we could not demonstrate the use of Zoom - we were online in another app. We just shared the best Zoom functions (integrated whiteboard & recording, the ability for the student to control your screen, creating small groups for individual work, and more.) To conclude with the live lesson app, we shared some tips on organizing the classroom and using Free Conference Call with large groups.

Content creation tool - Canva & online PDF editors

To make the worksheet creation easier we suggested a 3 step process:

1. Downloading a pdf scanner app on their phone so that they can scan the textbooks they have and use them online.
2. Going to [ilovepdf](https://www.ilovepdf.com/) website where they can cut, edit, and merge pdfs easily so that they can use only specific pages in every lesson.
3. Step 3 consists of making your own worksheets by using [Canva](https://www.canva.com/), a very interactive free online designing tool with a lot of options and a lot of worksheet templates.

How to motivate students?

To motivate students, it is essential to follow these 3 simple steps:

1. **Be natural** - try to behave naturally, as much as you can, because the students will feel it, and they will also feel good if you seem to feel comfortable in the online classroom.
2. **Make it dynamic** - have a lot of activities at hand and do not spend more than 5-10 minutes on one activity because your students will lose focus, and they will stop participating.
3. **No frontal teaching & a lot of Inquiry-based Learning** - Switch to the student-centered classroom as painfully as you can because if you teach frontally, you will lose students very quickly online. By flipping the classroom and leaving students to search, discuss, and discover answers, you promote Inquiry-based Learning, you seamlessly develop the 21st-century skills in your students, and finally, your lesson will be a complete success!

Interactive presentations and how to make them - Genial.ly

After we finished with all the tools, we presented [Genial.ly](https://genial.ly) and shared some ideas with the teachers. We showed them the abundance of templates Genial.ly offers and pointed out that it functions just like PowerPoint, but it offers a lot of additional interactivity and beautiful designs. The presentation you make can be sent out as a page, and it functions just like a webpage - you can add as many links as you want! The features are great, and you can make quizzes, escape rooms, WebQuests, board games, infographics, interactive tasks, calendars, and images. There are so many templates that the possibilities are limitless.

Classroom management or how not to lose your mind

Some of the tips we shared included:

- **Start the lesson 5 minutes earlier** so that everyone is ready.
- **Do an A/V check-** audio/video check as soon as you start to eliminate technical problems. This way you can be certain that problems the students may experience later in the lesson come from their side, not yours.

- **Remind students that the lesson starts in 1 hour** so that no one is late. Use Edmodo to make a post since everyone will receive a notification or use a mailing service such as Mailerlite or MailChimp.
- **Leave the last 10 minutes for the Q&A session** and try to motivate students to ask all the general, technical questions at the end of the lesson. If the students keep asking questions, they will interrupt you too much, and you will lose your focus. On the other hand, if a student has a question connected to the practice you are completing at the moment, make sure to answer immediately before it's too late.
- **Be careful when it comes to time distribution** - time flies fast when you are having an online lesson, so make sure that you have extra activities planned out in case you finish faster.
- **Finally, find a lesson moderator** - there has to be one tech-savvy student who can help other students with the technical issues while you keep on with your class. Rotate your lesson moderators and award them with digital badges as rewards. Digital badges are an innovative way to issue micro-credentials your students can use in their CV. You can make badges in [Canva](#) and issue them through [Badgr](#).

List of applications we mentioned and their use

- **Zoom** – The most interactive live lesson app at the moment which has integrated lesson recording options, whiteboard, screen sharing, annotations (students can write on your screen and complete worksheets). Students can also control your screen, and you can share them into smaller, private groups.
- **Free Conference Call** – A video conferencing app, good for large classrooms (20+ people) due to simple conference controls and tool layout. It has the same functions as Zoom.
- **Edmodo** – Social media for learning, functioning on the Facebook principle. It gives you the possibility to share content, separate students into groups, make assignments, tests, tasks, and communicate with parents.
- **Class Dojo** – The same as Edmodo, only the focus of this app is on young learners.
- **Canvas Instructure** – Currently the most advanced LMS platform with the largest number of functions. It is used by many universities in the world, and it has a very developed grading scheme and discussion panels. While Edmodo serves only as a social media for learning, Canvas serves as a course building platform as well.

