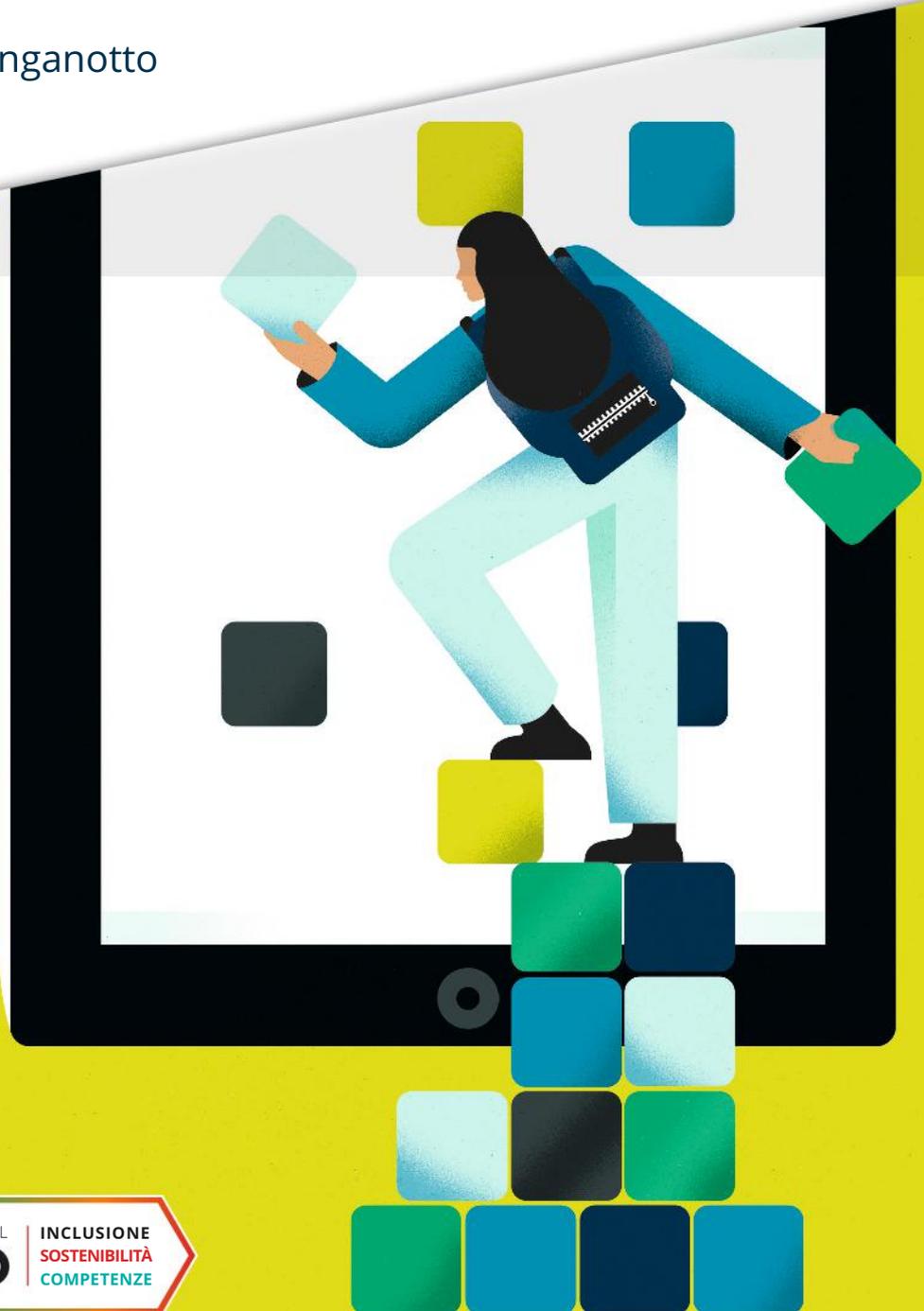


The Handy Little Guide to Distance Teaching

How to use learning technologies in the EFL class

Letizia Cinganotto



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“ Learning technology is not new. Almost as long as there have been teachers, there have been instructional tools to help students learn, from clay slates, the abacus, pencils and pens, typewriters, overhead projectors and computers, to the Internet, smartphones and social networks ”

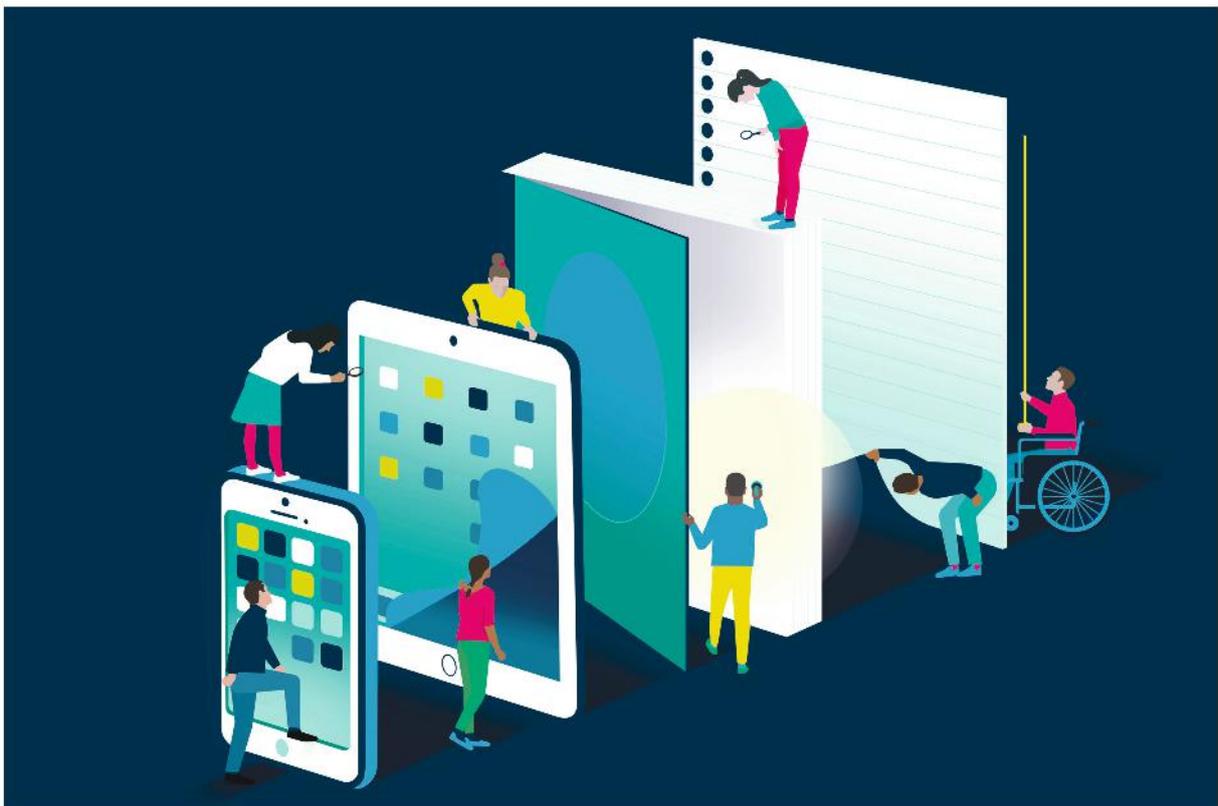
Gordon Lewis

This *Handy Little Guide* is aimed at providing suggestions and practical tips on how to use learning technologies in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) class for **fully remote** or **blended/hybrid solutions**.

As Lewis pointed out in the quotation above, the use of technologies for language learning and teaching is not new, but their potential and added value became self-evident during the pandemic due to COVID-19 (since March 2020), when the Internet became the only way to reach the students in the majority of schools and universities all over the world.

Learning technologies are now part of our personal and professional life, that is why we need to get the lessons learnt from fully remote teaching and learning during the pandemic to conceive and design better future scenarios in education in general and in language learning and teaching in particular:

“New technologies have become pervasive in the way people live, work, learn and communicate, challenging our values and norms in education and literacy” (Mavridi, 2020).



Connected creatures in a connected world

“ I wonder who invented the term ‘social distancing’? Seems totally wrong to me. It’s ‘physical distancing’ we need to be practising. We need social solidarity, not distancing, at this time ”

David Crystal

This reflection leads us to consider the emotional and affective aspects that run parallel to the didactic ones that a teacher absolutely cannot ignore: the **SEL (Socio-Emotional Learning)** approach aims to consider the student in a holistic and integral way, focusing on emotions, well-being, resilience, which inevitably affect deep learning in any possible teaching solution (face-to-face, remote, blended/hybrid).

With reference to **language learning**, we need to take into consideration Krashen’s **“affective filter”** (Krashen, 1985): the emotional obstacles that can affect the communicative performance

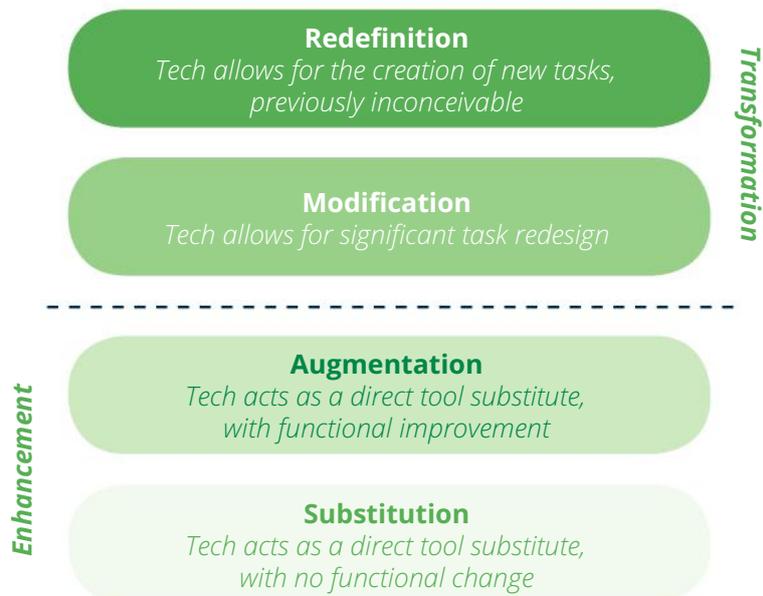
“ The web is enabling us to rediscover what we’ve always known about being human: we are connected creatures in a connected world about which we care passionately ”

David Weinberger

in the foreign language, especially the anxiety of being judged, of being in a hostile and not very understanding environment.

