MASTERARBEIT / MASTER'S THESIS

Titel der Masterarbeit / Title of the Master's Thesis

Teaching EFL Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking During the Emergency Distance Learning Period in Spring 2020

verfasst von / submitted by

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angestrebter akademischer Grad / in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education (MEd)

Wien, 2021 / Vienna 2021

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List of abbreviations

AHS[1]	Allgemeinbildende Höhere Schule (Academic secondary school)
BHS	Berufsbildende Höhere Schule (College for higher vocational education)
CALL	Computer-Assisted Language Learning
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer Mediated Communication
CMS	Course Management System
EDE	Emergency Distance Education
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
HAK	Handelsakademie (Commercial college)
HLW	Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe (College for commerce and tourism)
LMS	Learning Management System
MS Teams	Microsoft Teams (a platform for online classrooms)
NMS	Neue Mittelschule (New Secondary School)
SAMR model	Substitution – Augmentation – Modification – Redefinition (more on Puentedura's model on page 9)
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching

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[1] Translations for school types have mostly been taken from the website of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research (https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/en/Topics/school/school_syst/st.html, April 2021)

1 Introduction

> Here I am, at 66, within a year of full retirement, having to learn how to use Google Classroom with 35 first graders at various places in their learning. I feel as though I am attempting to drive on a road that I am simultaneously paving while also following a paper map. (Rae 2020)

Starting on the 16th of March 2020, schools in Austria closed in order to help stop the spread of the coronavirus. Teachers and students were suddenly confronted with the task of digitalising their classroom within a few days. Although integrating media and online tools is described in the Austrian curriculum of all school types, the schools and teachers themselves largely decide on the amount of technology used in their classes. Some schools have made it obligatory to use learning/course management systems and some schools have allowed their teachers to make this decision. An article in the Austrian newspaper *Der Standard* from the 8th May 2020 referred to the situation of distance learning as "mühsame[s] Provisorium" [a tedious temporal solution] and describes the sudden digitalisation of schools as "Husch-Pfusch-Digitalisierung" [a botched-up digitalisation] (Stajić 2020: 11). When examining emergency distance learning, Barbour (2020: 6) concluded that planning in a crisis situation "require[s] creative problem solving" and thinking "outside standard boxes". Supported by in-school assistance and nationwide guidelines paired with their own knowledge and resources, teachers had to organise their online classrooms out of thin air. Such an unprecedented situation has underlined the importance and the necessity of *digi-fit* schools.

Online learning can take place in various forms. Teachers might ask their classes to be synchronously present in order to maintain an approximation of a real-life classroom. Students can also receive tasks and instructions to work autonomously in an asynchronous online environment. With regard to the English classroom, it is of particular interest to learn how teachers used these environments to incorporate the four skills in their online classes.

The thesis work, therefore, was carried out to provide answers about whether EFL classes were taught synchronously, asynchronously, or in a hybrid mode. Moreover, this thesis gives an insight into how the four skills were trained with a focus on the learning environment, online tools, and correction and feedback. Hence, this descriptive study provides a broad snapshot of an unprecedented period of teaching that can serve as a basis for further research into strategies used and challenges faced when teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening online.

In order to find out how teachers taught reading, writing, listening and speaking within the first distance learning period, which started in March 2020, questionnaires were sent out and interviews were conducted. The qualitative analysis of the responses has given voice to a

small portion of teachers who spent their time and efforts to keep English language classes going in a situation that had never happened before. Referring to the citation at the beginning of this chapter, the thesis work was performed to find out more about the 'paving' of the 'teaching road'. What happened in the online English classrooms during this period offers a rich pool of ideas and trial and error experiences that merit an analysis for teaching in the future. When schools are ready to go back to face-to-face teaching, it does not mean that distance or online learning will be over. However, new practices might evolve, which might be suitable for hybrid classrooms as well.

By taking a closer look at *distance learning,* it will be possible to establish the theoretical basis of the topic of this master thesis. Here, a special focus is placed on synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. This is followed by an exploration of teaching languages (online with an examination of the four skills, correction and feedback against the backdrop of research findings from the past 20 years. Various studies with a research focus similar to the present thesis and that were published after the start of the pandemic are then briefly reviewed. The methodology of the qualitative study is then explained, followed by the results, the discussion and the conclusion.

2 Distance Learning

> Distance education or distance learning refers to the practice of delivering education and instruction to students not physically present but interacting with the instructor and the educational process remotely (usually by computers and the Internet these days.) (Milman 2015: 567)

2.1 Distance learning, e-learning, online-learning and School From Home

Various terms are employed to talk about the 'new' way of teaching and learning that was implemented to prevent the spread of SARS-CoV-2. Distance learning or distance education is "a method of study where teachers and students do not meet in a classroom but use the Internet, e-mail, mail, etc., to have classes"[2]. Rasmitadila et al. (2020) talk about School From Home (SFH) considering the special distance learning situation that arose during the coronavirus pandemic. Moreover, terms such as e-learning and online-learning are common.

Traditionally, the term distance learning was used only in reference to people working full-time, people living in remote areas, or people not able to come to a school. However, when more and more universities started to use online learning, it became more widely known. Several requirements need to be fulfilled when talking about distance education. It always refers to learning that is organised by some kind of institution when the teachers and students are physically separated. The learning community that comprises teachers, students and available

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[2] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/distance%20learning (2 February 2021)

instructional resources is connected through various forms of electronic communication, such as social networks, telephones, e-mail. While computers or laptops are mostly used by teachers and schools to stay in contact with and teach their students, many people use their mobile phones to attend their online classes. Meskill and Anthony (2015: ix) even go as far as to already declare the end of the "desktop computer" era, as the desktop computer is being replaced by people moving around with their phones while taking part in all sorts of online classrooms.

2.2   Homeschooling, home-schooling, home education

In light of the current situation, the term 'homeschooling' necessitates clarification, as it seems that there has been a confusion of terms. A review of newspaper articles on the Internet[3] indicates that the English term "homeschooling" (in German: Fernunterricht) is used to talk about the current distance learning situation. Homeschooling, however, refers to a trend that has come to Europe from the United States. In a very broad definition, "to homeschool" means "to teach school subjects to one's children at home"[4], which would be a fitting definition for the current situation. However, homeschooling has developed historically in the United States where it is a legal option to educate one's children at home. Discontent with the curriculum, a belief that certain values are not being taught in schools, or potential risks to children at school can motivate parents to opt for homeschooling. This usually means that children do not attend school on a regular basis, but take tests at schools in order to receive school certificates.[5]

Versions of the term 'homeschooling' and the term distance learning with their synonyms have lately often been used interchangeably, although the characteristics of homeschooling cannot be applied to the lockdown associated with the outbreak of the coronavirus. Therefore, the terms *distance learning, distance education, e-learning* and *online learning* or *online education* are used in this thesis to describe the learning focused on, namely learning by students in upper and lower secondary schools who studied from home while keeping contact with their teachers and fellow students through smartphones, computer, laptops and various online media and tools. When talking about learning that takes place at school as it had been 'normal' prior to the coronavirus pandemic, Terms such as *traditional learning/classroom* or *face-to-face/f2f courses* are used to talk about learning that normally took place at school prior to the coronavirus pandemic.

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[3] For example: https://www.zeit.de/gesellschaft/schule/2020-05/homeschooling-lehrer-digitalisierung-schulsystem-chancengleichheit-videokonferenzen; https://www.teachforaustria.at/story/homeschooling-benachteiligter-kinder/; https://www.focus.de/familie/schule/schulwahl/deutsche-familie-flieht-ins-ausland-heimunterricht_id_2498928.html (10 May 2020)

[4] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/homeschool (2 February 2021)

[5] https://www.britannica.com/topic/homeschooling

2.3 Distance learning – tools and terms

According to the *Merriam-Webster*[6]*Dictionary*, a tool can be "something (such as an instrument or apparatus) used in performing an operation or necessary in the practice of a vocation or profession", "an element of a computer program (such as a graphics application) that activates and controls a particular function", or simply "a means to an end". In the present thesis, a tool is "an element of a computer program" needed for the student's practice of learning ("vocation or profession"). Therefore, an online or digital tool refers to any program, app, or software that is used to make learning and teaching at a distance possible. Trajanovic, Domazet and Misic-Ilic (2007: 448) juxtaposed traditional and distance learning tools to provide a list of media to teach English. According to this list, distance learning tools comprise programs like e-mail and Skype but also hardware such as microphones, webcams, CDs and websites like Google. For the purpose of this thesis work, the terms online tools and distance (learning) tools were used to refer to any program, website, software, or system that is used to teach and learn the four skills from home. This could be programs/apps/social media such as Moodle, Zoom, SchoolFox, Skype, Whatsapp, Discord or Facebook, websites like Google or YouTube, blogs, podcasts, e-mails, audio recordings, CDs, webcams and microphones. Moreover, phones used for either the aforementioned programs or for phone calls are considered to be tools. If teachers used screenshots/photos from textbooks, which were attached to e-mails, to check the students' homework or to give assignments, such screenshots are attachments and, therefore, also seen as online tools.

In the field of distance learning, various terms have developed that need clarification. First, the terms *Computer Mediated Communication* and *Computer-Assisted Language Learning* are explained. Then, the terms *Course Management Systems* and *Learning Management Systems* are clarified, as they are essential for teaching English (and other subjects) at a distance.

Computer Mediated Communication comprises various forms of communication performed with the help of computers, the Internet and online tools that humans make use of to communicate with each other online. In a narrow sense, Computer Mediated Communication refers to online software such as discussion boards or chats. However, more broadly defined, it includes virtual realities, online games and social networks (Goertler 2009: 74ff). According to White (2003: 52), e-mails, conferences and live chats were the most widely used CMC 'tools' 17 years ago.

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[6] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tool (2 February 2021)

CMC is a rather broad term covering 'general' online communication. When making use of CMC with the aim of studying and teaching languages, it is covered by the term CALL or Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Depending on the definition, the acronym CALL is usually used to describe an approach for teaching and learning languages with the help of computers, software and all other types of technology such as smartphones, laptops, and whiteboards (Hubbard 2020: 1). CALL involves working with online quizzes, games, links, dictionaries, but also with online newspapers, radio and TV channels (Kuang-wu 2000: 3). Furthermore, it describes speech recognition, dictation programs and other tools that help students work on their language skills (Blake 2016: 130). Computer-Assisted Language Learning started in the 1960s and 1970s with its foundations in the behaviourist learning model. Here, the computer played the role of a tutor providing mechanical drills, translations tests and grammar instruction. Later, in the 1980s, the behaviourist approach was rejected and replaced by CLT approaches. The use of language was placed in the foreground, and this was reflected in CALL and the emergence of personal computers, which made it possible for learners to be more creative and express themselves. This approach, called communicative CALL, was later criticised for marginalising core elements of language learning, so another development took place in both language learning and CALL. A socio-cognitive view with "real language use in a meaningful, authentic context" was moved to the centre stage (Kuang-wu 2000: 2). Starting around the year 2000, Integrative CALL sought to combine the teaching and learning of the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) with the integration of technology in the classroom (Kuang-wu 2000: 1ff). A socio-cognitive and an integrative view of CALL forms the basis of the present thesis; in it, students are seen as "active participants in learning". By using computer-assisted language learning, "information processing, communication, use of authentic language, and learner autonomy" are combined (Kuang-wu 2000: 4). Hubbard (2020: 5) argued that CALL is efficient, effective, convenient and motivating for the learners. Moreover, it makes material highly accessible. Hubbard (2020: 5) strongly advocated CALL, especially because technology plays the role of a mediator in the language learning process where "learners will become users of the language", thus making it an authentic method of language learning. Kuang-wu (2000: 3) also advocated CALL, as it offers authentic material for students that is available 24 hours a day.

Teaching (languages) online necessitates the use of systems that not only help organise online classes, but also facilitate learning. A Course Management Systems (CMS) is a software system that helps teachers administer and manage their classes online. Wordpress or Tumblr are platforms that teachers can use to design a site for their own classes (EasyLMS 2020);

however, 'ready-made' websites also exist that teachers can use. A CMS is a "virtual place for communicative activities with the computer" (Goertler 2009: 77). Such a system can be seen as an online substitution for the traditional class register. Webuntis, which is used in Austrian schools, is an example of this. When teaching English in an online classroom, the teacher needs managing skills. Only if teachers are able to keep track of their students' work and are able to make use of their own and their students' material can online courses be successful. In order to keep track of the assignments, the students' online time investments and participation, posts and other reactions, teachers can and should make use of a Course Management System (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 6). The CMS may give students access to their grading and the scheduling of the learning content, which might motivate them to learn more independently. It can also help students to develop more responsibility for their own learning (Goertler 2009: 77).

Course Management Systems can easily be confused with Learning Management Systems (LMS) as the one can be integrated into the other, and the lines between these two systems are sometimes blurred. As the name suggests, the latter places a focus on learning. Thus, an LMS should not only make the students' results visible and track their progress but also support their learning process by the use of a certain design, quizzes and other resources for language learning (EasyLMS 2020). An example of a combination of a CMS and an LMS would be Moodle, MS Teams, or the Austrian website LMS.at, which is provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research.

2.4   Reasons for distance education

Schools, universities, institutions, individual classes or individual teachers decide to transfer their classes into the online world for various reasons. Besides the general reasons for doing so, the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 prompted everyone to move to distance learning as an emergency solution, an aspect that will be explained later in this thesis.

Milman (2015: 586) stated four of the reasons an institution chooses to use distance education: The reduction of travel costs for staff and students can be considered to be a factor, however, it must not be neglected that moving to distance learning also involves an investment. Moreover, learners can become more flexible by moving online as they can study autonomously. Another reason would be the potential for inviting experts and other people to an online course to make classes more diverse. Lastly, distance education makes learning accessible to anyone who is not able to come to an institution physically for various reasons. These reasons can also be summarised in what Meskill and Anthony (2015: 2) call a "matter of convenience".

White (2003: 23) talked about the fact that "distance language learning […] is not an easy option." Schools and universities currently teach through distance education due to the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 and the necessity to close institutions to prevent its spreading. Teachers were not able to choose their preferred teaching and learning environment; instructors all over the world were suddenly forced to switch to online learning. The current situation is also sometimes referred to as Emergency Distance Education (EDE) (for example Karataş 2020), which also reflects this unique reason.

The present thesis needs to be viewed from the perspective of a crisis situation. Most of the literature and websites in this thesis present an institution's choice of distance learning as a deliberate, carefully thought-through process. Although the research findings concerning distance learning before 2020 need to be taken into account to obtain a comprehensive picture of online learning, it needs to be additionally made clear that a planned online course differs from "crisis-prompted online language teaching" (Gacs, Goertler & Spasova 2020: 380). Gacs, Goertler and Spasova (2020: 383) also referred to this rapid process as "online triage" to reflect the fact that teachers needed to select the course content that was absolutely necessary in order to teach efficiently considering the special situation. Qualitative teaching was not of paramount relevance at the beginning, but "temporary access to instruction and instructional support that is quick to set up" was (Barbour 2020: 6).

2.5   Switching from face-to-face to distance learning

Research has shown that effective online learning necessitates careful planning, design, course set-up and training. Moreover, support from all participants (e.g. students, instructors, institutions) is needed to make a distance learning project a success (Vivolo 2020). When institutions or individual teachers plan to switch from a f2f class to an online classroom there is usually "an intentional commitment" with long-term planning and the necessary resources (Gacs, Goertler & Spasova 2020: 382). The main purpose of EDE, on the other hand, is "ensuring continuity", and the outcomes and expectations are adapted to meet short-term goals (Gacs, Goertler & Spasova 2020: 380). Whether a course is switched to an online format abruptly or within a few months, it is suggested to have a plan regarding the learning objectives, delivery format (synchronous or asynchronous), platforms and tools, organisational structure, interaction types, assessment and evaluation (Gacs, Goertler & Spasova 2020: 385-387).

Moving courses online might require institutions to change the whole IT system that had previously only been installed to fulfil administrative functions. A teacher will also have the additional work to set up a course virtually which involves time and IT knowledge (White 2003: 41). Fojtik (2018: 16) pointed out that the time required to plan, prepare and rework

online classes exceeds what teachers are used to in a traditional classroom setting, which seems particularly important considering the fact that teachers had to change their classes almost overnight.

When switching to an online environment, teachers have to take on new roles to meet the requirements of this new teaching and learning environment. Flexibility is a key aspect, and also a "shift in mindset is required" (White 2003: 69). Teachers have to change their role from being a tutor to becoming a facilitator and a motivator. In an online environment, a teacher becomes more of a co-learner and an additional communicator within the classroom (White 2003: 68f). In fact, this not only reflects the teacher's role in an online classroom but also describes the 'new' role of a teacher as described in the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which will be explained in chapter 3. Similarly, Muñoz-Marín and González-Moncada (2010: 82) found in their case study that teachers needed to take on new roles, such as "technical knowledge expert", "immediate feedback provider", "constant motivator" and "time management advisor".

Through the combination of audio and video input, an online class should be designed in a way that "a distance learning student does not notice that s/he is not in the classroom" (Trajanovic, Domazet and Misic-Ilic 2007: 443). However, Fojtik (2018: 16) pointed out that distance learning is "a completely different approach than regular daytime lessons". He looked at bachelor's degree students and the problems they faced in their learning during distance education. One of the general difficulties for teachers is the realisation that online and real classes are different. Teachers think that they can apply the same strategies, methods and practices that they would use in 'normal' lessons. The lack of experience and the increased time needed to prepare online classes and online materials simply adds to these difficulties (Fojtik 2018: 16). White (2003) also highlighted the facts that teachers tend to use existing material such as worksheets and coursebooks, which are then adapted for online use. However, what tends to be forgotten is the "crucial role played by the teacher" regarding feedback, instructions and the structuring of content (White 2003: 40). Teachers often have their course content in their heads and suddenly need to write everything down and structure it. Not having physical contact with one's students also hinders the ability of giving immediate feedback and motivating the students. When teachers simply adapt traditional material to the online classroom, deep and effective learning might get lost along the way. It is, therefore, necessary to redirect one's attention away from the material and toward the learners and their particular needs. Moving the learners' needs to the centre stage means adapting course content to the

online environment in a way that learners can make the most out of it and support their progress in language learning (White 2003: 42f).

Hauck and Haezewindt (1999: 50) summarised the teachers' insights gained in an online course created as part of a pilot project. According to them, it is necessary for the teachers to feel at ease not only with online tools but also with problems that might occur, such as when a loudspeaker or a microphone is not working. Being confident as a teacher is of utmost importance for the learner's confidence as well. Moreover, the teaching style needs to be adapted when longer pauses or correcting errors occur. In addition, teachers need to work on strategies that enable students to take on more active roles, such as letting them 'alone' in groups or within the whole group so that they learn to work autonomously. This is supported by an experiment on synchronous online communication analysed by Murphy (2009) who suggested that students might need to be assigned different roles. Giving students more responsibility and assigning them the role of moderators, not only changes the lesson's focus from teacher-centred to learner-centred, but also takes "some of the instructional burden off of teachers" (Murphy 2009: 18).

In order to classify the move of traditional learning material and methods to online learning, Puentedura (2006) developed a framework with four levels called the SAMR model. The model's initial aim was to provide support and guidance for teachers switching from real-life to online classes (Puentedura 2006). Hockly (2013: 3f), who applied Puentedura's model to online English language classes, provided examples for the four different categories (Hockly 2013).[7]

- **S**ubstitution: Online tools are used to substitute traditional tools, and no functional change occurs.

  Example: Students take dictation in form of a text message instead of using pen and paper.

- **A**ugmentation: Online tools are used to substitute traditional tools, and the functional aspect is improved.

  Example: An SMS is sent to another learner who comments on it and others can see the chat. Pen and paper are substituted by the SMS; however, the function is improved through the conversation.

- **M**odification: Online tools require tasks to be redesigned significantly.

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[7] The model can be found in the PowerPoint presentation on Puentedura's weblog (Puentedura 2006) and the examples provided are from Hockly (2013: 3f).

Example: An oral presentation is practised, recorded and then reworked until the students are happy with the recording. Such a presentation could be shared via blogs, an LMS or even a wider audience.

- **R**edefinition: Online tools are used to create completely new tasks that would not have been possible without technology.

Example: A teacher creates a treasure hunt for students outside or in the school using devices with GPS. Thus, a new learning experience is made possible by the use of online tools.

Whereas technology is used to *enhance* online classes in the first two levels, online tools help to *transform* course content in the last two levels. According to Puentedura (2006: "slides and audio"), *transformation* would be the ultimate goal in order to achieve better performances and stay competitive. Hockly (2013: 4) pointed out that we need to be aware that our future will become more and more mobile and that *transforming* traditional f2f tasks will support learners in becoming mobile literates.[8]

2.6   Distance learning environments

When examining how distance learning environments are designed, one will encounter the terms synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. This distinction is a core element of this thesis and will be one of the main perspectives for the analysis of the interview data. Teachers might decide voluntarily which environment they choose or whether they wish to use a combination of the two. However, technical challenges, personal preferences, or learning objectives might also be factors that help them to decide on a learning environment.

An asynchronous distance learning environment usually involves a CMS or an LMS that allows participants to complete a course or assignments without being present at the same time or place as the instructor or the other participants (White 2003: 8f). According to Vivolo (2020: 9), the majority of online classes are asynchronous or non-real-time classes. Communication and learning are not live in such classes, and various tools like documents, e-mails, audio files, or videos are used to keep the course going. This means that instructors provide instructions with a deadline and documents or material and that participants work on by themselves. Depending on the course and the online tools used, students and teachers stay

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[8] The SAMR model will add an additional perspective of the interview findings and will help to analyse the teachers' strategies and methods. It will be incorporated into this thesis to show the levels of enhancement and transformation. To indicate the reference to the four levels in the running text, the verbs/nouns (*substitute/substitution*, *augment/augmentation*, *modify/modification*, *redefine/redefinition, enhance/enhancement, transform/transformation*) will be written in italics.

in contact via e-mail, chat functions, or calls (Vivolo 2020: 9). In general, asynchronous learning environments offer one major affordance; *time*, which allows the teacher to focus, review, compose and reflect. In addition, information becomes richer; an example would be e-mails that can be accompanied by large amounts of additional information such as links or files (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 9).