- **Genial.ly** – Online tool for making interactive presentations, infographics, board games, quizzes, escape rooms, and more.
- **Canva** – Online tool for worksheet designing.
- **Camera to PDF scanner** (Android application) – Used for scanning documents or textbooks using your smartphone.
- **IlovePDF** – Simple online website used for separating pdf documents, so that you can share only a specific page, not the whole book.

Resources and links for further learning:

All in all, the webinar was a success. A lot of teachers were motivated and relieved, which was our goal. We wanted to demystify distance learning and make it more accessible to everyone. There were a lot of questions in our private Edmodo training group (more than 60), and the engagement continued even after the webinar was done. The webinar feedback was very positive, and we will organize more webinars soon.

Resources and links for further learning:

1. [Webinar recording](#)
2. [Webinar presentation done in Genial.ly](#)
3. [Webinar feedback](#)
4. British Council Teaching English - [10 methods to motivate teenage learners](#) (using digital tools)
5. [From Distance to Blended Learning - Engaging Large Student Groups Online](#) - conference presentation recording from EdmodoCon 2019, Miami, U.S.A.
6. [Teaching Large Student Groups Online – 10 Steps & Apps – A Complete Guide: Teenage and Adult Learners](#)
7. [Classroom Management in a Large Online Classroom – Tips for Managing 20+ Students](#)
8. [Interactive Advent Calendars of Activities for Parents, Class Dojo, Games & More- Moving your Preschool/Primary school Online](#)
9. [Zoom tutorial in Serbian](#)
10. [Edmodo tutorial in Serbian](#)
11. [Canva tutorial in Serbian](#)
12. [Genial.ly tutorial in Serbian](#)

Milica Vukadin holds a Bachelor's Degree in Education from the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac. She is currently writing her Master thesis on the topic of environmental education in bilingual preschools, and she also attended an additional master's course for English teaching methodology for young learners. She is currently working on multiple positions, one of them being the head of language studies at the B.Y.Mafit award-winning IELTS center in Nigeria, where she taught more than 2000 students so far. She has been teaching English and Psychology online on Preply for 6 years now, where she also conducts training for tutors on how to teach children. Milica also facilitates weekly English storytelling & project-based learning lessons at the Kutak za Kulturu in Novi Sad. She is a proud National Geographic Certified Educator, and she is very passionate about environmental education. Her other interests include interculturalism, distance learning, and using technologies in education.

In her free time, she writes academic and semi-academic articles for her website [Alice in Methodologyland](#) and for British Council Teaching English. She also volunteers online for the [Granny Cloud](#), where she has sessions with children from India.

On Lockdown, yet Active

Mary Sebastian, Suad al sabah High School, Ministry of Education, Kuwait

Key words: teachers as humans

Teachers: we are actually one person but functions are multiple. We teach or impart information, which is our primary function but currently, the majority of us, and I actually mean the majority of us worldwide, are at home on **LOCKDOWN**. We never imagined we would be in such a situation.

I have always seen myself in a classroom: whether it was in Delhi, my home town, or Kuwait where I am currently teaching. I was born to be a teacher. I have always been in control or I would like to think like that. But right now I am not in control. Using the whiteboard and the coloured markers, the smart board, presentations, making innovative assignments, I miss those days tremendously. Right now I am analyzing various situations. What did I do wrong and what could I have done better?

I remember one particular class. A student I noticed seemed to be more silent than usual. She was a hyper student in the class, but for a couple of days, I found she was very quiet. I actually began to miss her cheerfulness and I thought she was up to some mischief. I asked her a simple question: Change into negative: **My mother cooks for me**. I thought it was a simple statement. The whole class stared at me. She didn't look up. I shouted. No reply. After a couple of minutes, I moved on. After the class as I stepped out, some students followed me to the English department. They told me that this particular student's mother had passed away a week ago. My heart broke. How did I miss that? I am a mother myself and how I did not know this tragedy had happened. In the recess, I went down to my class and there she was, alone, sitting and staring at the whiteboard. She looked up at me. I simply went and hugged her.