Daniela Lucangeli (2020), Full Professor in Psychology of Education and Development at the University of Padua, says that the important thing is to relate to the **“connettoma”**, to the “self” of the other, in our case the student, leveraging on emotions, through which learning inevitably passes: she uses the term **“warm cognition”**, because the cognitive aspects cannot be separated from the emotional and “warm” aspects of the educational relationship. When the teaching and learning process is mediated through technologies, taking into account the students’ socio-emotional sphere becomes one of the greatest challenges for the teacher.

Human beings are by nature inclined to “connection”, human contact and interpersonal relationship and during lockdown due to COVID-19, when **“remote teaching”** was the only possible solution, the network simply amplified this social need, trying to surrogate distance and physical closeness through digital means. Within this framework, the role of the teacher is crucial; therefore, it is useful to refer to the famous **SAMR** (acronym for **S**ubstitution/**A**ugmentation/**M**odification/**R**edefinition) model by Ruben Puentedura (2006, 2009), illustrated in the figure on the next page.



(Source: <http://www.hippasus.com/rrpweblog/archives/2013/04/16/SAMRGettingToTransformation.pdf>)

The first two phases, “**Substitution**” and “**Augmentation**”, represent a gradual integration of technologies into the teaching practice, although with no deep rethinking of one’s own teaching style. The next two phases, “**Modification**” and “**Re-definition**”, indicate the real transformation of the teaching process through technologies, conceived not as an episodic “add on”, but as an added and essential value in daily teaching.

but also fully rethink it, according to the students’ specific needs.

The emergency due to COVID-19 has outlined a new teaching and learning scenario, which requires a growth mindset entailing a real revolution, actually a mental revolution, before being a technological one, as Baricco argues (in “*The Game*”).

Our students, “**digital natives**”, or “**screenagers**” (Rushkoff, 2006), as they are called, because they are constantly exposed to the screen of a smartphone or other devices, need to be guided towards “**digital wisdom**”, as Mark Prensky (2012) pointed out in his most recent studies and this is crucial when technologies play a leading role in education. Obviously, it is up to the teacher to show digital wisdom in balancing the technological and cognitive workload properly, planning **synchronous and asynchronous activities** in detail.

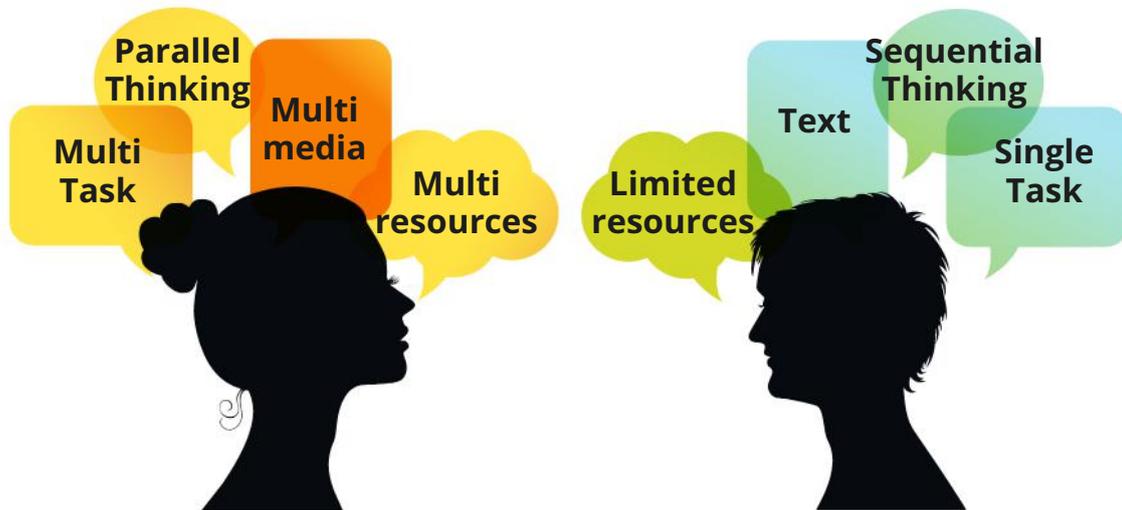
There are no predefined and equal rules for every learning context: each class needs specific tools, content and materials, designed, adapted or manipulated for the specific target. For this reason, the suggestions that will be provided in this *Handy Little Guide* will have no claim to exhaustiveness, as the network offers a very wide range of resources, digital content, webtools, repositories, of which only a few examples will be selected and mentioned.

“ Technology will never replace great teachers, but technology in the hand of great teachers is transformational! ”

George Couros

According to the quotation above, technologies in the hands of teachers are **transformative**, as they can not only enhance the educational process,

Digital Natives Digital Immigrants



Remote teaching during lockdown represented an unprecedented situation to each of us and no one was prepared: not everything was a success, but we will have learnt from our mistakes.

From this global emergency **the point is to capitalise on “lessons learnt”**, in order to rethink future educational scenarios.

As Minerva (2020) underlines, the pandemic has

led us to a new phase of **“digital education”**, based on the combination of essential physical relationships and relationships with digital media, in which digital and traditional education needs to become complementary, as also recommended by the Italian Ministry of Education in the Guidelines on **DDI (“Didattica Digitale Integrata”**, which is **Integrated Digital Teaching**, August 2020).

“Eventually, the dinosaurs went extinct, precisely because they failed to adapt to their new environment. They failed to evolve. But out of their extinction, Homo sapiens was born” (Minerva, 2020).

We are now supposed to “evolve” and to shape new learning and teaching scenarios, in which face-to-face and digital educational formats can become interdependent and complementary, according to the specific context, target needs, learning aims:

“Education is about the past. It is an attempt by one generation to inform the next about the key things that are known, from the past, until a little before the present. This is done in the hope that such knowledge will help the generation being educated to live and negotiate their future” (Sugata Mitra, 2020).

“A pandemic will lead to permanent social, economic and cultural changes. The key is to create good from a bad situation”

Wayne Gerard Trotman

Digital literacies

As already mentioned referring to Prensky, students need to be guided towards digital wisdom, that is why **digital literacy** is crucial for digital citizenship.

Here are some possible tips:

- Managing and opening an account
- Making sure you do **onboarding** at the beginning of term getting students to download their digital resources and become familiar with them.

Digital literacy is constantly in flux as “it is grounded in people’s activities as they participate in diverse kinds of cultural practices” (Gillen, 2014, p. 31).

- Creating **digital champions** in your class to help students in difficulty.

“Digital literacies are not a list of discrete skills that are simply acquired and then checked off [...], they also include less clearly defined skills, such as communicating effectively online with others. [...] As technology evolves and changes, so new skills and literacies emerge and become increasingly important” (Hockly, 2016, p. 43).

The figure below includes some suggestions about **“netiquette”** in online lessons.



NETIQUETTE FOR ONLINE LESSONS



- **Be PUNCTUAL** as if you have to go to school
- **Take care and have everything you need (pens, books, notebooks...)**
- **Do not activate you MICROPHONE unless it is your turn to speak**



- **As in class you cannot EAT in class**
- **Always use PROPER language**
- **Leave your camera on**
- **APPROPRIATE clothing is recommended as in class**



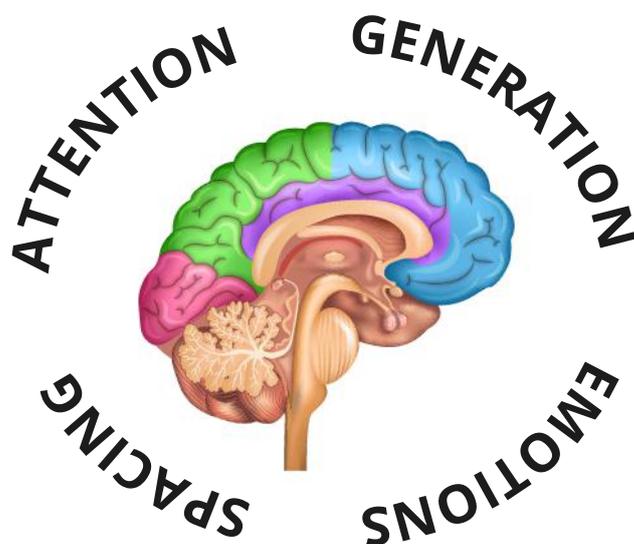
- **Remember that you cannot RECORD nor SHARE content and pictures of the lessons**
- **Ask for permission if you need to leave the room**

Getting into Distance Teaching

Planning the activities

A fundamental step in remote teaching as in blended/hybrid or face-to-face teaching is planning the activities and the teaching/learning scenario and setting.

As a theoretical framework to be considered before planning, we can refer to the **AGES** model (Davachi *et al.*, 2010), illustrated below.



(Adapted from: <http://resultscoaches.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/ages.pdf>)

AGES is the acronym for:

Attention: is the presentation of information and new inputs which can be mixed with group discussions, role-playing, or scenario planning.

Generation: refers to ownership or “**generation of own learning**”, which occurs when you are motivated to understand, retain, apply knowledge, transforming it and making it meaningful for you.

Generating information can happen in different ways, in particular:

- **Social generation:** students connect their previous knowledge with their peers’ knowledge
- **Metacognitive generation,** where knowledge builds on itself, by reflection and meta-cognition
- **Insight generation,** where learners suddenly recognise their “learning moment”.

Emotions: emotions are important regulators of learning and memory, that is why it is crucial to facilitate emotion-arousing events. Therefore, education should be based on enjoyable instead of mandatory activities or events.

Stimulating students' positive emotions, feelings and motivation represents a crucial aspect both in face-to-face and in online/blended learning:

"Key elements that drive people to action – and this includes learning a language: a sense of competence, autonomy, and connection with others" (Ryan, & Deci, 2000).

Spacing: which refers to the need to distribute learning over time to lead to better long-term memory.

Jensen (2005) suggests an approach which takes advantage of a variety of techniques, such as **"spaced repetition"**, which combines spacing and

generating of learning over time: repetition itself is not a guarantee of learning.

