Autonomous Digital Language Learning in Higher Education. The DIAL4U Erasmus+Project

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Abstract: *This paper aims at documenting some important aspects related to the process of teaching foreign languages in an online/hybrid university environment in Romania. The focus is on describing the online reality of foreign language instruction in Romania, sharing information on a series of observed challenges that language instructors and learners have had/need to focus on, and comparing and contrasting analysis of a selection of answers provided by teachers in Higher Education (HE) on various aspects connected to digital language instruction. The paper draws on theoretical research in the field of online/hybrid education, using the DIAL4U (Digital pedagogy to develop Autonomy, mediate and certify Lifewide and Lifelong Language Learning for (European) Universities) project to collect and analyse relevant data regarding the language instructors' perception on the use of digital apps and tools in the teaching process. Emphasis is also placed on how teachers acknowledge and use metacognitive and face management strategies as instruments of digital pedagogy. The research was based on a questionnaire which provided valuable qualitative and quantitative data. The results focus on the development of digital skills pre- and post-pandemic and preferences for certain resources, tools and apps, while also correlating these tendencies with metacognitive and pragmatic politeness strategies. The potential outcomes would be to identify creative solutions and design open educational resources to effectively teach online/hybrid language classes.*

Keywords: online/hybrid learning, learning foreign languages, Higher Education (HE), Open Educational Resources.

1. Introduction

Foreign language instruction in the online and hybrid higher education environment is rooted in the mediation of contents through language and digital apps and tools. Within the COVID-19 context, language instructors were urged to

adapt their contents, methods and strategies to a new teaching scenario, in which digital pedagogy gained new dimensions and was reconfigured to accommodate learners' academic and emotional needs. Within the Romanian context, there were many challenges that occurred along the process ranging from limited technical support and training to redesigning academic content and the teaching-learning-assessment process. Additionally, an important challenge that had to be addressed was the lack of effective frameworks that encourage and support online learner engagement and academic achievement. Moreover, faulty communication among faculty members/departments (caused either by lack of uniformity in terms of used platforms and tools, by resistance to use and implement multimodal contents or by teachers of digital literacy) has also impeded on the online foreign language instruction process.

Attempting to respond to these challenges, various projects were conducted and DIAL4u (Digital pedagogy to develop Autonomy, mediate and certify Lifewide and Lifelong Language Learning for (European) Universities) is a good practice scenario, bringing together eight partner universities to provide tested solutions to online foreign language instruction. The aims of the project are to develop the digital culture of language teachers and their ability to use it for didactic purposes, to implement digital tools for language learning, to recognise and validate knowledge, skills and competences acquired in formal and non-formal contexts, and to motivate learners to use open educational resources in preparation for lifelong and lifewide learning.

The project was proposed in 2020 (and accepted in 2021) as a response to particular needs of higher education language instructors, who had identified a lack of structure in the framework of digital pedagogy in online foreign language instruction. Considering that online instruction was an immediate and temporary solution triggered by the COVID-19 context, the DIAL4U project sought to identify strategies and design digital content customised for new learning paths, foreseeing directions of instruction development for both online and hybrid scenarios.

The digital deliverables designed by the Babeș-Bolyai University team (in co-leadership with the Mikolo Romeris University in Lithuania) include a database on both formal and informal digital content for language learning mediation and online educational resources (metacognitive and online face management toolkits, glossary of apps and tools, teaching sequences showcasing the use of apps and tools and addressed to language instructors and students). The questionnaire addressed to language instructors represents a starting point catering for the needs analysis necessary for designing a set of creative solutions and OER that could provide a structured digital pedagogical framework for future technologically enhanced language instruction.

Having analysed the instructors' responses, we consider that providing a detailed guide of how various apps and tools that can be used in foreign language instruction constitutes a valid approach to digital pedagogy development and

implementation in Higher Education (HE) Romanian institutions. At the same time, the needs analysis indicated a scarcity of background regarding useful strategies in the process, metacognitive and face management strategies being among the most significant mechanisms of promoting social and emotional learning and enabling teachers to facilitate autonomous learning.