Teaching within a synchronous learning environment means that teachers and students are online at the same time (White 2003: 8f). Technical developments like streaming services, video chats and webinars have facilitated live online classes where teachers and students can interact. According to Vivolo (2020: 9), this format will only be used occasionally to "create a connection between students to students and teacher to students" amongst others. However, Meskill and Anthony (2015: 4) stressed that "being present and active in the online venue is a critical factor for successful instruction." In synchronous online environments, information can be presented through different channels and multimedia. Moreover, the class is more closely connected with the teacher, and the teacher does not only have the possibility to watch his or her students learn, but also to track their progress at the moment of speaking or writing (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 9). Being online at the same time increases the students' sense of belonging to a group which, in turn, makes them feel less isolated. An additional benefit of these learning environments is the fact that synchronous interactions make it easier for them to emulate spontaneous conversations and interactions (White 2003: 10).

Beldarrain (2016: 140) claimed that both synchronous and asynchronous environments make it possible for students to interact and collaborate because of new technological developments. This is supported by Trajanovic, Domazet and Misic-Ilic (2007: 451) who found that distance student learners did not fall behind their peers who were in face-to-face classes, which is probably due to the use of audio and video streams that compensate for their absence from a real classroom. However, Offir, Lev and Bezalel (2008: 1176f) who tested how 160 students used synchronous and asynchronous learning environments with regard to surface and deep learning stated that "interaction is essential for internalizing the learning" and questioned whether asynchronous learning might have a negative effect on deep learning due to the lack of interaction. The results of their observations and interviews highlight the importance of teacher-student interaction. It is especially the lack of dialogue and questions in an asynchronous learning environment that hinders deep learning processes, and thus, a better processing of the course content. Moreover, the presence of the teacher and face-to-face instructions are highly beneficial for the students' motivation and attention (Offir, Lev & Bezalel 2008: 1181f). However, the authors also highlighted the fact that students with "high

cognitive ability" are also successful in asynchronous environments (Offir, Lev & Bezalel 2008: 1181).

The terms blended learning and hybrid learning are sometimes used interchangeably. In this thesis, hybrid learning environments refer to the combination of synchronous and asynchronous environments. Those two environments "complement each other" (Puliti 2019: 249). Whereas asynchronous learning offers possibilities to train writing and analytical skills, synchronous learning motivates students and makes the training of speaking skills possible. Additionally, a combination might help to reduce the effects of technological barriers (Puliti 2019: 249). White (2003: 10) called hybrid learning "multi-synchronous learning". This type of education brings together the advantages of both synchronous and asynchronous environments.

In the present thesis, blended learning refers to live courses that are accompanied by online sessions, which can take many different forms. As this work placed a focus on the period when real-time classes were not possible due to the pandemic, this will not be further explained. More information can be found in Meskill and Anthony (2015).

2.7 Challenges in distance learning

Teachers and students face numerous challenges in an online environment; these might be linked to time management, missing the classroom atmosphere and new autonomous ways of learning. On the other hand, technical barriers might hinder successful distance learning.

When interviewing language teachers, Baumann et al. (2008: 383) found the aspect of time to be "an important constraint". Time management is a crucial factor in distance education as learning from home also means considering that private and school life might interfere (White 2003: 21f). Gacs, Goertler and Spasova (2020: 388) suggested a clear time management plan for teachers. This involves separating assignments that need feedback from those that do not need to be commented on or that can be checked by the students themselves and a fixed time for responding to e-mails and other means of communication. Teachers should also make use of automated answers in LMS and tasks that are corrected automatically.

Fojtik (2018: 16) asked students about the disadvantages of distance education and found that students miss the contact with their peers and the teachers and the general classroom setting, which even synchronous environments can hardly compensate for. In general, it can be said that learners have difficulties with talking into the void in synchronous conferences, especially without video. Although students get used to this environment with time, it remains challenging for them to participate actively (White 2003: 49). Baumann et al. (2008: 383) also highlighted a feeling of isolation in language teachers as well as their fear of "losing students".

Added to this are communication problems with teachers, challenging lecture content and staying motivated (Fojtik 2018: 16).

Schools and institutions usually provide "an overall ecosystem specifically designed to support learners with formal, informal, and social resources" (Barbour et al. 2020: 5). Moving everything into the home of students and teachers takes away such a system. However, the home can also become such an ecosystem. Dixon, Shewell, Crandell (2020: Introduction) used the term "ecosystem concept" to generally refer to the system that learners need to make successful (online) language learning possible. This model particularly refers to the fact that language learning must go beyond the classroom to enable the students' success in language learning. Here, the ecosystem revolves around aspects like learner autonomy, language practice within large communities and resources for language learning that stem from the students' personal surroundings like family and friends (Dixon, Shewell, Crandell 2020: Introduction). The distance learning phase that students and teachers all over the world found themselves in proves itself to be quite favourable for such a concept, although it is the teacher's task to create activities that include the student's surroundings.

Moreover, distance learning requires students to work more independently as compared to how they work in a face-to-face classroom. This, in turn, means that students need to take on a new learner role where they take over more responsibility for their own learning and their own success, which can be challenging (White 2003: 23). Autonomous learning and managing their time are sometimes considered to be negative aspects by students (Fojtik 2018: 16).

Besides the aforementioned aspects, teachers and students depend on the technology they work with in order to be able to teach a class online and participate in an online course. It is, therefore, a crucial aspect in online learning to have access to computers and/or smartphones and the Internet. According to an article in the *Kurier*, approximately 6% of Austrian students aged between 6 and 14 do not have a computer or laptop at home or have to share devices with other family members. The Federal Ministry of Austria for Education, Science and Research has promised support for students. Large companies like Magenta, an Austrian mobile company, have provided data packages to make distance learning possible for students in need (Hager 2020). A poor internet connection or a lack of webcams, microphones and speakers can hinder communication between students and teachers (Goertler 2009: 76f). In addition, the unique situation that Austria faced in March meant that thousands of students and teachers were not only trying to access certain learning management systems at the same time but also had to organise a timetable that would not interfere with other family members' subjects and timetables. Goertler (2009: 77) furthermore invoked the problem of data protection. Besides

school internal privacy and security issues, it must also be considered what students under 18 might encounter when they are 'sent out' into the world wide web to complete tasks.

Problems with technology are especially frustrating and have a negative impact on the students' attitude towards online education, which, in turn, also has a negative impact on achievement (Simonson et al. 2011: 135). In this regard, a language teacher must consider different learner types and that students might possess very different IT skills. What seems particularly noteworthy is that, on the basis of two studies, 20% of the students dropped out of the distance learning class as a result of technical issues (White 2003: 49).

One might think that today's students are well-prepared for an online environment, as they are "equipped with any number of highly developed digital literacy skills" (Meskill 2007: 13). Rogers and Wolff (2000: 47), however, suggested using online tools moderately, as every activity and every new program that is being introduced makes online classes even more complex, which could lead to frustration and unsuccessful instructions. Teachers might not have the technical skills to identify the most suitable tools, and students could be overwhelmed by the many different tools that are offered (White 2003: 72). It is the instructor's job to "not only consider the pedagogical objectives of a task, but s/he must also identify an appropriate CMC tool and properly situate the task in an authentic context" (Goertler 2009: 75). However, the distance learning phase most likely helped students and teachers to improve their IT skills, as besides learning language through online tools, technological skills are trained as a 'side-effect" (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 380).

3   The Austrian Curriculum

Writing a paper about teaching English via distance learning and the use of digital technology necessitates taking a look at the Austrian curriculum. Language teaching and learning in Austrian schools is based on the communicative language teaching approach. As this has an influence on the teaching practices in face-to-face classrooms and consequently in online classrooms, this approach to teaching will be presented in more detail as well.

3.1   Digitalisation and the Austrian curriculum

If the curriculum is examined, it goes without saying that subjects like Informatik [computer science] are dedicated to make students fit for the digital age. Moreover, the general educational objectives of the Austrian AHS curriculum specify that innovative information technology and mass media have gained in importance and that digital competence will, therefore, be promoted at schools (Lehrplan AHS 2020: 5). The same paragraph can be found in the curriculum of the Austrian NMS (Lehrplan NMS 2021: 3). According to the curriculum of the Austrian HAK and

HLW, "[t]he use of information and communication technologies has to be aimed at in all subjects" (HAK Lehrplan 2014: 6/ HLW Lehrplan 2015: 12).

In this thesis work, however, it was particularly interesting to have a closer look at languages addressed in the curriculum. In the following section, the curricula of different school types placing a special focus on the relevance of online media and digital competences in English are presented.

Information technology such as the Internet and e-mail should be incorporated into the English classroom in a target-oriented manner (Lehrplan AHS 2020: 32). Furthermore, online dictionaries, online material, electronic messaging like blogs and e-mails, audio-visual media and 'new technologies' like e-mails and the Internet, should be used in class. In combination with such media education, students need to be trained to critically analyse media (Lehrplan AHS 2020: 32f; 69; 73). Looking into the Austrian BMS, students should be able to write e-mails and (corporate) blogs and "understand standard language in direct contact and in media" (HAK Lehrplan 39). While the curriculum of the HAK and the AHS mostly refer to media, the HLW curriculum gives more detailed information. Students of an Austrian HLW should be able to understand podcasts, SMSs, e-mails and posts in social networks (Lehrplan HLW 2015: 28). No matter how much detail the curricula provide, all require the incorporation of technology and media in the language classroom. As technology advances tremendously rapidly, it is only logical that the curricula mostly refrain from suggesting specific ways to integrate the media into the English classroom. Everything linked to online media can only be a snapshot in time, as the curriculum would already be outdated from the moment of publishing. It is, therefore, mostly left to the teachers' responsibility and interest to implement the constantly changing media landscape in the English classroom and make their students fit for the digital world.

However, there is also a nation-wide campaign worthy to be mentioned. The Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research has launched the initiative "eEducation Austria: Digitale Schulentwicklung". Its aim is to equip students of all age levels with the competences to use technology for their own personal development and/or to start their careers in professional fields linked to the digital world. Schools can become members of this initiative in order to make their schools "digi-fit" through training sessions, individual counselling, and the access to material. The meaningful integration of digital media into all school subjects in order to add value to learning and teaching has been moved to the centre stage.[9] From the Ministry's information, it does not become apparent when this initiative was introduced. The *eeducation.at* website reveals that 2960 of all types of schools in Austria (elementary schools,

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[9] https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/zrp/dibi/dgb/eeducation.html (11 May 2020)

vocational schools, academic secondary schools, new secondary schools, colleges for higher vocational education) are taking part in the initiative to become 'more digitalised'. According to the latest document of school information published by the Ministry in 2017, there are 5712[10] schools in Austria, which means that almost half of the Austrian schools are striving to become more "digi-fit". Goertler (2009: 74) stated that "when faced with changing the curriculum to a technology-enhanced or a partially, or even fully, online format, language educators struggle with envisioning an implementation that adheres to their pedagogical goals." This suggests that curricula also need to be made digi-fit in order to provide teachers with the necessary basis that should guide their pedagogical goals.

3.2   Language learning - Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

> Als übergeordnetes Lernziel in allen Fertigkeitsbereichen ist stets die Fähigkeit zur erfolgreichen Kommunikation – die nicht mit fehlerfreier Kommunikation zu verwechseln ist – anzustreben. Somit sind die jeweiligen kommunikativen Anliegen beim Üben von Teilfertigkeiten in den Vordergrund zu stellen. (for example Lehrplan AHS 2020: 32)

With regard to how languages should be taught in Austrian schools, the Austrian curriculum has clearly adopted a communicative language approach where the communicative function of language is given the highest priority. Language proficiency used to be based on grammatical competence. Repetition and drilling practices were commonly used to equip students with grammatical knowledge. Grammatical rules were taught deductively, which means that students were confronted with the grammatical rule first and then given exercises and practice. The four skills were introduced only once the basis of the language had been solidified (Richards 2006: 6ff). In teaching methodologies like Audiolingualism and Situational Language Teaching, language learning was mostly teacher-centred (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 378). As earlier approaches were criticised for their heavy focus on grammar, CLT developed in the 1970s, and teachers and students started paying attention to the actual meaningful use of grammatical structures. Thus, communicative competence has become "the goal of second and foreign language teaching" (Richards 2006: 22). Communicatively competent students cannot only adapt their language to various different purposes, but they can also adapt their language to suit different settings and interlocutors. Moreover, communicative competence involves the production of different text types and the knowledge of strategies to overcome limiting conversation situations. The idea behind this was that "communication that is meaningful to the learner provides a better opportunity for learning than through a grammar-based approach" (Richards 2006: 3,12). Language skills should, therefore, be taught in a way so that they can be incorporated into real-life situations (Richards 2006: 19f) and where

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[10] https://www.bmbwf.gv.at/Themen/schule/schulsystem/gd.html (11 May 2020)

attention is given to the language's function and not primarily to linguistic structures such as grammar (Littlewood 1981: x), just like it is stated above in the extract of the Austrian AHS curriculum. However, it must be clarified that even though CLT trends exist that have tried to remove grammar from their teaching, the knowledge and mastery of grammatical structures are necessary components of successful communication and thus language teaching. CLT, however, tends to favour an inductive way of familiarising students with grammar (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 378).

CLT has not only changed the ways the four skills are taught but also entailed changes in the roles of teachers and students. Activities started to be designed to include students and to initiate communication between them. Students have become responsible for their own progress and have started to actively participate in the English lessons. The role of the teacher has changed from a "model for correct speech" to a teacher who facilitates communication (Richards 2006: 5). The teacher is no longer the centre of language learning, but the lessons have become more student-centred. Students interact, they collaborate and learn through feedback (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 378f). Autonomy and responsibility on the side of the students play a significant part in distance learning (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 8) and, therefore, online lessons seem to provide the ideal playing field for CLT. Against this background, it is important to note that the CLT approach seems beneficial for more advanced students. Young learners who have difficulties organising their own learning autonomously and who additionally might lack language proficiency will find participation in CLT activities challenging (Thamarana 2015: 97).

In the CLT approach, communicative competence is taught on the basis of grammatical competency, sociolinguistic competency, discourse competency and strategic competency (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 380). Current CLT practices are based on general principles drawn from a "number of different educational paradigms and traditions" (Richards 2006: 22). The principles, which are presented in the list below, helped to develop the interview questions that served as a basis for the semi-structured interviews described in this thesis. According to Richards (2006: 22-24), a CLT-based lesson should feature:

1. Interaction and meaningful communication
2. Opportunities for negotiation and collaborative creation of meaning
3. Relevant, interesting and purposeful content (with the help of authentic 'material')
4. Creative use of language
5. Inductive or discovery learning
6. Opportunities to use and practice language

7. Learning through feedback
8. A teacher who acts as facilitator

One way of implementing the CLT approach in class is to teach language through *tasks*. Blake stressed the fact that teaching the four skills (online or not) cannot be done without 'tasks' (Blake 2016: 130). In task-based language teaching (TBLT), an activity must be goal-oriented and "[l]anguage tasks involve communication that is meaning-oriented and as authentic as possible" (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 10). Authenticity will be discussed more thoroughly in section 4.5. Klapper (2003: 35) described tasks as "meaning-based activities closely related to learners' actual communicative needs with some real-world relationship", which takes the language learning out of the classroom. Moreover, an instructional environment where students feel comfortable is the ideal playing field for becoming more fluent and literate in "productive communication", which is done through the authentic use of language (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 10). Lessons and tasks that are planned with the aim of training communicative competence can, of course, also be carried out online. Online tools and the Internet offer various possibilities to adapt CLT lessons and tasks to distance learning. These possibilities will be more thoroughly presented in the next chapter dealing with the four skills. In general, it can be said that students need many opportunities for practice and negotiating meaning in a CLT classroom. To provide these opportunities, a sense of community and trust is necessary that needs to be established online. Only then can activities like dialogues, role-play games and information gap exercises be successful. Teachers might additionally consider introducing certain behaviour rules that are called 'netiquette' in order to have respectful interactions (Hampel & Stickler 2005: 318).

4 Teaching the Four Skills

The following chapter presents an overview of how the four skills reading, writing, listening and speaking are taught in the English language classroom. Besides looking at the four skills from a CLT perspective, the notion of technology (Internet and online tools) is discussed. In this context, Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model is also included to see how 'traditional' strategies for teaching the four skills can be *enhanced* and/or *transformed* to suit the requirements of online language teaching.

In this thesis, the skills are presented separately and divided into the 'well-known' four skills providing a readable structure that can also be applied to the interviews. Various authors have voiced criticism about dividing the skills in such a way. Blake (2016: 137) criticised the reduction of L2 development to four skills, namely, listening, reading, writing and speaking

and explained that "the practice of CALL itself no longer deals with digital writing as separate from reading, nor implements speaking practice in isolation from listening". Chappelle (2003: 16) pondered whether written and oral language could be distinguished in curricula and proposed the use of computer-meditated communication to constitute a "third mode, and a third set of abilities". It became apparent that, through CALL and thus the possibilities that online media open up, the skills become more and more intertwined. Even more so when a TBLT approach is taken where the students' language use and needs are the focal points and the creation of meaning is paramount, i.e. a "more integrated view of language" is recognised (Blake 2016: 137). Therefore, the new affordances of online teaching will be kept in mind in the probable expansion/connection of the four skills throughout the thesis.

In the following, the teaching of the four skills in English Language Teaching is described with regard to the 'traditional' face-to-face setting and in combination with an online environment. Besides providing a theoretical framework for the interviews, this chapter also serves as a collection of possibilities offered by the online world to provide learners with opportunities for using and practicing English in a meaningful way. The pandemic has resulted in a tremendous increase in the creation of online tools, and the existing ones are now more easily accessible and available. Therefore, the explanations tend to concern the skills in general, and only a few technological and digital options were selected to give insights into 'what is out there'. However, the constantly changing online environment makes it impossible for such a chapter to be exhaustive; it could never be complete due to the rapid and vast developments in the field.

4.1 Reading

Reading can be described as "the process of constructing meaning from written texts. It is a complex skill requiring the coordination of interrelated sources of information" (Anderson et al. 1985: 18). Readers enter in "a kind of dialogue" with the text and try to make sense of it (Hedge 2000: 188). Students (consciously or unconsciously) activate different kinds of knowledge when reading. Systemic knowledge, which is also called linguistic knowledge or bottom-up processing, helps the reader to understand language structures and morphology. Schematic knowledge (top-down processing) draws on the students' prior knowledge of the world, cultures, or the topic of a text itself (Hedge 2000: 189). The importance of schematic knowledge has influenced the methodology of the reading skill and led to the use of pre-reading tasks to activate the students. Regarding language knowledge, cohesive devices such as linking words and vocabulary are particularly important for readers. This knowledge can, for example,

be activated within pre-reading tasks and consolidated through post-reading tasks (Nunan 1991: 67f).

The literature differentiates between intensive and extensive reading in the language classroom. Acquiring new vocabulary, understanding texts and increasing grammatical knowledge are the aims of intensive reading activities (Nation 2004: 20f). Moreover, through intensive reading tasks, students learn "language features through a deliberate focus on these items" (Nation 2004: 20). Reading strategies such as *scanning* or *skimming* allow for an intensive reading of a text (BBC Intensive Reading 2020). Such intensive reading tasks might include true/false activities, gap filling activities, matching headlines, and sequencing jumbled paragraphs.

Extensive reading, on the other hand, involves "large quantities of material that are comfortably within the[…] linguistic range" of the learner and should give students a "pleasurable experience" (Watkins 2018: 3). The language focus in extensive reading activities is on fluency and amongst other sources, teachers can make use of graded readers (Watkins 2018: 3–5). Extensive reading is an excellent way for learners to become more autonomous, improve their general language competences, to broaden their schematic or world knowledge, grow their vocabulary and as a consequence improve their writing skills (BBC Extensive Reading 2020). Moreover, such reading activities increase motivation in learners (Watkins 2018: 3).

These are insights about how learners acquire the reading skills that can be generally applied to teaching reading for students of English. The reading skills and the aforementioned aspects shall now be put into the perspective of distance learning and the use of online tools.

4.1.1 Reading online

The World Wide Web is a treasure trove of written or rather typed text. Not only can instructors benefit from a plethora of authors from multiple cultural backgrounds speaking different linguistic varieties who are motivated by their professional or private lives, but the Internet has also opened the door to 'old' and 'new' text types. Besides online newspapers or online versions of books, Twitter posts, memes and Instagram entries can become potential reading sources for English classes as well. Moreover, easy access and availability make it possible for students to read blogs, website entries and scientific articles.

Online texts have a multimodal character that needs to be considered. Text might be incorporated into videos, accompanied by pictures or integrated into a sound file. Therefore, moving the reading skill into an online environment not only adds more complexity to the skill but requires a reconsideration of teaching reading online (Muñoz-Marín & González-Moncada

2010; 73) and a different perspective on the reading skill (Blake 2016: 130). The line between reading and writing, for example, becomes blurred when considering instant messaging or commenting on websites and entries. Here, the perception of reading as being a "solitary activity" is changed to a skill that leads to a "collaborative digital writing" experience (Blake 2016: 135). This social dimension is added because of the "instantaneous connectedness" that not only changes the reading patterns but also adds the possibility of immediate exchange (Liaw/English 2017: 64).

Although the combination of visual and auditory input in online text is not only beneficial for vocabulary retention but also for reading comprehension (Blake 2016: 134), the availability of numerous online materials and the combination of resources can also lead to "distracted minds, information overload, and fragmentation" (Liaw/English 2017: 70). Readers not only need to be able to decode texts, but also to critically evaluate online material. This puts an additional burden on the teachers as they not only have to select and prepare material, but also to guide students through reading texts online, teaching them how to identify reliable sources, question the authors' statements and use information from the World Wide Web (Liaw/English 2017: 71). In online reading tasks, pre-reading activities can support students by alleviating the burden of working with online text. Such activities are especially important for students who work "autonomously with CALL reading activities" (Blake 2016: 135). Ideally, students will encounter numerous English texts in their private lives as well and should, therefore, be equipped to work with unknown texts when surfing the net. What is more, knowing how to approach unfamiliar texts on the Internet might encourage students to read more English blogs, sites, or comments by themselves out of interest and pleasure. Students can, therefore, find motivation for completing extensive reading tasks, besides the intensive reading tasks that constitute the majority of tasks in coursebooks. This goes hand in hand with technology that "foster[s] learner autonomy" and online tools that move the learner to the centre-stage, as learner-centredness becomes the guiding force in the design and selection of online tools (Liaw/English 2017: 71).