This incident was a wakeup call for me. Since then, I have always felt when something was wrong with any of my students, not only of my class but of the entire school. If I saw a child alone in the recess, I would go and sit with her and talk to her.

During this epidemic let us be compassionate and generous. Reach out to all your fellows around you. A moment of kindness, a moment of good cheer can change lives.

Together we will get out of this. Surely, we will overcome this.

**I certify that I have the right to publish the photo.*

Mary Sebastian is an English Teacher recruited by the Ministry of Education, Kuwait from New Delhi, India. She had been teaching in a High School which also was her Alma Mater: the name of the school was Presentation Convent High School. She was teaching the secondary classes: Grades 9-12. In the year 2001 she moved to Kuwait to take up her new teaching assignment. Here too she was teaching the secondary classes: Grades 10-12. She also taught part time in Kuwait University. She has conducted many workshops in Kuwait for the teachers both in the Ministry schools and Indian schools. In February she presented a workshop in the International TESOL Conference conducted in Kuwait.. The topic of her session was: Continuous Professional Development.



School Closure in Slovenia – My point of View

Gregor Pirš, Primary school Ane Gale Sevnica

Key words: school closure, management, special needs

The news of school closures in Slovenia was shared through the media on Thursday and, on Monday the following week, schools were closed. Working as a principal, I had a lot of questions and very few answers. The only certain thing was that we would not be working on Monday. So there I was, left on my own and I hated it. For the first time in my life I hated the freedom I was given. In this article, I will try to give you my own reflection on the situation, not so much as a teacher, but as a manager.

As this was the first time after 1945 that the schools in Slovenia were closed, many teachers were in a great state of shock, so I have made a decision that all the staff will have a week off. This turned out to be a very good decision as the things for long distance learning did not work. The first issue was that the network could not deal with the high volume of data so everything crashed, after a few days more obvious problems became known e.g. not every student has access to a computer or access to the internet. On top of everything, the government changed.

I work in a special needs school. This brings many challenges. For example, many parents are not able to help their kids learn as the kids struggle themselves. About half of the students do not have the means to do long distance learning. The government and the local community had offered tablets, PCs or laptops for the students to use. However, not having on-line access, the PCs did not come in handy. Even today, we still send the materials to 15 children by snail mail and it actually works nicely.

The good thing is that we have a lot of freedom on how we prepare the materials. Some schools are doing cross-curricular modules (e.g. family tree in History and English), while other schools (like ours) are preparing materials according to the “normal” schedule. Having this in mind, the teachers did not need a lot of support in terms of content, but some needed a lot of support in the sense of quantity – e.g. not preparing too much. The fact that lesson planning here works differently and the classes are not longer, caused some stress for the teachers. Today, after three weeks, the understanding of classroom management in long-distance learning is much better. Speaking of teachers, their wellbeing has to be addressed as well. Many of them have their own children and consequently they have very little or almost no free time (a lot of feedback that I get is that material preparation for long distance learning actually takes much longer). Sunny days have a very positive effect; however, I try to phone each teacher at least once a week just to see how he or she is doing.

By doing this, I am trying to reduce their anxiety level if they are struggling to balance their professional and private life.

Parents are being very positive towards long distance learning and one of the main reasons for this is that we have not used many complicated online based tools. When writing about parents, we had some issues at the beginning. The requirement of each teacher was to write a short letter to their students to explain the rules of long-distance learning. Here wording was essential. Some teachers have written sentences like *please send me the evidence that you have done this work* while some have written *looking forward to sharing ideas with you*. A lot of parents and students reacted very negatively to the word evidence so we needed to explain this more. We did it over the phone and now they are happy. I was very surprised how wording changes everything.