The current paper aims to discuss the Romanian language instructors' perspective on the use of digital apps, correlating the online language instruction process with metacognitive and face management strategies with a focus on supporting and empowering learners. The theoretical framework covers aspects pertaining to Pedagogical Digital Competence (PDC) and the use of the Social and Emotional Learning framework in the support of language learning mediation. The following part presents the Methodology (purpose of the study, participants and procedure, research instruments and hypotheses) and is continued by a section which analyses and discusses the results and answers. The interpretation of results allows for some preliminary conclusions and sketches further directions of research.

2. Theoretical Framework

New technologies embedded in teaching foreign languages triggered the reconfiguration of the academic teaching content and led to the design of more interactive synchronous and asynchronous activities and to the increase in language learner autonomy. They also enabled language instructors to customise the strategies and methods by integrating digital apps and tools in the teaching, learning and self-assessment process. More than reshaping the academic content, language instructors were required to update their 21st-century skills, particularly since "digitalization has increasingly introduced a new dimension in teachers' pedagogical skills and competences which we have chosen to call Pedagogical Digital Competence (PDC)" (From, 2017: 43). The underlying argument is that pedagogical digital competence should be an integrated skill in all taught disciplines as digital competence has become a basic competence in all subjects and at all levels (Krumsvik, 2014). PDC should be thus a prerequisite for hybrid and face-to-face teaching in language instruction, meeting the learning needs of digital native students (see Prensky, 2001). Furthermore, PDC should be an integrated skill that must not be limited to the teaching framework generated by the COVID-19 crisis situation and that should be transferred to accommodate students' evolving identities in digitised society as "education cannot be detached from ICT" (Edelhauser, Lupu-Dima, 2020: 4).

The need for a tailored digital pedagogy in foreign language instruction stemmed from the reality in which language teachers, exposed to a plethora of apps, were in need of a specialised digital pedagogy background. In this respect, Zhu and Liu argue that "long-term integration of online teaching and learning into university curricula implies further attention to quality" (Zhu & Liu, 2020: 697),

which emphasises the stringent requirement that language instructors master accurate PDC before delivering instructional content in a digital or hybrid framework. Additionally, the use of digital tools also facilitates the development of multiple literacies for both teachers and learners. As such, "in the online learning environment where digital resources are extensively used, teaching practice should acknowledge the different types of literacies: digital literacy, multimodal literacy, critical literacy and multicultural literacy" (Pop, 2020: 82-83).

Making use of the PDC also entails the accurate choice of language teaching resources (text, audio, audio-video, visual aids, interactive materials). At the beginning of the COVID-19 teaching crisis scenario, in Romania there was a practice of predominantly using text in a digital format or simply using the videoconference platform to enable communication with learners, which does not qualify as online teaching (Pedagogia Universitară în pandemia COVID, 2020). This also indicates an incongruency with the basic principles of digital pedagogy, which streamline an accurate use of digital technologies in collaborative and interactive academic tasks, design and production of digital content, selecting and tailoring content for specific teaching situations, and the involvement of students as active participants. In the same line of thought, the use of apps and tools in online language teaching should be made with suitable documentation regarding a digital pedagogy framework.

During COVID-19, a tendency to use apps that were available for free was noticed, even though some such apps were designed for primary and secondary education learners and for all the subjects included in the school curriculum (see also Zalat, Hamed, Bolbol, 2021; Grosseck, Holotescu, Andone, 2020; OECD, 2020). Moreover, most of these apps (Kahoot!, Quizizz, Quizlet, Learningsnacks, Wordwall) aim to gamify the teaching-learning process and gamified learning may well compensate for the lack of face-to-face interaction and add to the dimension of both collaborative learning and enable a positive competitive learning environment.

