

Sight Unseen: Visible and Invisible Teachers in Online Teaching

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ABSTRACT

During the lockdown period, with schools closed, teachers across the world have had to adapt their classroom teaching practices to the relatively new methodology of online teaching. There is a large amount of literature on this approach, covering course design, pedagogical strategies, assessment and so on. Much of this pertains to the idea of the ‘future’ school, where learners stay mostly at home and share teaching models given by global experts, and is driven by the higher education sector’s needs for outreach and a desire for improving social equity (Searle, Jackson & Scott 2019). For the study of classical languages and literature, there has been little for teachers to turn to that is relevant to their immediate needs during this crisis. My co-edited book *Teaching Classics with Technology* (Natoli & Hunt, 2019) provided some samples of practices that could help teachers better orient themselves to the new environment, such as distance-learning (Walden, 2019) and the Virtual Learning Environment (Lewis, 2019). Nevertheless, this moment provides a unique opportunity not just to consider how teachers are using online teaching and learning to deal with this moment in time, but also to critically investigate how the experience might lead to further integration of digital resources into standard classroom/home settings when the crisis is over. Casual observations of teachers’ inquiries on social media such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* suggest that they share not just a concern with the practical use of unfamiliar technology, but that they are led to question the very ways in which they have previously taught. The Classics teachers value technology highly, allowing students to see the teacher, even if not all the time. The teacher’s own voice is felt to be as engaging for maintaining student engagement as is the image of the teacher. Teachers explored a range of types of technology that afforded both synchronous and asynchronous teaching and learning activities. They developed their own routines of using both approaches for consistency of delivery, assessment, and feedback, and managing their students’ work-life balances. Crisis-led online teaching and learning has begun to change teachers’ thoughts about their practices and may in the long-term impact on current modes of assessment.

Introduction

I draw my observations from discussions with a range of around 30 experienced UK Classics teachers. For the purposes of this article, I have described them all as ‘Classics’ teachers, although their specialisms vary. The majority teach Latin, which, in the UK at

least, combines language, literature, and Roman civilization topic areas. Many UK Latin teachers also teach non-linguistic classical subjects. The views of a number of teachers of non-linguistic classical subjects are also reported in this article. Two groups were involved: a larger group of teachers from state-maintained and private secondary schools (where students are aged 11-18) who are mentors for the postgraduate initial teacher training course for Classics which I run at the University of Cambridge; and a smaller group of Classics teachers from sixth form colleges which educate students aged 16-18. Both groups met in June, separately, in meetings held online through *Zoom*. All the Classics teachers were currently teaching online, and the meetings were held partly to share experiences and to learn from each other. I am indebted to members of the Cambridge PGCE Mentor Panel and the sixth form college teachers who enabled the discussions, during which, in the spirit of opportunistic research, I took notes. These notes form the basis of this article. For the purpose of this article, when I refer to ‘the Classics teachers’, I am referring specifically to the members of the groups who participated in the discussions rather than any other teachers of Classics in the UK. Respondents, when quoted, have been anonymized.

Brief Overview of Classics Teaching in the UK

In order to provide some context, I shall briefly describe the characteristics of normal face-to-face classics teaching in the UK before I go on to discuss the online teaching occasioned by the pandemic. Four classical subjects may be offered in UK schools. Two courses have a focus on language and literature: Latin and Ancient Greek. Two courses are non-linguistic: Classical Civilization and Ancient History. When it is offered, Latin is the most common classical subject taught in schools¹. Latin is most often a compulsory subject for all students or a selected group in addition to or occasionally replacing a compulsory modern foreign language. In some schools, however, Latin is an elective subject. Ancient Greek is very rare outside the private sector and is nearly always offered as an extra subject to those studying Latin already (Foster, 2015). The two non-linguistic courses (Classical Civilization and Ancient History) tend to be offered as an elective to older students from age 14 or 16. One of the things which might surprise an American reader is the sheer number

¹ The most authoritative report on the provision of classical subjects in UK schools is in the meticulous survey carried out by the Cambridge School Classics Project in 2008. According to the report around 1,000 secondary schools offered Latin (1 in 5), with 12.9% of the state-maintained sector and 59.9% of the private sector offering it (Cambridge School Classics Project, 2008). Since then, the charity Classics for All has supported the introduction of classical subjects (mostly Latin) into 390 further state-maintained secondary schools (Classics for All, 2020a).

of examination types which are offered for these subjects, the most common of which are the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) which is taken by students aged around 16, and the General Certificate of Education A Level examination which is taken by students aged around 18. Both sets of examinations must adhere to the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) criteria, a non-ministerial department of the Department for Education (DfE). For example, for the languages, accidence and syntax, vocabulary and selections of literature are centrally specified by the examinations board². No school would offer any of the four classical subjects without considering the examination to which it would lead: it is assumed that all students who start a course could be entered for an examination in it further down the line.