Our decision to follow the principle *less is more* has really paid off. Also sending the right information at the right moment gives staff more security. We do not know how long these measures will be in effect, but I believe that we have done a lot, especially considering the fact that in our school long distance learning was non-existent.

**I certify that I have the right to publish the photo.*

Gregor is an English teacher. He is currently working as a principal of a special-needs primary school in Sevnica. He has been teaching English in Slovenia as well as Spain, he has also been working as a school counselor and as a student services manager in Cambridge, UK. His teacher training experience covers a wide range of topics from working with special needs students to dealing with parents. At the moment he is a full time employed principal, he is teaching English to adults and trying to develop his managerial skills. His main interests are neuroscience, psychology of language learning and how to increase students' potential through development and upgrading of their strong points.



When Life Gets Tough

**Slavica Jockovic, Primary School "Heroj Radmila Šišković",
Smederevska Palanka, Serbia**

Keywords: hard times, routine, transformation, maintaining connection, learning to fly

Life is an enigma to all of us. These are hard times. We are facing big challenges. We are facing ourselves, but this time more deeply, with no fake perceptions, illusions. It can be a fierce battle with one's own self. Routine has made us become our own strangers. We worked a day in - day out, fulfilling our duties, obligations, not having enough time to bring about some important issues. Like we feared to do so. We were in the constant escape of our inner beings. This is the time to question ourselves. It can be painful. Very painful.

Now the time has come to look in the eyes of life. More than ever before we can truly understand Shakespeare's heroes' hardships, dilemmas, tragedies. Hamlet's "to be or not to be", Gloucester in King Lear speaks "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport." Life is showing us its fierce face. We have to make our own decisions, we are made to get to know our own selves more truly. Life is going on, but we must take a break, we must pause and sum things up.

There are some positive sides to this situation, though. Every coin has two sides. Change is often stressful, but it has some good effects. We look at things from a different angle. We see things in a different light.

In just a few hours everything was different. We weren't prepared for such a transformation of life activities. Instead of noisy classrooms, corridors full of teenagers, smiling faces fresh to study in the cool mornings, we were faced with laptops, new platforms, and online tools. To our own surprise, we organized quickly and well. We were all good at technology, people helped each other, we connected both to our colleagues and students. Students on their side responded to our assignments, they sent emails, and showed goodwill to cooperate. Many of them found this kind of learning even better. The works they sent were neat, full of enthusiasm. The students showed their individuality, creativity, their point of view, likes and dislikes, some things they couldn't show in classes. We, teachers, could learn more about our students as individuals, as personalities. I started listening to some music they like, I got to know my students better, their opinions, family relations, hobbies. We succeeded in maintaining connection, and the feeling that we are all in this together. And we will endure

the hardships and get through them as new personalities, maybe stronger or with new perceptions and looks on life. Like in literature, we must go through catharsis to settle things down and be ready for a new beginning. Life thrusts us into something new, if we grow wings we will fly, if we do not, we will fall. Maybe the beauty is the learning to fly.

Slavica Jockovic has been teaching English in a primary school "Heroj Radmila Šišković" in Smederevska Palanka for 23 years. She teaches young learners as well as teenagers, and she loves teaching both groups. Her interests are writing essays, blogs, e-twinning projects. Outside of work, she enjoys preparing healthy food, travelling, and reading. She has two daughters.

The essay about COVID-19 news

**by Marija Šalinić, Kraljevo Grammar school,
teacher Katarina Stanković**

It is already well known that COVID-19, commonly known as coronavirus, has become a great threat not only to Asia, but also to Europe and the rest of the world. Rarely do countries manage to avoid a virus that spreads rapidly, such as the one that nowadays roams the world.

On 6 March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic was reported to have spread to Serbia. Unfortunately, it was then that the first case in the country was officially confirmed, involving a 43-year-old man from Bačka Topola who had previously travelled to Budapest. Three days later, the second case was confirmed, since a Chinese citizen tested positive for the virus. From that point, the number of cases started increasing faster than expected and every day brought a couple of new cases.

