



UNIT 1.

PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE REMOTE TEACHING

AIM

Presentation of
the general rules
of effective
remote teaching

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Unit 1. Principles of effective remote teaching

1.1. Is traditional teaching possible in e-learning?

There is a lot of differences between traditional and online education. The table below shows the most important ones.

Traditional education	Online education
Stationary – teachers and students meet in a specific place and at a specific time	Remotely – teachers and students work from their homes, at a specific time or not
Working together – students have the possibility to meet in a class and easily collaborate (learning from each other style)	Working alone – every student works himself/herself, collaboration is more difficult (independent learning style)
Wide interaction between students and students with the teacher	Limited interaction
Source of information: mostly the teacher	Source of information: mostly online materials
The determined pace of learning – according to the group’s needs in general	The flexible pace of learning – according to the needs of a particular student (students do the tasks at their own pace)

The table below shows that some differences between these two ways of conducting lessons are impassable. The screen will never substitute the real interactions. On the other hand, there is a lot of methods to make online learning interactive and collaborative. Some methods from traditional education can be adjusted to the digital environment. For example, group work can be organized by dividing students into groups. But traditional teaching cannot be just moved into the digital environment which has its requirements and possibilities. For example, the teacher cannot speak too much because students’ attention is not able to stay focused for too long in front of the computer.

1.2. How to make remote teaching effective?

Using online resources

The Internet is full of amazing materials that can be used during the lesson. It needs time to find an appropriate material that suits the needs of the lesson but it is worth your time for it. If giving a lecture is not a good idea, you must find other ways of providing educational content. Videos, pictures, educational posters – all these tools are an amazing ideas to provide knowledge in an interesting, catching, often funny way. There is also a lot of apps that can help in class activities. You can use Padlet (padlet.com) during group work, you can use Canva (canva.com) to prepare an amazing poster or to ask students to prepare their homework as a graphic.

When looking for online resources, it is important to remember that not every material is trustworthy. A good principle is to check the content before the lesson and to use reliable sources.

Testing is important

The results of research done at Harvard University (Reuel, 2013) show unequivocally that the online lesson is far more effective when students' knowledge is checked by tests and other forms of evaluation. Remote learning is connected with the phenomenon of mind-wandering – students cannot focus their attention, even if they listen. It will not suffice to divide a lesson into smaller parts, to use various types of tools or to take breaks. Research shows that students are most focused when they know that their knowledge will be checked in a short time (tests every week is not enough). Testing keeps attention, makes note-taking more effective and improves retention.

Testing can have different forms. You can use google forms to create a quiz. You can play Kahoot (kahoot.com) with your students. You can ask questions. The testing does not need to be long. There can be 3 questions in the middle of the lesson and another three at the end. It will significantly improve students' attention.

Ongoing feedback

Feedback is important in both traditional and remote learning. But in e-learning it has a much more complex function. Remote learning leaves the student less opportunity to correct the mistakes. So they need regular feedback to identify which skills and competencies they need to improve. The second function of the feedback is to make students feel connected with the learning community and with the teacher. It also improves students' motivation when they know they do not learn themselves but with other people and when they get feedback about what to improve.

There are a lot of ways of giving feedback. A teacher can give comments during the lesson, write the assessment of the homework, give tips for improving particular skills. A wonderful idea is to let the students give feedback to each other. It can have a form of open discussion or pieces of advice written on the discussion board. Mutual feedback has a lot of advantages: students must rethink the issue, go deeply into the methodology of learning, then formulate their discovery in sentences with a special focus on doing it kindly and clearly.

More tips

- Communication is crucial. Try to be connected with your students as much as possible. Do live meetings, create collaboration activities, show your students you think about them.
- Be in touch with your pupils' parents. Encourage them to monitor their children's work and be ready to help and motivate them.
- Find the best digital tools. Not every tool will be got for every group. Do not change the tools all the time, be consistent.
- Support independent learning. Encourage students to learn new skills, to look for information themselves. You can help them set the goals and advise where they can find information, courses and interesting tools.

- Motivate students. Establish the milestones for the group. Work on the self-motivation of your students.
- Remember about emotional impact. Express gratitude, let the students share their feelings about learning. Encourage them to write down their experiences and ideas.
- Encourage students to spend time out of the digital environment. E-learning forces them to sit in front of the computer for many hours. It is important to rest and change the environment (walks, sport, books, friends).

1.3. Principles of constructing clear and logical courses and materials

To prepare clear and logical content a teacher needs to know a few didactical and technical rules according to the materials preparation and ways of delivering them.

1. Remember about the lesson plan – logical order of the activities improves effectiveness (this issue will be developed in Unit 2 of this topic). Tell your students about the steps of a lesson to make them aware of the learning process.
2. Use visual tools to catch students' attention. Prepare .ppt presentations, educational posters, etc. Follow these rules to make the visual tools attractive:
 - Do not overpack the slides with too much text. Write slogans, single words, important phrases. It is not an academic article!
 - Use different colours to highlight the most important information. Use contrasts.
 - Do not give a patterned background – it will hinder focusing on the content.
 - Use graphs, tables, arrows to make the content visually catching.
 - Remember about pictures correlated with the topic. You can also use mems.
3. Use different tools during one lesson. Instead of giving a lecture, show an educational movie and ask students to answer the questions, lead the discussion around a few bullet points, let your students look for the information themselves and then write the conclusions on a common board (like Palet). Remember about evaluation of their knowledge and skills.
4. Always comment on the content you show to your students. A picture is not enough – use it as a help to explain something, add some questions to it, prepare an exercise.
5. Give students the possibility to ask questions and discuss. Plan it in the lesson schedule. If you do not know the answer, remember to find it later and report back to the students.
6. Summarize parts of the lesson and give summary questions.

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