

PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY IN OLMOUC

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Department of Foreign Languages

BACHELOR THESIS

Martina Chvlov

English Language in Education

Remote learning activities at lower secondary level in the school year

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Supervisor: doc. PhDr. Vclav řicha, CSc.

*I hereby declare that I have worked on my thesis independently using only the sources listed in the bibliography.*

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Author's signature

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## **ABSTRACT**

This bachelor thesis analyses the remote learning activities that teachers incorporated into the English lesson during remote learning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The theoretical part defines remote learning and its specifics. Furthermore, this part focuses on the remote learning case studies led around the world and in the Czech Republic and presents a historical overview of Covid-19 regulations in the education sector. The empirical part of this thesis consists of methodology, questionnaire analysis and summary of the results. The research questionnaire is a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. Finally, the last chapter discusses the most used remote learning activities and refutes the thesis hypothesis that teachers changed their approaches after experiencing remote learning.

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# Introduction

When an illness unknown to the public called Covid-19 began to spread, the World found itself in an unforeseen situation. Population all over the World was affected and had to quickly adapt to various changes. One of those was a series of school closures, and in order to prevent pupils from spreading the virus to their homes, teachers were presented with a novel situation of how to further educate pupils.

That was the moment when teachers had to find out how to substitute a traditional face-to-face education and continue educating pupils. The only option was to create a learning system called remote learning. Not only was it a great challenge for the educators, but also for students, both technically and psychologically. The curriculum had to be completed regardless of the situation, this forced teachers to incorporate remote learning activities into their course plans.

The aim of this bachelor thesis is to outline the remote learning activities, find their frequency and purpose, and also find the activities that were effective enough to be incorporated into face-to-face lessons. The thesis hypothesis discusses whether the teacher changed their approach after experiencing remote learning.

The theoretical part includes three chapters. The first chapter distinguishes the main terms such as remote learning, and distance learning but also synchronous and asynchronous learning. The distinction between these terms helps to better understand why teachers incorporated new activities in the first place. The second chapter highlights a few case studies comparing remote learning around the world, as well as in the Czech Republic. The third chapter records the pandemic in concrete data and shows how teachers had to quickly adapt and educate the pupils. The summary concludes the theoretical part.

The empirical part of this thesis analyses the data obtained from the questionnaire which combines qualitative and quantitative approach. The questionnaire focuses on the remote learning activities, their purpose and frequency. It also aims to describe the impact of remote learning on the students as well as the teachers. The summary of the results includes all the responses of the teachers and their analysis. The collected data are discussed in the thesis conclusion.

# THEORETICAL PART

## 1 Remote learning

The main purpose of this chapter is to distinguish between the terms remote learning, distance learning, synchronous and asynchronous learning. Some of these terms are difficult to isolate because of their similarities and also due to the fact that many authors offer varying definitions of them.

### 1.1 Remote learning definition

The definition of remote learning is: “physical separation of teachers and students during learning process.” Students are distanced from each other, and the teacher is not physically present with them in the same room (Britannica, 2016).

One of the most effective methods used in remote learning is to hold a class in a virtual classroom and to try and set a similar atmosphere as if the students were present in the same room. Students are also challenged and need to adapt their flexible timetables. Remote learning highlights the time flexibility, student’s own learning pace as the key features of successful remote learning process (Shelley, as cited in White, 2003).

TeachThought(2020) defines remote learning:

*„While there isn’t one single definition for remote learning any more than there is a single definition for ‘learning through play,’ the big idea is generally consistent: a temporary move from face-to-face teaching in a physical classroom to a digital space accessed ‘remotely.’ “*

### 1.2 Difference between remote, distance, and online education

One of the biggest issues when outlining terminology is the difference between “remote” and “distant”. Both terms discuss a learning process when the teacher is physically not present in the same classroom as the students. The term remote learning is usually used in connection with emergency or temporary form of learning, whereas the term *distance learning* is understood as a planned form of education. Distant learning also operates with more elaborate planning according to Cambridge Dictionary.

Průcha et al. (2003) defines the term *remote learning*:

*The Pedagogical Dictionary defines this term as a form of study mediated by media (telephone, radio, television, computer, especially the Internet and e-mail). It is based on self-study by the participant, which is managed by a specialised institution, without the students having face-to-face contact with teachers. Teaching is provided by specially prepared learning materials (so-called learning packages) and other methods of learning support and assessment allowing individual access, comment, and support.*

Distance education had not been introduced to the public eye until the pandemic. The European Commission defines "distance education (learning)" in the Memorandum on Open Distance Learning in the European Community (1991) as follows:

*"Distance education (study) is defined as any form of study where the student is not under the permanent or direct supervision of teachers, but nevertheless benefits from the planning, guidance and consultation of an educational institution or other support organisation. Distance education is characterised by self-study and is therefore heavily dependent on didactically sound material design, which must replace the interactivity between student and teacher common in face-to-face teaching. Self-study is always complemented by tutor support and other support services, ideally provided by a regional study centre and increasingly using modern communication media."*

Online education is a unique form of education. It does not necessarily try to recreate the face-to-face process like remote or distance learning do. As a result, online learning provides students with courses specially adapted to online setting.

For the purpose of this bachelor theses, both the terms *remote learning* and *distance learning* will be used interchangeably. As seen in the theoretical examples above, the terminology does not strictly differentiate. Furthermore, remote learning acts as a hypernym to distance learning.

### 1.3 Remote learning legislative

To further establish the setting of the thesis, legislative amendments of the law reacting to the Covid-19 pandemic has to be discussed. The amendment led to school closures in the first half of march in 2020, until June 2020.

The Emergency act led to the application of compulsory distance learning as well as temporary school closures by the order of the Ministry of Health and Regional health stations. Not only can it be applied to Covid-19 epidemic, but also to other emergencies that may arise, such as natural disasters.

In addition to the Emergency Act, the school institute is obliged to adapt distance education to the needs of every student. If the pupil does not have a computer, the school is required to offer a different method of education. The government points out that every student needs to be educated no matter what the form is. (Czech School Inspectorate, 2020, p.14)

Amendment to the Education Act (2020):

*"Act No.349/2020 Coll. children are obliged to participate in distance education as part of compulsory schooling. The law does not prescribe the form of distance education; the school has to adapt it to the pupil's circumstances. Schools will receive money to equip the students with computer technology." (Free translation by the author of this theses)*

### 1.4 Synchronous and asynchronous learning

In order to understand the terms like *distance*, *remote* or *face to face education*, terms such as synchronous and asynchronous learning have to be discussed.