State of emergency in the whole country was officially declared by the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, on 15 March, at 20:15 CET. What Serbia did next was close its borders to all foreigners not residing in Serbia, while Serbian citizens entering the country were required, and still are, to self-quarantine for up to 28 days. Unless they did so, they would face criminal charges of three years in prison. It was not only the borders that were closed, but also schools, kindergartens and even faculties. Furthermore, the new safety measures were soon introduced – bus and train lines were suspended and more importantly, night curfew was introduced (from 8 p.m. to 5 a.m.) Therefore, it is said that people aged above 65 are not allowed to leave their homes.

Being aware of the crisis Serbia would soon face regarding the virus, Aleksandar Vučić turned to China. It appears that Beijing has decided to help Serbia fight the coronavirus pandemic and send its experts. More masks and gloves will also be needed and the President strongly believes that it is China that will help our country avoid the worst-case scenario.

Until the help comes and even after that, the thing all of us should do is try to help our neighbours and family members who are old and constantly need our compassion and

solidarity. A friend in need is a friend indeed! Only in this way will we be able to win this battle and until then:

Take care and stay healthy!

IF I WERE...

by Anja Sretenović, Kraljevo Grammar school

teacher Katarina Stanković

If I were a season, I would be spring or winter, because spring is filled with plenty of gorgeous, blooming flowers and alluring fragrances of nature, whereas winter is not only peaceful and quaint, but it also reminds me of the winter vacation and Christmas, one of my favorite holidays.

If I were a planet, I would be Pluto because it is distant and mysterious, and because recent satellite pictures have shown that it is actually very beautiful and colorful. Oh, and also, I'd be Pluto because nobody would bother me when I'm THAT far away.

If I were a weather condition, I would be a raging storm because there is nothing better than seeing the dark, murky clouds towering above the city and pouring down while sounds of thunder echo throughout the area.

If I were a color, I would be the color blue because it is my favorite- it can be found in the ocean and in the sky, on various animals, and simply because it's a nice color to look at.

If I were a magazine, I would be a magazine about games and comics because it is something that interests me and is widely popular.

If I were a sea creature, I would be a ghost shark because they are very mysterious and have been captured on camera only once or twice. Their eyes are filled with mysterious darkness, and they have patterns on their bodies that make them look like they were stitched together- as if they were dolls.

If I were a car, I would be a red Opel Corsa because it was the first car my family had ever bought, and it was a very good one. I am so attached to this

car that I keep calling every “Opel” on the road a “Corsa”, only to correct myself right after.

If I were a type of road, I would be a train rail because they somehow fill me with nostalgia and memories of better, happier times when I used to travel by those old trains with separate rooms and hallways for passengers.

If I were a type of building, I would be an abandoned mansion because I’ve seen plenty of videos with people exploring these old structures. I’ve seen some with an indoor pool, ridiculously designed bathrooms, weird wallpapers and even wine cellars and small, secret libraries! Actually, I really want one of those... Too bad I’ll never have the money to purchase or maintain one...

If I were a tool, I would be a pocket knife because they can be pretty handy at times. Whether you need to cut something, unscrew a small screw from a toy, cut open an envelope or protect yourself, you can always count on your little pocket knife.

If I were a movie, I would be a fantasy one, especially focused on the life of a dragon, because dragons are very fascinating creatures despite being fictional... Whether they are fictional or not, I don’t know. In addition, they come in all shapes and sizes with lots of different powers and personalities. They’re a kind of like people, except they’re big and covered in scales and have wings!

If I were a body of water, I would be an ocean because a majority of aquatic life in the ocean remains undiscovered even today, despite our advanced technology.

If I were a type of footwear, I would be a pair of Adidas sneakers because they’re simply the best and nobody can change my mind about it. Comfortable, fashionable and can be pretty affordable if you look and wait enough!

If I were a dessert, I would be a chocolate soufflé with a side of vanilla ice cream and caramel topping because it is by far one of the tastiest treats I have ever had in my entire life.