4.1.2   Online tools for teaching reading

In this section, a selection of possibilities for teaching reading is presented. The methods and tools used are also examined against the background of Puentedura's (2006) model for implementing online English classes in distance learning.

What is particularly challenging for teachers in the preparation of online content is the selection of material, as technology offers an overwhelming number of possibilities (Liaw/English 2017: 65). Online tools used for teaching reading can come in the shape of self-

developed or commercial courseware, which are online study packages that include explanations and various exercises (Liaw/English 2017: 66f). Moreover, dictionaries, concordancing tools, or corpus analysis tools and speech recognition can be used. Although the latter seems useful for training speaking skills, it can also support learners and encourage them to work on their reading abilities especially in asynchronous learning environments, as studies have shown that such programs can motivate and encourage children to read more (Liaw/English 2017: 69).

Besides using online tools for teaching reading in an online environment, White (2003: 40) also explained that many teachers make use of their usual teaching material like coursebooks and worksheets for online learning. Printed materials and books that are usually used as the basis for reading comprehensions can be replaced by their online versions such as PDF documents, text in e-mails, or Word documents (Trajanovic, Domazet & Misic-Ilic 2007: 448). This would be a simple way of *substituting* traditional material with online tools in Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model. Various Austrian schoolbook publishers such as *Helbling*, *Hueber*, *Trauner* and *Veritas* to name but a few, immediately reacted to the sudden move to online learning by providing students with free online books or online versions of books (BMBWF 2020). Here, books in paper format are *substituted* with their online versions. However, some of these books also provide interactive tools, such as the graphic stories that come with the mobile app of the MORE! books which can be seen as *augmentation*, *modification*, or even as *redefinition* of traditional material. Goertler (2009: 77ff) proposed the use of various online tools to promote CLT in the English classroom with regard to reading. Whereas instant messaging services, e-mails, discussion forums and blogs can be seen as a *substitution*, *augmentation*, or *modification* of traditional material, wikis that allow participants to read texts, react to them, collaborate with others and co-author texts that are collected in a closed or open online space could be seen as *redefinition* according to the SAMR model. Such extensive reading material seems to be especially suitable for asynchronous learning environments. However, depending on what the teachers would like to achieve, such reading activities can also be adapted for synchronous online classes.

Blogs are omnipresent in language teaching as they constitute a text type that students are required to produce during the Matura[11] exams. Korovina, Pushkina and Gurova (2016) studied the effects of blogs on university students' reading skills. The authors developed a "closed blog" through which the students were given reading assignments that would train

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[11] The Matura is an Austrian school leaving examination for students completing secondary education. It allows students to enter university or other forms of higher education.

reading types such as skimming, scanning and reading for detail. The texts were accompanied by different tasks that reflected typical reading activities, such as dividing texts and giving the subtexts headlines, finding main ideas, crossing out unnecessary information and looking for information to find the main ideas of the text. There were also tasks that supported writing skills such as writing summaries and commenting on content. Comments were only received by the teacher to avoid opportunities for cheating (Korovina, Puskina & Gurova 2016: 301). Through the results of the tasks and questionnaires, the authors concluded that the blog helped students not only to improve their reading skills but also their knowledge of terminology and their language competences. Moreover, the students were highly motivated to try this new way of learning language. Although the creation of blogs necessitates IT knowledge, it seems as if a class blog might be beneficial in the English classroom.

4.2   Listening

Just as with reading, bottom-up and top-down strategies are involved when trying to understand oral text. Whereas in bottom-up listening, the language knowledge is used to comprehend a text, top-down processes involve prior knowledge of the context or topic of the oral text (Hedge 2000: 228ff). Regarding preparation for a listening task, pre-listening tasks should consist of activities that activate the students' schematic knowledge and thus facilitate comprehension afterwards (Hedge 2000: 247). When designing listening tasks in a CLT approach, teachers also need to distinguish between tasks that necessitate 'pure' listening as opposed to listening as part of an interaction, such as a dialogue where a response is expected. Moreover, listening tasks always need to be put into "a meaningful context" with a "functional intent" (Nunan 1991). Using authentic material adds meaning to a listening task; however, this also necessitates contextualisation for learners in order to facilitate comprehension (Hedge 2000: 249).

4.2.1   Listening online

Sportspeople use YouTube videos to provide helpful tips for their viewers, hobby chefs talk about their cooking life hacks in podcasts, international radio shows can be switched on from every smartphone with an internet connection, and English songs are omnipresent through earphones. It can be said that "the explosion of native-speaker authored content on the web has been the most significant recent change for listening practice" (Blake 2016: 132). Blake's quote focused on native speakers, and many different opinions and research findings exist on whether 'native English' is more advantageous for students or not (see, for example, Moussu & Llurda 2008). Not only does the Internet provide teachers and students with a plethora of topics, but also with insights into various different 'forms of English' and cultures, which must not be neglected. Using online oral texts, whether they are 'native' or 'non-native' English, make it

much easier today to broaden the student's English world by providing them with all varieties of English spoken with different accents.

This being said, teachers need to carefully select the appropriate content for their teaching and their classes. Blake (2016: 133) stressed the fact that the rich amount of content that can be found online is futile without instructors who "frame these materials linguistically and culturally in ways that will be meaningful for L2 learners". Hubbard (2017: 96) pointed out that the problem for teachers is not finding enough material but selecting the right material for "the development of listening skills and target language proficiency." Pre-listening activities and contextualisation have to be assigned special importance. Students need groundwork for comprehending the linguistic, cultural and content-related background which might include vocabulary work and brainstorming activities. Blake (2016: 133) also highlighted the preparation of pragmatics, which is often neglected in lower classes. Although students also need preparatory work for listening comprehensions in face-to-face classrooms, pre-listening activities need to be designed differently online, as students should also be able to perform them autonomously. Moreover, as explained for the reading skill, students should be equipped with knowledge to encounter unknown oral texts, because they might listen to all sorts of content in their private lives.

Even though teachers need to thoroughly prepare to add oral online content into the classroom, it seems to be especially beneficial, as coursebooks have often been criticised for providing students with 'manufactured' and 'unreal' content. When authentic content is defined as content that has not initially been designed for coursebooks, the Internet indeed provides access to incredible resources, such as 'real' English audios, texts and videos. Online content is authentic in the sense that it is full of idiomatic and sarcastic language, humorous talk and collocations – all things that students in classrooms are not often exposed to naturally (Blake 2016: 133). Such online material could also be incorporated into face-to-face classrooms; however, barriers may exist linked, such as the lack of computers and other equipment. Although distance learning does not automatically mean that every student has access to a computer, having most of the class in front of their computers and phones makes integrating online listening tasks easier.

4.2.2 Online tools for teaching listening

Teaching listening in an online classroom can have different advantages. Hubbard (2017: 97) summarised them in the term "*enhanced input*" [original emphasis]. Transcripts and captions can be used and then highlighted or underlined to increase salience. In order to prepare online content for listening activities in class, Blake (2016: 133) suggested tools that make it possible

to add questions and comments to YouTube Videos. As such programs sometimes have short lifespans, no specific software is listed here. However, they can easily be found online. The listening input can also be modified to facilitate comprehension by providing a still image with audio input. The combination of visuals and sound, such as a video with captions, seems to support learning as long as the visual material fits the audio material (Hubbard 2017: 98, 99). This makes one think of Blake's (2016) criticism with regard to the separation of the four skills. Combining audio and video or presenting a dialogue with a transcript would be a combination of reading and listening.

Traditionally, teachers use coursebooks and the respective CD or audio files as well as the normal classroom communication as practice for the skill of listening. Most coursebooks have CDs included or make it possible to use audio files online. Therefore, students may study listening comprehension tasks with their traditional coursebook from home as part of asynchronous assignments in the case of distance learning; this would represent a *substitution* for the traditional coursebooks. As instructions by teachers (for example, pre-listening tasks) can also be recorded and uploaded to a Learning Management System, this would *augment* and even *modify* traditional coursebook listening tasks (Trajanovic, Domazet & Misic-Ilic 2007: 448).

When teaching listening online, it seems especially important to consider the affective side of motivation. Listening activities are particularly motivating if the student's personal preferences and interests are taken into account. This might involve the lyrics of favourite songs where the teacher could add mistakes that students need to identify. Tasks including videos about student-related hobbies can also be incorporated into an online classroom (Hubbard 2017: 102). By using videos for listening comprehension tasks as a starting point for other activities that involve reacting to the video or commenting on others' opinions, new tasks formats such as shard documents or online quizzes can be created that would not be possible outside of an online environment.

Dang (2012) conducted surveys of 222 language teachers in Vietnam in order to find out what resources were used to teach listening to others. The online tools used were YouTube, TED Talks, free audiobooks and the BBC Learning English page ("6 Minute English" and "Words in the News" and podcasts). Another suggestion for warm-ups, pre-/while-/ and post-listening tasks were news articles that are read aloud by a computer-generated voice. *Breakingnewsenglish.com* offers news that are read at various speed levels and listening activities that can also be completed online. The tools are presented as a list, and possible activities are presented separately. The aforementioned tools can be used for various listening

strategies such as gap-filling, accent training, note-taking, dictation, listening for details/main ideas, and listening comprehension questions. Some activities such as dictations seem highly suitable for synchronous online environments whereas activities for listening in detail might be more appropriate for self-study in an asynchronous course. Dang (2012) also pointed out the possibility of speed adjustments that various programs make possible. Depending on the combination of activities and online tools, all levels of the SAMR model seem to be possible. Moreover, some authors have suggested encouraging learners to listen to online material outside the classroom. This has already been mentioned for practicing reading and also applies to the listening skill. The availability of oral material outside the classroom supports autonomy in learners and autonomy within their learning processes (Hubbard 2017: 102).

Against the backdrop of the aforementioned aspects in this thesis work, teachers were asked in the interviews about the strategies they used to teach listening with regard to (authentic) online material used, whether they taught synchronously or asynchronously and how the listening tasks were structured.

4.3 Writing

"Writing is the vehicle for communication and a skill mandated in all aspects of life", which is why it is an integral part of language learning and thus language teaching (Caswell & Mahler 2004: 3). Writing can have different functions in the language classroom. On the one hand, it can be used to reinforce language by asking students to use specific grammatical structures in texts or sentences. Writing can be used as a preparatory activity to gather and structure thoughts and opinions for oral discussions or serve as a basis for other activities, for example, when writing texts for dialogues (Harmer 2004: 32ff). On the other hand, writing can be taught "to help students to become better writers and to learn how to write in various genres using different registers" (Harmer 2004: 34).

When teaching writing, teachers make use of different approaches, such as process writing and product writing. In process writing, students go through different stages when producing texts. After planning a text by selecting ideas and brainstorming activities, drafts are written, revised and edited so that students have the possibility to develop their texts within numerous cycles. Product writing, on the other hand, involves model texts in which the linguistic features are analysed by the students so they can reproduce such a text. Accuracy and a focus on forms are prioritised in this approach (Hedge 2000: 305ff). Genre writing is similar to the product approach, as students often work with model texts. However, when focusing on genres, students need to be made aware of "the specific choice of vocabulary" (i.e. *register*)

(Harmer 2004: 17). Additionally, the knowledge of genres and especially their purposes are of paramount importance for successful communication (Harmer 2004: 16f).

4.3.1 Writing online

Blake started his chapter about writing by introducing the notion of "collaborative writing" that is tremendously facilitated through the Internet (Blake 2016: 135). Sharing documents, creating wikis, writing blog posts and comments and using other possibilities provided by LMSs will give students the chance to not only write themselves but create a writing document with others as well. If, in addition to the act of writing, students also are given the opportunity to analyse and edit their texts (with the help of the teacher or other students) and maybe rewrite them, they can benefit greatly from this writing process (Blake 2016: 136). This is due to the fact that "[a]ny digital tool that helps L2 learners engage in the reediting process is bound to produce improvements over the long run, as long as learners are engaged in this iterative design process" (Blake 2016: 136). Here, one must note that a clear distinction of the four skills might no longer be possible. Speaking is usually divided into spoken production and spoken interaction. If one examines the new possibilities that online environments create for teaching writing, one might argue to divide the writing skill accordingly.

4.3.2 Online tools for teaching writing

According to Meskill and Anthony (2015: 9), "written asynchronous is the most widely used mode of online instructional delivery by educational institutions around the world." It has reached this status mostly due to e-mails, which are "quintessential" and facilitate communication between students and teachers and between students and students. Teachers can send their instructions whenever and from wherever it suits them, and students can autonomously access this information and follow the instructions on their own schedule (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 8). Through online tools such as chats and e-mails, students have the possibility to communicate with their peers and their teachers in English. Such communication can take the form of a guided discussion, an information exchange through a chat programme, a post in a blog, or training the text type *e-mail*. Tools such as podcasts, wikis and blogs "take interactivity to the next level" (Beldarrain 2006: 140). E-mails can be placed on all levels of the SAMR model when taking into account the fact that e-mails can be sent to numerous recipients at the same time and that files/links can be annexed. In addition, the 'lower' levels of the SAMR model like *substitution, augmentation* and *modification* do not apply to chats, Twitter and blog posts because of their interactive character, thus making these tools prime examples of a *transformation* in learning materials.

Written synchronous environments involve written messages that are sent and received instantaneously. Such "real-time interactions" that can take place via chat functions in LMSs or in mobile phones might be used for educational means at school (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 9). The authors added that such exchanges tend to be "more conversation-like in their form and content" (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 9). In the curricula of Austrian schools, the four skills are divided into reading, writing, listening, spoken interaction and spoken production (Lehrplan HAK 2014: 16f). Written interaction has not yet been included in the Austrian curriculum. The language of written communication between teachers and between students and students and students also deserves special mention and will be discussed in more detail in section 4.5.

Whether writing takes place synchronously or asynchronously, Throssel and Morgan (2015: 380) argued that an online classroom provides everyone with the opportunity to utter their opinions. Forums and chats might even encourage shy learners to share their thoughts and provide feedback for their peers. Moreover, writing online makes it also possible to contact native speakers much more easily (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 380). Students could write 'real' inquiries to hotels via e-mail which would comply with the principles of meaningful interaction, authenticity and opportunities for practice. Moreover, the teacher's role shifts into the background, as another 'real' person receives the e-mail whether it is a fellow student or somebody else.

Blake (2016: 136) also highlighted the usage of corpora for vocabulary acquisition which, in turn, improves not only listening, speaking and reading, but of course, also writing. Corpora such as *Linguee* – a "goldmine" according to Blake – can positively influence vocabulary acquisition under the prerequisite that students are trained so they can use the terms, collocations and phrases efficiently (Blake 2016: 136).

Fattah (2014) tested the instant messaging service WhatsApp and its effect on university students' writing skills, revealing that WhatsApp had positive effects on the teacher/student relationship as more informal communication can take place. Moreover, students were able to "relate their opinions to those of others" (Fattah 2015: 126). However, using WhatsApp is often not recommended in school classes for data protection reasons, as the use of WhatsApp requires providing the personal phone number. Furthermore, the constant availability of teachers and students for questions and information must be considered.

Blogs can be used to explore various topics while, at the same time give students the opportunity to write for a larger audience. Moreover, blogs can be used as a portfolio where students can collect their thoughts, progress and reflections. Blogs can be managed by

instructors, but it is also possible to let students create their own blog for their peers (Beldarrain 2006: 140f). This is a particularly relevant task, as students gather metaknowledge about the creation of blogs. The Austrian school leaving examination (Matura) requires students to write blog posts and comments, and using 'real' blogs as training field seems to be highly beneficial for the learning process in an authentic situation. In experimental research, Fageeh (2011) studied how blogging affected university students' English proficiency. The writings of the experimental group, where members were trained to write through blogs, and of the control groups, where the members were instructed in a 'traditional' style with lectures and discussions, were analysed and the students had to answer additional questionnaires (Fageeh 2011: 36). The blogs helped to create interactions between the students and gave them the opportunity "to write more freely" (Fageeh 2011: 41). Although the focus was initially placed on *fluency*, the study found that *accuracy* improved at a later stage. Moreover, blogs offer a learner-centred approach; they motivated students because they could write and read in an authentic situation (Fageeh 2011: 41). Again, blogs seem to be beneficial for the online classroom.

Depending on how blogs are used, they can also be seen as a tool for collaborative writing. Blake especially highlighted *collaboration* for the topic of online writing and gave the creation of digital stories and fanfiction as examples (Blake 2016: 136). Besides the common effort that can be used to create stories or write personal sequels or endings to famous films, TV series, or books, such activities can also be used in feedback and reediting exercises. Depending on the online tool used, digital stories can be stories embedded in videos, accompanied by sound, images, photos, drawings and much more; these are clearly examples of a *redefinition* according to the SAMR model as such a multimodal story could not exist outside the online world.

With regard to correcting texts and giving feedback, the students usually would hand their text in hard copy to a teacher or sometimes to another student for correction. Using online media enlarges the audience, and if done in an organised fashion, it could be used to provide more feedback for students. A safe environment must, however, be created for the students where they can experiment with their texts without being 'thrown out into the World Wide Web', where it is impossible to know who is reading and commenting on the texts.

4.4   Speaking

If one examines the Austrian curriculum, one notes that the speaking skill is divided into two categories: spoken production and spoken interaction (Lehrplan HAK 2014: 17, Lehrplan AHS 2020: 33). Whereas spoken production requires students to present, describe, or explain various topics in a clear manner and clarify their opinions, spoken interaction entails the fluent use of

English in spontaneous conversations or the active participation in dialogues without mistakes that might hinder communication (Lehrplan HAK 2014: 17).

When teaching speaking using a CLT approach, teachers might design tasks to focus on fluency or accuracy. Fluency-based tasks require learners to respond "coherently within the turns of the conversation" (Hedge 2000: 261). Tasks might involve free discussion activities, role-plays, or information gap activities where learners need to communicate in order to get information from other learners (Hedge 2000: 281). Although the focus might be placed on accuracy, it does not mean that the correct use of language is not important. However, the main aim in such tasks is to keep up a conversation without too many pauses or hesitations. Accuracy-based activities, on the other hand, are used to train and test linguistic structures such as tenses, verb forms and pronunciation. Tasks that aim at training the linguistic system should always require students to use new forms in appropriate contexts. Moreover, learning is enhanced when tasks are personalised, which means that learners need to use language to talk about their own lives, their opinions, or express their feelings (Hedge 2000: 273f).

A "natural pronunciation and intonation" (Lehrplan HAK 2014: 16) is part of the curriculum as "speaking the English language competently" necessitates "the ability to produce its sounds in ways that are intelligible to other speakers" (Hedge 2000: 268). Which 'English' is taught is often the teacher's choice. Authors have suggested making students aware of aspects such as word stress, individual sounds and linking as early as possible, so that natural pronunciation can be achieved. Teaching pronunciation apparently appears to be quite challenging "because of awkwardness, inhibition, embarrassment, and fear of losing face" (Hedge 2000: 286f).

4.4.1 Speaking online

Teaching speaking online can be performed asynchronously with the help of voice or video recordings and synchronously via programs such as Skype, Zoom or MS Teams. By giving students asynchronous tasks where they should record themselves or make videos, they are given more planning time, which can lead to linguistically more accurate speech and more complex structures (Blake 2016: 131).

Oral synchronous environments are "the most demanding environment for instructors and students" (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 10). This environment involves teachers and students who are present at the same time in an online classroom, which, depending on the course, means that all participants are present via webcam. Although Meskill and Anthony (2015: 28) argued that oral synchronous environments "resemble face-to-face (f2f) classrooms", Blake (2016: 132) pointed out that video conferences cannot be likened to a face-to-face conversation in a

classroom, as the online tools "profoundly affect[…] the conversational dynamics". One reason can be attributed to the missing body language and mimics (if no webcam is used), which affects communication (Throssel & Morgan 2015: 382).

In a classroom based on the CLT approach the students and their participation are moved to the centre-stage. In a face-to-face classroom, taking turns can be more easily managed through body language and eye contact. This evidently is not an option for asynchronous environments, and specific rules are required for synchronous online environments. Hampel and Stickler (2005: 319) suggested instructing students to speak once another student has finished. By doing so, the teacher avoids calling out names, and students are automatically invited to talk.

One of the biggest challenges seems to be the skill of spoken interaction, which was considered to be especially relevant in this thesis work, as it is one of the core aspects of Communicative Language Teaching. Hampel and Stickler (2005) pointed out that the lack of body language can not only hinder communication but also proves challenging for the teachers, as it impedes classroom management and makes the learners anxious. Moreover, technical challenges such as lags and connection problems make meaningful interactions difficult (Hamper & Stickler 2005: 314f). Hampel and Stickler raised these issues in 2005 and technology has made incredible advances, however, teachers still might face technological barriers today. In addition, the pandemic has prompted software producers to refine their programs to make the online classroom experience as smooth as possible. What still might be a challenge, however, is that students are more concerned about their appearance in videos and pictures than they are in real life (Coverdale-Jones 2000: 38). This might have an effect on whether students are willing to show themselves in video conferences or not.

4.4.2 Online tools for teaching speaking

The ways online technology can be used to teach speaking are divided into two areas according to Blake (2016: 130f); CALL programs and CMC. Whereas the first describes programs that help students to work on their speaking skills, CMC tools comprise programs that allow synchronous or asynchronous communication to take place between students or between teachers and students.

With regard to spoken production, teachers can make use of various online possibilities. In-class oral presentations can be *substituted* with audio or video recordings (Blake 2016: 131). Teachers might also ask students questions directly that need to be answered orally (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 10). Of course, students might also be required to read out loud or give short presentations in conferences. Such presentations might be *augmented* or *modified* using

YouTube storyboards with captions and/or voice overs (Blake 2016: 131). However, data protection must be kept in mind when teachers ask students to make videos and post them. This is particularly relevant for young learners, where parental consent is imperative. Oral presentations do not necessarily need to be put on YouTube but can be put on an LMS or sent directly to the teachers.