#### 1.4.1 Synchronous learning

Synchronous learning/education is described as situation when a teacher present in the same virtual place. Teacher works on the same or similar task as the students. Both the teacher and students usually connected through a virtual platform such as Zoom or Microsoft teams (TeachThought, 2021)

The most common way to implement this type of teaching is through a videoconference tool guided by a pre-arranged timetable. The teacher has an overview of the lesson plan and keeps track of pupils' progress. Meeting in a virtual space helps participants overcome difficulties caused by social isolation and promote motivation to learn according to the Ministry of Education (2020). Chiew Hong, in his article *Benefits of Synchronous Learning*, states

the importance of immediate response from pupils' as one of the major advantages of synchronous learning.

However, according to Hong (2020) this form of learning demands the pupil to be technically equipped and requires quality Internet connection not mentioning flexibility of the pupil and their families (e.g., having to share a single household computer with other family members). For more, the synchronous learning process is not only challenging for the individuality of the students, but also for the teacher, having to adapt the lesson plan to online learning, as well as adapting the lesson to the pace of each pupil for the learning objectives to be fulfilled. When setting up the synchronous remote or distance learning, free time and other activities of pupils should be respected in order not to completely disrupt the pupil's timetable (Ministry of Education, 2020).

#### 1.4.2 Asynchronous learning

To compare the *asynchronous learning* with *synchronous*. In the asynchronous setting students work in their own chosen time according to their individual needs. They do not meet in the videoconference together with other students and the teacher. All sorts of platforms, tools or apps may be used as a supporting(supportive) system, giving feedback, or assigning a task by the teacher (TeachThought, 2021)

To provide an example, the Ministry of Education (2020) describes asynchronous as a practice when a teacher sends students the tasks or group work through a pre-arranged communication tool, such as the school's information system, learning management system (LMS), or e-mail. The participants work on the tasks according to their time possibilities and submit the assignment in the agreed upon manner within the set deadline. During completion of the assignments, it is advisable for the teacher to be at hand for consultation or individual support based on individual student's needs. Asynchronous online learning allows a high level of individualisation and is suitable in situations where it is not possible to ensure the same conditions for all participants. At the same time, it places certain demands not only on the responsibility of the individual participants and their competence to learn, but also on the time flexibility of the teacher and the student

#### 1.5 Distance learning recommendation by the Czech government

Distance education at the lower-secondary level of primary school should take place mainly online and should combine both synchronous and asynchronous methods. The older the pupils get, the greater the degree of learning independence can be expected

and encouraged. However, it is also necessary to include activities related to the use of the school information system and digital learning tools, so that any transition to distance learning is without any further complications. Compared to teaching first-graders, it is recommended to include more group activities like independent searching for resources and learn how to work with them, use of various digital tools to support understanding of the curriculum, its practice, and the development of competences in the given areas. It is not possible to plan online teaching in such a way that synchronous activities replicate the normal school timetable and pupils must watch online transmissions for many hours a day. Synchronous instruction should not exceed three consecutive class periods (Edu.cz, 2021)

## 2 Case studies on remote learning and its development

This chapter offers a look at case studies conducted around the world and in the Czech Republic. The main aim is to showcase different outcomes and aspects of remote learning and provide a discussion on the matter. These case studies mainly focus on remote learning from the point of view of the teacher.

### 2.1 Case studies around the World

The fact that Covid-19 pandemic change the educational system is beyond dispute. Large portions of states were backed into a corner and faced the challenge of what to do next. An alternative learning system had to be found as soon as possible to maintain the level of knowledge and education of pupils across countries. W.E.F. April 2020 statistics states that almost 1,3 billion pupils in 186 countries were forced out of classroom education because of the pandemic (World Economic Forum, 2020).

According to UNICEF at least some form of learning policy after school closing was set for more than 90 % of countries around the World. A global analysis estimated the minimum of 463 million students being cut off from educational process. The reason for that is due to lack of technical equipment at home (UNICEF, 2020).

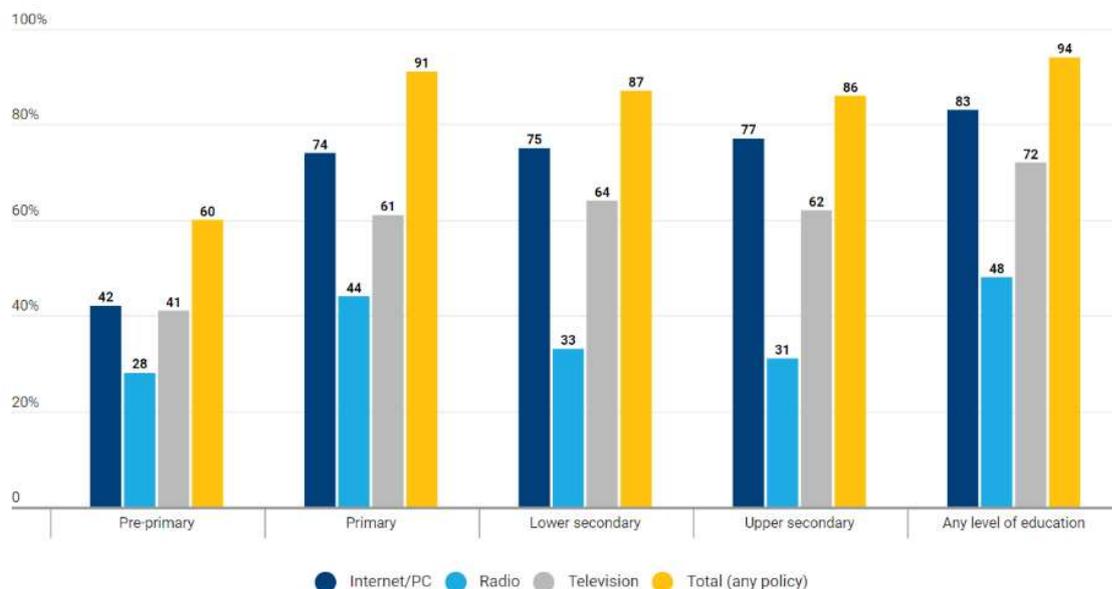


Figure 1 Share of countries implementing digital and broadcast remote learning policies, by education level, (UNICEF, 2020)

In the U.S., a group of researchers analysed the state education policy guidance concerning remote learning. Several offered thorough instructional directions during this period due to the remarkable and quick changes caused by school closures and social isolation. The researchers characterized the remote learning necessary pillars that were identified as substantial areas of agreement such as remote learning support, equity and access, state-wide assessments. This study highlights the importance of daily physical activity, the arts and even shortening of the school lesson hours, e.g., from eight 45 min lessons to six 45 min lessons. It also recommended that some changes may be worth to include during face-to-face education as well (Reich et al., 2020).

Another case study in the rural part of Alaska showed significant results of correct practice of remote education. According to the finding of the study, school timetables became much more variable throughout the pandemic, students gained a greater time flexibility when it came to their school duties and furthermore, students became much more independent and self-reliant when taking their own learning responsibility into their hands (Kaden, 2020).

