

# The future of language education in the light of Covid - lessons learned and ways forward

## Case study on experiences of foreign language teaching during the Covid pandemic by Mara Zordan, Italy

- A. Please write briefly about a memorable language teaching experience, either particularly challenging or especially successful, as an example of your practice during the pandemic:

Who were the learners?

12<sup>th</sup> year - high school (science-oriented 4<sup>th</sup> form)

What were the aims of the session/lesson?

Comprehension and analysis of P. B. Shelley's poem 'Ode to the West Wind' (module on Romantic poetry)

Please write a brief description – the 'story' - of what you did/what happened that made this an especially memorable experience:

Online lessons lasted 40 minutes only, therefore I chose the Flipped Classroom Approach.

Before the online lesson with my students:

- using **Camtasia**, I recorded a 10-minute video on the content of the poem and shared it with my students on the e-learning platform **Moodle**.
- Students were given the video 4 days before our online lesson together. They were asked to watch it, take notes, write their questions, express their doubts... on the discussion thread on Moodle dedicated to this activity. They were also asked to upload an image (painting/picture) that, according to them, could represent the poem.

This discussion thread was visible by all the students, and they could interact, answer other students' questions, comment and give feedback on the images uploaded by their classmates. They were given a deadline for this activity (6 pm on the day before our online lesson on Meet).

During the online lesson on Meet:

- I answered students' questions and gave feedback on their activity on Moodle
- we analysed some meaningful parts of the poem.

While doing this, all of a sudden, a student started sharing personal feelings, emotions, challenges and anxieties connected with the difficult period they were going through. All the others followed this example spontaneously. This lesson was memorable not only because of the flipped classroom approach, the use of Moodle and of technology, but also because we managed to create a real bond even in a difficult period, thanks to literature.

The content of the poem led the students to talk openly and freely about their feelings and anxieties, their new way of life during the first lockdown. To them Covid 19 was similar to the wind Shelley talks about, destroying all their habits and certainties, compelling them to a new way of learning and especially to a new way of life. It is also important to underline how the last lines of the poem gave my students hope: after a wintry and cold period spring can come again.

I had planned to involve them in a **Kahoot** quiz as well however, we ran out of time because of (but I should say thanks to) their moment of sharing. We did that during our next lesson on Meet.

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Follow up activity on Moodle :

How does Shelley's treatment of nature differ from that of the earlier Romantic poets you have studied? (write a 300-word essay).

This task was assessed so only the teacher could read and correct it on Moodle. Students were given one week to do this activity.

Later on, the students were also given an online written test on Moodle on Romantic poetry (T/F exercises – a multiple choice – a cloze - some open questions...) Their results were good.

*What lessons might there be in your experience for language teaching in general beyond the pandemic?*

- Prioritize content selecting what is really essential to develop skills
- Flexibility and adaptability
- Learning quickly and effectively (e.g. challenges of remote learning)
- Using technology and digital learning environments was already a habit but it has become much more effective

*B. In your context, how have teachers and other colleagues supported each other's professional practice during the pandemic?*

- More mutual support sharing ideas and good practices -we were physically far from each other, but we felt connected sharing information/challenges/successes/failures/asking for and giving advice.
- Supporting each other and motivating colleagues having difficulties with technology or with online lessons management/activities with a problem-solving attitude

*C. The pandemic has now lasted almost two years and is not over yet. How is it affecting your professional practice at present?*

I realise I have become much more flexible

I tend to prioritise content selecting what is really essential to develop skills

Other keywords that have acquired a much deeper meaning: empathy, mutual support, motivation, sharing, adaptability, strategy, effectiveness.