Figure 1 below indicates the year groups and corresponding ages of students and examinations in UK secondary schools today³.

Key stage	Year	Age of student	Main Examination type
3	7	11	
	8	12	
	9	13	
4	10	14	GCSE
	11	15	
5 (‘Sixth Form’)	12	16	A Level
	13	17	

Figure 1 Secondary school year groups

Ofqual prescribes the examinations’ content and format; however, there is much flexibility around what methods teachers use and how much teaching time is allocated. Lesson times may vary from 35 minutes to more than 90; the subjects might be taught once or twice a week, or even only once a fortnight; most students will start Latin at age 11 or 12, although some students in private schools might start Latin or even Ancient Greek at the age of 5 or 6. Students aged 7-11 in state-maintained primary schools may study Latin or Ancient Greek in place of a compulsory modern foreign language. Numbers of these

² There are many examinations boards in the UK. In England, the two examinations boards which offer Latin qualifications are OCR (at GCSE and A Level) and Eduqas (at GCSE). OCR also offers qualifications in Ancient Greek, Classical Civilisation and Ancient History (at GCSE and A Level). For a detailed look, see Hunt’s *School Qualifications in Classical Subjects in the UK* (Hunt, S., 2020).

³ Note that the system described is for England. Wales, Northern Ireland, and Scotland are broadly similar, but have some detail differences which it is unnecessary to describe for the purpose of this article.

are still small but significant (see, for example, Maguire (2018) and examples from the Classics for All website (2020b)). But, because classical subjects are not part of the National Curriculum⁴ in the secondary schools, no record is kept of how many students start them. Students who complete a course and take the GCSE and A Level examinations are recorded as part of the DfE's annual statistical review. The Office uses this review for Standards in Education (Ofsted) to compare students' performance and, thereby, schools each year (see Council of University Classics Departments 2020). Accordingly, the majority of Classics teachers follow course books that fully align with the national examinations and which are endorsed by the examination boards. Indeed, Tim Oates, the Group Director of Assessment Research and Development at Cambridge Assessment, and a government advisor for national examinations policy argued in a report for the Department for Education that:

High quality textbooks are not antithetical to high quality pedagogy – they are supportive of sensitive and effective approaches to high attainment, high equity and high enjoyment of learning. A failure to recognise this may be impeding improvement of education in England. A supply of high-quality textbooks may provide considerable support to both teachers and pupils (Oates, 2014, 19-20).

In the main, the course books use broadly reading-comprehension approaches in the initial stages of learning but strongly advocate explicit learning of grammar to meet the examinations' requirements. For Latin, the *Cambridge Latin Course* (Cambridge School Classics Project, 1998) is by far the most popular course book and has substantial digital and online resources. John Taylor's *Latin to GCSE* (Cullen & Taylor, 2016) and *Greek to GCSE* (Taylor, 2016) are also popular if rather more traditional grammar-translation course books. Active Latin (let alone Ancient Greek) is rare. Similarly, for the non-linguistic courses of Classical Civilisation and Ancient History, a suite of course books has been designed to provide support for the GCSE and A Level examinations (See, for example, the suite of resources endorsed by the examination board OCR for the teaching of Classical Civilization at GCSE (OCR, 2020a) and A level (OCR, 2020b) and for Ancient History at

⁴ The National Curriculum (DfE, 2013) sets out the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects at all key stages in England. All local-authority state-maintained schools in England must teach these programmes of study, which consists of the following subjects: Mathematics, English Language, English Literature, Science, History, Geography, a Modern Foreign Language, Art, Music, Religious Education, Physical Education and Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE). Because of devolved government, there are slight differences in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

GCSE (OCR, 2020c) and A level (OCR, 2020d)). Accordingly, amongst Classics teachers in the UK there is a fair amount of consistency in aims and objectives, even if the amount of teaching time and the teaching methods which are available is varied. All the above has impacted the sorts of resources and delivery that teachers have used during the lockdown.