CALL programs make it possible for students to record audio files that are produced for various reasons in oral asynchronous environments: They can contain responses to questions, thoughts on content or questions to the teachers. Moreover, they can be produced by the teacher to give instructions or feedback. It is also possible to let students record themselves to accompany the work in their portfolio, an online tour or poster sessions. Such recordings can practically be part of any online course and easily inserted on web pages or LMS (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 9f).

When referring to CALL programs, Blake (2016: 131) stressed the advantages of automatic speech recognition programs. This is particularly interesting for pronunciation training in an asynchronous environment, as speech recognition programmes like Dragon Naturally Speaking compare the recorded voice with different varieties of English. Besides using such programs for sentence repetition and specific sound practice, students can dictate longer passages. Whenever the program is not able to recognise and thus correctly transcribe a word, the student knows that they have to work on their pronunciation, which has already been explained (Liaw/English 2017: 69). Blake noted that these programs and such activities do not include feedback and, therefore, necessitate reworking the pronunciation with a teacher or another student.

Regarding spoken interaction, CMC tools can be used to teach it synchronously or asynchronously. Training spoken interaction seems especially challenging due to the COVID-19 distance learning situation, because of the lack of real-life interactions and communication between teachers and students and among peers (Trajanovic, Domazet & Misic-Ilic 2007: 450f). These challenges might be overcome through the use of oral synchronous environments that programs such as Skype or MS Teams enable. In an oral synchronous environment, teachers can make use of numerous different tools to emulate a real-time classroom at school. Web cameras, chat functions, break-out sessions for group work and screen sharing are just some of the possibilities at the teacher's disposal (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 28f). Practicing a dialogue with a classmate can be done via an online conference. If technological barriers hinder spoken interaction, teachers can resort to chat functions that make instant communication possible. In addition to a chat, visual information could be displayed

through an instructor's shared screen in order to *substitute* a face-to-face classroom, although the lack of body language is debatable. Just as in a 'normal' live classroom, all participants can interact, the teachers can ask the students questions and react to their responses, and it is also possible to organise group work depending on the program used (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 10).

Meskill and Anthony (2015: 29) and Goertler (2009: 76) added another interesting aspect; the use of virtual reality games such as *Second Life* where students are able to create avatars with whom the learners can interact in authentic situations with other people. Throssel and Morgan (2015: 381) suggested that using 3D virtual realities constitutes "[t]he most advanced form of role play" and thus can be used to train interaction with students.

4.5   Authentic material and communication

The notion of authenticity has already been raised several times and needs clarification. In this chapter, authentic material is examined that can be used in online classrooms. Then, written and oral communication between teachers and students and students and their peers is explained.

In language learning, the term 'authenticity' gained importance as part of the CLT approach in the 1970s, because "the language classroom is intended as a preparation for survival in the real world" (Richards 2006: 20). Therefore, any tasks or activities should help students prepare for this objective by using as much authentic material as possible. This material should include "real language, [be] produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience and designed to convey a real message of some sort" (Morrow 1977: 13). If this definition is examined, "the source of the discourse" and "the context of its production" determine whether a text is authentic or not (Gilmore 2007: 4). With regard to English language teaching and learning, this would mean, for example, that a text that is specifically written for the purpose of an English textbook would not be authentic. Although the aforementioned explanation refers to written material, it can also be used for spoken English, as the World Wide Web offers a plethora of authentic texts that could be used for English classes. Any material, whether it is spoken or written or composed of images, qualifies as authentic if the "context of its production" was not (only) of pedagogical origin. Therefore, teachers could work with blog or Instagram posts, YouTube or TikTok videos, or Facebook pages, as they would all qualify as authentic texts. Although not all exercises and activities can constantly be based on authentic material, such material makes communication meaningful, and understanding and reading and listening to 'real' English can strongly motivate learners (Richards 2006: 20f).

This being said, Gilmore (2007: 65) reminded the reader that teachers must always keep the learner and the learning aim in mind when using authentic texts. Blake (2016: 132) also

stressed the fact that, without thorough preparation, authentic material could "overwhelm L2 learners". Teachers sometimes simply offer lists of sources that should help students without providing a context or explanations. However, teachers must train students in the use of such sources, and they must also be able to select the appropriate material. Although using online tools and sources in a "creative and enjoyable" way is a challenge, it is necessary for making learning possible and efficient in an online environment (Hampel & Stickler 2005: 319).

The concern of how authentic interaction can be provided in an online environment has already been raised. Several asynchronous and synchronous options have been introduced. In order to provide students with as much English input as possible, communication between students and students and between teachers and students seems especially relevant. However, views on this subject differ in the ELT world. Krashen (1981: 106) and others proposed the use of monolingual English classrooms. Cook (1992: 583), on the other hand, referred to the "multicompetence" of learners as the interdependence of the learner's native language(s) and the language a person seeks to learn, and, therefore, advocated the need for L1 and L2 usage within a language learning classroom. Making use of the L1 can be particularly useful for providing students with quick and easy information about the content or meaning and should not be banned from language learning and teaching (Nation 2003: 3-7). However, Cook (1992: 584) rightly pointed out that this does not fit the CLT approach. Nation (2003: 2–7) suggested that, in an environment where students do not have many opportunities to hear, see and use the L2, a teacher should use it as much as possible within an English learning context to support students in language acquisition.

With regard to the CLT approach, many misunderstandings have arisen concerning the use of L1 and L2, which were analysed by Wu (2008), who concluded that, although the L1 plays an important role in language learning, its usage must be carefully gauged to encourage and support students in their acquisition of the English language (Wu 2008: 52). Besides the fact that the L1 plays a more important role with young learners, it is also used to explain vocabulary and grammar (Kerr 2019: 5). In a later paper, Cook (2001: 415f) proposed several general aspects of the language classroom to be taught in the L1. These aspects might include organisational language, disciplining students, establishing individual contact and testing. A class would most likely also address the topic of COVID-19 and the lockdown. Teachers might ask students how they are or whether everybody is healthy. Organisational communication might include information about certain online tools or programs used, deadlines that students have to meet, or other course-relevant aspects. In CLT, communication should be relevant, and students should be given meaningful opportunities to practice language. Small talk and

organisational communication in English could, therefore, be of incredible importance in a distance learning phase, as they present 'real' speaking situations. All of these constitute authentic situations, as they are not part of any activity or task but part of the 'real' lives of the students. However, the learner proficiency level and time might necessitate L1 use and thus influence the teachers' decisions regarding the language used.

Due to the affordances of an online learning environment, some of the usually spoken interaction covering instructional explanations, assignments, small talk, or organisational matters, might take the form of written exchange. Authenticity is central to a communicative language classroom; therefore, every kind of conversation that is not staged but where the aim is to provide students with necessary information or where teachers want to genuinely know about their students' wellbeing serves a prime example of authentic communication in the classroom. The online environment offers numerous possibilities for written exchange as has been presented with the skills. In distance learning e-mails can be used for a plethora of reasons such as asking questions, submitting course work and giving and receiving feedback (White 2003: 52). 'Real' e-mail communication, for example, can serve an educational purpose with the aim of text type training (Trajanovic, Domazet & Misic-Ilic 2007: 448). For synchronous written communication, Goertler (2009: 76) proposed using chats or instant messaging, which can serve as tools for small talk. Social networking sites could be used for both synchronous and asynchronous communication, as they usually provide place for instant messaging and forum-like discussions at the same time.

4.6   Correction and feedback in an online classroom

Researching how the four skills are taught in an online environment also necessitates looking at how teachers assess their students' learning.

> The ability to provide immediate feedback to learners' concerns or problems is part of the face-to-face environment. Good online delivery needs to develop extensive feedback resources that are immediately available to learners. (White 2003: 42)

According to the online dictionary Merriam-Webster[12], feedback is "the transmission of evaluative or corrective information about an action, event, or process to the original or controlling source". Within an educational context "feedback is information provided by an agent (e.g. teacher, peer, book, parent, experience) regarding aspects of one's performance or understanding" (Hattie & Timperley 2007: 102). In their paper, the authors referred to Hattie's metastudy from 1999; here, feedback was amongst the top five most important aspects that influence the students' sense of achievement (Hattie & Timperley 2007: 83). In previous chapters, the importance of (peer) feedback to the students' motivation and learning in general

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[12] https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/feedback (2 March 2020)

and from the perspective of CLT has been stated (White 2003: 44; Throssel & Morgan 2015: 378f; Richards 2006: 4, 20). Although some books describe how to adapt a traditional classroom to the online environment, White (2003: 44) pointed out that such guides often neglect the support of the learners, feedback options and social interactions. Interaction in an online classroom is limited, no matter whether it is in an asynchronous or synchronous environment. This is mostly due to technological barriers and the lack of body language and 'bodily' presence. Hyland (2001: 233) underlined the fact that this lack of interaction opportunities makes feedback extremely important "in opening and maintaining a dialogue between tutors and students." The aspect of an increased amount of time spent on preparing online classes has already been raised. Giving feedback, which is such an important component of language learning, seems to add another burden. It is therefore necessary to be aware of the challenges related to feedback and equip oneself with effective ways of providing feedback where all participants can benefit.

In a traditional classroom, students can usually gauge their progress by comparing themselves to their peers. In an online environment, students do not have as many possibilities to talk to their classmates 'in private'. This being said, feedback has a particularly important role, not only for informing the students about their performance and for keeping them motivated but also for reinforcing the relationship between teachers and students (White 2003: 187). Ros i Solé and Truman (2005: 301) suggested that feedback and correction within a distance learning environment, which are sometimes the "sole form of communication between teacher and learner", might become more student-centred because of the new role of feedback in an online environment. This can also be attributed to the fact that feedback directed toward the whole class is replaced by more individual feedback.

The previously presented study on teaching reading comprehension in an asynchronous learning environment by Muñoz-Marín and González-Moncada (2010: 78) revealed the amount of time that goes into correcting assignments and providing feedback. In this study, because of time restraints, feedback was often sent with a delay which frustrated the students. This issue was also raised by Karataş and Tuncer (2020: 28), as it is especially the "absence of feedback" that leads the students to ask questions and demotivates them. The fact that errors were not corrected immediately and that the students were not sure whether they had succeeded in the completion of tasks or not led to uncertainty and numerous questions via e-mails (Muñoz-Marín & González-Moncada 2010: 78ff).

For written assignments, teachers mostly make use of functions inherent to computer programs; a prominent example would be the insertion of comments in a Word document or

highlighting mistakes and adding explanations. Here, instructors can add links or other useful resources to help the learners understand their mistakes. Feedback can also be delivered orally through voice recording tools that might even come in the form of a video. A combination of the two would be a recording of a teacher who is correcting a written document while adding oral comments as well (Kerr 2020: 17).

According to Hattie and Timperly (2007: 84), it is most beneficial for students to receive feedback on tasks they are currently doing, including tips on how they can work more efficiently. This notion might be applied when using shared documents, where more than one student and the teacher can enter into a collaborative writing process. This means that texts can be immediately commented on or even corrected. This would also lead to a shift from focusing on the final product to a focus on the writing process (Ros i Solé & Truman 2005: 301), which also supports the benefits of formative assessment (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 7f). This being said, written work produced by students can also be collected which is facilitated through CMS or LMS, which proves to be useful for providing "digital records of student performance" (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 8). Here, the authors refer to written content that can be produced through forums or tools for discussions. Additionally, such a record can take the form of essays, various exercises or other tasks that can be individually assessed on a regular basis. Such a digital record can be collected in a "student-generated electronic portfolio" and can serve as a record of the students' language learning progress (Meskill & Anthony 2015: 8).

Regarding oral assignments, synchronous online environments offer the possibility to use break-out rooms, which seems to be *substituting* group work, where teachers would walk around and listen to the groups in order to provide immediate feedback. However, Ng (2020: 69) pointed out that entering break-out rooms as a teacher might be more disturbing to students and their work than in a face-to-face classroom because of courtesy; a teacher enters and needs to announce his presence with a greeting and the students feel obliged to reply, and the same applies to leaving the break-out room. Moreover, students might be more encouraged to use the target language in a traditional classroom as compared to in a break-out room where no one is listening (Ng 2020: 69). In speaking assignments, special attention needs to be paid to error correction as well. In a pilot study conducted to try out a synchronous online course in the UK, Hauck and Haezewindt (1999: 50) found that a teacher's teaching style needed to be modified, especially with regard to error correction. In an online environment which lacks facial expressions, mimicry, and body language, it is important to pay particular attention to the students' reactions and their feedback in order to adapt the error correction strategies.

Besides giving immediate oral feedback on spoken interaction, new platforms and video conferencing can be used to provide written feedback in chats in order to prevent disrupting the flow of student interaction. However, in online environments, "delayed" feedback in the form of e-mails or other forms of written feedback and audio files seem to be used more frequently (Kerr 2020: 16). Hauck and Haezewindt (1999: 51) suggested adapting the feedback strategies regarding the focus of the task (on fluency or accuracy), which needs to be clearly stated to the students. Teachers could correct mistakes after the class via e-mail or at the end of every online session to avoid disturbing the course. This might also do away with another challenge related to feedback; when organising feedback opportunities in real-life classrooms, the greatest drawback is that students might become anxious. Providing comments and feedback after the lesson in a discrete manner via chats, e-mails, or recordings might be helpful for nervous students (Başaran, Cinkara & Cabaroğlu 2015: 165). In this context, one student in the study previously mentioned remarked that asking questions via online tools was easier than in a traditional classroom and also that the reply was more aim-oriented (Muñoz-Marín & González-Moncada 2010: 78ff). This could be attributed to the fact that asking questions directly in a face-to-face environment is sometimes difficult for students, who then appreciate being able to ask their questions in writing, where they have time to think about it.

Although sending feedback e-mails after an online lesson seems highly beneficial for students, the aspects of time and effort must be taken into account. In an attempt to create a more learner-centred environment, synchronous and asynchronous environments offer opportunities for direct feedback, not only from the teacher but also from peers. Providing feedback for peers can be excellently trained through different activities and helps to reduce the feedback time invested by the teacher (White 2003: 10). This also supports CLT that demands more autonomy from students.

5 Relevant Studies at the Time of Emergency Distance Education

The starting point of this thesis was to describe how reading, writing, listening and speaking were taught during the first lockdown in spring 2020 and thereby give a snapshot of this unprecedented situation. The previous chapters have provided the reader with background regarding how the four skills are taught not only from the perspective of CLT, but also against the backdrop of technological advances and the Internet, all of which served as basis for analysing the interviewees' remarks about how they have transferred their teaching into the online world.

The pandemic has prompted many researchers to examine distance learning within the context of Emergency Distance Education. Although only few studies included qualitative research on teaching the four skills during the distance learning period in March 2020, several included online classrooms along with other research foci. In the first part of this section, findings are presented with regard to the teachers' and students' perceptions of distance learning and the challenges that they faced. In the second part, studies addressing the four skills during the emergency distance learning phase are examined more closely.

5.1 General findings

Quite a few studies have focused on the perspectives of the students' perception of online English classes (see, for example, Rifiyanti 2020; Maican & Cocorada 2021; Destianingsih & Satria 2020). Nevertheless, many studies also looked at the teachers' and parents' perspectives. Kai Wen and Kim Hua (2020) asked 153 Malaysian ESL teachers using questionnaires about factors that influenced the teachers' intentions to switch their traditional courses to online courses, such as ICT competences, infrastructure and resources. Niemi and Kousa (2020) studied the teachers' and students' perceptions of distance learning in Finnish high schools. Although distance learning was successful according to the questionnaires filled in by 56 to 72 students and 9 to 15 teachers (the numbers vary because the questionnaires were conducted on four different occasions), the results also showed that the students' workload, a loss of motivation and "the spontaneity of interaction" proved to be challenging (Niemi & Kousa 2020: 367).

Huber (2020) asked 2500 students, parents, teachers and administrative personnel about challenges faced during the first COVID-19-related distance learning phase. Amongst the numerous interesting insights, Huber's study also examined communication between students and teachers. The study found that e-mail seemed to be the dominant means of communication, while mobile phones and "Lernplattformen" (LMS and/or CMS depending on the definition) were neglected (Huber 2020). Moreover, communication through printouts and analogue work booklets also seemed to be rarely used. Huber (2020) also highlighted the potential of synchronous online communication and collaborative working, methods that were not exploited enough. The author pointed out that this was not a representative study but a "Stimmungsbarometer" (Huber 2020). The present thesis also seeks to give insights into the practices of a few Austrian teachers without making a claim for representativeness.

5.2 Language learning environments and the four skills

Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) examined the effects of the pandemic on students and teachers in ESL. While the focus of their survey of 153 students and 41 teachers in the United States

was placed on stress levels (which were found to increase in both students and teachers), there were also interesting findings with regard to teaching English online. Although students were able to improve their writing and speaking skills during the distance learning period, the progress was smaller for the speaking skills. The researchers believed that this difference between the improvements in the skills might be due to the interaction needed for speaking skills that is not necessary for training writing skills (Hartshorn & McMurry 2020: 151f).

Rasmitadila et al. (2020) collected data on the impact of distance learning on teachers by conducting semi-structured interviews and surveys with 67 primary school teachers in Indonesia. The authors analysed teachers' perceptions with regard to the motivation of teachers, institutional support and challenges, while instructional strategies also arose as a main theme in the thematic analysis. This theme covered aspects such as objectives, time, assessment, media and methods (Rasmitadila et al. 2020: 95). The researchers found that (YouTube) learning videos or learning videos created by the teachers themselves were the instructional media that were most often used. This was due to availability, accessibility and the fact that the content could be easily understood by the students. Other online tools that were used during the distance learning period were "WhatsApp, Google Forms, Worksheets, YouTube, and Zoom" (Rasmitadila et al. 2020: 96). Google Forms, Worksheets and WhatsApp were mostly used to send material to students and parents. Although the study did not use the terms synchronous and asynchronous for the online environments used, findings for these two online environments were reported. For a synchronous online environment, teachers used conference tools, such as Google Classroom, PowToon and Zoom and mostly used discussions and Q&A sessions for teaching. To make up for the shorter teaching time available, "the lecture method" was also used (Rasmitadila et al. 2020: 96). From the context, one can deduce that the researchers refer to a fronted, teacher-centred way of teaching where the students were provided with information without student-centred activities. With respect to asynchronous online classes, the teachers made use of quizzes and assignments that the students had to work on by themselves (Rasmitadila et al. 2020: 96). The study also found interesting results on parent involvement. As parents often participated in the classes and provided the students with correct answers, this actually hindered the flow of the course and shortened the 'teaching time' (Rasmitadila et al. 2020: 96f). However, primary school teachers were interviewed in this study, and this amount of parental involvement was, therefore, not expected in the present study.

Karataş and Tuncer (2020: 6) asked 118 Turkish pre-service teachers about the development of their own language skills during the emergency distance learning period. For their qualitative descriptive research, the authors used questionnaires with open-ended

questions to identify the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning on the four skills. With regard to writing and reading, the researchers found that the course content, the atmosphere at home and the flexible time were beneficial for these skills. Students were more at ease when writing at home and, when completing specific writing tasks, the teacher-student communication helped to improve the writing skill. Furthermore, the study suggests that the availability and necessity of reading material online helps to improve reading skills (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 10). The distance education platform itself was advantageous for the listening skill, although the authors noted that technical issues like problems with the internet connection or with the suitability of equipment caused problems when working on the listening skills (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 24).

The study findings suggest that online learning seems to be rather advantageous for writing, reading and listening and that writing is the skill where distance learning has the most positive effect (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 22). However, the speaking skills suffer due to the lack of face-to-face interactions, eye contact and the classroom atmosphere (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 16), results that were also found by Hartshorn and McMurry (2020). According to Karataş and Tuncer (2020: 26), online learning makes it difficult to improve the speaking skills and even leads to a replacement of speaking with writing. Moreover, the study found that the period of emergency distance learning 'forced' the students to learn how to use various online resources, such as dictionaries, different programs and software for grammar and spelling corrections. Additionally, besides being more flexible, students had to take on more responsibility for their learning and become more autonomous (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 24).

The aforementioned studies provide initial insights into online classrooms worldwide and only represent the views and perspectives of a number of teachers, students and parents. However, they do give an idea about some aspects regarding language teaching online that will also receive special attention in the interviews. A diversity of tools are being used, such as e-mails, WhatsApp and YouTube, with different aims. Generally, these studies show the increased stress levels for teachers and students due to distance learning. Whereas teachers face transferring their courses to the online world, students need to adapt to a more autonomous way of learning, and both might face technical barriers. With regard to the four skills, online learning seems to be quite favourable for writing and reading; however, teaching online seems to be more challenging when training the speaking skill.

6 Empirical Study – Methodology

6.1 Research interests

This thesis project developed as a reaction to the first lockdown, which entailed the closing of all schools and institutions and an immediate switch to distance learning. Back then, it was not clear how long such a lockdown would last and whether periods of distance learning would follow. Therefore, the aim was to conduct the interviews as quickly as possible to assure that the participants could remember most of the aspects about their online classes. The basic idea that this research project pursued was to combine research on distance learning and on language learning.

The decision was made to examine how the four skills were taught in combination with possible online tools and to find out about the learning environment (synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid) used to teach reading, writing, speaking and listening. Although this resulted in a rather broad research question, the unprecedented situation of EDE justified such a wide research perspective to provide a broad insight that could then result in further, more detailed research in the future. The initial first research question therefore was:

> How did English teachers in Austrian upper and lower secondary schools
> teach reading, writing, listening and speaking during the distance learning
> period in spring 2020?

After a first online questionnaire had been conducted to get an overview of the situation, an interview guide was developed as a basis for the expert interviews. After this and after the thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews, the initial research question was refined by adding sub questions for the analysis. This resulted in the following research questions:

1. Was the general learning environment in the EFL classes synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid?
2. How were the four skills trained?
   - Were the four skills trained synchronously or asynchronously?
   - Which (online) tools were used to teach the four skills?
   - Which skills were preferred/neglected?
3. What were the general findings with regard to
   - correction and feedback?
   - language of communication?