As far as spacing is concerned, **"brain breaks"** are fundamental both in face-to-face and online learning: micro-learning sequences should be planned with short breaks among them, as the students' attention cannot be active for long especially during online sessions.

Using webtools such as **GoNoodle**,¹ teachers can suggest students movements, dance moves and other mindful actions, positions and gestures, which can help break the flow of the lesson to recuperate new energies for further learning.



GoNoodle

As briefly explained above, in order to plan your teaching activities, you need to consider a wide range of factors, which strongly impact the learning process.

A very useful webtool to plan your teaching activities, both in class and online is **Learning Designer**², a webtool created by prof. Diane Laurillard, University College London, based on her **"Conversational Framework"**³, providing different **"Teaching and Learning Activities" (TLA)**, in particular:

- **Read - Watch - Listen**
- **Collaborate**
- **Investigate**
- **Discuss**
- **Practise**
- **Produce.**

According to the Conversational Framework these are the main dimensions to take into account in planning a **learning pathway**:

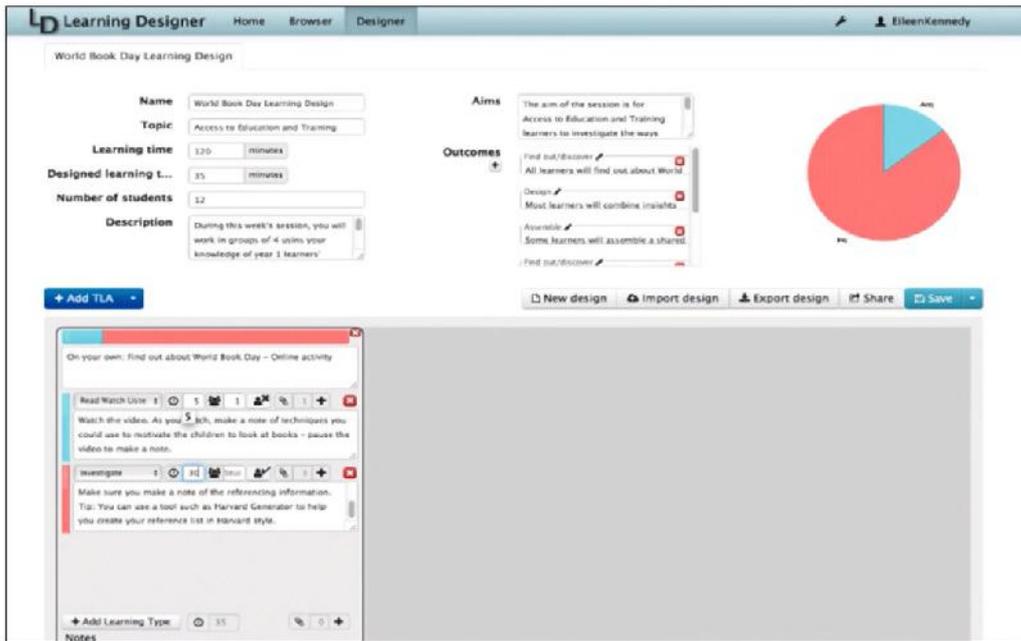
- **Topic**
- **Aims**
- **Learning Times**
- **Size of class**
- **TLA**
- **Description**
- **Mode of delivery** (wholly online, blended, classroom based etc.)
- **Assessment.**

1 <https://www.gonoodle.com>

2 <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/learning-designer/index.php>

3 To learn more: <https://www.bera.ac.uk/blog/a-new-tool-to-help-teachers-as-digital-learning-designers>

Using the Learning Designer to plan your activities, you can balance face-to-face and remote learning, as well as synchronous and asynchronous activities.



The Learning Designer
(Image: https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=S0edRboC9vI&feature=emb_logo)

The image below will help you consider the different elements in your lesson plan:

How to prepare for Online Teaching



How will you teach?	➔ Synchronous (Live lectures online)	or	Asynchronous (Work at own pace)		
How will students engage?	➔ Self-Directed Learning	and/or	Discussion Forums	and/or	Small Group Work
How will you communicate?	➔ E-mail	and/or	Announcements	and/or	Virtual Office Hours
How will you assess learning?	➔ Discussion Forum Posts	and/or	Group Work	and/or	Online Learning Assignments

(Image: <https://www.pearsoned.com/tips-moving-class-online-quickly/>)

As shown in the picture, in your planning,

- you can decide to plan **synchronous or asynchronous** activities;
- you can engage the learners through **self-directed or autonomous** learning, discussion forums or small group work;
- you can communicate through emails, announcements or virtual meetings;

- you can plan to assess learning through discussion forum posts, group work, online learning assignments or other tools.

In order to get useful inputs and suggestions which can help your planning activities, the *Handy Guide to Teaching Online*⁴ will offer a wide range of possible technical, organisational and teaching solutions.

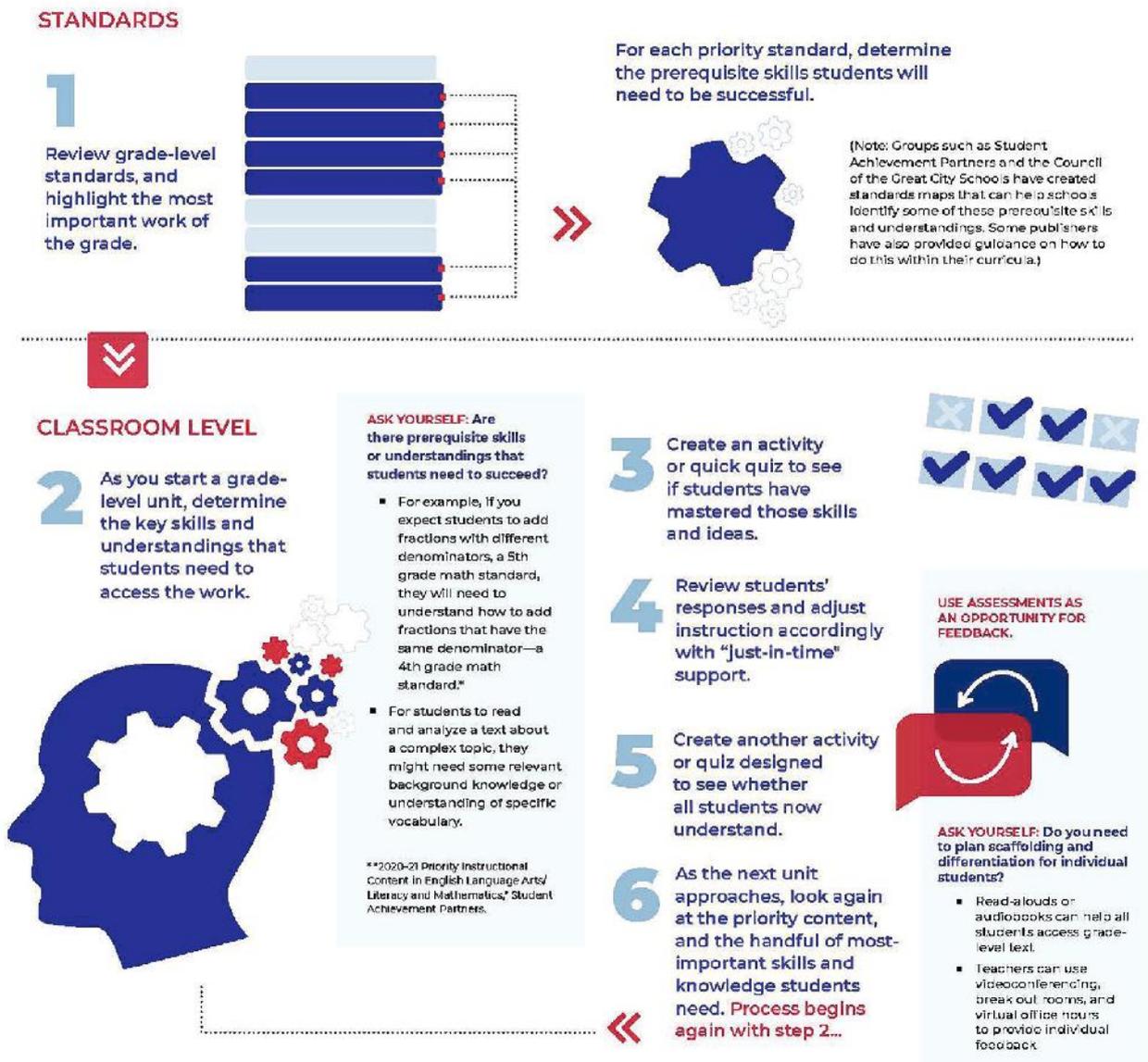
⁴ <https://it.pearson.com/content/dam/region-core/italy/pearson-italy/pdf/km0/KM0-INGLESE-PDF-Handy-Guide-Teaching-Online.pdf>

Choosing what to teach

As an important part of the planning process, you should take into consideration the selection of topics, functions, grammar areas to focus on, considering the national standards, the school standards and the curriculum defined for that particular target of learners, the classroom level, the students' pre-requisites etc. Sometimes in remote teaching you cannot follow exactly the same planning as in class but you should select

the core areas of the curriculum and privilege competency-based, interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary pathways, fostering active learning through methodologies such as **Task-Based Learning, Project-Based Learning, Flipped Learning**.

The table below⁵ can help you direct your teaching choices.



(Source: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/deciding-what-to-teach-heres-how>)

5 <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/deciding-what-to-teach-heres-how.html>

Building bridges

“With separation there is a psychological and communication space to be crossed”

M.G. Moore

A fundamental step in remote teaching is teacher training especially for teachers who are new to online education. The aim is not only to deliver content through new media, but to get familiar with those tech tools which can be useful in helping reach your teaching aims and build emotional bridges with your students. In this way you can connect with them, build trust, organise your “**virtual classroom**” and ensure that your

technology is serving human-centered ends. In order to reach the above-mentioned aims, the following tips⁶ may be useful:

TIP #1: GO BEYOND SPEAKING PRESENCE

You need to leave your students with the idea of your presence and scaffolding, even if you are not speaking in that particular moment.

TIP #2: IT IS MORE THAN JUST FACE TIME

Asynchronous activities are as important as live and face-to-face sessions.