Immediate Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic in UK Schools

On the afternoon of Friday 20 March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the DfE instructed all nurseries and schools to be closed to all students except the children of keyworkers and vulnerable children. The nationwide lockdown began on Monday 23 March with only essential shops allowed to remain open and with social distancing measures in place. From 15 June students from Years 10 and 12 were allowed to return to school; however, it was up to the discretion of the schools themselves how to manage students' return into classrooms, with appropriate levels of social distancing and Personal Protection Equipment. Students from other year groups did not return to school until the beginning of September 2020, when the new school year was to begin. GCSE and A Level examinations, which were due to be completed in June 2020, were cancelled and replaced by teacher-awarded grades, to be submitted to the examination boards for adjudication and award of results. Any immediate requirement of having to continue to prepare students for national examinations was removed at a stroke. But examination grades still had to be predicted from whatever students' school assessments existed in order for examination grades to be calculated. This process of award by teacher recommendation was carried out not without concern for unconscious bias and discrimination against disadvantaged groups. GCSEs are how schools and colleges allow access to further study at A Level, and A Levels are used similarly by the universities to allow access to undergraduate courses. Grades for performance will still be awarded by the examination boards (DfE, 2020b), but teachers, students, and parents remain anxious that the process of the awards will be fair and not disadvantage those from poorer backgrounds (The Sutton Trust, 2020; BBC, 2020f) and that students should have an opportunity for recourse if they consider the grades to have been awarded unfairly (Schools Week, 2020b). Ofqual has made reassurances that there will be no 'unconscious bias' in the award of results (BBC, 2020g). The process was made yet more complex because the assessment for all four classical subjects was by terminal examination with no continuous assessment carried out in school. This meant that the materials which showed prior attainment of the students from which evidence might

be drawn was variable in nature and extent from school to school, and even from class to class in the same school. Access to students' hard copy exercise books from which teachers might make informed judgments was also challenging as the students either had taken them home with them or the books were locked away in school. One lesson to be learned from this experience was that teachers felt that in case of future need, evidence of student attainment needed to be kept in central digital storage and that online teaching and learning should also include systematic ways of tracking students' performance, maintaining an electronic grade book and keeping samples of students' completed work.⁵

Keeping the Curriculum Going

Against a background of limited official advice, schools and teachers were expected to rise to the challenge and find alternative ways of teaching students for the foreseeable future. In the secondary schools, where classical subjects are for the most part taught, this meant a sudden switch to online teaching and learning without, in many cases, any previous training or experience. None of the teachers in sample reported having been trained in online teaching before they were expected to do it with barely a weekend's notice. Nevertheless, they were free to use their own professional judgment and previous classroom teaching experiences to experiment without fear of judgment against newly-invented standards: fully-online teaching was uncharted territory and, with a positive spin, might be conceived of as self-directed professional development. Indeed, social media was alive with teachers' reports of their trials and errors – generally supportive and beneficial to the teaching community's sense of common purpose.

Accessibility to the Internet

Access to the internet continued to be very variable across the UK. According to the National Foundation for Educational Research (2020a), one-third of students were not engaging with online lessons, with around 25% of all students reported to have little or no access to information technology at home, and with 81% of the most disadvantaged having limited access to it and/or a study space at home. According to the Times Educational Supplement (TES), former Education Minister Lord Adonis tweeted vigorously and publicly his anxiety about the growing digital divide between state-maintained and private

⁵ When this article was written, the outcomes of the examination awards were not known. Further Details of the awarding process and how they impacted on the examination of students for classical subjects can be found in the Journal of Classics Teaching 42.

schools (TES, 2020b). Meanwhile, Ofsted chief Amanda Spielman, commenting on the disparity of provision between state-maintained schools, reported her caution about the widening gap between wealthy and poor students, despite school action:

The vast majority of schools are putting a great deal of effort both into assembling packages of remote learning...But all of that is still not going to add up to a full education for children and it is not going to prevent the gaps widening (Spielman, quoted in TES (2020c)).

This disparity of provision was noteworthy among all Classics teachers both between state-maintained and private schools and between different types of state-maintained schools. The teachers in the sixth form colleges were more strongly aware of this disparity because of their location, which tended to be in rural areas, than the teachers in secondary schools, which tended to be in urban areas. Anna, who worked in a sixth form college located in the Welsh borders, for example, noted that their intermittent internet connectivity made synchronous teaching impossible. In urban areas, however, access to the internet was better and more reliable; but, access to computers themselves was reported to be a problem for some students, who had to share with siblings and parents. One private school and one state-maintained school had long provided students with iPads for their normal lessons. They were the exception. In other schools, teachers had simply assumed that students had their own access to a computer. For those who did not, the DfE had promised to supply necessary computer equipment for disadvantaged students (BBC, 2020b); however, the roll-out seems to have been imperfect (Schools Week, 2020a) and the DfE suggested in the meantime that many students could try to access work through their smartphones (DfE, 2020a). Of course, access to the internet in this way might prove expensive and might affect the sorts of resources that could be accessed. For example, text-dependent resources, such as *PowerPoint* slides, are not very suitable for showing on a smartphone. All the Classics teachers reckoned that their students had access to a personal computer for at least some of the day.

The Value of Teacher-Student Visibility Online or Offline

At the beginning of the lockdown, teachers and students alike were unclear about what to do and what the expectations were. Advice from the DfE was initially lacking, and schools were expected to work out what they wanted from the start. The centralizing

tendencies of the UK education system, which I have reported above were, surprisingly, not immediately apparent. Advice to teachers was provided initially by their Unions. For example, the largest of these, the National Education Union, advised:

Teachers working at home must be given workloads which are reasonable and sustainable, and this must be negotiated with the staff. Normal education is currently suspended, and teachers should not be teaching a full timetable, or routinely marking work (National Education Union, 2020).