In comparison with the already mentioned countries which were able to change their education style from face-to-face to remote almost immediately, it was not the case for many Asian countries, specifically those in south Asia. Since the school closure, countries like Sri Lanka, Pakistan or India showed hundred million students suffering from a lack of proper form of education due to the absence of available electronic devices. For such countries, the change was even more drastic due to already low quality of education in the countries of South Asia (Reuters, 2021). While 95% of students in Norway, Austria or Switzerland own at least 1 computer per household, only 34% of students in Indonesia have access to a computer (OECD statistics in Reuters, 2021).

## 2.2 Case studies in the Czech Republic

Survey by Kopecký & Szotkowski(2020) conducted during the first wave of the pandemic (February-May2020) analysed teachers' use of technology. The pool of respondents was formed by 2,154 teachers in 21 to 78 years of age; 67% of them were primary school teachers, 29% of them were secondary school teachers, and 2% of them were from kindergarten teachers and higher vocational schools (2%). The results showed that educators use a whole range of technologies, while email and telephone communication being the most used.

Online tools are used by teachers for communicating with students (83%), giving assignments (72%), or to practice the curriculum (57%). This study also showed an interesting outcome that only 36% of respondents have not received any professional training and around 7% of teachers consider the use of digital technologies difficult.

The researchers also looked at the most used technologies as an additional activity to the lesson, those are short educational videos (87%), presentations (85%), or in some cases the students created their own educational content themselves (29%).

### 3 Remote learning development in the Czech Republic

For the purposes of this thesis and for establishing a complete look on the problematic, it is important to draw on the data that showcase the historical development of the introduction of remote learning in the light of the pandemic.

10<sup>th</sup> March 2020

The first emergency restriction affecting the education was announced on 10<sup>th</sup> March by the Ministry of Health due to worsening epidemiological situation of Covid-19. The schools were ordered to close the following day (iRozhlas, 2021).

12<sup>th</sup> March 2020

A state of emergency was declared that was to last 30 days. The government banned the presence of pupils in educational institutions including leisure education.

The government also restricted free movement throughout the Czech Republic (iRozhlas, 2021).

8<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Since the beginning of May, some forms of Covid-19 loosening took place. On 8<sup>th</sup> June, lower-secondary level students returned to elementary schools. The attendance was voluntary and a maximum of 15 pupils was allowed to be present in the classroom.

The end of 2019/20 school year took place under almost standard conditions. The summer holidays were not shortened (iRozhlas, 2021).

18<sup>th</sup> September 2020

From this date, students were obligated to wear facemasks during the lessons (iDnes, 2022).

30<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Due to the worsening epidemiological situation and the increasing number of positive cases, the government imposed a state of emergency again (iRozhlas, 2021).

5<sup>th</sup> October 2020

Secondary schools across the Czech Republic were closed in areas of higher risk of infection (iDnes, 2022).

14<sup>th</sup> October 2020

All the elementary, secondary schools and universities were ordered to close down and attend only the mode of distance education (iDnes, 2022).

30<sup>th</sup> November 2020

By the end of November, the face-to-face education was voluntary for primary schools and the 9<sup>th</sup> graders. The rest of lower-secondary level students were placed in the so-called “rotating teaching system” – 1 week of face-to-face education, 1 week of remote learning.

The use of facemasks was obligatory when on school premises (iRozhlas, 2021).

23<sup>rd</sup> December 2020

The Minister of Education stated that from 4<sup>th</sup> January only 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> graders may attend face-to-face education (iRozhlas, 2021).

1<sup>st</sup> March 2021

Face-to-face education was forbidden to all the levels across the educational sector due to worsening epidemiological situation (iRozhlas, 2021).

12<sup>th</sup> April 2021

The primary schools started to attend face-to-face education in rotating teaching system. The lower secondary level still remained remotely educated. The pupils were Covid-tested on Mondays and Thursdays to ensure lower level of Covid-19 infection (iDnes, 2022).

11<sup>th</sup> May 2021

The Czech government decided to re-open the kinder-gardens and students across the lower secondary level began to attend the face-to-face education. Primary schools were covid-tested once a week, whereas lower secondary level was tested twice a week (iDnes, 2022).

17<sup>th</sup> May 2021

The end of so-called “rotating teaching system” in some regions of the Czech Republic (iDnes, 2022).

15<sup>th</sup> June 2021

The government decided to cancel wearing facemasks. The teachers and pupils were compelled to wear them only during the breaks (iDnes, 2022).

### 3.1 Educational sector’s response to remote learning

As seen above, restrictions changed rapidly and varied from complete closures to specific restrictions applied to individual levels of the education system (Czech School Inspectorate, 2021). Switching from face-to-face education to distance education back and forth meant a great financial profit for online learning platforms, those registered a 200% usage increase. Some platforms eventually offered free access to teachers and their students when using their apps (WeForum, 2020).

Although the education system had to adapt to unexpected changes, there were still some primary schools that were unable to introduce distance learning, e.g., 15% of primary schools in the Czech Republic in April 2020 but in February 2021 the percentage increased to 89% (Czech School Inspectorate, 2020).

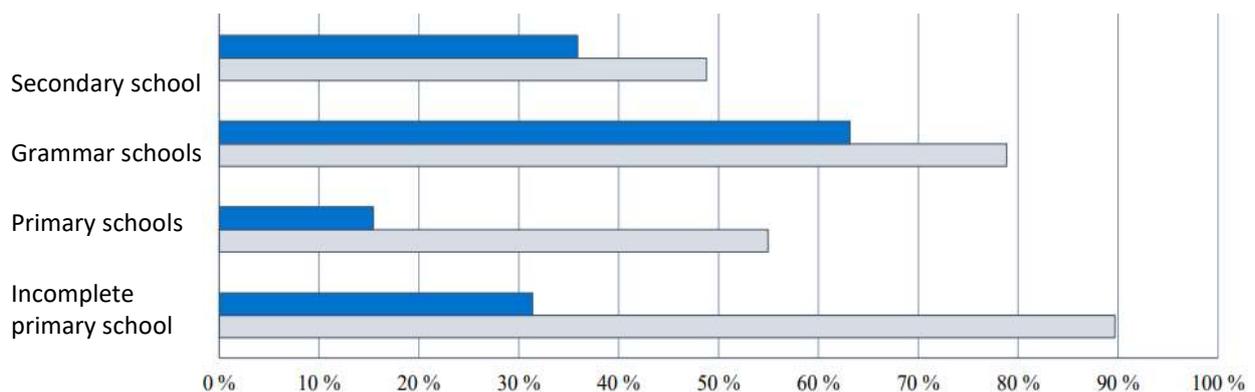


Figure 2 Remote learning comparison of attending students in April 2020 and February 2021 (Czech School Inspectorate, 2021), (free translation by the author)

Almost all students were involved in some form of distance education, some did not participate in distance education. One of the reasons for this was shortcomings their digital equipment or inadequate internet connection. Thanks to extensive financial interventions that made it possible to equip schools with digital technology and to lend this technology to students in need, the rate of the impact of digital technology problems was much less than it was in spring 2020 (Czech School Inspectorate, 2020).