TIP #3: SIGNAL PRESENCE THROUGH CLARITY AND ORGANISATION

You need to organise the activities in a clear and effective way.

TIP #4: GET STUDENT FEEDBACK AND RESPOND TO IT

Feedback is crucial: it must be prompt, clear and practical.

TIP #5: FOCUS ON SURFACING CONNECTIONS AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

Connections and social relationships should be fostered also interweaving formal and informal learning.



⁶ adapted from <https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-research-backed-tips-improve-your-online-teaching-presence>

Resources

“For educators, the COVID-19 Pandemic is a quintessential adaptive and transformative challenge, one for which there is no pre-configured playbook that can guide appropriate responses”

M.G. Moore

This quotation is taken from the report titled “Supporting the continuation of teaching and learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic - Annotated Resources for Online Learning” by OECD in co-operation with Harvard University, World Bank Education Global Practice and HundrED.⁷ It is a wonderful **repository of online resources** aiming at supporting governments and other education leaders as they research and assess different ways to continue educating students during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Resources are divided into the following categories:

Curriculum Resources: lessons, videos, interactive learning modules and any other resources that directly support students in acquiring knowledge and skills.

Professional Development Resources: resources which can support teachers or parents in supporting learners, guiding them to content, developing their skills to teach remotely or more generally augmenting their capacity to support learners in these flexible contexts.

Tools: tools that can help manage teaching and learning, such as communication tools, learning management systems or other tools that teachers, parents or students can use to create or access educational content.

The Global Education Innovation Initiative at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and the Directorate of Education and Skills of the OECD have also been collaborating in the development of a decision-support framework to support governments in devising education responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic. A rapid response framework,⁸ based on an analysis of current global needs and practices to support education during the pandemic highlights innovative practices in response to the Pandemic and includes a wide range of resources, webtools, platforms and repositories used by teachers for remote teaching.

Other examples of international institutions providing resources and repositories for remote language teaching and learning are The European Centre for Modern Languages⁹ (ECML) and the British Council.¹⁰

⁷ <http://www.oecd.org/education/Supporting-the-continuation-of-teaching-and-learning-during-the-COVID-19-pandemic.pdf>

⁸ https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=126_126988-t63lxosohs&title=A-framework-to-guide-an-education-response-to-the-Covid-19-Pandemic-of-2020

⁹ <https://www.ecml.at/Resources/TreasureChestofResources/tabid/4397/language/en-GB/Default.aspx>

¹⁰ https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/professional-development/teachers/integrating-ict/guidance?utm_source=TE_Facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=bc-teachingenglish

Same lessons in different formats

You may want to plan your activities both in the **face-to-face** format and in the **remote** one, considering the need to alternate the two solutions for different groups of students or to switch suddenly to the fully remote one.

The figure below¹¹ may help you design your plan: it shows an example of simple reading and writing activities in EFL, which can be planned in class using the blackboard/whiteboard/IWB or online, sharing your screen or a shared board or using specific webtools.

The figure consists of four panels, each with an illustration and a text description:

- IN-PERSON INSTRUCTION: WHOLE CLASS**: Illustration shows a teacher pointing to a whiteboard with a grid of letters (a, e, i, o, n, d, k, f, c, a, t). Text: "Students use a chart with letters to practice placing individual letters in the right order to form words." Three red dots are at the bottom.
- REMOTE SYNCHRONOUS: SMALL GROUP**: Illustration shows a video call interface with a grid of letters and a person's silhouette. Text: "On a video call, students practice making words by moving letters around using an interactive chart." Three red dots are at the bottom.
- REMOTE ASYNCHRONOUS INSTRUCTION**: Illustration shows a person at a laptop with a digital reading program interface. Text: "In a digital reading program, students identify and manipulate letter sounds to assemble new words." Three red dots are at the bottom.
- CAREGIVER SUPPORT**: Illustration shows two people at a laptop with a website interface. Text: "Caregivers can access a website that provides easy reinforcement activities that can be done at home." Three red dots are at the bottom.

(Source: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/how-to-make-lessons-cohesive-when-teaching-both-remote-and-in-person-classes/2020/08>)

Back to school remote activities

The website **Ditch That Textbook** offers 75 very useful back to school activities for the remote classroom¹². The activities can be adapted for **physical, remote or blended/hybrid classes**.



Preparing your online classroom



Remote learning first week of school activities



Remote learning community building lessons



Social Emotional Learning



Connecting with families remotely



35+ beginning of the year activities

¹¹ <https://mobile.edweek.org/c.jsp?cid=25919761&bcid=25919761&rssid=25919751&item=http%3A%2F%2Fapi.edweek.org%2Fv1%2Ffew%2Findex.html%3Fuuid%3D4B0A5216-D729-11EA-8B09-956759D98AAA&cmp=soc-edit-fb>

¹² <https://ditchthattextbook.com/back-to-school/#tve-jump-173703a02fb>

Distance Teaching into practice: methodologies and tips

ESAP methodology



A very useful methodology for organising remote activities is **ESAP**, an acronym for **Engage, Study, Activate, Practise**¹³.

First Step: Engage

Equivalent of warm-up and brainstorming in face-to-face lessons.

Engage

(warm-up, retrieval practice, prior knowledge activation)



This stage warms students up, activating their interest by tapping into their existing knowledge and the language they have been practising in previous classes. This step is aimed at drawing on previous content and language knowledge.

Second Step: Study

Equivalent of presentation and practice in face-to-face lessons.

Study

(new language introduction followed by controlled practice)



In this stage the students will receive new inputs and will be fostered to interact and speak with their peers in breakout rooms or write in the chatbox or on a whiteboard. The teacher will check and monitor their production step by step.

Third step: Activate

Equivalent of production in face-to-face lessons.

Activate

(free language production)



In this step students are encouraged to activate the target language. The teacher will provide feedback on their oral and written production in both controlled and freer communicative practice activities.

Fourth Step: Practise

Equivalent of homework (hard copy workbook) in face-to-face lessons.

Practise

in Interactive Environment on MyEnglishLab/ Pearson English Portal



This stage usually happens at home, after class. It can involve different types of activities, aimed at helping students independently practise what they learnt in the lesson. The teacher will review progress and discuss any issues in the next class.

¹³ To learn more about ESAP: <https://www.pearson.com/english/professional-development/covid19/ESAP.html>

Tips for running live sessions

Live sessions should be carefully planned in terms of time, content, interaction, communication, response, taking into account **TTT (Teacher Talking Time), SST (Student Talking Time)**, also considering Writing Time. In fact, during live sessions students are given the floor by switching on/off their microphones or they can ask to take the floor by pressing the “raise your hand” button and booking their turn. However, live sessions are also very effective opportunities to practise students’ writing skills. They can interact with each other in writing, posting comments, opinions, responses to the teacher’s inputs. In order to run effective and interactive live sessions here are some useful tips:

1. Set norms and protocols

When you plan and start a live session, you need to set rules and discussion protocols so that everybody has a clear idea of what to do, when to speak or write, the teacher’s expectations, the tasks assigned.

In order to facilitate the norm construction process, it may be useful to have a look at some of the protocols defined by Project Zero researchers at Harvard Graduate School of Education, such as the **Norms Construction Protocol**¹⁴ or other protocols from the Collaboration & Group Learning¹⁵ area of Project Zero website. It can also be useful to adopt some of the **“Thinking Routines”** from Project Zero, in order to foster given thinking and learning aims suggesting simple steps to follow during the activities, which are easy to remember. Thinking Routines¹⁶ can also be used to create rituals, such as a welcoming and closing moment, a specific ritual for assigning tasks and roles, a regular session for Q&A, etc.

A very useful protocol¹⁷ for organising live sessions is shown below: it can help assign roles and tasks to students, so that everyone feels engaged.

	Live Session Student Job Title	Role
	Welcomer	After the first five minutes of the Live Session... As people enter the meet and some arrive late, greet them in writing by saying Hello, _____. Give them a summary of what has happened so far.
	Questioner	If a great question is posted in the chat and as the teacher I don't see it or respond, the questioner may unmute their mic and alert me to the question.
	Linker	If, as a teacher, I post a useful link during the discussion, the linker will have that copied (if anyone asks for it or needs it later in the discussion and someone cannot find it).
	Timekeeper	If the teacher gives a time for a particular activity or part of class, the timekeeper will alert us all if we are approaching the end of the time allowed.
	Notetakers	All students are expected to take notes and participate as needed. You will have access to all that is posted in the chat after the recording ends. Some may be asked to share notes with anyone who could not attend live.

¹⁴ http://www.schoolreforminitiative.org/doc/norms_construction.pdf

¹⁵ <https://pz.harvard.edu/topics/collaboration-group-learning>

¹⁶ <https://pz.harvard.edu/thinking-routines>

¹⁷ https://www.edutopia.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/Student%20Protocols%20for%20Google%20Meet_Zoom%20SR.pdf

Additional roles can be the following:

- *documenter*, documenting all the activities
- *attendance recorder*, registering the students' attendance
- *mind mapper*, creating a mind map of the session
- *graphic organiser*, organising contents and other materials through graphic organisers
- *sketcher*, drawing pictures, sketches or other visual outputs summarising the content of the session
- any other possible role according to the specific situation and context.