One aspect of online language instruction that became more stringent in the pandemic context was that language instructors assumed the role of facilitators, by coordinating students rather than the traditional method of assigning practical tasks in the form of fill-in-the-gaps, multiple choice, cloze or word formation exercises. Having experimented with various apps in different teaching scenarios (Kahoot for vocabulary practice, Quizlet for introducing and revising new concepts and terms, TedEd for reading and listening tasks etc.), language instructors explored the wider potential of apps and tools, by putting them into practice to facilitate autonomy for more empowered learners. With an increased role in language instruction, "learning autonomy represents the main ingredient in empowering students with the necessary tools and strategies to continue learning in other settings, non-formal or informal ones" (Cotoc & Pop, 2022: 119). In these new settings, language instructors take on the role of creating adequate learning contexts for specific activities, in which students can understand and acquire new content (grammar,

vocabulary, concepts, theories), use it in skill-specific tasks, engage in self- and peer-assessment activities and produce digital learning content (presentations, posters, essays, storytelling). They also facilitate the use of digital cognition in the course of which "the scenes of knowledge construction are online platforms, where it is possible to form the most varied connections" and "the strategy of knowledge construction is problem-solving mediatized and facilitated by the educator" (Szőke-Milinte, 2021: 11).

In the framework of class interactivity as facilitated by the integration of apps and tools, the customisation of skill-specific tasks is dependent on the type of activity/skill, the affordances of the app and the instructor's willingness to use new technologies and his/her digital literacy level. Regarding the type of activity/skill involved, receptive skills (reading and listening) allow for a wide range use of apps, but are quite limited in terms of interactivity among learners. On the other hand, for the productive skills (speaking and writing), apps enable interactivity and collaboration even more, creating a more resourceful learning context than in face-to-face instruction.

Social and Emotional Learning represents a useful framework against whose backdrop foreign language instruction may occur as it regulates language production, language proficiency, emotional intelligence and intercultural competence development. Online and hybrid learning environments have been blamed for being detrimental in terms of the emotional connection that is considered necessary particularly in the context of learning and teaching languages. While we acknowledge this downside, it is our stance that increased focus on metacognition training can improve online classes, helping students to stay more focused in class, to gain autonomy and responsibility for their own learning. Moreover, metacognitive strategies can improve exam performance and can be transferred to any subject or cognitive task.

The main metacognitive strategies we had in mind are planning (what learners do before the task), monitoring (what they do while solving the task) and self-evaluation (what happens after the task has been completed). During planning, students may ask themselves what they are required to do, what strategies they may use, but also more specific questions that depend on the particular task being addressed. During the monitoring stage, students may wonder if the strategy they are using is working, if they need to make any changes in terms of their approach. Last but not least, the self-evaluation stage is when students should ask themselves how they performed, what went well and what did not and what they may do in the future when confronted with similar tasks.

Metacognitive strategies are teachable (Hattie et al., 1996; Swanson et al., 1999; Dignath et al.,2008) and metacognitive training in language learning is necessary for instructors to empower learners to use strategies effectively and efficiently (Raoofi et al., 2014). Thus, it is relevant to highlight language instructors' attitudes towards encouraging students to use metacognitive strategies in online classes.

Our study also acknowledges the role that pragmatic politeness plays in achieving a *quid pro quo* in communication that respects interactants' needs for autonomy, interdependence and collaboration. In Brown and Levinson's view, politeness is *universal and a highly rational phenomenon* (1987). Politeness is founded on linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour that is employed in interactions where Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) occur.

The rapport management theory (RMM) (Helen Spencer-Oatey, 2000 onwards) further and generously contributes to the politeness theory conceptualisations by focussing on the analysis of the relational aspect of social interaction and not just on the linguistic aspects that lead to polite strategies use. Focussing on relational management becomes an important pedagogical tool as the switch is moved onto a hearer-centred approach to politeness rather than a speaker-centred approach (Helen Spencer Oatey, 2015). Rapport management is crucial to academic foreign language instruction as the achievement of our interactional goals can only be executed through a collaborative *give and take*. The negotiation of meaning becomes a strive for consensus and engagement.