6.2 Sampling instruments and data collection

In empirical research, one encounters 'qualitative data' and 'quantitative data'. "Quantitative data entail[s] numerical information", which basically means that the data that has been collected can be represented in numbers (Kuckartz 2019: 182). However, qualitative data can also be presented in numbers depending on the research project. A researcher might conduct a standardised interview that is guided by variables formed in order to answer the research question. Kuckartz (2019: 182) provides the example of interviews about household chores. The results of the interviews in a quantitative approach could be presented in a table where each member of the household is represented in one line. By asking standardised questions, the interviewer would find out which person does what chore and how many times they would do it. The results, presented in numbers, could be used to create statistics and bar charts to show relations between the variables or to show differences in the test groups. Qualitative data views the same topic from a different research perspective. In the above-mentioned example it could mean that the interviewees are interviewed with the help of a narrative or a guideline-assisted interview. The researcher's interest would not be to have numbers of who does what, but, for example, to ask for the respondents' motivations and reasons for (not) doing a chore. Although some results of the questionnaires are presented in numbers, the core of the present thesis, which constituted the interviews, adopted a qualitative research perspective.

Different sampling strategies exist in qualitative research. The selection process for the participants in this study fell into the category of *criterion sampling* in combination with *snowball sampling*. In criterion sampling those participants are selected "who meet some specific predetermined criteria" (Dörnyei 2007: 129). Snowball sampling involves asking "participants to recruit further participants who are similar to them" (Dörnyei 2007: 129). For the purpose of this study participants were supposed to be teachers of English in Austrian upper and lower secondary schools. In order to have a wide variety no specifications were made with regard to the age of the students and the school type. Moreover, there were no geographical restrictions within Austria.

Combining questionnaires and surveys within a "*mixed-methods*-Design[…]" [original emphasis] not only helps to obtain facts and demographic information but also to facilitate the interview (Riemer 2016: 157). The questionnaire of this thesis additionally helped to gain first insights into the topic and to gain a better understanding of the research field. Google Forms was selected because it is freely available on the Internet. Besides the fact that the development of online surveys is straightforward, it was also important that respondents could access the link without registering.

The aim of this project was to provide insights into how the four skills were taught during the first distance learning phase. Although a longer questionnaire would have been possible as well, several disadvantages needed to be considered. One drawback of questionnaires is that questions can be misunderstood. Moreover, questions might not cover every important aspect, which might lead to a distortion of answers (Altrichter & Posch 2018: 157). This reflects one of the main reasons why interviews were considered to be the better choice for the main instrument of data collection. As the emergency distance situation was not only very sudden but unprecedented, a questionnaire would have led to limitations within this topic. One limitation that was considered was narrowing down the project to one skill. However, as the skills are treated as equally important within the CLT perspective and because it was not clear whether any skills would have been completely neglected due to the sudden online environment, this was not considered to be an option. In addition, it was important to give a voice to at least some of the teachers within this global pandemic and learn how they managed to teach English.

The results of the study are not representative of Austrian teachers but provide an insight into this research area. Moreover, the results are based on the accounts of teachers without any classroom observation and, thus, only reflect the teachers' perspectives.

6.2.1 Questionnaire

Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010: 71f) explained that online surveys have become a practical, time-saving way of data collection. Not only is it easy to reach different target groups, but also the costs are rather low. As suggested by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010: 71), a researcher would try to reach participants through discussion groups, lists or chatrooms to get a "sizable sample". However, the authors also noted that online surveys tend to have a lower outcome than "traditional postal surveys" (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 71). In order to reach a maximum of potential participants, this study's questionnaire was put into the Facebook Group "Anglistik Wien" with almost 7000 members (April 2020). This not only allowed to narrow down the target group within the strategy of a criterion sampling, but it also allowed for a request to readers to forward the link. Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010: 71) proposed various tips on how to increase returns in online questionnaires. In line with these guidelines the questionnaire was designed to appear short and interesting. Furthermore, no names were asked at the beginning, to ensure anonymity. When participants were willing to provide their contact details for a follow up interview, though, a note was included that they would be kept anonymous in the paper.

As suggested in the previous paragraph, the questionnaire was put into the Facebook group "Anglistik Wien" as the group members are not only students of the program for English

teachers, but often also people who already work at schools. Posting it only on this site could have led to a rather homogeneous group of participants. Employed teachers would have probably only been working for a short period of time. In order to obtain answers from more experienced teachers, the questionnaire was additionally sent to teacher colleagues and a former mentor teacher. Posting it on Facebook or sending it via e-mail to colleagues was always accompanied by a request to forward the questionnaire to other teachers. As can be seen in the respondents' answers, this method proved to be successful as a variety of English teachers took part.

When opening the link to the survey, the respondents first saw the headline and the short general information of the research project. The survey consisted of nine questions. In terms of facts this short survey asked for the years of working experience, the school type and the age of the students at the beginning of the questionnaire. Six questions were multiple choice questions and one question was a Yes/No question. Besides the invitation for sending teaching material, respondents were asked to participate in an interview. Researchers tend to forget making surveys attractive to respondents and including a thank you note (Dörnyei 2007: 110), therefore, a thank you note with a picture was included at the end of the form. A copy of the questionnaire that was conducted via Google Forms can be found in the Appendix.

28 teachers took part in the online survey. Questionnaire number 9 was excluded from the sample as the answers indicated that the respondent had not taken the questionnaire seriously. From the remaining ones, 16 of the respondents had four or fewer years of teaching experience. Three respondents had over 20 years of experience. Ten teachers were teaching at an AHS, nine were teachers at a BHS, eight were teaching at an NMS and the others were in language schools, a BMS or had voluntary teaching jobs (multiple answers were possible).

6.2.2 Teaching material

In the research field of language teaching, teachers can be asked to remember certain situations with the help of teaching materials. Riemer (2016: 165) talked about this when presenting the "fokussierte Interview" type where interviewees share their experiences about a predetermined research field. One of the questions in the questionnaire asked for teaching material used during the online phase. Several of the interview partners had sent lesson material before the interviews took place. As there had not been any specifications to the type of material, the teachers could send anything they wanted to. This led to a great variety of material that was sent; screenshots from assignments on MS Teams, lesson plans and week plans, tasks, feedback sheets and material, such as crosswords. The material sent by the interviewees was not part of the main data to be analysed in the present study. However, the material was scanned for possible talking

points and used as a basis for the interviews. Including the material during the interviews, however, made focusing on the questions and the interview guide rather difficult. This was further complicated by gaps in the teachers' memories that required explanations of the material when they did not have it in front of them. For the analysis of the interviews, the teaching material proved to be helpful when utterances made by the teachers in reference to online tasks were not entirely clear.

6.2.3 Interviews

The last item on the questionnaire was an invitation to participate in an interview study. In qualitative research, different interview types are at a researcher's disposal regarding their structures. Reinders described interviews in empirical educational research as "persönlich-mündliches Gespräch mit einem geringen Maß an Strukturierung und Standardisierung" (Reinders 2015: 94). In the present thesis work, however, the interviews were semi-structured on the basis of an interview guide. In such interviews, questions and talking points provide a structure for the interview, but the interviewer "is also keen to follow up interesting developments" (Dörnyei 2007: 136). This seemed appropriate as the interviewees were thus given the possibility to raise topics themselves. The interviewees were also able to choose, which skill they wanted to start with to avoid giving one skill more value. The interview guide can be found in the Appendix.

Due to the circumstances, all participants were asked whether they wanted to conduct the interviews via telephone or Skype to avoid a personal meeting. Skype seemed to be the best choice for conducting the interviews as most people had it already installed. Besides offering the possibility of a videoconference, the sound quality of Skype calls is usually good. Additionally, recording a Skype call is simple and the recording is automatically saved in the Skype chat. It is available for download for all participants up to 30 days.

The interviews started in the last week of May. Prior to the interviews, all interviewees were asked whether they wanted to conduct the interview in German or English. All teachers except for one, whose native language is English, chose German as language for the interviews. All interviews lasted between 35 and 45 minutes.

It was decided that those participants who agreed to take part in the interviews would be contacted in the order that they had sent the survey. When a respondent did not reply to the e-mail request or the phone call for the interview date, the next person on the list was asked.

By responding to the interview invitation within the online survey, the potential interviewees agreed to take part in an interview. Additionally, the interviewees were informed right before the interview about the recording, the anonymous processing of their data and a

possible withdrawal. Additionally, the interviewees were then asked to sign a written consent form, which can be found in the Appendix.

In the end, six teachers agreed to take part in the interviews. The respondents comprised two AHS teachers of various age groups within the upper and lower cycle, three NMS teachers and one HAK teacher. One AHS teacher had between 11 and 20 years of working experience, the other teachers had been working for under four years. All interviews were conducted between the 26th of May 2020 and the 10th of July 2020.

Owing to the fact that the questionnaires were also sent to teacher colleagues, I knew several of the interviewees. As I am currently not working, I did not do research at my own workplace. However, as I do know some of the participants, the issue, often referred to as *insiderne*ss, needs to be addressed. After exploring "insider research in educational research", Mercer (2007: 1) continued to be uncertain to what degree being an insider affects research. Insiderness has advantages, as researchers who do research at their place of work have easier access to everything and everyone, and interviewer and interviewee not only share common knowledge but also have a closer relationship. Nevertheless, the researcher comes into the interview with pre-conceptions and also the interviewee has knowledge about the interviewer (Mercer 2007: 13). According to Dörnyei (2007: 137), it is important to build a basis of trust in qualitative research. Usually, the beginning of the interview and the initial questions set the tone and are an important step for a good conversation. Nevertheless, staying professional was paramount, therefore, addressing or hinting to any personal topics or including any personal information was avoided. Knowing some of the interviewees definitely helped with regard to the interview atmosphere and also regarding shared knowledge, such as school-related topics and terminology. The interview guide proved to be extremely useful in order to stay focused. However, when transcribing the interviews I realised that I occasionally got enthused with the topic and thus, topic-related questions were asked that were not necessarily related to the research question(s). This, however, might not necessarily only be an issue connected with my 'insiderness', but still facilitated it.

Although many definitions of data saturation can be found, it can be generally described as "the point in the research process when no new information is discovered in data analysis" (Faulkner/Trotter 2017). There was no point in trying to reach saturation with the great number of online tools that could be used for teaching the four skills online. It was evident from the beginning that the interviews would only provide a small overview, which could then be put into the context of distance learning research in general. However, I felt that in order to reach some kind of saturation, it would be ideal to have interviewees who were using synchronous,

asynchronous and hybrid learning environments. Although a purely synchronous learning environment was difficult to determine because of homework assignments, the six interviews seemed to represent all three types. In addition, the six interviews presented a suitable variety of teachers regarding different school types and age of learners.

6.2.4 Piloting

Piloting a questionnaire is recommended to test the wording, answer options, coding problems and instructions (Dörnyei and Taguchi 2010: 53). After a first trial run with one person, several errors were corrected. Question 6 was ambiguous due to its wording and was therefore reformulated. In order to make the question clearer, examples were added. Question 4 initially had provided space for the respondents to fill in the programs they were using to stay in contact with their students. In order to obtain more detailed answers, a list of possible programs to choose from was added (Dörnyei & Taguchi 2010: 73). In line with the thought of motivation the survey initially included an upload button that would have made it easy to upload distance learning material. However, when testing the questionnaire, it became apparent that a respondent would need to log in with a Google account to upload material. As this would not only have made accessing the form more complicated and would have excluded every participant without a Google account, the upload option was removed and replaced by an e-mail address.

In order to guarantee a smooth interview, it is recommended to conduct test interviews and do trial runs with regard to the recording of the interview (Riemer 2016: 168-170). One test interview was conducted to try out the questions. However, as the test interviewee was no language teacher, it was difficult to imagine a real interview situation. The first question that was not related to the actual research question(s) and should make the interviewees feel at ease ("Do you use online tools in your private life?") seemed to be inappropriate and led to a very time-consuming monologue in the first interview, which is why it was deleted for the other interviews.[13] A conversation with a recording device was tried with two different persons on two different devices; both times the quality was excellent and there was no problem saving the recording. There were no technical issues in any of the six interviews.

6.2.5 Qualitative content analysis

Reading and analysing texts within a research project necessitates a structured, systematic and uniform approach to guarantee comparability and transparency (Kuckartz 2018: 56f). The

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[13] After a few interviews there were thoughts of adding questions (for example: What was the main teaching objective when designing the tasks?). However, adding such a question would have distorted the previous interviews, which is why it was decided not to add any questions.

categories used for the data analysis are of paramount importance in a qualitative approach, which is also the approach used for the present research project. Classifying or categorising the data will obviously lead to condensing information and thus an information loss as well (Früh 2004: 44). However, in order for research to be effective, categories are not only important "in their role as analysis tools, but also insofar as they form the substance of the research and the building blocks of the theory the researchers want to develop" (Kuckartz 2019: 183). Kuckartz (2018: 33f) differentiated between six types of categories within the field of empirical research: factual categories, thematic categories, evaluative categories, analytical categories, natural categories and formal.

The two categories that were of importance for the present research project (thematic categories and formal categories) are explained in more detail. *Formal categories* comprise the basic description of the unit under analysis. This includes the length of the interviews, the name of the interviewee, when the interview was conducted and the length of the transcript (Kuckartz 2018: 33ff). This information, however, is not included in the thesis itself. In order to analyse the interviews in an organised and effective way, *thematic categories* were used. Every category thus represents a specific theme which was considered necessary for answering the research question. Every piece of information that fit within one of the pre-defined categories was highlighted with the help of the program F4.

The present thesis used Kuckartz' (2019: 187ff) recommendation of six steps for the analysis of the data. Given the nature of the research project, however, the steps were not entirely followed in the original order. The following part shows how the thematic analysis was conducted.

Step 1: Preparing the data, initiating text work

The six interviews were transcribed with the program F4. After the transcription, the texts were aligned regarding orthography and transcription style. As this analysis focused on the content of the interviews, several decisions were made to facilitate data analysis.

Orthography	OK was spelt Okay/okay
Pauses/Restarts	When the interviewer or interviewee made pauses to think or to restart their sentences such breaks were indicated with three points: "…"
Online Tools	English words and phrases in German interviews were put in italics (e.g. "die sind einfach *at my disposal*"; ELT terms like Listening, Reading-Task, Textbook and (English sounding names for) programs like Moodle, MS Teams or YouTube. were spelt with a capital letter and were not put in italics.
Colloquial language	German colloquial verbs forms like "ich werd", "ich hab", "es is", "ich versteh" were changed into standard language, e.g. "ich werde".

Hesitations and repetitions	'Ehms', 'ehs'' were left out unless they had a significant impact on the content of the utterance. Word repetitions in the case of restarts were not transcribed unless they served the purpose of emphasis (e.g. sehr sehr wichtig).
Backchannelling	Backchannelling from the side of the interviewer that only served the purpose of showing the listeners attention and/ or agreement were not transcribed. In the case of long answers by the interviewees, the answers were subdivided into numbered paragraphs to facilitate citations and quotations.

During the process of harmonising the interviews, every interview was summarised in what Kuckartz called a "case summary" (Kuckartz 2018: 58). The case (here the interview) was summarised in a very short text that represented aspects characteristic of the respective interview. These short summaries are not part of the thesis but helped to write and discuss the results.

Step 2: Forming main categories corresponding to the questions asked in the interview

The interviews were based on categories derived from the theory on English language teaching in combination with distance learning. During the transcription and revision process, the initial category catalogue was re-evaluated and a combination of new and old categories was put together to form a new catalogue of categories for the coding of the data. This reflects what Kuckartz (2019: 186) said about qualitative content analysis; whereas the definition of coding units normally takes place in advance in quantitative research, coding units (or categories) "are created *by* the coding process" [original emphasis] in qualitative research.

Step 3: Coding data with the main categories

The interviews were then read again and coded with the aforementioned categories with the help of *f4analyse*. The categories were given different colour schemes to make the coding and the analysis clearer and more efficient. Any thoughts on the data or remarks were written directly into the program for later analysis. Broad categories with regard to the learning environment, the four skills and other remarks concerning language of communication, correction/feedback and challenges were established. The six interviews were analysed against the background of these categories. It became apparent rather quickly that the aforementioned categories needed fine-tuning.

As the categories are the key elements of the data analysis in qualitative content analysis, it is necessary to look at how such categories are developed within a research project. Kuckartz (2019: 184f) described three different ways for developing categories. In a concept-driven development the researcher uses a theory, literature, or the research question as the basis for the categories. In a data-driven approach the researcher uses a step-by-step procedure where

coding remains open "until saturation occurs" and where coding is a continuous "organization and systematization of the formed codes" (Kuckartz 2019: 185). Evidently, an approach unifying the two afore-mentioned ways exists. Here, the researcher starts with a "coding frame with deductively formed codes" and then inductively codes the data within specific categories (Kuckartz 2019: 185). This research paper used a mixed method approach.

Step 4: Compiling text passages of the main categories and forming subcategories

Step 4 involved reviewing the categories and the assigned data again in order to fine-tune the categories and develop subcategories. The "[s]ubcodes are then developed directly in the relation to this data", which means that "the creation of categories is data-driven" (Kuckartz 2019: 189). The *Skills* category was expanded with a category including *preferred and neglected skills*. Moreover, the skills themselves were subdivided into the *synchronous/asynchronous* category, *tools* and *correction and feedback*. This was done to simplify the analysis process afterwards and make the presentation of the results easier. Additionally, the productive skills *Writing* and *Speaking* were given the subcategory *interaction*.

Step 5: Category-based analysis and presenting results

In order to give the data a content-related structure (Kuckartz 2018: 101), the interviews were coded with the categories that can be found below. The codebook with definitions and examples can be found in the Appendix.

- Learning environment (General)
  - Synchronous
  - Asynchronous
- Four skills (General)
  - Neglected/preferred skills
  - Tools/methods
- Reading
  - Synchronous/Asynchronous
  - Tools/Methods
  - Correction and Feedback
- Writing
  - Synchronous/Asynchronous
  - Tools/Methods/text types
  - Correction and Feedback
  - Interaction
- Listening
  - Synchronous/Asynchronous
  - Tools/Methods
  - Correction and Feedback
- Speaking
  - Synchronous/Asynchronous
  - Tools/Methods
  - Correction and Feedback

          o   Interaction
- Other
          o   Language of communication/instruction

One important aspect of doing qualitative research is reliability. Reliability increases when several researchers code the data independently and then compare it (Kuckartz 2019: 75). To achieve intercoder reliability, the two or more different researchers ideally code the data similarly. In order to show reliability in qualitive research this is considered to be good practice (O'Connor/Joffe 2020: 10f). It would have gone beyond the scope of this thesis to have more than one person code all the interviews. However, I chose to code all the interviews, put them away for a few weeks and then coded them again. This process allowed me to gain some distance from the material and I was able to fine-tune the coding. What remained a challenge in both coding cycles were utterances that would fulfil the criteria of two different categories. For example there were many overlaps between *Tools/Methods* and *Correction and Feedback.* However, I decided to allocate such utterances to both categories and present them separately within the results.

Step 6: Reporting and documentation.

When reporting the research, one usually presents the results in two different sections: analytical and descriptive (Kuckartz 2019: 194). This thesis follows this recommendation; while the descriptive part is presented within the "Results" section, the analytical part can be found under "Discussion".

7   Results

The following section presents the results of both the questionnaires and the interviews. The questionnaires provided general insights into how English was taught during the distance learning phase, which is demonstrated by the different bar charts.[14] The interview results provided more detailed insights into the online English classrooms. The results are presented below according to the different research questions.

7.1   Questionnaires

Figure 1 shows the diversity of programs used and that many respondents selected more than one online tool. With regard to Learning Management Systems (such as Moodle, e-mail, LMS.at) all the 27 respondents said that they made use of such tools in order to stay in contact with the students. More than 70% of the respondents used e-mails and more than 40% made

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[14] The figures are taken from Google Forms, which provides summarising graphs for questionnaires.

use of Moodle. Of the participants, around 20% worked with SchoolFox, Skype and/or WhatsApp. Zoom, LMS.at and MS Teams were also used.
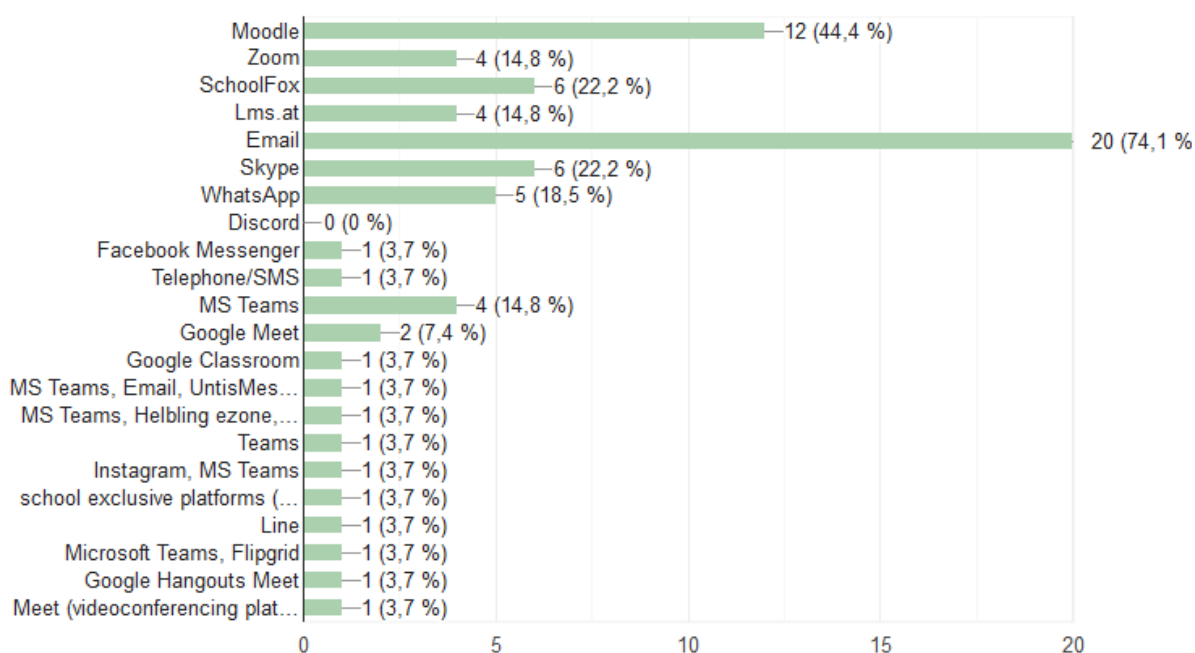

Figure 1: Tools for staying in contact with students

The participants were asked about the aspects they taught during the distance learning phase. The term 'aspect' was used as vocabulary and grammar were added to the four skills. As can be seen in Figure 2, reading, vocabulary and grammar were taught by between 90% and 100% of the participants. Speaking and listening were taught by 85.2 % and 88.9 %, respectively.