The other unions concurred that the situation was not a normal one and that teachers should not be expected to attempt to continue as they had before. They recognized that students and their families led busy lives, and that working all day online might bring unacceptable pressures on students and teachers alike. The National Education Union (2020) recommended that the daily school timetable should come to a halt. It suggested that online lessons should be shorter than normal and consist of a presentation of new material (such as by PowerPoint with teacher narration), with further work to be carried out by the student in their own time and with deadlines set for completion and return.

For many students, familiarity with a personal computer for learning had already been deeply ingrained through normal lessons pre-lockdown. Even if they had not been in use in the school classroom, many teachers often set homework to be carried out using the computer. However, most of the teachers from the groups found that in the new and changed circumstances instructing their students how to use the computer, navigate a website, access resources, and return completed work was a challenging, time-consuming, seemingly everlasting, and sometimes frustrating task. While students might have been very familiar with commercial websites such as the *Cambridge Latin Course*, these had been integrated in small ways into lessons and homework activity, and the teacher and your friends were always on hand to support you. No more. Now there were many new apps and programs to work with. Initially, there was little consistency across schools about the platforms and resources that could be used. Charlie commented about their own school: 'Kids are using different programs for different subjects in my school; but I hear that some schools are using school-wide VLEs'. Early confusion about which programs to use began to be dispelled as the lockdown continued, and most of the teachers from the groups referred to their using Zoom and Microsoft Teams for meetings, Google Docs for setting

work to be completed, and PowerPoint for the delivery of new material.

All of the teachers from the groups except one reported that their schools had not asked them to teach a normal timetable. The single teacher – Diana - whose private school had expected them to follow the timetable from the start of the school day to the end confessed to being exhausted by the whole process. All their students had personal access to iPads. Diana explained the school's emphasis on continuous synchronous teaching, 'It's what the parents expect.' While parental expectations are no doubt high in all schools, it was felt at her school that they were unreasonable for both teachers and students who also had other responsibilities at home during the lockdown. Diana was expected to provide as much synchronous teaching as possible, especially for students preparing for examinations in 2021: success at public examinations was a vital feature of the school's provision. Many of the online face-to-face lessons had been taking place through Zoom meetings. However, due to child-protection issues, Diana had to switch off the video facility. The National Education Union (2020) suggested that, for safeguarding reasons, neither teachers nor students should be obliged to switch on their videos during distance learning. The TES (2020a) also offered suggestions about how teachers should prevent unwarranted access to the virtual classroom and restrict chat functions. Some students preferred not to show themselves on screen either. Inevitably the full potential of face-to-face synchronous online teaching had been undermined and the process was proving to be tiring in all senses of the word. While Diana's experience was an extreme case, it highlights the exhaustion for both students and teachers that fully visible teaching facilitated by the latest technology can cause. Practice is, of course, determined by the expectations of school culture. It's worth noting, for example, that another school, state-maintained, which also had issued all of its students with iPads, chose not to teach the curriculum completely face-to-face, recognizing that the intensity of the experience might be deleterious for the mental health of its students and teachers.

Mental health was also alluded to when teachers from the group talked about the anxiety they felt for sustaining the relationship between teacher and students and students with each other, which they built up sometimes over several years. All the teachers from the group commented that the relationship they had built up with their students prior to the lockdown had made crisis online teaching easier than if it had had to have been delivered from scratch. However, the class's familiar routines and the reduced opportunities to collaborate on work posed challenges that the teachers couldn't overcome easily. Rob

lamented the loss of personal responsivity which happened with online teaching: ‘You get a feel for the class when you are in front of them’. Teachers liked their students and regretted that they could not find a way to replicate the total classroom experience online, even when using a conferencing program. Teaching in the classroom has a sense of theatre about it, which is lacking when the teacher merely appears ‘on screen’. Much of what the teachers reported about their practices implicated the need to maintain a long-established social connection with students.

Amanda noted that online conference-style apps made concentration both for herself and for her students very challenging. The lack of a physical space to wander around in and take notice of individuals and groups was lost: ‘It was like I couldn’t care.’ Instead, she was faced with a row of faces, or blank screens, often unmoving or challenging to read. ‘It was like speaking into the void,’ she said.

As the lockdown had gone on, teachers established a routine for themselves and their students. Tom, a teacher in a school sixth form, noted that the class size affected what one could reasonably be expected to do. Smaller classes of three or four students in a Year 12 Latin class were easier to teach through a conferencing program such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams; whereas the younger year groups, which might consist of as many as 31 students, were almost impossible. On the other hand, Year 12 Classical Civilisation classes were often much larger, with up to 28 recorded. Teacher visibility was felt to be very important, but practicalities made it not always possible, desirable, or even necessary to be on screen in person all the time.