Moreover, anxiety is commonly researched in relation to its impact on students' motivation as it is a rather obvious psychological factor influencing students' oral discourse and speaking competences in foreign language instruction. The existing connection between effective foreign language production and anxiety has been analysed (Ely, 1986; Krashen, 1985; MacIntyre, 1995) and Oflaz A. (2019) for example, details the effects of students' anxiety, their shyness level and adopted language learning strategies on their speaking skills and overall academic achievement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the attitude of Romanian foreign language instructors towards the use of digital tools and apps in the framework of digital pedagogy and to identify possible patterns in their approach regarding metacognitive and online politeness.

3.2. Participants and Procedure

A number of 104 participants were involved in the research. The majority were female (94.6%), 5.2 % were male, and 0.2% did not mention gender. The mean age was 34.55 (SD = 9.43). The study used the survey research method and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. The data were collected via Google Forms targeting the timeframe spring 2020-autumn 2021, given that the timespan accounts for two milestones in the online language instruction context in Romania. On the one hand, 2020 represented the moment of the abrupt transition to exclusively online teaching and learning scenarios, in which neither instructors, nor learners had any consistent and structured digital pedagogy knowledge. On the

other hand, the end of 2021 marked the moment when instructors had already gained sufficient experience in online instruction patterns to acknowledge particular needs for reconfiguration of content, strategies and methods.

The participants completed the questionnaire in approximately 30 minutes. Participation was voluntary and the participants were informed about the confidentiality of any sensitive information and they granted their informed consent. The quantitative data obtained were statistically analysed using IBM SPSS ™ software, and since the research instrument that we used is not standardised, we used a cut-off point of -1/+1 mean standard deviation performed with Visual Binning in SPSS for setting the cut-off points. The qualitative data were processed using content analysis under certain categories.

3.3. Research Instruments

The participants were asked to fill in a survey containing 56 items designed to assess language instructors' backgrounds and perceptions regarding: the demographic characteristics, the use of tools and apps, the level of digital pedagogy skills, the use of metacognitive strategies, and the student/teacher online face management. The majority of the items were designed on a 5 point Likert scale, where 1 represented *strongly disagree* and 5 *strongly agree*, but also as dichotomic and open questions. To identify the internal consistency of the survey, we have calculated Cronbach's Alpha = .85. Therefore, taking into consideration the value of Cronbach's Alpha, our research instrument is relevant and consistent.

3.4. Research Hypotheses

Our study targeted the following research hypotheses:
1. There is a significant increase in the development of HE instructors' digital skills from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment when the questionnaire was completed;
2. Language instructors customised their activities using resources and apps according to their instructional goals;
3. Higher education language instructors limit the emphasis on metacognitive and face management strategies to encourage more autonomy and engagement.

4. Results and Discussion of Results

The analysis presents a selection of the data collected, placing findings in line with the research hypotheses, and aims to show the respondents' perception of the utility and didactic potential of apps and tools in online language instruction. Another aspect to be considered is the awareness that higher education language teachers have regarding metacognitive and face management strategies along the process of teaching, as well as the overview of how they embed these strategies in order to obtain learner autonomy.

Related to the Digital pedagogy and Digital apps and tools, two questions were selected so as to indicate the development of teachers' digital skills in the specific timeframe: *Q9. How do you assess your digital skills at the beginning of the pandemic?; Q10. How do you assess your digital skills now?* The responses were analysed and a comparison was drawn, showing that language instructors perceive a significant difference between the level of digital skills at the beginning of the pandemic (moment 1 - M1) and the level of digital skills at the moment when the questionnaire was applied (moment 2 - M2). A paired statistical data was performed and can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 below.