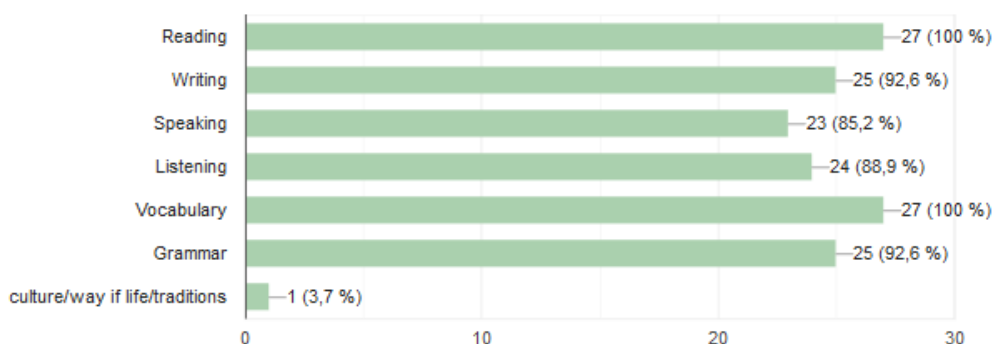*Figure 2: Aspects taught in the online English classroom*

How students returned assignments and tasks can be seen in Figure 3. Concerning how the assignments and tasks were returned, the majority of the respondents (21 out of 27) replied that they used e-mails, which is followed by attaching screenshots of textbooks and audio recordings, while 40% used videos. Screenshots and recordings were most likely sent via e-

mail or an LMS; however, this is not evident from the answers to the questions. For more details, see the bar chart below.
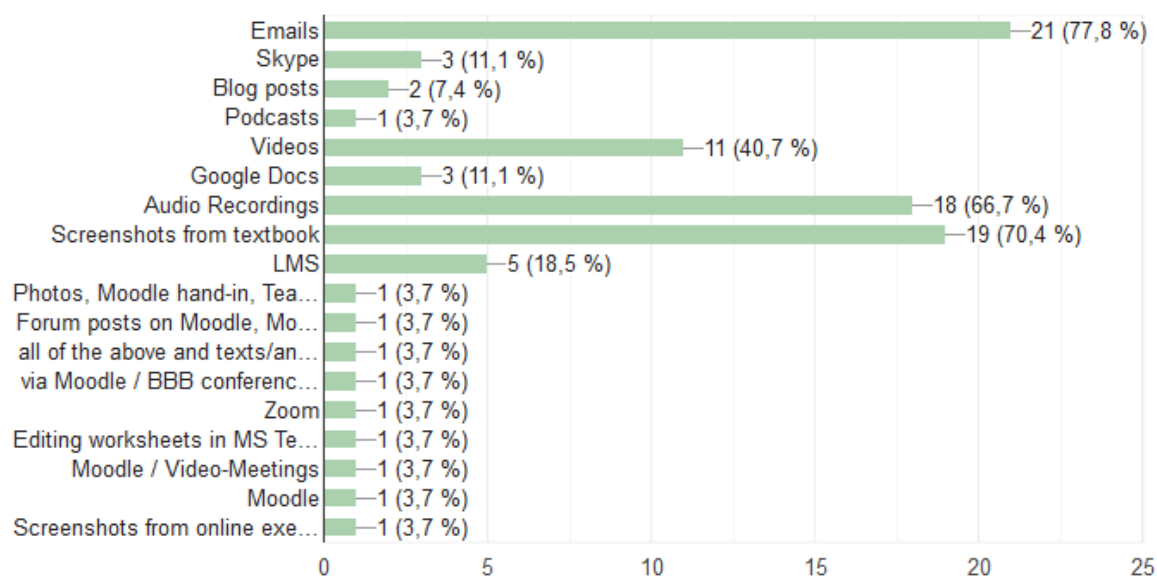

Figure 3: Tools for returning assignments

7.2   Interviews [15]

In order to analyse how English was taught during the distance learning phase, it was of interest to learn more about the general learning environment. The first part of this chapter answers the first research question:

1. Was the general learning environment in the EFL classes synchronous, asynchronous, or hybrid?

7.2.1   Learning environment (general findings)

Before taking a closer look at how the four skills were taught, it is necessary to present the general online environment that the teachers chose for their English classes. As has not only become evident through the literature review, the interviews also revealed the diversity of teaching English through distance learning. Therefore, this first section should provide the reader with a basic understanding of how the six interviewed teachers organised their English lessons online.

Four out of the six teachers (Teachers 1, 2, 3 and 4) used a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning environments throughout the distance learning phase. One teacher

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[15] The six teachers will be indicated with Teacher + number (e.g. Teacher 3) or the abbreviation Int_ + number (e.g. Int_3) of the interview order. The responses in German to the interview questions were translated by the author of this thesis. If the translations are very close to the source language, this was indicated by the use of single inverted commas. Direct quotes by Interviewee 5 are in English, because the interview was conducted in English.

(Int_5) taught only asynchronously, and one teacher (Int_6) switched to a rather synchronous teaching environment after Easter. More precisely, Int_1 and Int_2 used assignments and homework in combination with weekly conferences. Int_3 also let the students work on weekly assignments ("Lernpakete", Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 36) and offered voluntary online conferences. Int_4 used only an asynchronous environment with assignments before Easter and changed to a hybrid format after Easter. Int_6 also only taught asynchronously before Easter and changed the format after Easter. The courses after Easter were synchronous matching with the 'usual' timetable and classic homework assignments without week plans, which resulted in a rather synchronous learning environment. Int_5 moved the classroom into an asynchronous online environment with weekly assignments and plans.

Various strategies were used by the teachers to teach asynchronously. The weekly synchronous conferences of Teacher 1 were accompanied by asynchronous weekly assignments ("Arbeitsaufträge", Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 35). The assignments had to be completed by Friday, and the conferences took place on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. Int_1 used MS Teams in order to communicate with students asynchronously. The teacher's questionnaire revealed that students sent audio recordings, videos or screenshots from the coursebook that were also transmitted via MS Teams. Moreover, the teacher made use of the MS Teams chat function in order to post material to the whole class but also to communicate with individual students. This communication was performed asynchronously, as the chat does not require people to be online at the same time and can be equated with an 'SMS-service' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 15).

Teacher 2 also used MS Teams but only for the online conferences and LMS.at in order to stay in contact with the students for asynchronous teaching. Every week, a new folder was opened that contained handouts, material and links and a PDF document with the weekly assignments ("Arbeitsauftrag", Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 21). This also included the use of the *Besser Lernen* tool that can be found on LMS.at. Here, Int_2 selected reading and listening comprehension assignments and grammar exercises that were part of the weekly assignments and which allowed the teacher to see whether the students had done the exercises (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 25).

Teacher 3 worked with Moodle, where the students received weekly 'study packages' ("Lernpaket", Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 38) with a deadline from Tuesday to Tuesday. Such a package included exercises in the coursebook, digital exercises, handouts and a final writing assignment. Nothing was added to this package within the week and the students were free to complete the tasks at their own discretion (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 38). Teacher 3 (Paragraph 94) explained that the packages were specifically formulated to be "self-study". As the teacher

also added answer keys for the packages, the honest completion of the tasks was based on trust (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 94). Only the writing assignments were then sent to the teacher, mostly via e-mail (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 96).

Before Easter, Teacher 4 sent 'weekly plans' ("Wochenpläne", Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 45) via e-mail, and the students sent back their exercises in Word documents or as pictures via e-mail as well. In these three weeks, communication was purely asynchronous in written form. Int_4 also talked about the idea of asynchronous videos, but refrained from this because they worried that students might use such videos and alter them on TikTok (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 189). Teacher 5 used a purely asynchronous learning environment. Before Easter, Int_5 just like Int_4 only communicated with the students via e-mail. After Easter, SchoolFox was added to communicate with the class asynchronously (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 191). From the material that Teacher 5 provided, it became clear that 'weekly plans' ("Wochenplan", material) were sent out.

Almost all teachers made use of synchronous learning environments for the online English classes. Teacher 1 used the chat synchronously and asynchronously. For synchronous communication the teacher explained that the chat function also allowed for 'phone calls' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 17). Otherwise, synchronous video conferences were held via MS Teams (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 27). For one class with 22 students, the teacher decided to divide the class for video conferences into two groups on the basis of gender (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 29). According to the teacher, this worked fine for the second subject and for English as well.

In their synchronous conferences, Int_2 always shared a Word document which served as the basis for the lesson. Besides discussing the week plans, assignments and hearing them speak, the teacher decided to have those conferences in order 'not to lose the students' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 37). Teacher 2 also used MS Teams for the weekly conferences, because the teacher wished for more 'personal communication' after the Easter break (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 51). Moreover, the lack of speaking and numerous upcoming questions concerning the assignments justified online conferences (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 53).

Teacher 3 offered online synchronous conferences on a voluntary basis. In the first grade, (AHS) the number of participants varied greatly (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 152). In the 7th and 5th grades, the students did not show much interest in such conferences; hence, they did not take place (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 180). Teacher 5 did not make use of online conferences, because the teacher mainly thought "they had enough" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 77). There was one attempt to do an online conference on a voluntary basis, but just as with

Teacher 3, it failed because of a lack of student interest (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 219). Teacher 4 started to use MS Teams conferences after the Easter break. They always started with a bit of small talk, followed by input (vocabulary or grammar) from the teacher(s), and then the students worked by themselves. The teacher(s) were able to join the document the student was working on and commented on it orally or in written form (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 29).

Teacher 6 is the only teacher that referred to the assignments given within the synchronous Skype sessions as "Aufgabe" [homework] (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 104). This adds to the fact that this teacher's courses after Easter are categorised as a synchronous environment, emulating a traditional face-to-face classroom, also because 'it was quite similar to regular lessons' (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 46). The synchronous online lessons took place two or three times a week and were planned according to the 'normal' weekly schedule of the class (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 110). Before Easter, Teacher 6 used portfolios ("Übungsmappe", Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 112) to provide students with tasks asynchronously. This teacher used SchoolFox and WhatsApp to send out and receive the students' portfolios. The students were able to send pictures and questions via those tools, and Teacher 6 and their colleague provided feedback (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 116).

7.2.2 The four skills, correction and feedback, language of communication

In this second section, an attempt is made to answer the second and third research question with their sub questions:

2. How were the four skills trained?
   o Were the four skills trained synchronously or asynchronously?
   o Which (online) tools were used to teach the four skills?
   o Which skills were preferred/neglected?
3. What were the general findings with regard to
   o correction and feedback?
   o language of communication?

This part, therefore, addresses the core topic of this thesis: the question of how reading, listening, writing and speaking were trained online. The skills are presented in this order, and the results cover the learning environment, information about tools/methods used and the topic of correction and feedback for the respective skill. Statements regarding interaction and language of communication are presented for the productive skills; writing and speaking.

7.2.2.1 Reading

Except for Teacher 3 and Teacher 6 who also used the synchronous online conferences for reading comprehensions (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 154, Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 44), all other teachers taught reading asynchronously as part of their weekly assignments.

All six teachers mostly used reading tasks and the pre- and post-reading tasks from the coursebooks. Int_1 and Int_6 additionally made use of online materials as pre- and post-reading assignments (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 73–75, Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 104). In addition to using a monthly language learning printed magazine (Club) for reading tasks, Int_2 used a tool embedded in LMS.at, which is called *Besser Lernen*; the students were given reading tasks and had to complete them online (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 25). Teacher 4 did not use any other online sources, but also let students work on the reading tasks in the books asynchronously and made use of Graphic Stories which are part of the *More!* mobile app (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 81, 101). Teacher 5, who also mainly used coursebook readings, pointed out that they "tried to encourage [the students] to do the pre-reading exercises", but that this was based on trust (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 71).

With regard to extensive reading assignments, three teachers used the graded readers offered by the Helbling Publishing company for free right after the beginning of the lockdown in March 2021. Teacher 1 used the readers and the activities provided by Helbling. This teacher also stressed that students generally had to read a lot more, as almost every task was given in a written form instead of orally. In addition, YouTube videos and material from the British Council website were used for pre-reading tasks that the students worked on by themselves. These were then discussed in the synchronous conferences (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 23). Teacher 3 also used the Helbling readers for one class and created post-reading questions. Another class received printed Helbling readers right before the distance learning began (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 100, 102). Teacher 4 also made use of printed books that were readily available and could be quickly distributed to the students (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 89). Both of these teachers (3 +4) and Teacher 5 explained that an extensive reading task would have not been given if it had not been for the emergency distance learning situation (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 57, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 104). Teacher 4 called it an 'emergency solution' (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 93). Teacher 2 thought about doing such a task but did not find a suitable book and was under time constraints (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 119). The limited time was also the reason why Teacher 6 did not do an extensive reading task (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 62).

Teachers mostly relied on the students to work reliably on their own (e.g. Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 59). Teachers 3 and 4 sent answer keys either with the weekly assignments or at the

end of the week (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 94). Teacher 2, who made use of *Besser Lernen,* found it helpful that this tool autocorrected the tasks which facilitated the correction process (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 230). Moreover, this teacher also let students look for an online article about a certain topic, which they had to summarise in an audio file (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 81). Teachers 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6 requested pictures from completed exercises in the coursebooks.

7.2.2.2   Listening

All teachers except for Int_6 used the printed version of the course book as a main source for listening tasks. In addition, websites and YouTube were used. Teacher 6 only assigned few listening comprehension tasks with the cyber homework[16] app of the *More!* coursebook series. Listening was, therefore, exclusively taught asynchronously.

In addition to the coursebook, Teacher 3 also used websites like https://learnenglishteens.britishcouncil.org amongst others. Sometimes the teacher used the pre-/while-/ and post-reading tasks provided and sometimes created own quizzes on Moodle (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 118, 120). According to Teacher 3, listening tasks 'go down extremely well with students' in distance learning (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 110), saying that 'digital classes are predestined for listening'. This was due to the facilitated access to audio files online and the easy creation of quizzes for while-listening tasks (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 110). These statements agree with what Teacher 5 explained about the lack of suitable equipment for videos in class. This teacher enjoyed distance learning a lot, because the teacher "was really able to do everything [the teacher] like[d] and wanted to" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 223).

All teachers except for Teacher 6 made use of YouTube videos for their online English course, depending on the proficiency level of the learners. The reasons for implementing YouTube videos were "to introduce a bit of variety" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 49), to "be in touch with English language outside the classroom" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 49), letting the students hear 'authentic language' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 56), as an 'addition for students who are particularly interested' in the topic (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 122) and for students to relax and have a bit of variety through 'music, images, and a bit of subtitle reading' (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 124). Int_5 and Int_3, who both used videos from YouTube, stated that it was sometimes difficult to find appropriate material that would be suitable for the level of English (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 51, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 108).

In general, it was difficult for teachers to check whether pre-/while-/post-listening tasks that were part of the exercises in the book were completed and, therefore, the teachers relied on

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[16] Learners can access various exercises online that are similar to those that appear in the printed version of the coursebook. The exercises can be given as homework, and the teacher can see who has completed them and how many points were achieved.

the students to do them. However, besides using the *Besser Lernen* tool where the students' exercises were autocorrected, Teacher 1, 2, 4, 5 also requested pictures from the finished exercises in the coursebooks (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 128, Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 109), and Teacher 5 worked a lot with self-created Google Forms where the students could enter their answers for the teacher to check (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 107).

In addition, the teachers extended the coursebook exercises or YouTube videos with post-reading tasks (often in the form of questions) that then became part of the weekly assignments (for example: Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 113, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 112, 120).

7.2.2.3   Writing

Writing assignments were largely done asynchronously. Only Teacher 4 made use of shared documents within synchronous MS Teams conferences, where students could write and teachers were able to join the writing process (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 29). Teacher 6 used the online conferences which allowed the students to write on their own with the camera and microphone turned off (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 93 – 94).

Teacher 1 explained that written assignments were mostly replaced by oral assignments (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 44). There were almost no tasks that involved writing longer texts (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54), but rather improving or rephrasing texts, and, if there were writing assignments, it was on the 'sentence and chunk level' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54).

Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 thought about creating a blog so that students could write blog posts but dismissed the idea because of the additional workload (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 159, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 66). With regard to the text type of e-mails, Teacher 3 explained that these, just like other texts, were sent as attachments to e-mails (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 72).

In an attempt to have students comment on videos, as would be the case in YouTube, Teacher 5 recreated this atmosphere because the 'real' comment function was not available (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 121). This was done "[b]ecause it is something they could do in real life and [the teacher] thought that it was something they might have an opinion about and they [would] feel strongly about" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 123).

Teacher 2 used a tutorial video about the description of graphs as a preparatory activity for a subsequent writing task (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 167). Another pre-writing task was a brain storming activity within the synchronous video conferences for a genre-writing task concerning a school brochure (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 190). Just as with other assignments, Teacher 5 made use of Google Forms to do preparatory tasks for these writing assignments. These included, for example, an exercise about nouns and adjectives to prepare the students for the writing task that followed (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 100). Teacher 6 used the synchronous online conferences to work on adjectives and general language together with the students to

prepare them for a description of a person. Additionally, this teacher shared their screen and provided the learners with sentence starters (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 92).

Teacher 5 wanted the students to train the present progressive by writing a postcard. The teacher (and the teacher's colleague) wrote a postcard to the students via e-mail to which they had to reply. One student even replied with a real postcard sent to the school (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 91).

None of the six teachers specifically planned writing tasks that would necessitate students to interact in written communication. Although there was interaction with the teacher mostly for organisational matters, the chats or journal functions were not used for written student-student communication (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 62, Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 182, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 64). Only Teacher 4 explained that it sometimes developed within the chat, and that they were joking around in English, and Teacher 6 once asked the students to read an article, formulate questions and post them in the chat to have other students respond to the questions (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 104). As has been explained previously, Teacher 5 wrote a postcard that students had to reply "to make it more authentic", which can be regarded as a written interaction; however, this was not a purely online tool (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 89). Moreover, this teacher attempted to recreate a document containing a video, imitating the commentary function on YouTube. Although the students were able to read the others' comments, they were then not able to reply to their peers (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 119).

Regarding correction and feedback, teachers made many statements about the format of written assignments. Teacher 3 and Teacher 4 received writing tasks via e-mail as attachments and the learners could decide whether they wanted to send a Word document, a PDF, or a picture of their handwritten texts (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 52, Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 139). Teacher 1 explained that correcting writing assignments that had been sent online was 'very tedious and relatively inefficient', because having them re-correct texts was complicated and because students sent many different document types (e.g. images, screenshots, word documents). This is confirmed by Teacher 6, who left the decision of whether to send pictures or Word documents to the students (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 96), which led to a plethora of formats that made correction extremely time-consuming (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 100). Unlike Teacher 1 who found correcting online complicated and inefficient, Teacher 3 found 'normal' paper homework to be more time-consuming and suggested that this could be linked to a different generation of teachers (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 52).

Because of the issue with the different formats and the inefficiency in re-correcting texts, Teacher 1 stopped text writing and started to only demand short answers to questions. The

teacher additionally shifted the focus from testing "Accuracy" to "Content" (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 44). There was only one story where the students could choose to record or to write an assignment, and the "Content" was also moved to the centre-stage for those texts that were written. (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54) This teacher stressed that some mistakes were 'just left there' and „Das hat bei mir ganz viel im Kopf gemacht, dass ich einfach Fehler stehen lasse" (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54). In the feedback, the teacher then focused on aspects such as the appropriate use of adjectives or the use of connectors, which the teacher commented on in short phrases "Wow, tolle Verwendung von Adverbien" (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54). Teacher 6 also used short written comments in addition to the correction of mistakes (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 93).

In order to correct written texts, the teachers had them printed out and sent back images of the corrected versions or corrected directly within the documents with the commentary function (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 150 – 151, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 50). Teachers 4 and 6 used a tablet with a pen to correct written texts on their screens (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 145, Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 100). Teacher 3 remarked that the feedback was more detailed because of the Word commentary function, which made correcting much faster, and thus this teacher planned to continue correcting online (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 50). Teacher 1 remarked that feedback was much more individualised because one cannot simply communicate mistakes to the whole class (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 82).

Teacher 4 made use of an editing tool within the Word documents on MS Teams. The teacher (and their colleague) gave writing assignments to the students that they were working on alone. The teachers were able to join, comment and correct them in the writing process which replaced correcting the texts afterwards (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 23). This reflected the way writing was done at school as well, because students also would write a great deal by themselves in the lessons as their teachers went around and answered questions or commented on the texts (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 157).

With regard to the language of communication, the two NMS teachers explained that e-mail communication was mostly in German and that only a few young learners sometimes replied to English questions in English (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 43–47; Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 86). One teacher from an upper secondary school observed that more and more students had adapted and were replying in English as well after two weeks (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 47). This also reflects Teacher 3's remark that the use of English increased even among the 1st graders (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 174). Teacher 3 also remarked that students replied in English when the teacher only resorted to English when writing e-mails (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 86). Teacher

6 used WhatsApp to send information to the students and parents and here, German was used exclusively (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 29). This teacher mentioned that organisational matters and instructions would have usually been in English with 'stronger' students in a face-to-face classroom, but in this situation, German was used especially for written instructions and organisational matters (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 52 and 104).

7.2.2.4 Speaking

While all teachers taught speaking, Teacher 6 explained that this skill was strongly neglected and there were only occasional question/answer parts in Skype conferences (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 76). Otherwise, speaking was taught in synchronous and asynchronous learning environments. Whereas video conferencing tools such as Skype or MS Teams made it possible for students to discuss and answer questions orally, the video (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 211, (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 169) and audio files (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 82, Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 138, Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 54 – 55, Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 163) allowed for asynchronous speaking tasks.

Teacher 1 replaced many written assignments with audio recordings and oral statements to alleviate the burden of correcting written texts (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 44). Voice recordings were also used to react to online material, such as articles (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 79) or to provide short answers to questions (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 142). Teacher 3 particularly stressed how easy the recording process was (this teacher used Vocaroo) for the students, not only from a technical point of view, but also that students enjoyed it (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 138–146).