Mel had to deliver live lessons for certain year groups only. The Year 10 students (aged 14) had started learning the specified materials for the GCSE courses in September. Her school had prioritized lessons for these students with more visible teaching through Microsoft Teams per week; the other year groups have received packets of resources to work on through the week, with occasional video meetings.

Some teachers from the group provided periodic visibility – sometimes live presentations, but mostly recorded for the students to watch in their own time. They felt that their own voice needed to be heard, even if they were not seen. The voice-over was felt to reassure students that their teacher was ‘still there,’ and the maintenance of the normal classroom experience remained possible. Several Classics teachers alluded to their

recording their voices over a PowerPoint presentation or a video. Rob was especially keen to exploit the functionality of the visualizer as a good means of ‘showing and telling.’ Rather than ‘re-inventing the wheel’ he felt that recording images and video of the students’ ordinary printed resources saved him time and, more importantly, helped students because they were already familiar with the style and formatting of the textbook.

There seemed to be a limit to how much novelty either the teachers or the students could take. Ken pointed out that participation in live online lessons started to tail off quite rapidly. The students themselves had originally thought that they wanted online face-to-face teaching all the time, but in practice, their preferences changed. ‘In practice,’ he said, ‘they preferred not to...the same as the teachers...The ideal would be full synchronicity, but in practice it’s too [much] hard work. It’s relentless [being] online all day.’

The Types and Degree of Interactivity that can be Afforded by Synchronous and Asynchronous Activities

Availability of Online Resources

It could be argued that Classics teachers were well-prepared to use online resources. All state-maintained and many private schools have had interactive whiteboards, data projectors, and computers in every classroom for a decade or more and classics teachers have had long experience of integrating digital resources into their lessons. Teachers who used the *Cambridge Latin Course* had full access to the online resources produced by the Cambridge School Classics Project (CSCP) since their development in the early 2000s (See Lister, 2007; Griffiths, 2008; Hunt, S., 2016) for details of the development of the resources and its use in the classroom). Studies have shown that both teachers and students were already familiar with multi-modal learning in class and at home using that course book’s resources (See Lister, 2007; Hunt, F., 2018; Hunt, S., 2019). In addition to their usual suite of online resources, CSCP temporarily uploaded more resources to support online learning, including the famous ‘talking-head’ grammar notes and a selection of Roman civilization videos. Many teachers also seemed to be making full use of PowerPoint presentations, YouTube videos, and online quizzes such as Kahoot! or Quizlet. (For a description of such multi-modal teaching and learning in an everyday Latin classroom, see Hay (2019)). Because schools are inspected at regular intervals by Ofsted, teachers are encouraged to maintain an up-to-date work scheme for which all resources, digital or

otherwise, are recorded, maintained, and made accessible. They were thus able to draw on digital resources familiar to themselves and their students, which were stored at school and, therefore, relatively easy to access from home. Many also chose to develop new resources during the lockdown. Help also came from the universities. In the interests of widening participation and the impact agenda, the UK university Classics departments have, for a long time, provided resources for teachers for free. Among these, the University of Warwick, with support from the charity Classics for All, quickly developed a comprehensive ‘one-stop’ online platform of resources for Latin and Ancient Greek and for the non-linguistic courses of Classical Civilization and Ancient History (Warwick Classics Network, 2020). The University of Warwick’s active social media presence alerted teachers to updates to this growing set of resources, which were carefully curated so that they aligned with teachers’ current practices. Many other universities contributed their own resources: the longstanding Massolit platform of video lectures given by university scholars was widely in use (Massolit, 2020). Several individual university academics were noticeably active through social media such as Twitter and Facebook, with recommendations for further reading and resources. It could be said that the lockdown drew school teachers and university academics even closer together in a mutually supportive arrangement enabled by social media and the internet, and there is reason to hope that the relationship will continue to prosper when normal times return.

The DfE also published an initial list of online resources covering a number of subjects for teachers to draw upon (DfE, 2020c). Amongst these were the well-known BBC Bitesize resources (BBC, 2020d), arranged as a set of daily lessons covering most subjects (except classical ones), and the resources freely provided by Oak National Academy (2020a), a consortium of state-maintained schools. Oak National Academy provided some resources even for Latin; however, the value of the resources was stymied by their lack of alignment with standard Latin courses in use across the UK. None of the Classics Teachers referred to their using either BBC Bitesize or Oak National Academy resources.

Organization of Online Lessons

Ease of access to materials was vital. The Classics teachers commented that they learned to keep all the students’ resources, files, and feedback in the same place, ideally on the school Virtual Learning Environment. Students needed to be taught how to use the VLE and where to find information and how to upload work. It was unreasonable to

expect students to switch from one mode to another and that their computers should have all the required apps and programs installed. The Classics teachers recommended the use of remote file access and the use of email notifications and reminders for lesson tasks; some recorded lessons based around the textbooks which they commonly used and which were freely available online, with frequent exhortations to use the familiar materials and to prevent excess workload in creating new material.