If I were a foreign country, I would be Switzerland because it is neutral, expensive, and nobody ever hears anything about it, unless we're talking about the corona pandemic, in which case, we only hear about it when the government prohibits the Swiss from crossing the Serbian border.

Eight Graders in the State of Emergency

submitted by Milica Vojvodić, Pavle Popović primary school, Vranić, Belgrade

We found ourselves in a situation we had never experienced before. A kind of a movie scenario happened to us in real life. We didn't have much time to think, we just started coping... Distance learning, it reverberates. I didn't want to overwhelm my students, especially the eighth graders. I started with some revision and then I thought - the best tasks are sometimes the simplest ones. The homework for one week was just to write an email to me about how they were feeling and how they were spending their time. Not only did I get wonderful insight into their lives and daily routines, but I also made them produce real language. I enjoyed immensely reading and answering those emails. I remembered Mario Rinvoluceri, whose session I had the pleasure to attend at Pilgrims in 2018 who recommended giving this task to students. He used to invite his students to write him a letter once in a term. He pointed out that he never corrected those letters and emails, and he often got really precious information about his students.

These are parts of some of the emails I got:

How am I supposed to feel in this situation? Good? Nah, darling, not the case at all. The fact that I am barely allowed to go outside is something no one expected. For the first time ever I want to go to school, only because I can't hang out with anyone. During the current quarantine, I am trying to be somewhat productive. I try to improve my story writing, photo editing, video editing, and drawing. I have so much free time that I can watch all the series and films and read all the comics I wanted. This year may be good for films and comics, but overall it is pretty bad. *Godzilla vs. Kong* is coming out in November and the trailer couldn't be released because of the current pandemic, which is very unfortunate.

Nikola Maksimović 8-1

What is life anymore? Sitting at home watching TV for 20 hours because you can't go outside.

A year ago if someone asked if I would mind sitting at home for 17 hours and looking at my phone I would've said no. Now, I've changed my mind, it's getting boring as hell.

This Corona thing is a bummer, really.

The only physical activities I can do are running around the house looking for my phone, mowing the lawn and helping my dad around with work around the car.

Looking at those teachers on TV is even more boring than actual teachers, who would've thought.

Thinking that 2 months ago I could go outside and actually hang out with my friends instead of playing Minecraft with them for a few hours. How the world has changed, huh.

But, alas, it's not thaaaaat bad.

I get to play games all day and do a little bit of homework that I usually do.

I don't have to interact with people that much.

I get to spend time with my family.

And I have a lot of time to think about what I will do after the pandemic thing ends.

But the quarantine hasn't ended and the world is in a lockdown and I'm just a tiny human sitting like a retard watching my phone all day.

My newest idea to cure boredom is to rebuild the whole school (and surrounding area) in Minecraft so that I can hang out with all of my friends at the place I hate most, it's brilliant!

Buuuuut still I would prefer a normal life.

Going to school with my buddies and being able to go to the city to watch movies and eat (freely) is still better than being an introvert at home.

And to think that this whole thing started with a Chinese man eating bat soup.

Aleksandar Radeka 8-1

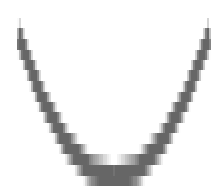
When I finish my homework, I am so bored. I hope we'll get an old way of practice as soon as possible. I love reading books; I have read two books since the emergency situation started. And my next book will be *What Katy did at school and what Katy did next*. I got that book for New Year, and I haven't gotten to read it yet. This book is in English. I love sports and I have played volleyball for seven years. Now I'm very sad because I don't have trainings. Snow fell yesterday, wow SNOW IN MARCH .

Isidora Vesić 8-2

Dear teacher, it is corona time. Everyone is at home, me too. Every day I get up early and I help my grandparents on our farm. I spend my time taking care of our quinces and sometimes I repair things in our garage. When I finish with all that work, I spend time playing with my brother and my cousin. I read books, watch videos on YouTube and I play computer games. After that I work on our farm again. I speak with my friends over video chat. I prepare for the final test. I watch films and I play football in my garden. I go to the forest nearby and I enjoy natural beauties. I like cooking very much, so I help my mum prepare dinner almost every day. This is a very difficult time for everyone but we have more time for each other.