Table 1. Paired Samples Test

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	S.E. Mean
M1 → M2	104 → 104	3.13→3.78	.78 →.59	.08 →.06

Table 2. Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	S. E. Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
M1 → M2	-.64	.59	.06	-.76	-.53	-11.14	103	.000

It has been found that **a significant difference** *(t = -11.14, df = 103, p = 0.000)* was perceived between the level of digital skills at the beginning of the pandemic (M = 3.13, SD = 0.78) and the survey completion timestamp (M = 3.78, SD = 0.59). This means that the instructors consider that the pandemic positively influenced the development of language instructors' digital skills, due to the fact that they had to use digital platforms and apps. While other studies show there is effectiveness regarding the design of online courses and the facilitation of students' learning while using digital tools (Ma et al., 2021), as a multi-tool teaching-learning system (Andronache, 2022), our study focuses on instructors' perceived gain in digital skills within the context of PDC.

When asked about the extent to which teachers used particular resources to develop learners' language competence (*12. How much do you use the following types of resources to develop learners' language competence in the foreign language that you teach?),* respondents could opt for multiple resources in their answers. The majority indicated a preference for text and audio, 90 respondents choosing text (textbooks, literature etc. in hard copy/ digital resources) and 84

choosing audio resources. Audio-video resources (films, animations, videos, TED Talks etc.) were selected by 80 respondents, whereas visual aids (Power-Point, Prezi etc.) were selected by 69 responses. The least used resources were interactive materials (Wordwall, Nearpod, PearDeck etc.), with 41 responses (see Figure 1 below).
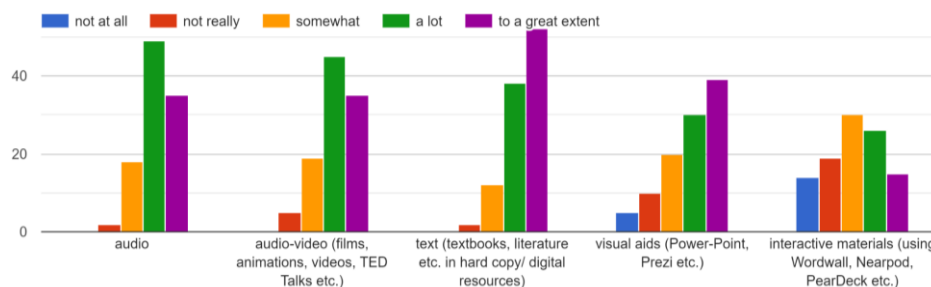
Figure 1. Most Used Resources for Digital Language Teaching

The results show that despite the increased availability of digital technologies, text and audio still represent the main resources used by language instructions. Teachers relied on what they already know in terms of pedagogical approach and the electronic versions (pdf/doc/docx) of textbooks/coursebooks/ handouts/images/PowerPoint presentations. The adaptation of the academic content to the new resources requires digital skills, digital cognition, PDC, and time which were readily available at the moment when teaching was fully transferred. For example, by sending a text-based resource, using a video-conferencing tool mainly for unidirectional transmission of the content or sending a recorded lecture in an audio-video format, the principles of PDC were not covered. Regardless of the age and teaching experience of the respondents, the choice of interactive materials was last on the list of preferences even if they were the most suitable means to ensure learner autonomy, interactivity, peer and self-assessment and even if they could have been complementary to visual aids, text and audio. A mirroring perception was identified in another study conducted among language learners, who "indicated a strong preference for the video conferences (synchronous meetings) (70.4 % first-year respondents and 90 % third-year respondents). This stands as proof for the fact that even if learning apps are useful tools, they need to be complemented by human agency and interaction" (Cotoc, Pop, 2022: 130).

Regarding the use of resources in foreign language classes, the answers to Q14 *How much do you use the following resources in your classes?* provided a top of most and least used resources. Language instructors referred to Online dictionaries, Kahoot!, Whiteboard, Liveworksheets, Quizizz as the most popular and frequently used digital resources, whereas the top least used resources are: iCivics (102 respondents), Chatterpix (101 respondents), Wallwisher (101 respondents) and Intothebook (100 respondents), Minecraft (99 respondents).