Routines were very important: if the students already knew how to use a resource (such as, for example, the *Cambridge Latin Course* vocabulary tester), the Classics teachers developed a simple routine: show the students where to find it by providing the URL, get the students to learn how to use the different components of the app, and record the results. With more complex activities, such as translation or comprehension of a Latin text, students needed a lot more feedback before misunderstandings and errors became fossilized. Alicia said, '[There's] so much whizzy stuff! But take care not to use too many. [We should] do an inventory first of what students have and what they know about.'

Regularity of provision of lessons was important. Siobhan set the same types of tasks every week. Two lessons a week were allocated for each class: one was designated an online live class, and the other consisted of a set of podcasts to listen to and activities to be completed in the students' own time. She felt that there was a definite need for the students to hear her voice. Therefore, she recorded herself reading the text of source material in translation that was to be studied. According to student feedback, the success of this has encouraged her to reuse the material in her lessons next year. Ciara set work for the day with instructions that the student must complete the tasks set within 12 hours: thus, the semblance of a school curriculum was maintained, albeit with flexibility given to the student as to when to complete it within a specified time frame. Like Siobhan's classes, Ciara's class received one set time per week for synchronous teaching and one asynchronous.

The types of activity helped determine whether synchronous or asynchronous online teaching was appropriate. Dennis said, 'We kept it simple – we kept everything to deal with the scholarship aspects of the specifications as a type of activity that can go asynchronous.' In other words, background reading as preparation for a live lesson could be delivered through the VLE and take place in the students' own time. This kind of flipped learning assumes, of course, that all students are able to carry it out. In Dennis's case, as a

sixth form college teacher, the students were usually reliable enough to do the task – it was something they practiced normally. With younger students, such an expectation might be more challenging – hence Siobhan’s reading aloud of the texts as a means of support for students with weak literacy skills.

Most students had been called on to stay at home, but students whose parents or guardians were considered ‘key-workers’ (such as doctors and nurses in the National Health Service) were allowed to continue going to school. These attended classes were tiny, but teachers were asked to volunteer to go in and teach them. Connor’s sixth form college collapsed the school timetable to two lessons of 2 hours 30 mins each, which he delivered to his tiny class of a handful of students and which was video recorded and live-streamed to the rest of the class watching from home. Initial enthusiasm for this mode of teaching waned rapidly. Students at home watching online found it hard to contribute to the live classroom participants, and Connor himself was caught in the tension of teaching live to two sets of an audience, one of which was much more visible and more responsive than the other. In practice, after initial enthusiasm, the students at home tended not to attend the live-streamed lessons in real time, but chose to watch the recordings afterward.

Sequence of Activities Within and Between Lessons

The sequence which most of the Classics teachers adopted followed a similar pattern. First, a recorded explanation of the new topic by the teacher; second, an activity for the students to complete; third, the uploading of the completed work; fourth, feedback provided by the teacher. This form of what can be characterized as independent online learning was efficient and easy to manage from both teacher and students’ points of view. Several of the Classics teachers employed multi-media worksheets outside of recorded direct instruction, with hyperlinks to external websites, podcasts, videos, and apps such as Quizlet and Memrise. Using Google Docs was an efficient way of checking factual and some interpretative understanding: students could submit responses and the teacher was easily able to monitor completion rates and mark the work all on the same platform. Multiple-choice questions made self-marking possible, thereby speeding up the process. The use of this program meant that teachers felt they spent less time looking around through emails for students’ work: everything was kept in one place. Personalized feedback was also possible if students submitted written work as the teacher was able to annotate a text using a stylus on a tablet computer.

While technology made the tasks easy to carry out, the Classics teachers had varying experiences of what made the lessons successful.

Mel pointed out that the opportunities for assessment for learning were non-existent and that errors made by students could only be spotted when the work had been completed – by which time it could be too late. Alicia thought that ‘everything just moved forward and forward,’ without the usual recall and recasting that takes place in the usual classroom. There was little opportunity to expand upon the initial information, ensure that students really understood, and to follow up on their personal interests and understanding. On the other hand, recorded delivery made it possible for students to ‘rewind’ as many times as they liked and pause the recording. Hyperlinks to materials could be accessed to access material in different ways, at different times, and again.