2. Screensharing

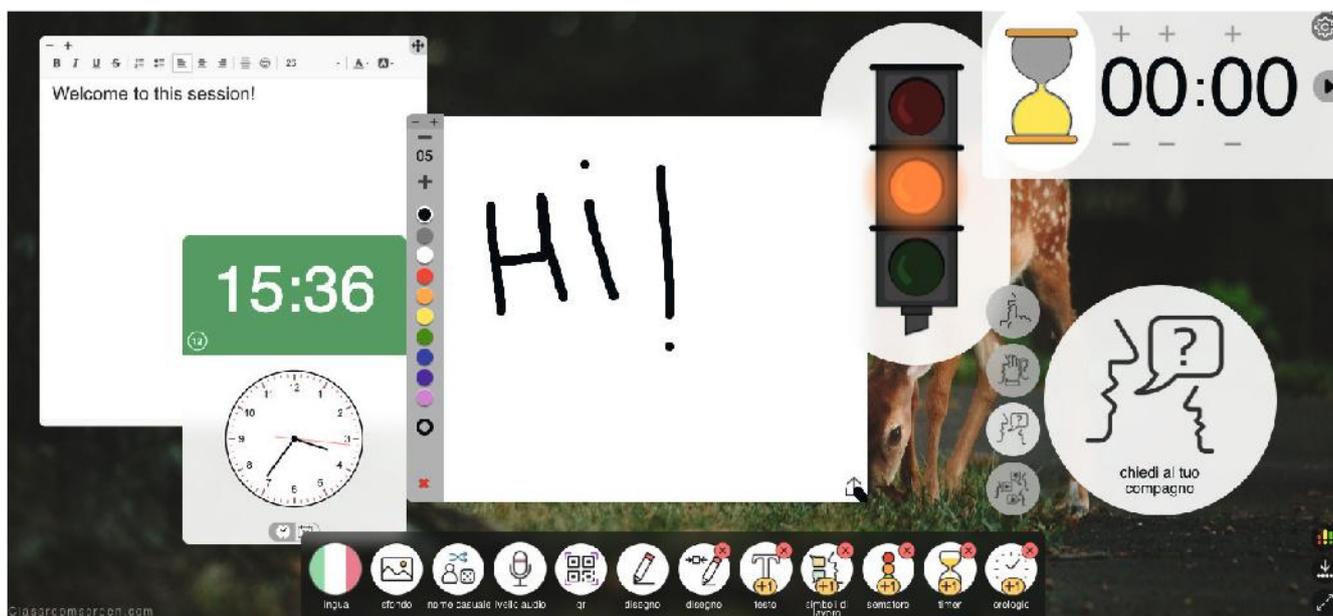
Sharing the teacher's screen can help engage students: it can be useful to share just a question or an entire slideshow, power point presentations or interactive activities.

set traffic lights; choose the relevant emoticon according to the type of activity (reflect in silence, ask a partner, listen/watch, etc.); you can have the students throw the dice for dynamic and engaging games, also introducing gamification into your lessons, which is always motivating both for young learners and teenagers.

Other examples of boards to share are **Nearpod Collaborate**, **Jamboard**, **Ziteboard** and **AWW Board** or **Autodraw**, particularly easy for young learners.

4. Organise breakout rooms

Dividing the students into small groups and directing them in separate breakout rooms can be very effective, as the students can discuss and freely express their ideas, co-creating projects, tasks etc. to be shared and presented to the rest



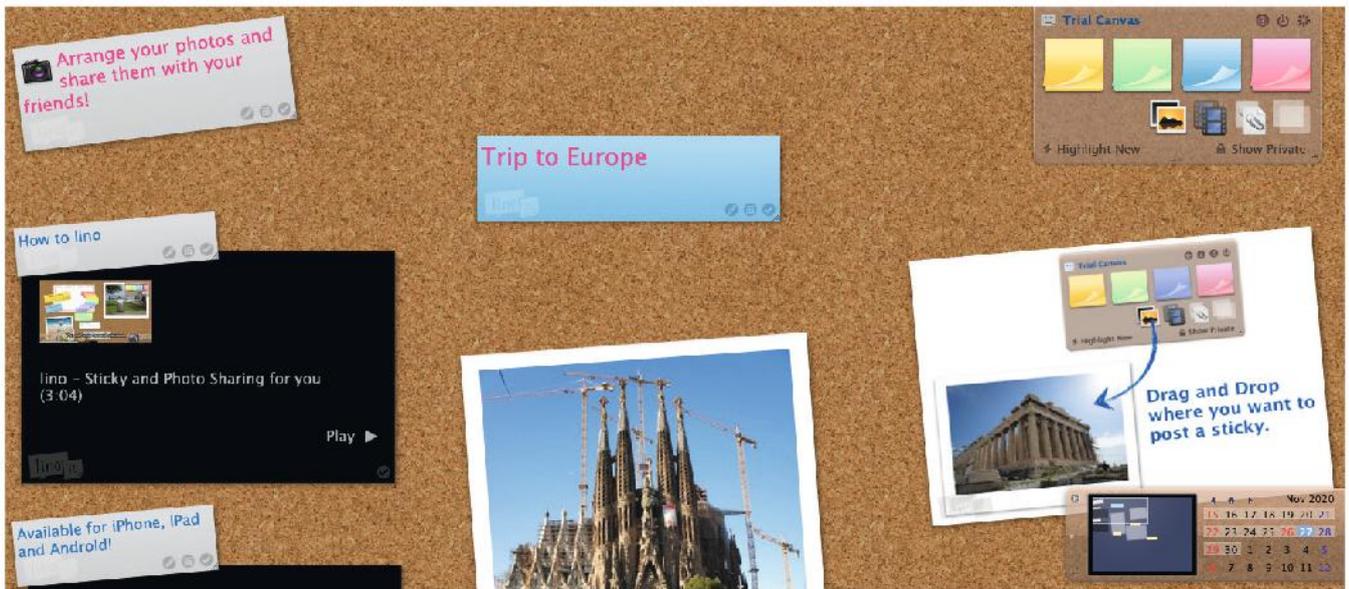
Classroomscreen

3. Share whiteboards

Sharing whiteboards can engage students in a wide range of interactive activities, such as polls, brainstorming, Q&A sessions, debates etc.

Classroomscreen.com is just an example of boards providing a wide range of functions. Among the different activities shown in the picture below, you can have students write on a white sheet; randomly select their names during a discussion; set the time and alarm clock to schedule the different parts of the session;

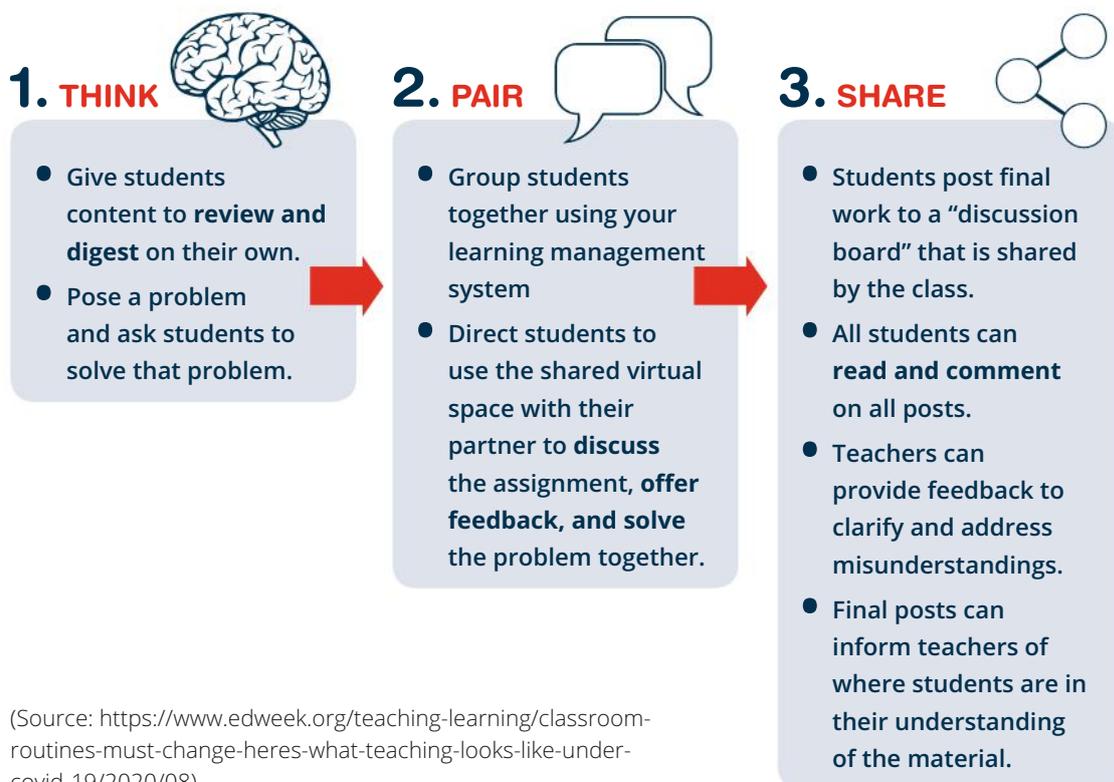
of the class in the “plenary” room. The teacher can jump from one room to another and clarify doubts, answer questions, scaffold the content and the language. Creating a board for every breakout room is recommended, so that each group can have a specific task to carry out and the teacher can keep track of the work done. Tools such as the well-known **Padlet** or **Lino** (in the figure on the next page) can help reach this aim: sticky-notes can be added by teachers and students, also attaching videos, audio-files, images, PDFs, etc.



Lino

An activity that may help discussion in breakout rooms is the **Thinking Routine** named **“Think/Pair/Share”**: students are assigned a given topic to reflect on individually, then share comments and reflections in pairs or small groups in a

breakout room and finally report and summarise the discussion to the whole class and the teacher. In the picture below an adaptation of the “Think/Pair/Share” routine to the **remote teaching format**.



(Source: <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/classroom-routines-must-change-heres-what-teaching-looks-like-under-covid-19/2020/08>)

Another useful activity to organise in breakout rooms is “Station brainstorming”: small groups of students rotate from one breakout room to another to answer prompts and view and listen to their peers presenting their work. Teacher and classmates may also provide feedback according to some protocols, such as the “**Ladder of feedback**”¹⁸ from Project Zero, Harvard Graduate School of Education (figure on the right).

5. Launch polls and surveys

Launching polls and surveys is a good way to keep the students’ motivation and attention, so that they feel engaged in the activities. You can share your screen to launch polls and surveys to be discussed with the students during the live sessions. You can use tools such as **Mentimeter**, **Poll Everywhere** or **Dotstorming**.