Findings regarding the top five most used resources show that only two of the specified digital resources (Kahoot! and Quizizz) encapsulate the gamification and interactive dimension, whereas the other resources are simply the electronic version of dictionaries (Online dictionaries), boards (online Whiteboard) and handouts (Liveworksheets)."Through gamified assessment there are various opportunities for students to learn collaboratively, to use peer-assessment as a pedagogical tool and respectively to increase motivation along autonomous learning" (Albert, Mudure-Iacob, 2021: 8197) We consider that the predominant choice, Online dictionaries, constitutes an unexpected outcome as such dictionaries are online repositories that do not have interactive features and that do not activate digital cognition either. Likewise, the majority of these resources are usually employed in the teaching and practice of vocabulary, indicating that many language instructors focused mainly on developing vocabulary micro-skills to the detriment of other language skills. In contrast, the top least-used resources show a tendency to avoid gamification (iCivics and Minecraft) in the language instruction process and use the apps which are more popular and which were presented in online trainings and webinars. Some of the indicated resources might have had a more popular alternative that was used by teachers: Padlet instead of Wallwisher, for example.

When asked about what type of apps and tools can enable students to connect more interactively in class, *Q18. Are there any particular apps/tools you think that enable students to connect more interactively to the course/ you? Can you mention 1-3 examples?*, respondents referred to various popular apps which are included in the word cloud that can be seen in Figure 2 below. We notice that these apps can be categorised into: interactive gamified quizzes (Kahoot!, Quizizz), poll-creator tools (Mentimeter, Slido), escape room apps (Genial.ly, Google Forms), community building and networking platforms (Padlet, Flipgrid, Miro) and competitive environment-oriented apps (Nearpod, Quizlet). Taking the example of Liveworksheets, which merely provides the online alternative to a handout, the degree of interactivity of some of these apps is however debatable.


Figure 2. Apps/Tools that Enable Interactivity

When asked about the extent to which apps were used to develop learners' language competence (*Q11. How much do you use apps to develop learners' language competence?*), 36.5% of respondents said they used them in more than half of their classes and 26.9% in almost all of their classes. Using the Pearson Correlation (r = 0.70, p < 0.05) to analyse Q11 and Q30 (*How much do you encourage students to use metacognitive strategies in online foreign language classes?*), it is shown that teachers who use apps in online classes tend to encourage students to use metacognitive strategies.

Another interesting finding is that teachers who feel anxiety in the context of teaching online, tend not to encourage the use of metacognitive strategies, as shown by the Pearson Correlation (r=-0.68, p<0.05) of Q39 (*Have you felt communication related anxiety when teaching online?*) with Q30 (*How much do you encourage students to use metacognitive strategies in online foreign language classes?*).

Q39 (*Have you felt communication-related anxiety when teaching online?*) and Q40 (*If you felt communication-related anxiety when teaching online was: a. student-related; b. teaching style related; c. technical aspects related*? detail the existence of anxiety in online teaching of foreign languages as perceived by language instructors. 64.4% of the Romanian respondents (104 answers in all) stated that they had experienced anxiety in their online teaching whereas 35.6% answered this question negatively failing to identify anxiety as a relevant variable.

Consequently, when asked to highlight the reasons behind the perceived anxiety, the respondents' answers (78 answers) have been categorised as follows: 39 answers (50%) have identified student-related reasons, 25 answers (32.1%) have revealed that their anxiety is related to their teaching style whereas 55 answers (70.5%) connect their perceived anxiety as being inadvertently connected to technical aspects.
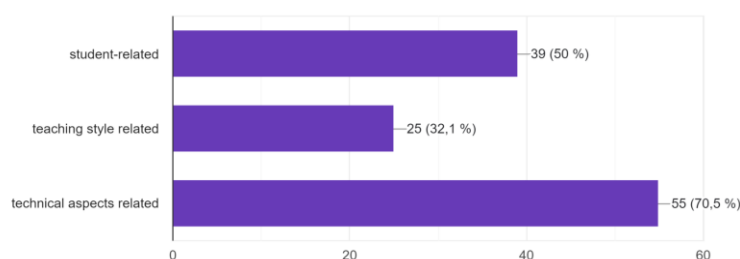
Figure 3. Anxiety-related Reasons when Teaching Online

Issues such as a valid Internet connection, access to online/hybrid resources, operational command of video conferencing platforms and various purpose-built apps as well as digital literacy skills may all be included under technical issues identified as conducive to instructors' anxiety in foreign language academic instruction.