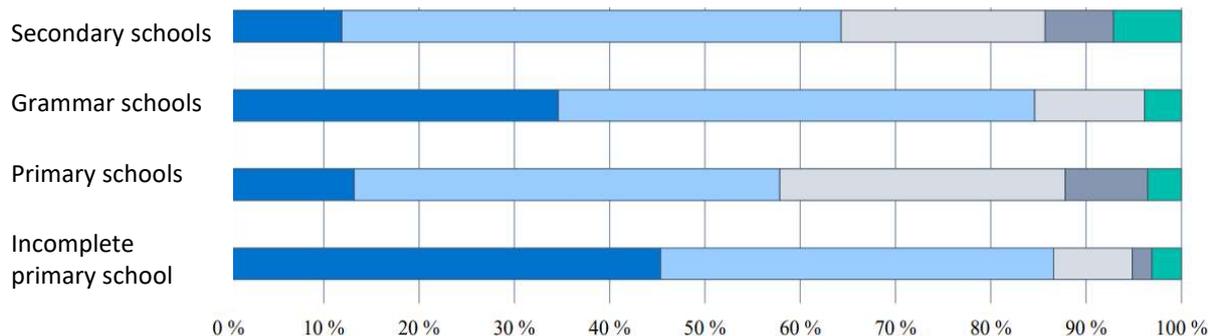


Figure 3 Students that did not attend remote learning due to problems with digital technology (Czech School Inspectorate, 2021), (free translation by the author)

As seen in the *Table 3*, only 13% of primary school students did not experience any technical difficulties. However, around 43% of students recorded at least some troubles with the Internet connection or computer device. On the other hand, high school students experienced some problems (20%) during remote learning at least once a week.

### 3.2 Remote learning necessities

In order to outline the necessities for remote learning, Zlámálová (2006) discusses different planning and approaches to make the remote learning as effective as possible. Remote learning has its set rules and principles, such as: the necessity of individual needs, time flexibility, different methods for assessment or even different way to fulfil the Framework Educational Programme.

#### **Individuality and flexibility**

For distance learning to be effective, the correct principles of individuality and flexibility are key. The curriculum is mostly consistent; however, the timetable might be altered (Zlámálová, 2006).

The teacher's role does not change in distance learning. Their role is to offer an individual support system for students with special needs. These pupils with special needs should be

offered not only a possibility of a timetable alteration, change of evaluation, forms and methods of education, but should also be provided with a teaching assistant, interpreter or transcriber for the deaf (Ministry of Education,2020)

### **Assessment**

Assessment is an essential part of any learning process. Formative assessment has a significant impact on its effectiveness and the achievement of expected results (Zhen et al., 2021). Quality feedback is indispensable in connection with distance learning, as it encourages motivation and shows the level of progress. The teacher's role throughout the distance learning period is to continuously monitor the engagement and activity of all pupils, provide feedback, support them in finding solutions, and motivate them to make further progress.

The use of evaluation as a form of pressure is not allowed. On the contrary, in the case of insufficient results, the teacher needs to find out the reasons, cooperate with the guardians, and look for ways to support the pupil and increase his/her level of involvement. In more serious cases, it is appropriate for the teacher to inform the school administration of the situation and try to find a solution to this case.

Remote/distance learning is a great opportunity for pupil self-evaluation. It plays an important role in an overall educational process and is significant in monitoring the progress of the student, and it also evaluates his progress based on his abilities and knowledge. There are multiple online tools for self-evaluation or self-assessment that support this topic such as Kahoot!, Socrative, Microsoft Forms, Google Forms, and others.

Throughout assessment period during remote learning, the school must secure the criteria and rules of assessment according to the school Law. The school regulations may be altered to meet the requirements (Ministry of Education,2020).

In fact, research on formative assessment that engages students actively in both asynchronous and synchronous online instructions and improves the learning performance as well would shed light on online teaching as an emergency response and even for regular online education and combined learning in the future (Gunes, 2019).

## **Fulfilment of the Framework Educational Programme (FEP) and the School Educational Programme (SEP)**

All the forms of education should fulfil the Framework Educational program as well as the school educational programme.

According to Ministry of Education, spring school closure in 2020 has shown some interesting facts in the case of distance education. It is not advisable, neither possible to educate the pupils in full accordance with the curriculum that students would have presented within full-time education. It has been recommended that education institutions should focus specifically on the application of knowledge and skills students have required more widely based on their diverse application. In primary schools, the key focus should be on Czech language, mathematics, and other foreign languages.

Throughout short-term periods of remote education such as quarantine of class, it is advised to pay attention to a variety of activities and to try to introduce a project-based learning methods on a cross-cutting topic connecting several educational areas. Even easier topics are advised to be implemented during these short-term periods of remote learning. Those including individual work, creative activities, or specific units e.g., educational programmes, instructional videos, digital learning materials. Other areas, more difficult ones or complicated to adjust to remote education will be moved to face-to-face teaching once it returns.

When remote learning lasts more than 2 weeks, certain educational areas in the curriculum should be prioritized according to School Educational Programme. It is necessary to focus primarily on expected outcomes and to focus on general profile subjects (Ministry of Education, 2020).

According to Chen et al. (2021), to fulfil the Framework educational program each synchronous and asynchronous type of education should use different activities and different assessment. While getting used to asynchronous learning, activities such as discussions, module test, assignment should be used in cooperation with drill and practice. On the other hand, synchronous online education should rather incorporate Quizizz, evaluation tasks and discussions.



## Summary of theoretical part

The theoretical part defines remote learning and its subtypes. This section discusses how the sudden transition from full-time teaching had to be adapted to fully functional distance learning. Ministry of Education (2020) says it is almost impossible to adapt full-time teaching of students to distance learning. Therefore, the learning objectives should be focused on the practical application of language skills. What is even more important than making a quality lesson plan, is to add a variety of engaging activities.

According to Průcha et al. (2003), features such as the importance of the teacher's role and the importance of pupils' self-study, as well as the extent to which pupils depend on the teacher's supportive role and guidance, are key to a fully functioning distance learning system (European Commission, 1991).

Furthermore, a brief footprint of chronological events is introduced. This historical timeline shows how difficult it must have been to adapt quickly to change, meet curriculum goals, and still create engaging lessons compared to face-to-face lessons, which everyone, including teachers and students, had to adapt to regardless of their preference. As a result of the sudden remote learning changes, the online learning platforms almost doubled their number of users, because it was nearly impossible to provide a distance form of education without using these tools.