It will pass!

Nemanja Joksić 8-3



I spend time during a state of emergency by mainly watching various movies, learning and playing board games. I also spend time watching TV lessons - various subjects. I have many obligations for school that I can barely get through... I miss school, society and teachers a lot. I've been bored lately. Because of that, I got interested in many things like nature, geography, history...

Slobodan Marinković 8-3

To be truthful it's monotonous, you keep doing the same thing every day - wake up, eat, get ready for classes on TV, receive photos and emails, write down the important parts of the lessons, and think how it would be great if that was the end, but that isn't the end of it. We have like a bunch of various assignments and lectures that the teachers from our school give to us, and it's hard for me to keep up the tempo. I think that this is a lot of pressure on us, and we aren't even allowed to be outside.

I really miss going to the gym and the basketball court with my friends.

I honestly don't want to get back to school, but I still want to go to prom and see all my friends and teachers. 😊

Veljko Radovanović 8-1

This way of homeschooling is different, a little tiring and boring with all these emails. When I finish all the tasks I read the book *Online girl* and *We Children From Bahnhof Zoo*. I like the books, especially the first one. Also, I started watching my favorite series which I have already watched 3 times. In addition to my assignment activities and online classes, there are some fights with my brother, family games, movies, decorating the room, chatting with friends, and also talking with my grandparents. English classes online are a bit odd, and I'm more comfortable with the classroom. I'm thinking about prom and graduation if there will be any at all.

Nikolina Bjeličić 8-2

In times of coronavirus, when we all spend our days at home, I spend every night with a good movie or series, a warm blanket and some delicious food. Sometimes in the evenings I also watch shows that are broadcast by the National Theater online. During the day I study and write homework, but I also have enough time to rest...Ok, kinda enough time to rest... I can't go to training because of this virus but that doesn't stop me from practicing in my room. I got a lot of home training equipment so this is also one of activities I do regularly while I'm in self-isolation. Since I spend more time with my family members, sometimes we have more fun playing board games. I like this current greater family connection. I find ways not to be bored in this period and so far I'm good at it xD... I started preparing myself for high school, I want to go to a high school of electrical

engineering and I hope I will succeed in it! I feel low-key nervous because everything new is waiting for me ...But I hope high school will become a fun chapter of my life!

I hope everyone's staying safe and healthy!

Dimitrije Vuković 8-1

People never know what may occur in their lives. The Pandemic of coronavirus is the right proof for that.

I miss school and my friends very much, but now I have more time to spend with my family. Every day I play table-tennis with my brother. Also I watch anime (Japanese animated series). Now, I'm watching *Sword art online*. I like it, but not as much as *Hunter x Hunter* or *Fairy Tale*. When we are in "online school" we have a lot more homework to do than when we go to normal school. I prefer going to ordinary school. One good thing in this situation is that I can sleep longer. This "mess" makes us to be creative. In two weeks I've learnt more songs than I could before for the same period. Also I've improved my art skills.

I hope that everyone who caught coronavirus will be fine as soon as possible.

Milica Popović 8-1



Milica Vojvodić is a primary school teacher. She's been teaching for 15 years and most of that time she spent in Pavle Popović Primary School in Vranić, Belgrade. She likes teaching teenagers. She has two kids. Her specialty is using the works of Roald Dahl in classes. She likes teaching teenagers.

THE GOLDEN YEARS

Students: Aleksandar Popović, 4e (Belgrade)

Antonije Subotić, 4e (Irig)

Vuk Simon Ovaskinen, 4e (Belgrade)

Mathematical Grammar School)

Teacher: Mirjana Savić Obradović

School: Mathematical Grammar School)

Students express their opinion (as a group discussion) on the topic 'The golden years'.

You can follow the discussion on the following link: bit.ly/3eiiAP7

Contact Us

office@elta.org.rs

www.elta.org.rs

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