The study has also focused on the existing correlation between the level of digital skills and the instructors' perceived anxiety when teaching online (a lack of a very high correlation). Nevertheless, we have identified a rather significant negative correlation between the level of digital skills at the beginning of the pandemic ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$), the level of digital skills upon completion timestamp ($r = -.15$, $p < .05$) and anxiety level perceived by the teachers. Thus, we may conclude that the lower the level of instructors' digital skills, the higher the experienced anxiety. Despite the challenges of such a dynamic context, our study has succeeded in analysing language instructors' perception of the usefulness of apps and tools in academic instruction, as well as the necessity of implementing metacognitive and politeness strategies that facilitate autonomous learning, relational collaboration and redefine the pedagogical framework in Romanian HE.

The core of our research has been articulated around three hypotheses that have resulted in different degrees of validation, contributing to a valuable snapshot of the Romanian HE context of digital pedagogy. Our first hypothesis (*1. There is a significant increase in the development of HE instructors' digital skills from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment when the questionnaire was completed*) regarding HE instructors' digital skills has been validated as our data show that the COVID-19 context triggered an increased awareness and consistent use of digital skills from the beginning of the pandemic until the moment when the questionnaire was completed. In what concerns the second hypothesis (*2. Language instructors customised their activities using resources and apps according to their instructional goals*), partial validation was obtained. Our study concludes that such tailoring is context and time-bound: instructors' willingness to integrate and develop apps and tools in the instruction, to apply their digital skills to content, urgency generated by the rapid switch to online instruction, time constraints, lack of standardised codes of good practice. The results obtained validated the third hypothesis to a certain extent *(3. HE language instructors limit the emphasis on metacognitive and face management strategies to encourage more autonomy and engagement)*. Foreign language instructors are insufficiently aware of the benefits metacognitive strategies and online politeness strategies pose in online teaching scenarios.

5. Conclusions and Further Directions

The present study aimed at analysing foreign language instructors' perception regarding the online teaching and learning of academic content to identify the newly-emerged needs that language instructors have. It is also the purpose of this study to recommend future developments related to training and lifewide learning, which may be consequently implemented into a coherent pedagogical digital competence framework. The added value consists of the activation of digital cognition to support the metacognitive and face management strategies as PDC tools in language instruction.

Our contention is that academic instruction in Romania is in its formative stages in what concerns the effective and full use of apps and digital resources, whereas metacognitive and politeness awareness on the part of instructors is in need of attentive consideration. In our study, we have observed the need to provide controlled and verified support in the form of comprehensive glossaries that go beyond a simple enumeration and include pedagogical guidance and implementation suggestions, toolkits that regulate the implementation of metacognitive and politeness strategies for the benefit of instructors and learners alike.

There is a high value in delegating responsibility for students to create their own digital content (their own Kahoot, Quizlet, Padlets etc.) as OERs and as instances of digital cognitions. The added value in this type of student-centred tasks and self-reflection could be conducive to implementing filtering mechanisms that could support foreign language instruction.

There is a need for creating a considerate teaching and learning digital framework that includes emphasis on metacognition and pragmatic politeness.

Since metacognition has long been recognized as a key factor in any type of learning, it is no longer a question of whether teachers should be training students to use metacognitive strategies, but a matter of how to do so effectively. Future research should focus on how to embed metacognition training into curricula. Additionally, politeness and face management strategies are to be tapped into in the foreign language class and we suggest that HE instructors may start from raising students' awareness as to what significant benefits politeness encompasses, practising politeness strategies in communicative activities as well as enabling learners to create and maintain their own e-face in online exchanges by protecting both their own face needs and the interlocutors' face wants and needs.

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