In synchronous online conferences, texts from the course books were used that served as the basis for oral discussions (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 154), and Teachers 1 and 2 usually shared a Word document with questions that served as basis for a discussion within the group (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 29, Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 62, 68). Int_2 also used a 'tally sheet' to make sure that everybody was talking in the lesson (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 62, 68). Such speaking activities often served as an introduction to the online conferences (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 29, Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 147).

Teacher 2 tried out a shadowing activity as an asynchronous assignment, which involved simultaneously talking over a native speaker's speech and thus creating a 'shadow' of their pronunciation and intonation. In contrast to other audio recordings where the students had to focus on the message and the content, this exercise served as a training for intonation and pronunciation (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 98 - 99). Teacher 3 also wanted to place a focus on pronunciation for the NMS first graders and did this by performing a reading-out-loud exercise in synchronous online conferences (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 154). Teacher 4 also made use of

such recordings for the young learners to practice number counting (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 57). Videos were also demanded by Teacher 2, and although some sent video presentations, others were concerned about data protection (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 209). Teacher 5 assigned students to send videos that included their presentations (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 169).

One preparatory task for a speaking task was looking up the weather forecast for a place. This was done in order to link the weather phrases from the book with an authentic source and a speaking task to show the students "that they didn't learn it for nothing and that they can actually use it now." (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 157). With the same intent, Teacher 2 created a preparatory task for a course book speaking task about office equipment. The pre-task involved students talking about the current situation of home office and online conferences (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 70).

Regarding spoken interaction, Teacher 1 used MS Teams to make 8th grade students record dialogues at the beginning of the first lockdown in March 2020. When the government decided that there would be no oral Matura, this practice was stopped to focus on writing. It was left open to younger learners to record dialogues, but they did not make use of this possibility (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 52). Teacher 2 let students do pair or group work (in the form of dialogues) in synchronous online conferences (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 62). Teachers 4 and 5 asked students in their weekly plans to act out a dialogue with a colleague via the telephone or with family members (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 65, Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 141). Teacher 6 only had teacher-student interactions in form of questions and answers (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 106). This teacher explained that the platforms they used (Skype, SchoolFox and WhatsApp) did not allow for break-out rooms or group work, which hindered spoken interaction tasks. According to the teacher, the lack of such activities was, therefore, due to a 'purely technological barrier' (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 132).

Generally speaking, the lack of body language hindered interaction in synchronous online conferences and necessitated the increased use of 'metacommunication' (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 46). Teacher 3 also explained that training interaction in a face-to-face class 'is a hundred times easier compared to video conferences' (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 190). For this teacher, this was due to the lack of spontaneity in an online environment. In the classroom, one utterance would lead to another and this would result in a spontaneous interactive discussion, which is nearly impossible online (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 190).

Asked about correction and feedback, Teacher 1 explained that it was important to keep students motivated. Therefore, feedback for audio recordings was limited to three points of improvement. Moreover, this teacher stressed that putting an additional burden on students

because of bad oral performance was not suitable for the already difficult situation ("unter besonderen Umständen muss auch besonders unterrichtet werden." Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 46) In addition, students learned new competences by recording a file and uploading it, which also deserved recognition (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 44). Although Teacher 5 used a highly detailed feedback grid for "pronunciation and clarity, fluency, grammar and vocabulary and task achievement", the teacher also stressed, just like Teacher 1, that "it was more important that they did the homework" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 179).

Teacher 2 wanted to design a speaking task with peer feedback with a tool called Flipgrid. Students can record a video within a set time limit, post it and the others can comment on it (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 86). The idea failed because of data protection issues and concerns by the students about how videos would be stored (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 88). However, the audio files made a 'really detailed feedback' via e-mail possible, because the teacher could listen to the files more than once (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 205). The students also appreciated the feedback, which was found to be very helpful (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 213). Teacher 3 also provided detailed feedback and enjoyed the new experience and the different focus on pronunciation (in contrast to the usual focus on grammar and vocabulary); however, this teacher also highlighted the additional time that was required to do so (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 142, 144, 192). Teacher 4, who also asked for a few audio recordings from younger learners, was surprised that one student submitted his work when this was not expected (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 59).

With regard to the language of communication, two teachers specifically talked about small talk as a way of opening up their online synchronous lessons. Here, the teachers would ask questions in English like "How are you?" or "How do you feel?" and the students would respond in English (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 29; Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 61). If the use of English or German in combination with organisational or technical matters is examined more closely, one upper secondary teacher explained that they even tried to use as much English as possible for organisational matters in synchronous conferences (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 217). Younger learners, on the other hand, received technical details (explanations, instructions) in German according to Teacher 4 (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 39, 133). One AHS teacher explained that, when demanding homework from weaker students, German was used in order to make it sound 'less aggressive' and to put the focus on the homework instead of the English language (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 19). This teacher also did not request students to write back in English but also reacted to German e-mails and messages (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 19).

Teacher 4 added that instructions and technical problems were mostly discussed in German, which would have been different in a face-to-face setting. Here, it was mentioned that the teacher's presence helped the students understand that it was time for English now, which led to an automatic switch into English, which was missing in the online setting (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 131). This echoes Teacher 5's remark that the online classroom lacks "facial reactions" that show "whether they understand or not" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 135).

7.2.2.5   Neglected and preferred skills

During the analysis of the coded transcripts, it became clear that the skills most frequently talked about in the interviews were the productive skills, speaking and writing. If it had not already been evident from the interviews, the teachers were asked at the end of the interviews whether there were any skills that were preferred or neglected during the distance learning period.

Teacher 1 stopped giving written assignments (of texts) because of the workload and replaced these with speaking tasks or short written assignments on the sentence level (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 43, Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 89). According to this teacher, the reading skills increased because the students received all assignments in written form (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 87). The AHS Teacher 3 remarked the same for the upper secondary students, as they had to read so much, and this teacher even had the impression that the students' skimming and scanning skills had improved (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 188). This teacher also added that no skill was neglected but that the aspect of vocabulary learning fell behind because it was difficult to test this (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 184).

Int_2 increased the teaching of speaking out of fear that it would not be trained sufficiently (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 198). This result mirrors what Teacher 5 said, as this teacher also focused heavily on speaking because "they didn't really have class interaction with the teachers" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 215). Teacher 4, on the contrary, explained that speaking was trained much less, and especially before Easter, because of technological barriers, a lack of knowledge about how to implement it and time constraints (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 175). Teacher 6 also neglected the speaking skill because of the students' very low proficiency levels and a lack of methodological knowledge for online speaking tasks (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 76). The listening skill was also difficult to train (outside the cyberhomework assignments), because the teacher was not sure how to train it 'in a meaningful way' (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 74).

8 Discussion

In this chapter, the results are examined from the perspective of online language learning, possible online tools and online communicative language learning. Additionally, the tools used are regarded through the lens of Puentedura's (2006) SAMR model that show how technology was used to transfer a face-to-face classroom into the online world.

8.1 Synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid environments

Vivolo (2020:9) explained that most online classes take place in asynchronous environments and that synchronous courses are only rarely taught. Puliti (2019: 249) argued that synchronous and asynchronous environments are complementary. Using both environments seemed to be the overall strategy taken by this project's sample, as four of the six teachers combined them. Synchronous environments were often chosen to compensate for the lack of spoken interaction, as suggested by Puliti (2019: 249); however, also keeping the contact and organising the online classes were reasons cited for choosing synchronous online conferences.

According to a recent study, e-mails were the most dominant online tool and LMS or CMS were neglected in the emergency distance situation (Huber 2020). Although the sample in this thesis was small and is not representative of all Austrian teachers, teachers seemed to increase their use of LMS and CMS. The interviews and questionnaires confirmed that e-mails were the main form of communication and thus, remain to be the most widely used CMC tool (White 2003: 52). LMS and CMS, however, also played a tremendously important role for staying in contact with the students, giving and handing in assignments, providing online material and organising synchronous online conferences.

8.2 Reading and listening

Other studies have shown that teachers tend to rely on their coursebooks, even in online classes (White 2003: 40), and the current study confirmed that all teachers made use of the coursebooks as a basis for their listening and reading comprehension tasks. However, the exercises and especially the pre- and post-reading and -listening activities in the books were then adapted with the help of different online tools to make them suitable for synchronous or asynchronous online environments. Against the backdrop of the SAMR model, exercises were *substituted* by writing answers into Google Forms or chats. Exercises were *augmented* or *modified* when a teacher, for example, let students summarise an online article via an audio recording. Graded online readers and graphic stories clearly *modified* the reading experience due to the animations and the graphic stories. The listening skill itself was entirely modified through the combination of visual and audio input in videos. A *redefinition* took place when teachers let students read

subtitles from YouTube videos, which would not have been possible in a 'real' listening situation. Some of the teachers explained that including YouTube videos had not been possible prior to the distance learning phase, due to the lack of technology in schools; only the 'forced' use of technology that involved everybody being at home and connected through computers made the implementation possible. Using online sources adds authenticity to the English language classroom (Kuang-wu 2000: 3) and also makes online learning more efficient (Hampel & Stickler 2005: 319), which might explain the interviewees' use of authentic material.

Nevertheless, the learners and their learning aims must not be neglected for the sake of authentic material, and the interviewees confirmed that finding online material that is suitable for the learner level proved to be challenging, as has been explained previously (Gilmore 2007: 65). Blake (2016: 132) also stressed the fact that authentic material might be overwhelming for learners. Therefore, it seems to be an efficient strategy that many interviewees used coursebook exercises and *augmented* and *modified* them so that students were able to do the exercises at an appropriate level in a synchronous or asynchronous online environment. Others used websites that provided exercises according to the learner levels (e.g. Besser Lernen, British Council website), which also helps teachers to find appropriate material.

From personal experience and conversations with other teachers I know that extensive reading tasks are often neglected because of time constraints. Furthermore, some school types are not required to teach 'literature' according to their curriculum, and thus, the motivation for extensive reading tasks is low. The three teachers who assigned extensive reading tasks stated that such a task was only possible because of the distance learning phase. Learning from home seems to have given the teachers the possibility to finally fit in 'reading a book'. Extensive reading is excellent for many reasons that have been previously mentioned (BBC Reading 2020), and it especially serves the development of learner autonomy and thus the CLT approach.

It was suggested in the interviews that *reading* generally increased, because students received most of the information (e.g. instructions, assignments) that would have usually been provided in class in a written form. Two teachers even said that the reading skills of their students had improved because of the increased amount of reading in online environments. Such a possible improvement was already suggested in the study by Karataş and Tuncer (2020: 10).

8.3   Writing

If the writing skill is examined against the backdrop of the SAMR model, it seems as though many traditional tools were *substituted* with their online equivalents. Texts that would normally be handwritten were typed into Word documents. When handwritten texts were photographed and then sent to the teachers for correction, this can be seen as an *augmentation*, as it opens up more possibilities for feedback (as corrections can be added in a handwritten form with tablets). Preparatory activities for writing texts were done in synchronous online conferences, via shared documents, or in Google Forms, which can be described as a *substitution* or *augmentation*. The writing skill is mostly taught asynchronously (Meskill and Anthony 2015: 9), which the interviewees confirmed. One teacher, however, used shared documents on MS Teams to accompany students during the writing process in a synchronous environment. This can be seen as a *substitution* for writing in the classroom where the teacher would give immediate feedback. However, it also *augments* and *modifies* the writing, as teachers could add immediate written feedback and links to websites to provide grammatical input or vocabulary. Such activities shift the focus away from the final written product to the writing process (Ros i Solé & Truman 2005: 301) which is extremely beneficial for improving the writing skill (Blake 2016: 136).

Other authors have noted that feedback and revaluating one's own work or the work of others is a tremendously important aspect in the learning process (White 2003: 44; Throssel & Morgan 2015: 378f; Richards 2006: 4, 20), therefore, it is necessary to find ways to do this. Blogs are a text type required for the Austrian Matura and offer an authentic, text type inherent way for commenting and providing feedback. Some teachers thought about creating a real blog where students would be able to comment on each other's blog entries, which would actually make more sense than writing blog posts on paper. One teacher also tried to emulate the commentary function in YouTube. Both of these ideas can be described as a *redefinition*, as they would not be easily possible in a face-to-face classroom. However, because of time constraints, technological barriers and lack of knowledge, it was difficult to create blogs and other commentary activities. Therefore, it would be highly beneficial to make teachers more 'digi-fit' (see initiative: eEducation Austria: Digitale Schulentwicklung on p. 15) and to provide the teachers with the necessary skills to create such blogs and other activities for an individual class, for all English classes, or even for the school.

One study suggested that students prefer writing at home and that the additional student teacher communication helped to improve their writing skills (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 24). The interviews did not specifically confirm any improvement. Nevertheless, with regard to the additional teacher-student communication, most of the interviewees confirmed that the

commentary function in Word made correcting easier and made more detailed feedback possible. One teacher, however, found it challenging to correct written assignments online, which might be age-related, as has been suggested by another (younger) interviewee.

What is of particular importance with regard to CLT is that one teacher specifically explained that they moved away from testing accuracy in writing to focusing on fluency. This teacher explained that correcting texts was extremely time-consuming and that it was almost impossible to check what students would do with the corrected texts. This teacher stopped assigning longer texts and either replaced them with short written question/answer activities or recorded oral answers/presentations. This led to a shift where the focus was moved away from *accuracy* to *content* and *successful communication*. This teacher specifically stressed that it changed the teacher's perception of mistakes; they were no longer the centre of attention and content and linking were prioritised. Moving the focus away from 'mistakes' and toward the successful use and function of language again supports a communicative approach of teaching language.

8.4   Speaking

Synchronous online classes can help to reduce the feeling of isolation (Baumann et al. 2008: 383) and are used to establish "a connection" among all participants (Vivolo 2020: 9). This is confirmed by those teachers who saw a need for synchronous online conferences so that they would not 'lose their students'. Smalltalk, which is a common starting point in face-to-face learning, was easily *substituted* in synchronous online conferences with the interviewees. In asynchronous environments, the recording of presentations and audio files proved to be suitable. This can be seen as an *augmentation*, as it allowed the teachers to re-listen to the files in order to provide more detailed feedback. If the students had then reworked their presentations and recordings and improved them in a peer or teacher feedback loop, this would have been a *modification*, but such activities were not implemented by the interviewees, probably because of time constraints. What is definitely a *redefinition* is the Shadowing task created by Teacher 2.

It has been noted that the teaching of pronunciation can be challenging for language learners because they might be embarrassed (Hedge 2000: 286f). However, the interviews revealed that speaking with a special focus on pronunciation was possible because of the affordances of the online environment. Audio recordings gave students a 'private' way to present their speech to teachers, and teachers were able to give detailed feedback, as they were able to listen to their students more than once. This seems beneficial for the students' progress, as feedback is essential in language learning and also a significant aspect of the CLT approach (Richards 2006: 20f ; White 2003: 44; Muñoz-Marín & González-Moncada 2010: 82; Throssel

& Morgan 2015: 378f). Nevertheless, giving such feedback can place an additional burden on teachers, as it is rather time-consuming, which was confirmed in the interviews.

Teaching speaking also involves body language and facial gestures. Even if all students and teachers had their webcams switched on and possessed the best possible equipment, this would only reveal a small section of the body and face. In order to be able to evaluate body language as well, some teachers, therefore, required students to send videos for 'real' presentations. Although advocates of distance learning state that synchronous environments can make up for real-life interactions (Meskill and Anthony 2015: 28), Teacher 3 specifically said that spontaneous conversation was not possible because of the missing facial expressions, gestures and body language, as was argued by Blake (2016: 132) and Throssel and Morgan (2015: 382). Although the online world provides substitutes for almost all face-to-face exercises and activities, classroom interactions that are not staged or part of an activity seem to be extremely difficult to emulate. This being said, some teachers decided to call the students by their names, unlike the situation in a face-to-face classroom, because of the lack of body language, which resulted in increased participation by everyone. Several teachers explained that some students spoke more in the online lessons. This might be linked to the calling of names or the sending of recordings that do not require learners to speak in front of their peers. In addition, a lack of body language, facial expressions and gestures in an online environment might additionally force students to utter their concerns, questions and wishes instead of relying on a teacher to seek possible questions.

One teacher raised the issue of data protection in combination with video files numerous times. Although data protection might be the actual reason that students are not willing to send videos, another aspect might have to be considered as well. Coverdale-Jones (2000: 38) explained that students seem to be more concerned about their appearance in video presentations than in traditional ones. This might be due to the fact that videos can be stored and – as was stated by Teacher 4 – altered with various programs.

Two studies (Hartshorn & McMurry 2020; Karataş & Tuncer 2020) found that the speaking skill suffered in online learning environments. It was also found that writing sometimes replaces speaking (Karataş & Tuncer 2020: 26), which has been confirmed by one teacher who stopped giving speaking assignments entirely. The questionnaires showed that speaking was neglected by several respondents. Although the interviewed teachers also confirmed that speaking exercises were difficult to implement, most of them used audio recordings and detailed feedback grids to make up for the missing speaking experience of face-

to-face classrooms. However, there seems to be a shift to focusing on accuracy (pronunciation and intonation) in such activities.

Although reading, listening and writing skills seem to be enhanced through various online tools, there are mixed findings with regard to the speaking skill. It is paradoxical that an environment that facilitates CLT on so many levels makes spoken interaction so difficult. Although the students' pronunciation training can benefit from the use of audio recordings and more detailed feedback, spontaneous interactions appear to be extremely difficult to establish online. While there seems to be a shift toward the focus of communicative aims and fluency (away from accuracy) in writing, there seems to be an increased focus on accuracy in speaking because of the augmented usage of audio recordings and the decrease in the number of tasks that train interaction.

8.5   General findings

Rasmitadila et al.'s (2020: 96) study on the emergency distance learning period revealed that many teachers made use of WhatsApp, Google Forms, YouTube and Zoom and that instructional videos were used frequently. Although almost all teachers used YouTube, one teacher used Google Forms various times and one also used instructional videos. WhatsApp and Zoom were only rarely used. This might be associated with Teacher 3's explanation that using WhatsApp with students would have placed an additional burden on them, because it implies constant availability. Moreover, data protection issues were raised many times, which might be the reason why Zoom was not used by the interviewees and only by four respondents of the questionnaires.

Although teachers of young learners (1st grade NMS and AHS) took part in the interviews as well, no teacher raised the issue of parents being involved in online conferences. However, the interviews did not include a specific question concerning this problem raised by Rasmitadila et al. (2020: 96f).

Learner autonomy not only plays a significant role in distance learning, but also in the approach of communicative language learning that moves the learner to the centre stage (Murphy 2009; Liaw/English 2017: 71; Meskill & Anthony 2015: 8; Hubbard 2017: 102). The teachers explained in the interviews that the completion of exercises was often based on trust or that students had to correct themselves using answer keys. Moreover, all of the teachers used weekly assignments or some kind of portfolio that required students to work by themselves and ask for help when they needed it. In addition, the sheer amount of work that teachers are confronted with regarding checking homework assignments and school exercises, listening to

audio files, watching videos and generally providing much more feedback, appears to force the teachers to hand over responsibility to the students.

It is also noteworthy that several teachers declared that exercises were voluntary. Although this would suggest that the students acted autonomously, these teachers also said that often the students did not do said activities. The reasons for this necessitate further research, but may have been due to the generally difficult situation and increased workload, which made the students set priorities. It might also be due to the fact that students were simply not used to being responsible for their own learning and their own progress. They would have needed more time to get accustomed to this.

The fact that students spent so much time at home makes one think of the concept of the "language ecosystem" (Dixon, Shewell, Crandell 2020: Introduction) that refers to the world that can support learning outside the classroom. The students need to incorporate this language ecosystem into their learning process to be successful. The teachers encouraged the students to include family members for training speaking. Moreover, spending so much time in their online classrooms, young learners acquired skills that enabled them to make use of various online tools, which might also be beneficial for using English in their private lives.

The abundance of online material that is easily accessible also necessitates a skilled teacher to handle this (White 2003: 72). Some teachers talked about how students were overwhelmed by all the different online tools, as well as the CMS and LMS that were used. With time, the teachers and schools agreed to use a few platforms in order not to add even more stress to the students. Although one might think that today's young learners are digitally fit and can easily cope with using different online tools (Meskill, 2007: 13; Rogers & Wolff 2000: 47), the interviews revealed that many students, and especially young ones, needed a lot of time to adapt to this new environment. However, some of the interviewees remarked that students not only gained language competences but especially digital competences because of the distance learning phase.

Communication and thus language learning can also be disturbed because of all sorts of computer-related barriers (Goertler 2009: 76f). The interviews included numerous comments regarding technological barriers, which were often linked to insufficient digital skills or a lack of equipment; however, this topic is not included in the thesis as it would have gone beyond the scope of this research project. In order to overcome obstacles such as missing webcams or microphones and poor internet connections that hindered live communication, weekly plans and assignments made it possible for students to complete the tasks without necessarily

participating in synchronous conferences. Planning ahead and informing students seems to be a useful strategy for both teachers and students to proceed with the online classes.

The written and oral language of communication provided by teachers in e-mails, chats, or online conferences can be seen as another important part in having more authentic language use in the English classroom. The interviews have shown that the online use of English reflects the use of English in the face-to-face classroom. Some teachers tended to establish an English only classroom whereas others were more lenient. The lack of body language and facial expression in combination with distance learning specific aspects, such as explaining software, and checking for webcams and microphones, made most of the teachers resort to German to make sure that everybody understood everything. However, no questions were asked or comments were made regarding the mother tongues of the students or whether German could be understood by everybody.

As has become apparent through the interviews, CALL indeed combines some fundamental aspects (highlighted in bold in the paragraph below) of the CLT approach (Kuang-wu 2000: 4), but not all of them. The World Wide Web opens up numerous possibilities not only due to the **interesting and purposeful** content, but especially for **authentic** language material. Using new online tools necessitates new ways of teaching reading, writing, speaking and listening, which results in the use of new, **creative** methods of language training. Moreover, the workload of teachers and the aspect of 'being home alone' necessitate a redefinition of roles, which shifts the teacher into the background and causes the online classes to become **more learner-centred**. The teacher takes on the role of the **facilitator** as a less synchronous learning environment simply necessitates the teachers to facilitate the students' learning on their own.