In this thesis, a subchapter is dedicated to the case studies based on distance education in the world and in the Czech Republic. The aspect of distance learning has been diverse in all countries, including the Czech Republic. UNICEF (2020) cites the lack of accessible and functional electronic devices as the biggest problem associated with distance education, which is confirmed by OECD statistics in Reuters (2021). The case study led by Kopecky & Szotkowski (2020) introduces interesting outcomes of teachers' computer literacy, but also presents information supporting this thesis data analysis in the empirical part.

# EMPIRICAL PART

## 4 Methodology of the research

The second part of the thesis is an empirical part. It follows the design of both the qualitative and quantitative research. The aim of the research, data collection, questionnaire respondents and questionnaire analysis are concluded in the empirical part of this thesis. Finally, the thesis conclusion summarizes and discusses the gathered.

### 4.1 Research aims

The aim of this research is to find out what activities were carried out by teachers in their English lessons in the mode of remote learning. The purpose of the research questions is to obtain information about the teaching activities that support distance learning, to find out how often they were used, their purpose, the difficulties in applying these activities, but most importantly, whether any of the learning activities were successful enough to be incorporated into face-to-face classes.

The primary school Kvítková<sup>1</sup> in Zlín is the main studied case of this thesis. Since the first moment the Czech government advised to switch to remote learning, this school immediately complied and went from face-to-face education into remote learning. The primary school Kvítková is also a language school, so pupils are obligated to study from two to three foreign languages at the lower secondary level.

The questionnaire focuses mainly on the teachers, their additional learning activities, and distance learning, and that only from their personal perspective.

### 4.2 Data collection methods

As mentioned above, the aim is to analyse the remote learning activities used in the remote learning period, caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. All participants are fully qualified English teachers who teach mainly at the lower secondary level. An unstructured questionnaire was used to collect data for this qualitative research.

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<sup>1</sup> Základní škola Zlín Kvítková, <https://zskvitkova.edupage.org/>

The questionnaire was sent out to English teachers via email in early December 2021, so the respondents had their remote teaching experiences in their minds. The pilot questionnaire was firstly sent to the head of English department at the school for further question objectification but also to check the clarity of the questions and their understanding. After that, a series of corrections made, the questionnaire was sent to the respondents. The pilot version of the questionnaire is not included in the thesis.

For the purpose of this study, the questionnaire was anonymous, so the names of the teachers are not provided, only the number of years teaching and position in the school. The questionnaire was created in two language versions - Czech and English, all teachers received both versions and had the option to choose to fill it out in one of the languages.

### 4.3 Questionnaire respondents

The questionnaire was sent to the English teachers in ZŠ Kvítková in Zlín. Currently, there are eight English teachers to whom the questionnaire was sent to fulfil. Except for two new teachers, six of them have been working in ZŠ Kvítková for more than 15 years. The group of English teachers consists of the head English department, one native speaker, and six English teachers.

The author received only six filled questionnaires to further analyse.

### 4.4 Research questions

The questionnaire is comprised of 10 questions to obtain all the relevant data. From the 10 questions, eight questions were restricted, and two questions were unrestricted. However, six questions were formed as combination of restricted and unrestricted type. The full version of the questionnaire is in the Appendix.

Questions in the questionnaire:

*What learning activity did you incorporate during your online English classes?*

*How often did you include the activity in your lessons?*

*Did you include any activities in your lessons that develop students' creative thinking?*

*What was the main purpose of these activities? What were you aiming at?*

*What difficulties did you experience in applying these activities?*

*What remote learning activity was that effective that you incorporated it in face-to-face teaching?*

*If remote learning were to happen again, what would you do differently in your teaching compared to your previous experience?*

*Do you think that your remote classes fulfilled the educational objectives as well as your face-to-face classes?*

*How do you think remote learning has affected students?*

*How has remote teaching affected you as a teacher?*

## 5 Data analysis

The aim of this chapter is to analyse the questions collected from the questionnaire.

The questionnaire combines a qualitative and quantitative research.

### 5.1 Remote learning activities

*Question 1* examines what activities were incorporated into the online lesson during the Covid-19 pandemic. The main aim was to find the list of activities from each teacher and examine them. This question is provided with a list of pre-written responses, such as *educational videos, Netflix series, educational podcasts, online games, language apps creative projects, project days, educational profiles on social media.*

The main aim was not only to find out whether the teacher used at least one of these aforementioned activities, but also to name the activity, e.g., educational videos from Bronislav Sobotka.

*Response to Question 1*, the questionnaire was provided with list of activities each for different question options.

*The 1<sup>st</sup> option: YouTube:*

All teachers used YouTube videos, for example *BBC English Grammar Game Show, iSLCollective, Super Simple Kids, English with Lucy, Bronislav Sobotka. BBC English* is very popular with the teachers. Four of the six teachers used *British Council for Kids, British Council for Teens.*

*The 2<sup>nd</sup> option: Netflix series:*

There were no responses to this option, none of the teachers had used the Netflix platform as a distance learning activity.

*The 3<sup>rd</sup> option: Educational podcasts*

There were no responses to this option, none of the teachers had used educational podcasts as a distance learning activity.

*The 4<sup>th</sup> option: Creative projects*

One of the most recurring responses, given by 50% of respondents, is the use of *Nearpod*, which allows the teacher to turn grammar and vocabulary-based activities into fun games. Teachers also seem to like using *Mentimeter* to summarise new vocabulary.

One teacher also mentioned creating a game called *Escape Room* by himself and adapting the game vocabulary based on lesson acquired vocabulary.

#### *The 5<sup>th</sup> option: Online games*

The respondents used a variety of online games, such as *Kahoot!*, *Wordwall*, *Quizizz*, but responses also included links to sites that were frequently used to find new games, such as *Learning Chocolate*, *Im-a-puzzle*, *Proprofsgames*. Two teachers also specifically mentioned the use of *Hangman*. A total of 5 out of 6 teachers use *Kahoot!!* and 50% of respondents use *Wordwall* and *Quizizz*.

#### *The 6<sup>th</sup> option: Project days*

Three out of five teachers use project days in their lesson plans.

Project days are used as a change from the traditional lesson plan with different topics for children to work in groups or independently to gain knowledge or certain vocabulary.

#### *The 7<sup>th</sup> option: Language learning apps*

Only one teacher responded that she uses a language learning app as a distance learning activity, an app called *Duolingo*. *Duolingo* is an online smartphone app that helps you develop language skills.

#### *The 8<sup>th</sup> option: Educational profile on social media*

There is no answer to this option, none of the teachers used any educational profile on social networking sites as a distance learning activity.

#### *The 9<sup>th</sup> option: Other:*

This option was an addition to this question because of the variety of activities.

Responses to this question included not only websites with worksheets, but also websites used for student testing, as well as online worksheet resources such as *LiveWorksheets*.