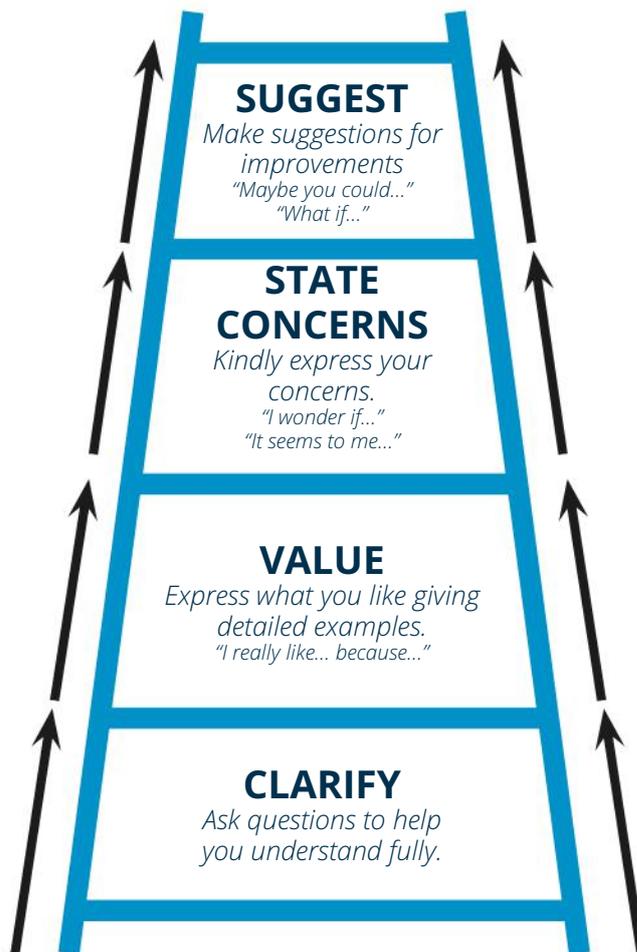
6. Organise interactive presentations

You can use tools such as **Sway**, **Prezi** or googleslides to have your students collaborate on a presentation to be shared and discussed with the teacher and the other classmates.

7. Set brain-breaks

Setting brain-breaks through tools such as GoNoodle, mentioned earlier, can help organise different work sessions and have students take short breaks to do some movement or mindfulness exercises.

THE LADDER OF FEEDBACK



(Adapted from: <https://petershomeroom.weebly.com/class-updates/learning-without-walls>)



¹⁸ <http://www.pz.harvard.edu/resources/ladder-of-feedback>

Digital portfolio

Digital portfolios can be very useful in remote teaching: they can represent a valuable tool

for formative assessment and for tracking and monitoring progress. All tasks, assignments, products can be collected in a digital portfolio, as in the example¹⁹ below:

The image shows a digital portfolio template slide with a blue header and yellow borders. The header contains a 'Name' field, an 'EXAMPLE SLIDE' button, a 'Business Photo of you' field, and a 'Dream Job Title (Link if really exists)' field with a 'Replace text' button and a refresh icon. The main content area is divided into several sections: 'SKILLS' (listing Soft Skill 1, 2, 3, 4), 'SPECIALTIES' (listing Awards, Achievement, Accolades), 'Why- Who are you and what do you love? Explain which position you are applying for and how this connects to your why.', and 'Qualities - Talk about your qualities and skills that would be helpful in that job. This is the paragraph where you are selling yourself to the company. If someone asked you the question "why should we hire you?" this paragraph would be your answer.'. On the right side, there are two blue buttons: 'Click box and insert photo. (Screenshot of work)' and 'Link to your exemplar projects/units'.

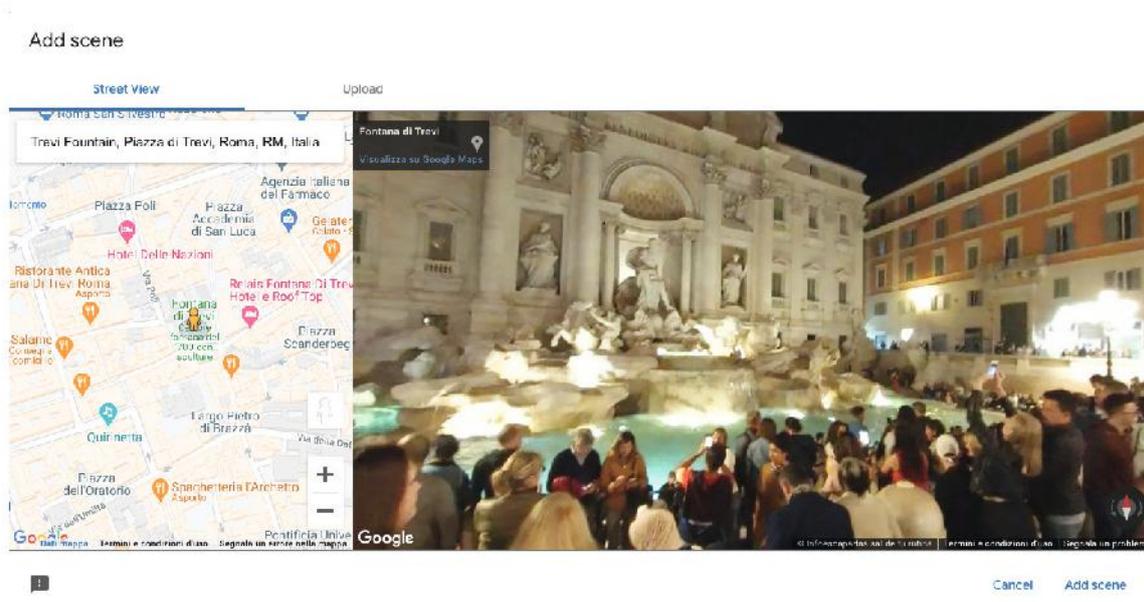
There are specific tools for creating digital portfolios, one of the most commonly used is **Seesaw**.

Virtual global tours

During lockdown due to Covid-19 it was impossible to go out or to leave your country. Teachers discovered the potential of some webtools, which can be very useful also for remote and hybrid teaching/learning, allowing students to take virtual global tours around the world, fostering an authentic use of the language, such as **Radio Garden**. Clicking on a given dot on the globe you can listen to the radio station

being broadcast at the moment in that particular place: a very effective way to foster listening skills, pronunciation, comprehension.

Google Tour Creator: it allows you to plan and visualise a virtual tour from one place to another across the world. You can visit places virtually in 3D, therefore very useful activities can be organised in the foreign language such as describing and labelling the different places, landscapes, directions.



¹⁹ https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1e-peakb5N_RdGx4zafPQpmfKrBzRssdvrFwL5Z2dso0/edit#slide=id.g77ae07c9fc_0_102

Fostering language skills in remote/hybrid teaching

The effectiveness of technologies for language learning and **CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning)** (Cinganotto, 2018; Cinganotto, Cuccurullo, 2019; Cinganotto, 2021) was widely cited in the literature, long before the pandemic. In 2014 the European Commission published a report titled *“Improving the effectiveness of language learning: CLIL and Computer Assisted Language Learning”*,²⁰ focusing on the added value of technologies to improve the effectiveness of language communication activities in foreign languages.

The *Companion Volume to the Common European Framework* (CEFR CV²¹) (2020), representing an integration to the original CEFR published

by the Council of Europe in 2001, among the new descriptors, has introduced **“online interaction”**²² referring to the way in which students communicate through the Internet, social networks, social media. It is a new way of communication, which involves the use of new linguistic varieties: **“netspeak”**, the language of the network, as Crystal puts it.

In remote and hybrid teaching and learning, online interaction is the way students communicate with each other and with teachers, therefore it is of crucial importance.

Here is one of the scales on online interaction provided by the CEFR CV:

Online conversation and discussion	
C2	<p>Can express him/herself with clarity and precision in real-time online discussion, adjusting language flexibly and sensitively to context, including emotional, allusive and joking usage.</p> <p>Can anticipate and deal effectively with possible misunderstandings (including cultural ones), communication issues and emotional reactions occurring in an online discussion.</p> <p>Can easily and quickly adapt his/her register and style to suit different online environments, communication purposes and speech acts.</p>
C1	<p>Can engage in real-time online exchanges with several participants, understanding the communicative intentions and cultural implications of the various contributions.</p> <p>Can participate effectively in live, online professional or academic discussion, asking for and giving further clarification of complex, abstract issues as necessary.</p> <p>Can adapt his/her register according to the context of online interaction, moving from one register to the other within the same exchange if necessary.</p> <p>Can evaluate, re-state and challenge arguments in professional or academic live online chat and discussion.</p>

²⁰ https://ec.europa.eu/education/content/improving-effectiveness-language-learning-clil-and-computer-assisted-language-learning_en

²¹ <https://rm.coe.int/common-european-framework-of-reference-for-languages-learning-teaching/16809ea0d4>

²² To learn about a project on online interaction in Italy carried out by the author, a volume in Italian published by INDIRE is available here: <http://www.indire.it/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Volume-Companion-07.07.pdf>

Online conversation and discussion	
B2	Can engage in online exchanges, linking his/her contributions to previous ones in the thread, understanding cultural implications and reacting appropriately.
	Can participate actively in an online discussion, stating and responding to opinions on topics of interest at some length, provided contributors avoid unusual or complex language and allow time for responses.
	Can engage in online exchanges between several participants, effectively linking his/her contributions to previous ones in the thread, provided a moderator helps manage the discussion. Can recognise misunderstandings and disagreements that arise in an online interaction and can deal with them, provided that the interlocutor(s) are willing to co-operate.
B1	Can engage in real-time online exchanges with more than one participant, recognising the communicative intentions of each contributor, but may not understand details or implications without further explanation.
	Can post online accounts of social events, experiences and activities referring to embedded links and media and sharing personal feelings.
	Can post a comprehensible contribution in an online discussion on a familiar topic of interest, provided that he/she can prepare the text beforehand and use online tools to fill gaps in language and check accuracy. Can make personal online postings about experiences, feelings and events and respond individually to the comments of others in some detail, though lexical limitations sometimes cause repetition and inappropriate formulation.
A2+	Can introduce him/herself and manage simple exchanges online, asking and answering questions and exchanging ideas on predictable everyday topics, provided enough time is allowed to formulate responses, and that he/she interacts with one interlocutor at a time.
	Can make short descriptive online postings about everyday matters, social activities and feelings, with simple key details.
	Can comment on other people's online postings, provided that they are written in simple language, reacting to embedded media by expressing feelings of surprise, interest and indifference in a simple way.
A2	Can engage in basic social communication online (e.g. writing a simple message on a virtual card for a special occasion, sharing news and making/confirming arrangements to meet).
	Can make brief positive or negative comments online about embedded links and media using a repertoire of basic language, though he/she will generally have to refer to an online translation tool and other resources.
A1	Can formulate very simple messages and personal online postings as a series of very short sentences about hobbies, likes/dislikes, etc., relying on the aid of a translation tool.
	Can use formulaic expressions and combinations of simple words to post short positive and negative reactions to simple online postings and their embedded links and media, and can respond to further comments with standard expressions of thanks and apology.
Pre-A1	Can post simple online greetings, using basic formulaic expressions and emoticons. Can post online short simple statements about him/herself (e.g. relationship status, nationality, occupation), provided he/she can select them from a menu and/or refer to an online translation tool.