8.6 Limitations

The present study, which was carried out to describe how the four skills were taught during the distance learning period, was limited to the use of questionnaires and interviews. This means that the results are based on the teachers' personal perspectives regarding their own teaching. It is, therefore, possible that the interviewees did not talk about all aspects that were addressed or that they simply forgot some things over the course of time. Additional insights could have been gained by using other data-collection techniques, such as observations. This, however, would have been nearly impossible during the first emergency distance learning phase as most of the teaching was made 'from home'. Even if tools had been used for video conferences, an observation would have been extremely complicated due to organisational reasons, time constraints and data protection. By the time this thesis was finished, several lockdowns had followed the first emergency distance learning phase. Many online classes now take place via

video conferencing software, such as MS Teams. With careful planning, such a learning environment will make it possible for future researchers to observe distance learning in synchronous environments if further lockdowns occur.

The interviewees were exclusively teachers. This provides a rather narrow perspective of the online classes as it excludes the students' and the parents' points of view. Giving learners the opportunity to share their experiences might help to establish a broader picture and to gain a more comprehensive look into the online English classrooms.

The present study is rather small; 27 respondents answered the online survey and six teachers took part in the Skype interviews. No generalisations can be made about English language teaching in Austrian schools during the distance learning phase that extended from the 16th of March until the 18th of May 2020. Gaining a broader insight necessitates a larger sampling.

As the initial research question revolved around the four skills in combination with online tools, the Google Forms survey lacked direct questions concerning an asynchronous/synchronous or hybrid learning environment. Although the answers about the tools used reveal some information about the learning environment, no clear statements can be made about this topic.

The material that the teachers had sent before the meeting via Skype were used as a basis for the interviews. An in depth-analysis of all the material would have gone beyond the scope of the present research project. However, the material is extremely diverse and would definitely merit a closer analysis. Examining the material in more detail could reveal numerous aspects concerning the structure of week plans, the content of feedback sheets, and many other details.

The interviews revealed a plethora of topics that could not be included in the analysis, as they were not in line with the research questions. Several comments were made on the topic of flexibility (by teachers, students and parents), which could be a fruitful topic of further research. Regarding the topic of flexibility, many statements were connected with empathy for the students and their (challenging) situations at home, which, for example, led teachers to set more lenient deadlines. This could also open up new research questions for distance learning during an emergency situation.

When the first idea for this thesis work was being developed, it was not clear whether other distance learning periods would occur later on. The development of the coronavirus pandemic has led to other online learning phases, each of which had highly individual effects on schools and classes. As the distance learning also continued after the summer holidays, it is

to be expected that the six teachers changed aspects of their language teaching. Of course, it would be extremely interesting to interview them again to ask how their online classes developed and also how they are dealing with a hybrid classroom that is taught online and face-to-face at the same time.

It was the aim of this study to provide a broad picture of language teaching. The study has revealed tendencies to prefer or neglect certain skills within an online language learning environment. This might provide insight for further studies in which the research focus could be placed on one specific skill in order to obtain more detailed results.

9   Conclusion

The emergency distance learning phase that started in March 2020 resulted in all Austrian schools closing down, forcing teachers and students to adapt their learning and teaching to an online environment within a few days. It seemed necessary to have a closer look at such an unprecedented situation and to investigate how English was taught online during the first lockdown. New technology and various online tools have given teachers various options to create and organise their English courses online. The first research question, therefore, was formulated to find out what general learning environment (synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid) was used during the EDE. In addition, this thesis project was then situated in the context of English language teaching. Thus, the research evolved around identifying how the four skills were taught with regard to the online tools used, correction/feedback and language of communication.

In order to answer the research questions, an online questionnaire was put online and sent to different teachers to obtain general information on the distance learning phase. Then, six teachers from various school types and learner levels were interviewed via Skype with the help of a semi-structured interview guide. By coding the data based on clearly defined categories, the qualitative content analysis revealed interesting insights. While the questionnaire survey and the interviews were based on broad research questions, the respondents provided detailed insights into their online classes.

Although various environments were used to teach English, the majority of teachers used a hybrid format that included weekly assignments in combination with synchronous online conferences. In teaching the four skills, the interviewed teachers used many different tools and strategies. While reading and listening activities were mostly based on coursebook activities that were adapted to the online world through *enhancement* and *transformation*, authentic material like online newspaper articles and YouTube videos were also used. Although training

spoken interaction proved to be challenging, the training of spoken production was facilitated through videos and audio recordings. Writing tasks were mostly performed in asynchronous environments through e-mails or LMS. Time constraints and the lack of IT knowledge hindered the creation of blogs or other writing tasks with commentary functions. Regarding the language of communication, many teachers resorted to German for technology-related information; however, (depending on the age) written communication often took place in English. Corrections and feedback were found in many different forms. Generally, teachers talked about the increased amount of time that went into feedback. There seems to have been a slight shift toward the focus on accuracy in spoken activities due to the possibility of audio recordings and a shift toward fluency in writing tasks because of the increased number of corrections.

All teachers are guided by pedagogical principles and methodological knowledge with regard to language teaching and teaching the four skills. The results and discussion have shown that many aspects in the distance learning environment enable a communicative ELT approach. Because of time constraints, teachers had to find different ways to give tasks, correct them and evaluate them. It was necessary to hand over responsibility to the students, rely on their autonomy and trust them to perform the work by themselves. Teaching English online seems to have moved the focus away from teacher-centred to learner-centred classrooms, which requires a great deal of autonomy and independence from the students.

This research project has shown that teaching English online is as diverse as the teachers themselves. The sample of interview partners was small, making it impossible to draw general conclusions from what was presented in the interviews. Schools might go back to teaching their students face-to-face, but distance learning and especially online tools will remain a part of English language teaching to some extent. This thesis provides a collection of online options for teaching languages, and the project can also serve as a basis for future research, focusing on distance learning environments, the four skills and correction/ feedback.

10 References

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11 Appendix

11.1 Abstract (English)

The coronavirus outbreak in 2020 prompted teachers and students to move their classrooms into the online world within a short period of time. The thesis work at hand was performed to study the online classrooms of English language teachers in Austrian upper and lower secondary schools during the Emergency Distance Education situation between March and May 2020. More precisely, the aim was to find out what general learning environment (synchronous, asynchronous, hybrid) teachers chose for their classes and how the four skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) were trained online. In order to find answers to these questions, semi-structured interviews were conducted with six teachers via Skype. Prior to the interviews, an online questionnaire was completed by 27 respondents providing general information about how English was taught online during the first lockdown. Regarding the four skills, the interviews and the questionnaires revealed that a large diversity of methods and online tools were used, extending from simple substitutions of traditional material with their online equivalents to a redefinition of English learning, enabled through online technology. Regarding the general learning environment, the interviews showed a preference for hybrid formats. Although the results are not representative due to the small number of interviewees and respondents, the present thesis provides initial insights that could then result in further, more detailed research in the future.

11.2 Abstract (German)

Aufgrund des Coronavirus-Ausbruchs Anfang des Jahres 2020 mussten LehrerInnen und SchülerInnen ihren Unterricht abrupt in die Online-Welt verlegen. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht den Online-Unterricht von EnglischlehrerInnen, die in der Ober- und Unterstufe an österreichischen Sekundarschulen in der *Emergency Distance Education*-Phase zwischen März und Mai 2020 unterrichteten. Es war nicht nur Ziel der Studie herauszufinden, welche Lernumgebung (synchron, asynchron, hybrid) Lehrpersonen für Ihren Unterricht wählten, sondern auch, wie die vier Fertigkeiten (Lesen, Schreiben, Hören, Sprechen) online unterrichtet werden konnten. Sechs EnglischlehrerInnen wurden in semistrukturierten Interviews dazu befragt. Dem voraus gingen Online Fragebögen, die von 27 Lehrpersonen beantwortet wurden und allgemeine Informationen zum Unterricht während des ersten Lockdowns lieferten. Im Hinblick auf die vier Fertigkeiten zeigten die Interviews und Fragebögen eine große Vielfalt an Methoden und Online Tools. Diese reichten vom simplen *Ersetzen* von traditionellem Unterrichtsmaterial durch deren Onlineversion bis hin zu einer *Neudefinition* der im Unterricht eingesetzten Materialien. Bezüglich der Lernumgebung zeigten die Interviews eine Präferenz für Hybridformen. Obgleich die Ergebnisse aufgrund der geringen Anzahl an Befragten und Interviewten nicht repräsentativ ist, liefert die vorliegende Arbeit einen ersten Einblick in das Thema, welches als Basis für umfassendere Untersuchungen dienen kann.

11.3 Interview guide

Before starting the recording:

- *Would you like to conduct the interview in German or English?*
- *Thank you for your time./ My name is … / Topic of the thesis*
- *Info: Everything will be anonymised*
- *Are there any questions?*
- *Start of the recording*

Einstiegsfragen:

- Seit wann sind Sie als Lehrerin/Lehrer tätig? (+ Bezug auf questionnaire)
- Alter SchülerInnen / Schultyp (+ Bezug auf questionnaire)
- Wie viele Klasse unterrichten Sie zurzeit?
- Unterrichten Sie bereits wieder alle Klassen in der Schule?

Hauptfragen:

1. Verwend(et)en Sie eine Art Online-Klassenbuch um den Kurs zu organisieren? (+ Bezug auf questionnaire)
2. Verwend(et)en Sie ein Lern-Management-System wie zum Beispiel LMS.at, um das Lernen der Schüler und Schülerinnen zu organisieren? (+ Bezug auf questionnaire)
3. Im Fragebogen haben Sie angegeben, dass Sie _____ im Englischunterricht verwenden bzw. verwendet haben. Im Hinblick auf die vier Skills; Wofür haben Sie zum Beispiel _____ verwendet?
4. Mit welchem Skill möchten Sie beginnen?

Writing – Sie wollten, dass die Schüler und Schülerinnen einen Text schreiben. Wie ist das abgelaufen? Sie können auch gerne Beispiele nennen. - Bezug auf gesendetes Material - Aufgabenstellung – Schreiben – Abgabe – Korrektur? (Tools?) - Schreibkontext? Textsorte? - Process/ Product Writing - Interaction: Haben Schüler und Schülerinnen (gleichzeitig) miteinander „geschrieben" bzw. Lehrer(in) mit SchülerIn? (text messages, Chat, Emails, discussion forums?)	**Reading** Welche Möglichkeiten haben Sie genutzt, um den Schülerinnen und Schülern Leseaufträge zu geben? - Bezug auf gesendetes Material - Pre / post / while reading (Tools?) - Aufgabenstellung – Erledigung – Korrektur (Tools?) - Lehrbuch? Andere (Online)-Quellen? - Extensive/Intensive Reading?
Listening Wie wurde Listening geübt? - Bezug auf gesendetes Material - Zum Beispiel Lehrbuch + Online Version oder CD ? - Andere (Online)-Quellen? - Pre / post / while listening (Tools?) - Aufgabenstellung – Erledigung – Korrektur (Tools?)	**Speaking** - Bezug auf gesendetes Material - Wie wurde Sprechen geübt? (Presentations /Interaction) - Aufgabenstellung – "Präsentation" – Feedback (Tools?) - Interaction: Haben Schüler und Schülerinnen (gleichzeitig) miteinander kommuniziert bzw. gab es englische Gespräche zwischen Lehrer(in) und Schüler(in)? (Telefon, Skype, etc.)

Falls noch nicht beantwortet:

1. Welcher Skill wurde bevorzugt unterrichtet? Welcher Skill wurde vernachlässigt/ nicht unterrichtet?
2. Welche Sprache haben Sie verwendet, um mit den Schülern und Schülerinnen zu kommunizieren? (z.B.: im LMS, per Email, für Arbeitsaufträge?)
3. Haben Sie eher Aufträge gegeben, die die SchülerInnen allein erarbeitet haben oder waren Sie eher mit der Klasse gleichzeitig online – z.B. in einem Chat oder in einer Videokonferenz?
4. Hat sich Ihr Unterricht nach den Osterferien verändert?
5. Welche Erkenntnisse nehmen Sie aus der Distance-Learning Phase mit? Welche Empfehlungen/ Tipps würden Sie Kolleginnen und Kollegen geben, die auf Online-Unterricht umstellen müssten oder wollen?

11.4 Questionnaire

(created with Google Forms)

Distance Teaching/Learning in the English Classroom

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer a few questions about how teachers are currently incorporating the four skills in their online English classrooms.

This questionnaire addresses employed English teachers at every level of experience and serves as introductory questionnaire for my Master Thesis.

It is not only extremely valuable on a scientifical basis to see how you taught the four skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking) in your online classroom, but I am also personally interested in your experiences for my own teaching.

*Erforderlich

1. **1. How long have you been working as an English teacher? ***

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- ☐ This is my first year
- ☐ 1 - 4 years
- ☐ 5 - 10 years
- ☐ 11 - 20 years
- ☐ More than 20 years

2. **2. What kind of school do your work for? (Multiple answers possible) ***

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- ☐ NMS (New Secondary School)
- ☐ BHS (College for higher vocational education)
- ☐ AHS (Academic secondary school, upper or lower cycle)
- ☐ Berufsschule (Vocational school)
- Sonstiges: ☐ _____

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3. **3. How old is the majority of your students? (Multiple answers possible) ***

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- ☐ 10 - 14 years
- ☐ 15 years and older

4. **4. Are you currently using any Learning Management Systems, Messenger programmes or Social Media to stay in contact with your students? (for example: Moodle, Email, LMS.at, Skype, SchoolFox, WhatsApp etc.) ***

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- ☐ No
- ☐ Yes

5. **If yes, which programmes are you using? (Multiple answers possible)**

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

- ☐ Moodle
- ☐ Zoom
- ☐ SchoolFox
- ☐ Lms.at
- ☐ Email
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ WhatsApp
- ☐ Discord
- ☐ Facebook Messenger
- ☐ Telephone/SMS
- Sonstiges: ☐ _____

5. Which aspects are you teaching in your online classroom? (Multiple answers possible) *

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

☐ Reading
☐ Writing
☐ Speaking
☐ Listening
☐ Vocabulary
☐ Grammar
Sonstiges: ☐

6. When giving your students tasks, how do they transmit their output?(for example: You ask your students to send a written diary entry via LMS.at; Your students should record an audio file and send it via email; You ask your students to give a presentation in a Skype conference etc.) Which online tools are you using?

Wählen Sie alle zutreffenden Antworten aus.

☐ Emails
☐ Skype
☐ Blog posts
☐ Podcasts
☐ Videos
☐ Google Docs
☐ Audio Recordings
☐ Screenshots from textbook
☐ LMS
Sonstiges: ☐

7. It would be fantastic if you could share some of your distance learning material with me for further analysis. (for example: writing prompts, instructions, tasks, handouts etc.) If you are willing to do so, please send them via email (with age group and school type) to: engfrensurvey@gmail.com

8. I would like to hear more about your experiences! Would you be willing to answer some further questions in an interview? The interview will take place in May/June 2020 via telephone or Skype. If yes, please leave your name and email address/telephone number and I will contact you. Participants will of course be kept anonymous in my thesis. Thank you very much, Lisa Andert

9. Thank you very much for your time. Stay healthy and please take some virtual chocolate for your time:

11.5 Consent form

Einwilligungserklärung Interview

Ich erkläre hiermit mein Einverständnis zur Nutzung der personenbezogenen Daten, die im Rahmen des folgenden Gesprächs erhoben wurden:

- *Datum des Interviews:*
- *Name des Teilnehmers/der Teilnehmerin:*
- *Masterarbeitsthema: Teaching the four skills in English classes in Austrian schools during the distance learning period in spring 2020*
- *Studierende: Lisa Andert, Betreuerin: Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. Ute Smit*
- *Durchführende Hochschule: Universität Wien (Anglistik)*

Für die Datenerhebung wurden mündliche Gespräche via Skype geführt, die mittels Skype aufgezeichnet wurden. Für die anschließende Analyse wurden die mündlich erhobenen Daten verschriftlicht (Transkription), wobei die Daten anonymisiert werden. Dadurch ist eine Identifizierung der interviewten Person ist ausgeschlossen. Auch die Namen, genauen Adressen der Schulen werden nicht genannt.

Kontaktdaten, die eine Identifizierung der interviewten Person zu einem späteren Zeitpunkt ermöglichen würden, werden aus Dokumentationsgründen in einem separaten Dokument gespeichert.

Die Teilnahme an dem Gespräch erfolgt freiwillig. Die/Der TeilnehmerIn wurde vor dem Gespräch darüber informiert, dass das Gespräch jederzeit abgebrochen werden kann, bzw. dass Fragen gestellt werden können.Das Einverständnis zur Aufzeichnung und Weiterverwendung der Daten kann jederzeit widerrufen werden.

Teilnehmerin:

Vorname und Name in Druckbuchstaben

_____

Unterschrift

_____

Datum, Ort

11.6 Codebook

The interviews were transcribed with F4analyse/F4transkript and coded on the basis of the following codebook.

Main category	Subcategory	Definition	Example
Learning environment	Synchronous	Teacher provides information linked to synchronous learning environment (e.g. time and dates, conference type, grouping of students, content of conferences etc.) Only general information, specific information goes into skill codes	"Nein, sondern wir haben wöchentliche Besprechungen gehabt." (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 27)
	asynchronous	Teacher provides information linked to asynchronous learning environment (e.g. week plans, schedules) Only general information, specific information goes into skill codes	"Nach wie vor läuft jetzt die letzte Woche mit Arbeitsaufträgen." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 19)
Four Skills	neglected/preferred skills	Teacher talks about skills that were neglected, not taught at all, taught more intensively, or replaced by other skills. Teacher gives reasons for neglecting/preferring skills.	"Viel weniger Speaking." (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 173)
	tools/methods	Teacher talks about online tools that were used in general (e.g. CMS, LMS) for: communication, document sharing, grading, organisational information Tools specifically used for skills go into respective skill section.	"We didn't have SchoolFox at the beginning of the coronavirus so at that point we were just communicating via E-Mail. […]" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 191)
Reading	Synch/Asynch	Teacher explains how reading was taught. For example: via assignments, in conferences etc.	"Da habe ich dann die Seitenzahl gegeben und die Reading war dann quasi zu machen, innerhalb einer Woche." (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 94)
	Tools/Methods	Teacher talks about (online) tools and methods for reading tasks/texts For example: - coursebook - texts from the Internet - books (extensive reading?) - other sources? - reading out loud, recordings?	"Da gibt es zum Beispiel das "Besser Lernen", wo ich den Schülern Übungen hineinstellen kann, Leseübungen, Hörübungen, Grammatikübungen usw." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 25)
	Correction/Feedback	Teacher provides information on correcting and giving feedback. For example: automatically, students themselves, sent to teachers via picture, tasks were adapted to online quizzes/forms, not at all etc.	"Gab keine, also teilweise Fotos, aber es war nicht Pflicht, sondern sie sollten es dann in die Schule mitnehmen." (Int_4_NMS, Paragraph 91)
Writing	Synch/Asynch	Teacher explains how writing was taught. For example: in conferences, via assignments, shared live documents,	"[…] Sie haben sich hingesetzt mit einem Blatt Papier und einem Stift und ich habe zu ihnen gesagt, versucht jetzt wirklich in der Stunde […] eine Personenbeschreibung zu schreiben. (Int_6_NMS, Paragraph 93)
	Tools/Methods/Text types	Teacher talks about (online) tools and methods for writing For example:	"Nein, ich habe kurz angedacht, einen Blog oder Ähnliches zu machen. Aber ich habe dann die Idee wieder verworfen." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 159)

		- coursebook - teaching of text types (blogs, emails etc.) + new text types?	
	Correction/Feedback	Teacher provides information on correcting/feedback and time investment. For example: peer feedback, correction through programs such as MS Word + commentary function, use of tablets, handwritten correction	"[…] Und ich habe einfach das, was ich reingeschrieben habe, habe ich dann gelb markiert. Also ist eine relativ mühsame Geschichte" (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 54)
	Interaction	Teacher gives information on written interaction activities. For example: use of short message services, discussions fora, chat services	"Nein, also das habe ich nicht, dass ich ihnen irgendwie Dialoge gebe" (Int_1_GYM, Paragraph 62)
Listening	Synch/Asynch	Teacher explains how listening was taught. For example: students did tasks at home, live in conferences	"Genau und auch wie es erledigt wurde, ob das richtig verstanden wurde, weil wenn nicht, haben wir das dann immer in der nächsten Online-Konferenz besprochen." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 132)
	Tools/Methods	Teacher talks about (online) tools and methods for listening tasks For example: - coursebook and CD, access to audios - use of podcasts, YouTube videos, songs	"Listening und Reading wurde großteils anhand vom Buch bzw. aus dem Club aufgegeben, dieses Magazin" (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 108)
	Correction/Feedback	Teacher provides information on correcting and giving feedback for listening tasks. For example: automatically, students themselves, sent to teachers via picture, tasks were adapted to online quizzes/forms, not at all etc.	"Mhm. Ja, bei allen Übungen, die sie im Buch zu machen hatten, haben sie mir ein Foto hochgeladen." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 128)
Speaking	Synch/asynch	Teacher explains how speaking was taught. For example: students had to record themselves, activities online in conferences, etc.	"Ja, weil ich eben die Befürchtung hatte, dass das Speaking nicht so geübt wird," (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 53)
	Tools/Methods	Teacher talks about (online) tools and methods for speaking tasks For example: - audio recordings - video presentations	"They have other speaking tasks that I had them record but not that one." (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 143)
	Correction/Feedback	Teacher provides information on correcting and giving feedback for speaking tasks. For example: feedback grids, focus on accuracy /fluency	"I have a grid. And I focused on […] pronunciation and clarity, fluency, grammar and vocabulary and task achievement. […]" (Int_5_NMS, Paragraph 179)
	Interaction	Teacher gives information on spoken interaction activities. For example: use of recordings, including family members, activities through phone calls,	"Und oft haben die Schüler auch Partnerarbeiten gemacht." (Int_2_HAK, Paragraph 62)
Other	Language of communication/instructions	Teacher provides information on written and spoken communication; Teacher explains why German/English was used - What language was used for organisational matters, small talk, instructions, assignments, week plans, etc.	"Die Kommunikation auf Moodle war auf Deutsch, diese Sprechblase. In der E-Mail, da haben viele auf Englisch geschrieben in der Oberstufe" (Int_3_GYM, Paragraph 84)