<b>Activities</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Frequenc y</b>
<b>YouTube educational videos</b>	BBC English Grammar Game Show, British Council, ESL video, Super Simple Songs, Royal Family Lessons, English with Lucy, Bronislav Sobotka	5
<b>Netflix series</b>		0
<b>educational podcasts</b>		0
<b>creative projects</b>	Storyboard That, Jam board, Answer Garden, Mentimeter, Nearpod (3)	3
<b>online games</b>	Wordwall, Kahoot!, Quizizz, Learning Chocolate, Proprofgames, Escape rooms, Hangman, islCollective	5
<b>project days</b>	St. Patrick's Day, My favourite animal, British food (3), Easter, St.Martin	3
<b>language learning apps</b>	Duolingo	1
<b>educational social media profiles</b>		-
<b>other</b>	English Hilfen, Test-English, Flippity, Cambridge English, Liveworksheets	3

*Table 1 Remote learning activities*

## 5.2 Frequency of the activities

Activities	Frequency
<b>YouTube educational videos</b>	Every lesson (2), once a week (1), once a month (2)
<b>Netflix series</b>	-
<b>educational podcasts</b>	-
<b>creative projects</b>	Every lesson (2), once a week (1)
<b>online games</b>	Every lesson (3), once a week (2)
<b>project days</b>	Twice a term (2), once a term
<b>language learning apps</b>	Asynchronously
<b>educational social media profiles</b>	-
<b>other</b>	Almost every lesson (1), once a week (2)

Table 2 Frequency of the remote learning activity

The main objective of this question was to find out how often teachers use these remote learning activities and how often they include them in their lesson plans. This question was also multiple choice, so the responses were varied and detailed.

The results show that two teachers (33%) use YouTube educational *videos* (*BBC Game Show, British Council or ESL videos*), every lesson one teacher (16.7%) uses these videos once a week and two teachers (33%) use the videos once a month. Creative project such as *Worwall, Kahoot!* and *Quizizz* were used every lesson by one third of teachers and once a week by one teacher.

Project days are one of the more interesting and engaging activities that can be incorporated into lesson plans. Again, 33% of respondents use this activity twice a term and only one teacher uses it once a school term, by using this method teachers add a variety into their lessons and try to distract the students from school routine.

A testing tool called Test-English.com was mentioned by 2 teachers who use it almost every lesson and by 2 teachers (33%) once a week.

One teacher also commented how they use an application *Duolingo*. The teacher uses it asynchronously to give students extra credit for completing certain levels.

### 5.3 Creative activities

	Frequency
<b>Always</b>	2
<b>Mostly</b>	2
<b>Sometimes</b>	1
<b>Hardly ever</b>	-
<b>Never</b>	1

Table 3 Creative activities

The aim of this question was to map whether the activity is used with regard to its creative purpose and if so, to name the activity.

Firstly, it is necessary to say that the term *creativity* itself is very wide and has been interpreted many times by different authors. The term *creativity* is explained by Maňák (1998) as heightened, intensive activity by the student, motivated by both inner inclinations, spontaneous interests, emotional impulses, or life requirements.

By the means of this question, *creativity* is outlined as a term of spontaneous drive that is included in the teacher way of planning process.

For more, two thirds of respondents reported that they had at least *sometimes* included a creative activity in their teaching. Two teachers responded that they always included a creative activity, such as mind maps, drawing games, brainstorming, category games or quizzes.

One teacher also mentioned using creative games as a cross-curricular element but only when the class was keeping up with the curriculum.

Two teachers included drawing activities such as Guess Who's Drawing a Picture, Draw a Picture of New Vocabulary (e.g. countable and uncountable nouns), or Draw Your Shopping List.

#### 5.4 Purpose of the activities

<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>To increase pupil's motivation</b>	5
<b>Maintain concentration</b>	2
<b>Engaging concept of learning</b>	4
<b>Develop creativity</b>	3
<b>Maintaining attention</b>	4

Table 4 Purpose of the activities

The purpose of this question was to find the reason why the teachers chose to use learning activities. It was possible to choose multiple answers. Teachers mainly chose more than three answers.

Five teachers responded that the reason they included supplementary activities into distance learning was to increase the students' motivation.

The second most recurring response was the practice of engaging concept of teaching, changing the lesson plan and not only following student books.

Trying to maintain the pupils' attention was also a very common response, specifically 4 teachers included these activities for this reason. According to teachers' comments from question 10, lack of motivation is a negative side effect of remote learning, because of lack of personal contact and interaction.

In contrast, the response with the least number of responses was to *maintain focus throughout the lesson*.

## 5.5 Difficulties while applying the activities

<b>Difficulty</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Technical difficulties on the teacher's part</b>	2
<b>Technical difficulties on the student's part</b>	5
<b>Pupils did not understand the activity</b>	1
<b>Pupils did not have the equipment to do the activity</b>	3
<b>Pupils did not enjoy the activity</b>	-
<b>Pupils did not want to do the activity</b>	-
<b>Other</b>	1

*Table 5 Difficulties while applying the activities*

The main objective of this question was to find out the difficulties experienced by the English teachers during remote learning. This question was also multiple choice.

The most recurring response to the question of whether the teacher experienced any difficulties in applying the activity was technical difficulties, but on the part of the student (83.3%). Teachers did not experience technical difficulties on their side (33.33%).

An interesting finding is that no teacher encountered a situation when the pupils did not enjoy the activity nor that they did not want to do it.

In the comments, one teacher expressed that she did not encounter any problems or difficulties throughout the use of the activities.

## 5.6 Activity to use the face-to-face learning

This question was formed as an open question.

The answers from this question were not surprising given the recurring number of popular and frequently used activities such as *Kahoot!* and *Wordwall*.

The activity called *Wordwall* is a website, where anyone can create entertaining content for lessons. This webpage is used for creating Quizizz, anagrams, missing word exercise, crossword, and other types of exercises. More than 65% of respondents chose to include this activity to include not only in distant education, but also decided to incorporate into face-to-face teaching.

Same as *Wordwall*, the webpage called *Kahoot!!* was used by half of the respondents to create engaging content in the lesson plan. All the teachers who used this activity during remote and face-to-face teaching replied, that they create both grammar and vocabulary-based exercises, thanks to this website.

One teacher has noticed a very positive response when incorporating the *Blockbusters* game, it is therefore one of the activities that gain popularity in both types of teaching.