Online conversation and discussion, CEFR CV p.85-86

In the following paragraphs some suggestions and links will be provided to help foster language skills in an integrated way (receptive and productive skills, mediation, interaction).

The webtools, repositories and websites suggested will be proposed just as examples, without any ambition of exhaustiveness.

Focus on Writing and Grammar

Writing skills can be fostered using the chatbox during live sessions or through specific webtools such as **Padlet**, **Lino** or other tools for online whiteboards, mentioned before.

An interesting and effective way to foster writing skills is organising debates or classroom discussions, which can be held orally or in writing. Debate is a teaching methodology which is becoming more and more popular in schools²³ as it is dynamic, engaging, interactive and helps students develop their critical thinking skills, their creativity and fluency in the foreign language. It can also be used for CLIL, when the topic of the debate belongs to a subject of the curriculum (STEM or humanities)²⁴.

Kialo and **Edeb8** are two examples of platforms allowing students to join an ongoing debate in writing, supporting the position in favour or against a given claim/motion. The teacher can also encourage his/her own class to start a debate with his/her students.

Tricider is a very simple tool where a claim or motion of a debate can be launched and students can vote, write their arguments in favour or against. They can also vote for the best arguments through the usual "like" system.

A very useful and innovative platform is **Write the World**, specifically designed to support remote learning practices, allowing the setting up of free digital classroom groups where teachers can upload curricula, facilitate student writing and

peer feedback and access a rich library of writing prompts, rubrics, resources and competitions.

If you want your students to write simple e-books, journals, reports or interactive stories, as an output of a project, you can use **ePubEditor**, **Book Creator**, **Flipsnack**, just to mention some examples.

As far as grammar is concerned, there are so many webtools for self-study and self-correction, with immediate feedback. Here are just some examples:

Road to grammar and **Road to Grammar Junior** for younger learners.

Grammarly: is perfect for self-correction: by writing a text in the box, the system will provide feedback, offering suggestions for improvement.

ESL Video proposes a wide range of films and video clips graded to the different levels of language competence.

Learning English with Apps is the British Council website designed specifically for teenagers to practise English through videos, quizzes, podcasts, etc. in a dynamic and engaging way.

Grammar Reference is the British Council website dedicated to English grammar, with a wide range of grammar explanations, exercises etc.



²³ See the *Handy Little Guide to Debate* by the author published by Pearson.

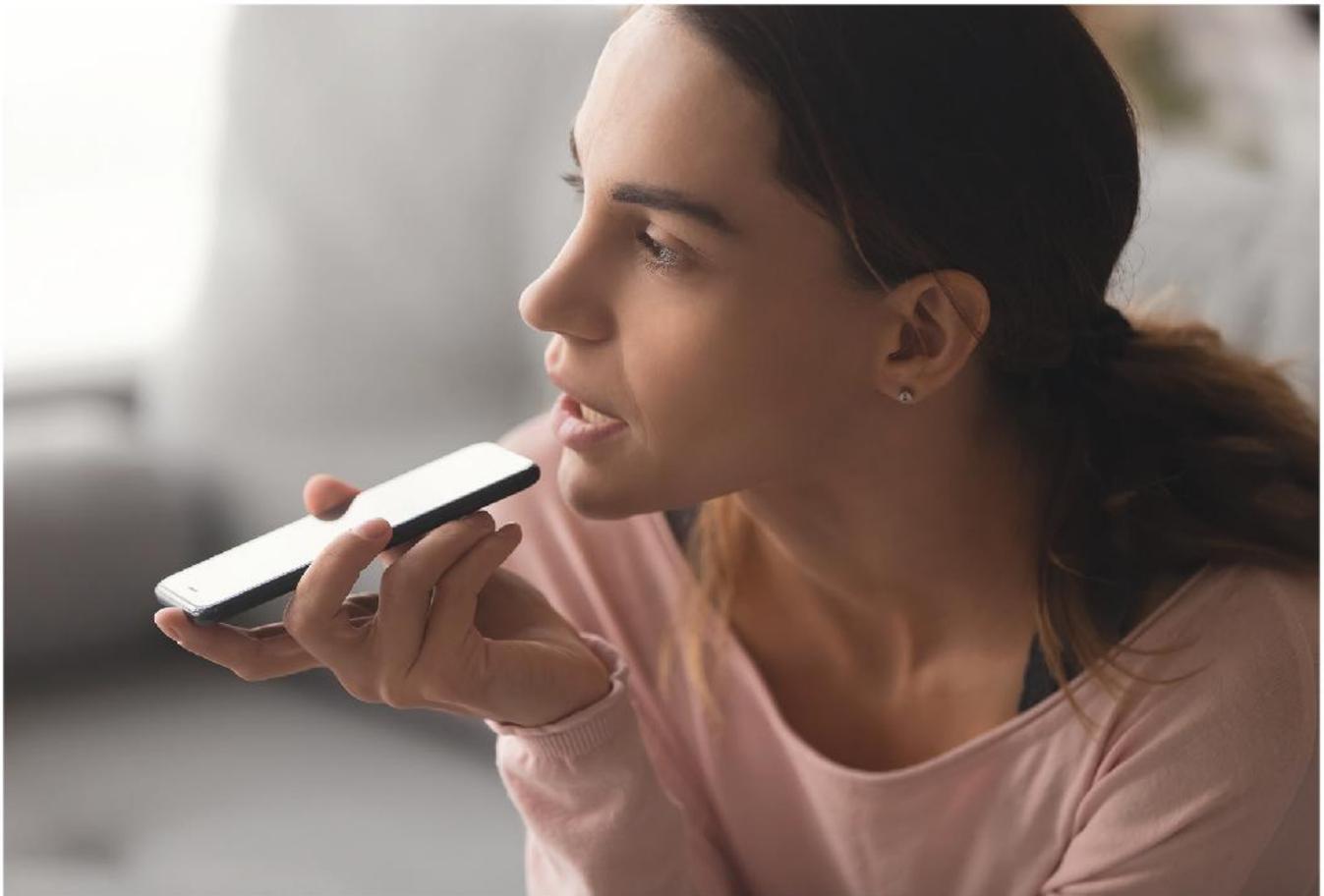
²⁴ See the article by the author on debate in *EFL* (Cinganotto, 2019).

Focus on Listening and Speaking

Speaking skills in remote or hybrid learning can be fostered during synchronous meetings (live sessions) or using some of the tools offered by the Internet.

An example is **SpeakPipe**, which enables

recording of audio files to be sent to the teacher or to a virtual class in order to receive feedback. The file can also be uploaded on a “talking” forum, such as the one proposed by **VoiceThread**.



Voki allows you to give a voice to an avatar whose appearance has been previously chosen. You

can also use the text-to-speech function, which combines speaking and writing skills. Listening skills are essential to enrich vocabulary, improve understanding and consequently fluency. Podcasts can easily help, as they can be listened to for free on your own cell phone, mp3 player, PC, iPad or mobile device. Since they are simple mp3 or mp4 files you can download them or listen to them through specific apps installed on your smartphone. Here are some examples:

- **6 minute English (BBC)**
- **The English We Speak (BBC)**
- **Luke’s English Podcast**



6 minute English

Focus on Reading

Pearson has been fostering specific projects on reading²⁵, such as **“Amazing Readers”**, coordinated by Donatella Fitzgerald or the very innovative project on social reading named **Pearson Social Reading with Betwyll**²⁶.

On the Internet you can find a wide range of audio-books, which combine the pleasure of reading with the pleasure of listening and storytelling: listening to the story of a fairy tale or a novel meets an innate, ancestral need of the human being that can contribute to consolation and comfort especially when isolated as during lockdown.

Among the others we can mention is **BITS English Language Learning**, which offers classics, short stories and stories of various types, also graded by linguistic level and **Unite for Literacy**, the American librarians website providing a wide variety of readings for all ages.



Unite for Literacy

A very useful tool **Active Textbook** allows you to create an engaging reading experience by adding interactive elements to existing books or documents.

Developing reading literacy is crucial for the 21st century students and it is fundamental in an EFL/CLIL remote or hybrid class, as well as in a face-to-face class.

OECD PISA definition of reading literacy acknowledges the diversity and complexity of the processes involved in daily reading activities, such as understanding, using, reflecting on and engaging with written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, develop one's knowledge and potential, and participate in society. The following acronyms refer to some of the possible ways to foster reading skills:

- **TALO (Text as a Linguistic Object)**, which refers to the use of a text to focus on grammatical and lexical features;
- **TAVI (Text as a Vehicle for Information)**, which mainly focuses on the content, the purpose and the overall meaning of the text;
- **TASP (Text as a Stimulus for Production)** in which the comprehension of the text represents the starting point of another task, generally a productive one.

Assigning tasks to the students related to a reading comprehension activity generally means developing **“intensive reading”**, which implies particular attention to the language or to the content conveyed by the text. On the contrary, **“extensive reading”** aims at fostering the pleasure of reading itself, as mentioned by Day and Bamford:

“These are what we believe are the basic ingredients of extensive reading. We encourage teachers to use them as a way to examine their beliefs about reading in general and extensive reading in particular, and the ways they teach foreign language reading”
(Day, Bamford, 2002, pp. 136-137).

In remote or hybrid/blended teaching and learning it is possible to foster both **“intensive”** and **“extensive reading”**, thanks to the use of the wide range of repositories and resources available online.

²⁵ The author has written “La Piccola Guida alla Lettura Estensiva” published by Pearson (<https://it.pearson.com/content/dam/region-core/italy/pearson-italy/pdf/inglese/ENGLISH-PDF-piccola-guida-alla-lettura-estensiva.pdf>).

