



# Teaching languages online. Challenges and opportunities

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# Teaching languages online.

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- Advantages and disadvantages of teaching online
- Approaches and planning
- Opportunities

# Teaching languages online – a topical issue

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Emergency situation – hybrid teaching with sudden shift from face-to-face to distance teaching / learning

Issues encountered: how to.... connect / create videos / create tests / evaluate etc...

Focus so far seems to be mainly on  
technology

What about methodology?



**THE IRISH TIMES**

Home tuition: Our guide to the best teaching and learning resources online

Teachers and parents share their top tips for teaching during the coronavirus closures

□ Thu, Mar 19, 2020, 10:51 | Updated: Fri, Mar 20, 2020, 09:30

# Distance, e-learning, online

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I will refer generically to *online*.

Online modules can be delivered through

- A website / blog
- A VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) o LMS (Learning Management System) come Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas ecc.
- A MOOC platform: FutureLearn, Coursera, Udacity edEx, etc.



Blackboard



coursera



UDACITY



Future  
Learn



# Advantages on online modules

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- **AMOUNT OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES** → teacher as a facilitator rather owner of knowledge
- **OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION** → among learners from different locations and backgrounds
- **USE OF DIGITAL MEDIA** → not just by tutors to deliver content, but also by learners: interaction with content and creation of new content
- **MOBILE LEARNING** → learners can connect from anywhere there is an internet connection, even when while travelling
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** → opportunities to upskill and re-think teaching methodologies and approaches

# Limitations of online modules

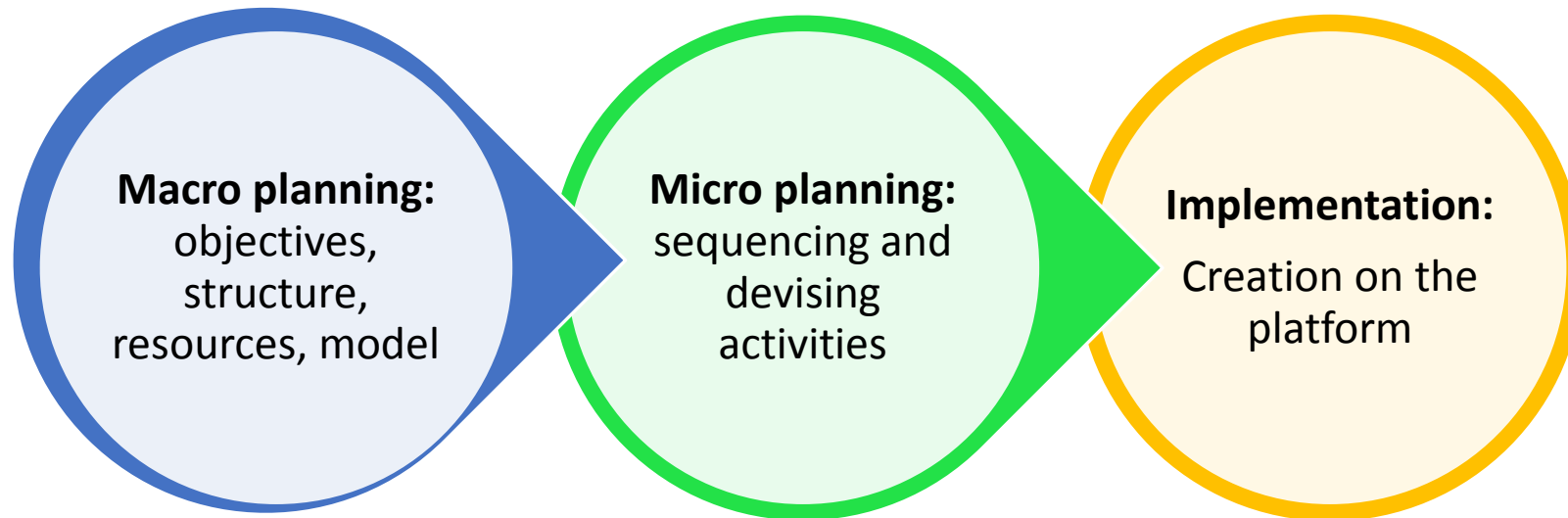
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- **INTERNET ACCESS** → technical issues can create geographical and socio-economic barriers
- **IDENTITY** → verifying learners' identities can be difficult and create issues especially for assessments and evaluation.
- **LACK OF INTONATIONAL NUANCES / BODY LANGUAGE** → both in synchronous and above all asynchronous communication (discussion fora etc.) → one-dimensional communication
- **DIFFICULTIES OF COLLABORATION** → “communities” of practice etc. are not automatic, their creation requires careful planning
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** → lots of online teaching modules, little practical help.

# Need for planning

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Careful planning is absolutely essential to maximise potential and minimise limitations.



KNOW YOUR TECHNOLOGY!

# Some structural models

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**Multimedia lessons** – can be as/more effective than f2f: adding graphics, augmentation, instant quizzes etc. that can aid memorisation of content.

**Adaptive learning** – based on a customised interaction with the learner, creating personalised paths & resources and immediate, automated feedback. Great for problem solving and complex tasks.

**Socio-constructivism** – allows learners to build their knowledge and contribute to other learners' knowledge through interaction. Learner-learner, tutor-learner, learner-content interactions are the bases for cognitive development and negotiation of meaning.



# However

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***Multimedia lessons*** – Not all learners are “visual” learners. These lessons, if well structured, can be stimulating but cannot replace discussion/interaction.

***Adaptive learning*** – Needs complex automation systems (based on algorithms). Favours linear learning, which is not always applicable. Does not include interaction.

***Socio-constructivism*** – Requires specific learner competences: negotiating meaning, selecting reliable information, mixing and integrating information, requesting information. Also requires very careful planning at macro and micro stages.

# *Learning design*

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Start from the learners!

*Learning design* is not a theory but an approach. Learners are at the centre of this approach. They determine structure, timing, strategies, sequences, evaluation etc.

*In Instructional design* instead, creation of the course is at the centre of the approach.

# Elements of *Learning design*

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- Learner's needs
- Learning objectives
- Learning contexts: resources, tools, time available (to both tutors and learners)
- theoretical framework

# Utilising a *Learning design* approach

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As we create an online module, we reflect on the validity of each step and see if

1) they correspond to learners' needs	Is it necessary for these learners to know all exceptions to a given rule?
2) they correspond to learning objectives	If the objective is to recognise certain formulaic expressions, why ask to comment on a text?
3) are compatible with the learning context	Is a given task doable with the resources we have?(technology, tools, time, etc.)
4) are compatible with the chosen theoretical framework	If following a socio-constructivism approach, are we including sufficient opportunities for knowledge sharing/building etc?

# Opportunities include

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- Many tools to cater for many different learning styles
- Different modes of interaction help many types of learners
- Creation of communities beyond physical classrooms
- Additional elements for f2f courses (through blended learning)
- Enhanced collaboration among learners / among teachers
- Enhanced international collaboration

# Thank you

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