## 5.7 Reflecting on remote learning changes

<b>Distance learning in comparison with face-to-learning</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>I would incorporate more activities in general</b>	2
<b>I would incorporate fewer activities in general</b>	-
<b>I would focus more on speaking skills</b>	2
<b>I would focus more on listening skills</b>	-
<b>I would focus less on speaking skills</b>	1
<b>I would focus less on listening skills</b>	-
<b>I would incorporate more vocabulary activities</b>	2
<b>I would incorporate less vocabulary activities</b>	-
<b>I would leave everything as it was the first time</b>	2
<b>Other</b>	1

*Table 6 Reflecting on remote learning changes*

The reason for including this question was to make the respondents reflect on whether or not they would hypothetically change their lesson plans.

The responses were evenly divided into 4 categories. The same number of teachers responded that they would include more activities in general to explore the offered possibilities more closely. Again, two teachers responded they would include not only more activities but also more vocabulary activities and exercises.

One teacher who chose the last option also personally commented that in the future they should focus both on vocabulary activities and try to apply the vocabulary more so that students could recall the vocabulary more easily in the future.

5.8 Fulfilling teacher’s face-to-face lesson objectives within distance lessons

<b>Fulfilling the lesson plan</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Always</b>	1
<b>Mostly</b>	2
<b>Sometimes</b>	3
<b>Hardly ever</b>	-
<b>Never</b>	-

*Table 7 Fulfilling teacher’s face-to-face lesson objectives within distance lessons*

The purpose of this question was for the respondent to reflect whether or not they fulfilled the objectives compared to face-to-face lessons, as was recommended by the Ministry of Education (2020).

Ministry of Education (2020) discusses how the lesson plans and objective should be differently created for both learning – remote and face-to-face. As a result, the objectives can be fulfilled in the face-to-face education, but it is impossible to fulfil them the same way throughout remote learning process.

For more, the teachers who responded with the option *sometimes* mirror the responses of the Ministry of Education.

## 5.9 The impact of remote learning on the students

<b>Impact on the students</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Improved students' motivation</b>	-
<b>Worsened students' motivation</b>	3
<b>Faster response time</b>	-
<b>Slower response time</b>	3
<b>Fear of asking in an online environment</b>	-
<b>Other</b>	-

Table 8 The impact of remote learning on the students

The aim of this question was to find out the impact of remote learning on the students. The question was multiple choice.

From the teachers' point of view, 50% of respondents noted that student's motivation has definitely deteriorated. The same number of percentages noticed that students tend to have slower response time and hesitate more when responding to questions

T1: *Students became more independent. Technology/Apps literacy improved.*

T2: *The ability to spell correctly deteriorated after distance education.*

T3: *Some students experienced difficulty to adapt back to the school routine/regime, students became also lazier.*

T4: *A general deterioration in work ethic and preparation for class (unfortunately, tests are the main tool to get kids to prepare regularly; if they had the opportunity, they tried to bypass learning and cheat as much as possible).*

## 5.10 The impact of remote learning on the teachers

<b>Impact on the teachers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<b>Positively</b>	-
<b>Rather positively</b>	5
<b>Rather negatively</b>	1
<b>Negatively</b>	-

Table 9 The impact of remote learning on the teachers

The final question had an open character to obtain a sincere personal experience from the teacher experienced remote learning.

A half of the respondents answered the question with their personal comments.

### Teachers' comments:

T1:

*“If there's no other option, distance learning is definitely better than no learning, and definitely better than just assignments via messages. I think that's totally inadequate. In my opinion, the best and most effective way is to teach in person. I get immediate feedback on who is working and who is not. I know immediately, not only by the answers, but also by the expressions on students' faces. If the different steps in the explanation are understandable for the students or if I should stop, give space for questions. The whole process of conveying the information to the pupils and checking how well they can use what they have learned is more vivid and more readable for me and the pupils.”*

T2:

*“I found activities that I wouldn't have thought of in a regular face-to-face learning. I think it has improved the quality of my teaching skills and made it more varied.”*

T3:

*“Looking back at the times of necessity of distant teaching and learning, it is not possible to deny its advantages any longer. These, as well as the disadvantages of remote schooling, should be considered from the academic stand view. On one hand, the lack of physical education and the complications of social distancing must be mentioned. These especially are very important to the health and well-being of the schoolchildren. On the other hand, a*

*lot of pupils must have, thanks to the circumstances, realised the role of their own responsibility in schoolwork.*

*For teachers, it was again the social interaction that was the crucial part that they have been robbed of during the period of online teaching. Not only were they not in daily contact with their colleagues, but also could not watch their students' learning process in person. Due to the long hours spent in front of a computer screen, a big number of teachers might have been struggling with health issues (back pain, sore wrist and eyes, headaches but also mental problems and mood swings).*

*Personally, remote teaching has compelled me to use more IT tools and online resources than I ever thought to imagine. The virtual world allows me, an English teacher, to employ in classes a wide variety of activities which, at the end of the day, may be used to their full potential in both online and in-person classes.”*

## 6 Summary of the results

The primary aim of this thesis was to find out what activities were used in distance learning during the Covid-19 pandemic. In the analysis, the data obtained from the questionnaire was discussed. The secondary aim was to find out whether or not were the activities successful enough to incorporate them into face-to-face learning. Teachers were forced to make the lesson more engaging to keep students motivated and focus, but also to motivate themselves.

Teachers seemed to enjoy using the *British Council* website as a common source of information. Also, a creative project that was popular with both teachers and students was a website called *Nearpod*. Teachers particularly appreciate it because it contains multiple activities, and they have the opportunity to vary their approach and change the learning activities frequently.

For more, *Wordwall*, *Kahoot!* and *Quizizz* are three activities that have been used significantly in distance education. In contrast, across the research, nobody took advantage of *Netflix* platform. The frequency of these activities tended to vary due to the diversity of each teacher's approach. In addition, some activities, such as instructional videos on the YouTube platform, were used by some teachers almost every lesson.

Reflecting back on the distance learning period, teachers were asked if they would have done anything differently. Teachers would have included more vocabulary activities, activities based on speaking skills, or left things as they were during the first distance learning period.

The data suggests that teachers are more inclined to "sometimes" meet the objectives rather than "always" meet the objectives based on the distance education plan. Teachers also claim that the distance impaired student motivation and slowed reaction time. Not many problems were noted on the part of the teachers. The majority of the problems were registered on the part of the students through technical difficulties.

At the end of the questionnaire, the teachers' opinion on the distance form of teaching was investigated. In general, teachers were not particularly enthusiastic about the distance learning system. At the same time, they all agree that the distance form of teaching is definitely better than no teaching or learning at all. Thus, teachers may have found new ways to make their teaching skills more engaging or of higher quality. Overall, distance education is primarily creating space for teachers to start using technology more than before and incorporating it into their lesson plans.

## Conclusion

This thesis, titled "Remote learning activities at lower secondary level in the school year 2020/21" summarized remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This bachelor thesis discovered and specified multiple remote learning activities, their purpose, frequency, and difficulties while applying them. But also, the impact remote learning had on the teachers and the students. It is safe to say that above all the activities, there are specifically three that stand out – Kahoot, Wordwall and Quizziz. These activities were chosen not only to be incorporated during remote learning but to be used during face-to-face learning.