²⁶ <https://it.pearson.com/pearson-social-reading-betwyll.html>

Focus on Online interaction and collaboration

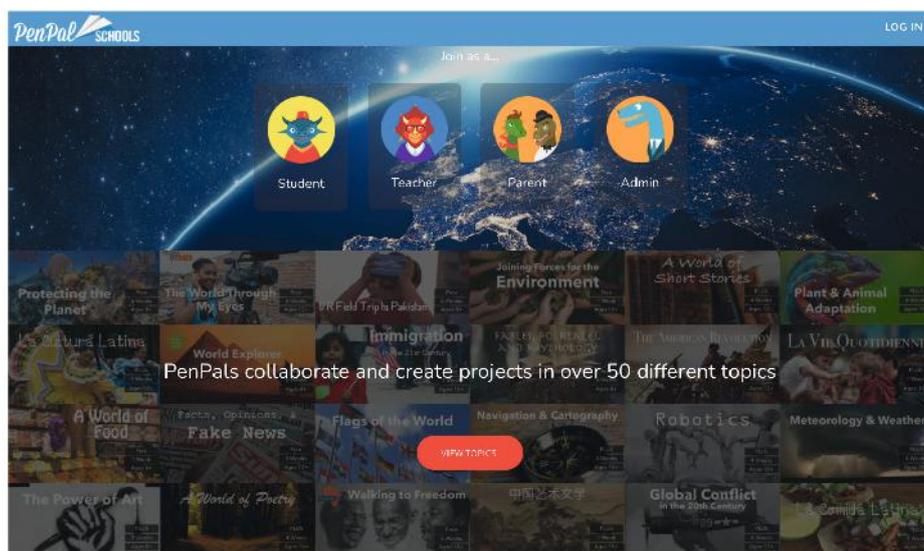
Particularly useful to enhance remote or hybrid teaching and learning could be a **long-distance collaboration** with students from other schools and in other countries, so that students can work together with their peers to carry out projects on shared themes and objectives, encouraging a meaningful use of the language in an authentic context.

Joining an Erasmus Plus or an e-Twinning project could be the perfect solution.

There are also some other platforms, such as **Pen Pal Schools**, offering an international collaborative

learning environment where students, individually or in groups, can choose a theme and carry out a project in collaboration with other students from other countries, using English as the language of communication and work.

MyPBLworks by Buck Institute of Education is an excellent website guiding teachers step by step in planning Project-Based Learning activities, such the ones suggested by PenPalSchools, in a wide range of subjects.



Pen Pal Schools

Focus on CLIL

An excellent repository designed for learning subject content in a foreign language according to the CLIL methodology is **Ciilstore**, output of a

European project, which includes a wide range of lessons and interactive activities related to different subjects, grouped according to language level, topic and first language, as it is a multilingual repository.

Another repository, output of another European project is **CLIL 4 Steam**, focused on STEM subjects: you can find video-lectures in English with explanations and other activities related to scientific subjects.

Interesting CLIL interactive activities and simulations in STEM subjects can be found in **Phet Colorado**.

If you want to take the opportunity of distance learning to let your students learn more about geography in a playful and dynamic way through a CLIL approach, **Seterra** is a very useful platform.



Seterra

Webtools and repositories for languages

The wide variety of tools and repositories available on the Internet allows the teacher to choose content and materials already created by other colleagues, or modify and adapt them, or even create new ones according to the specific target of learners.

The platform named **ICT-Rev**, output of a European project promoted by the European Centre for Modern Languages of the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the European Commission, allows teachers to select the most suitable tools and platforms, in relation to the specific teaching aims, using specific filters.

Learning Apps and **Wordwall** are two very rich multilingual repositories created and addressed to teachers from different school grades and subjects.

The activities are inspired by game-based learning and gamification, suggesting various types of interactive tasks, such as multiple choice, fill in the gaps, mazes, etc.

Registration to the website, completely free of charge, allows you to save content, adapt and modify activities created by other colleagues or create new ones from scratch.

Classtools.net collects a wide range of interactive tools and games, which can be modified according to your specific teaching needs.

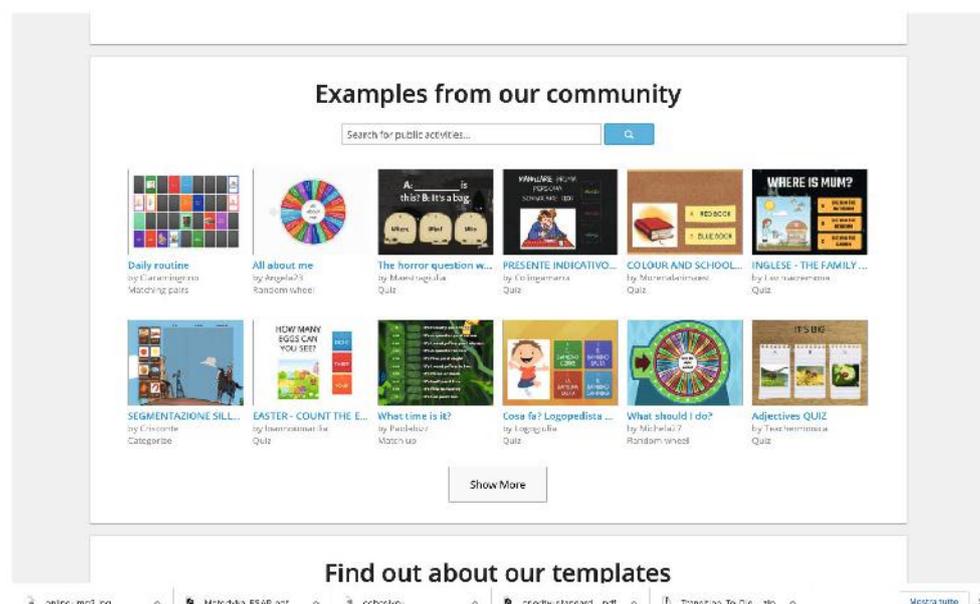
Labyrinths, crossword puzzles, chat simulators, Facebook (Fakebook), Pac-Man, magic wheels, puzzles and many more activities can be found in Classtools.net.

Among the most popular repositories where you can find resources, digital content, videos and other materials, **TED-ED** and **Khan Academy** offer educational paths in granular format, with videos, quizzes, tests etc. You can find pathways which are already made, but you can also create your own, starting from a video provided by the platform: you can add your own quizzes, tests, suggestions, discussion forums etc.

These repositories can be very useful also in a flipped learning context: you can assign a given video to the students to watch at home independently; it will be the starting point for discussions and other activities in class or during online live sessions with the teacher and classmates.

Other examples of repositories and webtools that could be very effective for language teaching and learning remotely are mentioned below:

Edpuzzle allows you to embed videos and assign them to the students, adding script, comments, audio-notes, interactive quizzes and tests.



Wordwall

Blendspace – Tes is a repository of lessons in different subjects: you can create your own lessons or adapt your colleagues' by collecting different resources in the boxes provided by the platform.

Wakelet allows you to capture, organise and share multi-media resources with students, teachers and entire learning communities.

Flipgrid is a free and accessible video discussion

experience used by millions of learners, educators and families around the world.

Liveworksheets is a repository of interactive exercises and activities starting from a PDF.

HyperDocs provides a wide range of activities and learning pathways for different subjects to be used as they are or adapted and manipulated according to specific needs.



HyperDocs

For young learners

There are numerous platforms and tools for teaching English to children: games, quizzes, rhymes, interactive activities can help children spend time in a playful and cheerful way, exposing them to different types of input in English and having fun at the same time.

Tiny Tap is one of the most popular websites: funny, colourful and dynamic, it offers simple videos on various lexical areas and topics about children's daily life.

Educandy is another website children like very much: the teacher can propose, select or create different types of games: crossword puzzles, hangman, anagrams, memory games, etc.

NeoK12 is another very useful website, full of

videos, quizzes and other materials addressed in particular to K12 students.



NeoK12

Assessment

Assessment FOR learning should be particularly enhanced in remote and hybrid teaching, definitely more than assessment OF learning, which could be considered as a sum of a given number of “pieces” of a puzzle to be completed at the end of a unit, module or term. The digital portfolio, already mentioned in this *Handy Little Guide* can be helpful in reaching this goal.

In order to facilitate online assessment, you may need to create rubrics: **Rubistar**, **ForAllRubrics**

and **iRubric** are just examples of webtools where you can find ready-made rubrics to adapt or you can create your own rubric by simply following a given template.

Online learning assessments can include directed reading assignments followed by a quick reading quiz, watching videos, listening to podcasts etc. Webtools such as **Socrative**, **Formative**, **Kahoot**, **Quizziz**, **Pear Deck** can foster effective engagement and on-the-fly assessments.

“Marrying the teaching of English with the development of 21st century skills not only empowers students to take part more effectively in this world, but it can also make our English classes more interesting and relevant”

Nicky Hockly, 2020

Concluding remarks

Without any ambition of exhaustiveness, this *Handy Little Guide* tries to make a small contribution to foreign languages and CLIL teachers engaged in distance learning in different formats (fully online, blended or hybrid).

The hope is that some of these tools, ideas, suggestions, discovered and widely used by a lot of teachers during lockdown, will be useful for language learning and teaching post-COVID19, to enhance and empower “physical”, face-to-face, as well as online, blended or hybrid classes.

One of the lessons learnt from the pandemic is that embedding technologies into language teaching and learning will help students develop 21st century skills, such as collaboration, creativity, communication, critical thinking.

From the pandemic, we have also learnt that we can adapt and even improve ourselves from critical situations and crisis, turning challenges into opportunities.

“You can’t change the waves but you can learn to surf!”

John Kabat Zinn

Further Readings

- *Handy Guide to Teaching Online*, Pearson: <https://it.pearson.com/content/dam/region-core/italy/pearson-italy/pdf/km0/KM0-INGLESE-PDF-Handy-Guide-Teaching-Online.pdf>
- *TeacherToolkit – 46 Ideas: How to Teach Online*: <https://www.teachertoolkit.co.uk/2020/03/15/how-to-teach-online/>
- *Best EdTech of 2019*: <https://www.common sense.org/education/top-picks/best-edtech-of-2019>
- *Distance learning solutions* (UNESCO): <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse/solutions>
- *A list of free, online, boredom-busting resources!* (by Chatterpack): <https://chatterpack.net/blogs/blog/list-of-online-resources-for-anyone-who-is-isolated-at-home>

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