Student Participation

Synchronous online teaching and learning provided many opportunities for more collaborative learning and participation. This was partly in response to maintaining the social bonding of the students in the classes that has been mentioned above, but mostly because the Classics teachers wanted to continue using an approach to learning which was integral to their teaching philosophy, and which they had found profitable in the past and did not want to lose. None of the Classics teachers used many spoken ‘active Latin’ approaches in their teaching, and so the sorts of challenges met by such practices as they might occur online did not arise. Nevertheless, other challenges still remained, as Lance Piantaggini in his blog commented:

*Sure, we can record videos and establish meaning with English, etc., but there's nothing back and forth in real time, which means students aren't getting personalized instruction, we can't negotiate meaning, and we can't *really* check comprehension (Piantaggini, 2020).*

Many Facebook threads showed teachers' concern about how to stop students 'cheating' by looking up online translations of Latin stories from the more common textbooks. To obviate this problem, the majority of the Classics teachers simply moved away from using the precious time allocated to synchronous online classes merely to translate or check translations of Latin texts. Making the best of a situation over which the teachers had no oversight engendered a shift in practice away from the mechanistic

word-by-word slog through a text towards something more interesting: the translation of a Latin story had become less an endpoint in the learning and more a starting point for discussion, analysis, and response. Instead, the spotlight turned to the discussion of a text, and its marking up and analysis – something that a student would find very difficult to do on their own without the teacher’s facilitation. There is some practice-research on the use of technology for collaborative learning in Classics, all of which have demonstrated an increase in students’ positive engagement.⁶ The challenge was to turn that completely online. Inevitably things did not run smoothly; however, the Classics teachers began to find their feet and innovate their practices.

The burden of continuing to prepare the Year 11 and Year 13 students for the GCSE and A Level examination had been taken away. The question of what should and should not be assessed, however, remained. The National Education Union advised that grading should cease as access to resources varied from family to family and might disadvantage the already disadvantaged (National Education Union, 2020). On the other hand, bearing in mind the difficulties teachers already had in finding evidence to justify grading students for the national examinations, some teachers felt that there needed to be some form of assessment record; moreover, students are often motivated by assessment. The Classics teachers were not immune to these considerations and developed a number of ways by which they might judge how far their students had developed their understanding without necessarily grading work.

Zoe used a Google Notebook with her small class of students – ‘Literally a space to jot down notes together collaboratively’ - because she found Zoom and Microsoft Teams conferencing too difficult for ‘learning together.’ With online conferencing, the emphasis was felt to be on the students’ faces, not on the text itself. Video conferencing tended to position the teacher as deliverer of knowledge and information, rather than co-collaborator in students’ learning. In this model, students would listen and then carry out an activity away

⁶ There are several articles which detail the practices, challenges and successes of computer-assisted collaborative teaching and learning in the Classics classroom. For example: Bungard on the use of student-driven visual vocabularies using the app *Padlet* (Bungard, 2020); Searle on the use of the VLE for distance learning (Searle, 2019); Lewis on the use of live editing with *Microsoft OneDrive* (Lewis, 2019); Travis on annotations with *Google Docs* (Travis, 2019); Downes on using the app *Explain Everything* (Downes, 2019); Eaton on teaching Classics with VLEs (Eaton, 2013); Smith on collaborative e-learning (Smith, 2012); Paterson on collaborative learning with the interactive whiteboard (Paterson, 2012); and Hunt, S. on teaching with the interactive whiteboard (Hunt, S., 2008).

from the screen, returning later to submit their thoughts and ideas. This process was slow and laborious and subject to students' misunderstanding and errors, which were difficult to confront and respond to with everyone watching. However, the *Notebook* became an object of joint reference for her and her students and became the place in which working together took place and became the end product of the collaboration.

Chris had similar thoughts. Using Microsoft Teams, he used the online whiteboard for demonstrating new grammar and modelling ways to translate Latin sentences. One of the Classics teachers had used the Padlet app as a way to show visible evidence of student research, another had used quizzes through the Quizlet app, and a third had simply asked students to show her on screen their answers written on mini-whiteboards.

Several of the Classics teachers had sought to vary the lesson format and provide joint learning activities of a different kind. Diana had used the TedEd videos (TedEd, 2020) to ask students questions about what they were watching – and encouraged the students to watch the videos remotely but together. Mel had designed some more creative tasks where the students carried out the same sorts of activity independently and then reported back the experience of the product to the whole class: she had directed them to Jessie Craft's Minecraft YouTube channel to hear some spoken Latin (See the YouTube channel of Divus Magister Craft (2020) and Craft's own description of the making and purpose of the videos in Craft (2019)). She had also told them to watch a video about making Pompeian bread (with encouragement to try their own hand at baking) and had taken the class on a virtual tour of Pompeii via Google Earth⁷. Daisy had asked students to design their own luxury Roman house and pretend to sell it using modern estate agents' advertising, shared around the class. These breaks from the normal routine of classroom instruction – 'going on a trip together' - became significant means of maintaining the cohesion and sense of belonging that online teaching otherwise denied the students. When normality returns, it might be reasonable to assume that their success would mean their continuation in keeping the class together in more informal ways 'outside' the classroom space.