Other than using these 3 activities regularly, teachers chose a variety of activities to make the lessons more engaging. The creative project and project days were incorporated into the lesson plans to break the school routine. Some teachers decided to take advantage of educational language apps such as Duolingo and one teacher specifically created an escape room to add a bit of creativity to the lesson.

When speaking about creativity, teachers chose to motivate children not only through the worksheets and textbooks, but they also wanted to engage students by creating mind maps and many types of creative drawing games. In fact, what was lacking among the remote learning activities was Netflix and educational podcasts. Nowadays, children are surrounded by the World that is in constant motion, they need many kinds of stimuli to keep their focus, but that is not what the teachers were aiming at. The most reoccurring activities were those used normally in a classroom but converted for virtual purposes. These activities offer a variety of possibilities on how to motivate the pupil or maintain the pupil's attention.

The thesis hypothesis was refuted because the teachers did not change their approaches after experiencing remote learning. The only element that has changed was teachers adding other activities to their lessons. The main reason for it is that remote learning does not meet the same requirements as face-to-face education. Remote learning needs its own planning. The requirements of face-to-face education applied to remote education resulted in students' slower response time and lack of motivation. The curricula of remote learning need different planning as well as different rules and limits to create a working educational system.

On the brighter side, many teachers improved their IT skills and rethought their lesson plans. They were able to hold on to the educational objectives and still fulfil them.

The main conclusion from this research is that remote learning during the Covid-19 pandemic did not differ from face-to-face learning. The education was performed remotely, but in the same manner as in face-to-face.

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## Appendix

1. What learning activity did you incorporate during your remote English classes?

**If yes, which ones?**

*(You can tick/highlight more than one answer.)*

- YouTube educational videos:
- Netflix series:
- educational podcasts:
- creative projects (for presenting):
- online games:
- project days:
- language learning apps:
- educational social media profiles:
- other:

.....

2. How often did you include the activity in your lessons?

*(You can tick/highlight more than one answer.)*

*(Every lesson, once a week, once a month...)*

- Educational videos on YouTube
- series on Netflix
- Educational podcasts
- creative projects (for presentation)
- online games
- project days
- language learning apps
- educational social media profiles
- other: .....

3. Did you include any activities in your lessons that develop students' creative thinking?  
(Warm up activity, project days, creative games for individuals or groups).

Always - mostly - sometimes - hardly ever - never

**If yes, which ones:**

4. What was the main purpose of these activities? What were you aiming at?

*(You can tick/highlight more than one answer.)*

- To increase the pupil's motivation
- Pupil concentration
- Fun learning concept
- Develop creativity
- Maintaining attention
- Other:

.....

5. What difficulties did you experience in applying these activities?

*(You can tick/highlight more than one answer.)*

- Difficulties with the technique from the teacher's part
- Difficulties with technique on the student's part
- Pupils did not understand the activity
- Pupils did not have the equipment to do the activity
- Pupils did not enjoy the activity
- Pupils did not want to do the activity
- Other:

.....

6. What remote learning activity was that effective that you incorporated it in face-to-face teaching?

*(name the activity/activities specifically.)*

7. If remote learning were to happen again, what would you do differently in your teaching compared to your previous experience?

*(You can check/highlight multiple answers.)*

- I would incorporate more activities in general
- I would incorporate fewer activities in general
- I would focus more on speaking skills
- I would focus more on listening skills
- I would focus less on speaking skills
- I would focus less on listening skills
- I would incorporate more vocabulary development activities
- I would incorporate less vocabulary development activities
- I would leave everything as it was the first time
- Other:

.....

8. Do you think that your remote classes fulfilled the educational objectives as well as your face-to-face classes?

Definitely yes – rather yes – sometimes yes, sometimes no – rather no – not at all

9. How do you think remote learning has affected students?

*(You can tick/highlight more than one answer.)*

- Improved students' motivation
- Worsened students' motivation
- Faster response time
- Slower response time
- Fear of asking in an online environment
- Other:

.....

10. Has remote teaching affected you as a teacher in any way?

Definitely positively – rather positively – rather negatively – definitely negatively

## ANOTACE

<b>Jméno a příjmení:</b>	Martina Chválová
<b>Katedra:</b>	Ústav cizích jazyků
<b>Vedoucí práce:</b>	doc. PhDr. Václav Řeřicha, CSc.
<b>Rok obhajoby:</b>	2022

<b>Název práce:</b>	Vzdělávací aktivity distanční výuky na 2.stupni ZŠ ve školním roce 2020/21
<b>Název v angličtině:</b>	Remote learning activities at lower secondary level in the school year 2020/21
<b>Anotace práce:</b>	<p>Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na vzdělávací aktivity distanční výuky, které byly začleněny učiteli do výuky anglického jazyka v době distančního vzdělávání.</p> <p>Teoretická část této práce rozebírá specifika pojmu distanční vzdělávání a zaznamenává dobu změn opatření způsobené onemocněním Covid-19. Empirická část se zaměřuje na data získané formou dotazníku. Dotazník je kombinací kvalitativního a kvantitativního výzkumu s cílem analyzovat vzdělávací aktivity na dálku.</p>
<b>Klíčová slova:</b>	Výuka na dálku, distanční výuka, anglický jazyk, online výuka, vzdělávací aktivity, vzdělávací aktivity distanční výuky, výuka v době Covid-19
<b>Anotace v angličtině:</b>	This bachelor thesis focuses on the remote learning activities at lower secondary level that teachers chose to incorporate into their English lessons during remote learning. The theoretical part discusses the specifics of remote learning and introduces a historical footprint of Covid-19 education regulations. The empirical part focuses on the data collected from a questionnaire.

	The questionnaire combines a qualitative and quantitative approach to analyse the remote learning activities.
<b>Klíčová slova v angličtině:</b>	Remote learning, distance learning, English language, online education, learning activities, remote learning activities, Covid-19 education, questionnaire
<b>Přílohy vázané v práci:</b>	Appendix – výzkumný dotazník
<b>Rozsah práce:</b>	51
<b>Jazyk práce:</b>	Anglický

## RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce analyzuje vzdělávací aktivity anglického jazyka, které byly začleněny do distanční výuky v průběhu pandemie Covidu-19 ve školním roce 2020/2021. Teoretická práce objasňuje terminologii důležitou pro tuto práci, srovnává světové a české studie o distanční výuce a zaznamenává historický sled změn Covid-19 opatření ve školství. Práce zmiňuje učitelé nejvíce užívané aktivity a to aplikace *Kahoot!*, *Wordwall* a *Quizizz*. Dále také diskutuje o jejich frekvenci, důvodech začlenění a problémech při užívání těchto aktivit.