Not everything went according to plan. Alicia described her experience as 'an epic fail.' She had set her students' and her own expectations too high and had to rein in a much simpler task setting. On the practical side, when showing students documents for

⁷ For a starting point, at the theatres of Pompeii, see Google Earth: <https://earth.google.com/web/@40.74930649,14.48596099,27.37872994a,625.90898473d,35y,64.52485971h,56.19734298t,-0r>

annotation or comment, she had found that having two screens made teaching much easier; she could see the document and the students at the same time, and was therefore, able to respond to them more easily. Teaching Latin literature was ‘difficult’, but she had come to a routine, which combined an element of teacher-led discussions, links to a pre-recorded teacher-voice-over video, and further explanations in a downloadable document.

Bob also found normal procedures for lessons were difficult to replicate: ‘Assessment for Learning is impossible; annotating books is really hard.’ Instead, he suggested that he try to use textbooks that were already available in digital format.

Ken used Google Classroom. His school discouraged live lessons for child protection reasons. He used the app Explain Everything to set activities and proved a multi-media approach that was intended to engage the students. His school considered that online lessons were unrelenting: they did not reflect the normal lesson experience with its ebbs and flows: there was no register taken, no pauses (time spent pausing felt like an ‘eternity of silence’) or breaks of any kind as one shifted from one activity to another – even just to ‘look out of the window’. He referred to the ‘non-lesson moments’ when students relaxed, laughed, breathed. A great fan of dialogic teaching, Ken felt that it was very difficult to achieve: communication was dying away: ‘Good pedagogy is being stripped down.’

The Impact of Crisis-Led Online Teaching and Learning on Changing Teachers’ Thoughts About Their Practices

From September, the DfE assumes that students will return to schools (DfE, 2020d). However, the threat of lockdown returning, if not nationally, then locally, means that teachers will need to prepare for blended learning or perhaps a return to fully-online learning. Ofsted will visit state-maintained schools in the autumn term to see how schools and colleges are getting pupils back up to speed after so long at home and to provide advice for their provision of blended learning support. The DfE reassured parents that no child should fall behind as a result of coronavirus and that they were working with partner organizations to support them during school closures (BBC, 2020c). This support would continue from September for students who had to self-quarantine. Once again, Oak National Academy received DfE funding for the development of freely available online lessons, including Latin. The award has been contentious, and there have been accusations that resources could be used ‘as a potential vehicle for the [Department of Education]

to promote a “traditionalist” agenda in teaching, or even create the subject matter of a government-approved curriculum’ (Morgan, 2020). A look at the Oak curriculum schedule for Latin reveals a traditional approach of vocabulary learning and practice of grammar through analysis of single words, short sentences, and traditional unseen translations (Oak National Academy, 2020b). Modeled on a course designed by a teacher for use in their own classroom rather than around the more commonly-used course books in the UK, the new resources still have limited applicability and usefulness. The lack of pedagogical insight into how to fully utilize the internet as a resource for online learning acts as a warning to future developers of resources in this medium for the teaching of classical subjects.

Access to computers and a reliable online connection remained a problem, especially among rural populations and among disadvantaged groups (National Foundation for Educational Research, 2020a). The BBC reported on the case of a family with six children having but a single laptop to complete all their school work on (BBC, 2020e). The case of smartphones serves to illustrate some of the complexities around how teachers want students to access the internet. On the one hand, smartphones are typically banned from the classroom but ubiquitous at home: nearly 100% of 16-24-year-olds in the UK have access to a smartphone (Office for National Statistics, 2020). They provide easy access to the internet, but their small size makes delivery of visual material difficult to see. That means that if they are to be used for school work, resources need to be optimized for the screen and/or delivered by voice recording with ease. The DfE recommended ways in which teachers could set work and stay in touch with their students using apps on them. In the past, it has been contentious whether students benefited from having smartphones in school. As Beetham and Sharpe comment on the use of the internet in general:

Some of the habits of mind associated with these new technologies are regarded by teachers as unhelpful and, particularly the often uncritical attitude to internet-based information, and the cut-and-paste mentality of a generation raised on editing tools rather than pen and paper (Beetham and Sharpe, 2010, 5).

The question arises whether teachers make the best of a ‘bad’ situation or embrace the opportunities that have already presented themselves and start to think of ways to use them in ways that may be more pedagogically effective than before. The present Minister for Schools Nick Gibb has spoken against the use of smartphones, considering

them a distraction from learning (BBC, 2019), although ministerial discomfort has not spread universally into the classroom: headteachers and school principals are allowed discretion to decide on their own school's policy towards them. Much of the negative discourse surrounding their use stems from concerns about students' misbehavior with the devices. For example, a press release from the DfE, which advocated an investigation into smartphone use in the classroom, explicitly linked them with the causes of poor student behavior (DfE, 2015). But now the situation has changed: teachers were encouraged by the DfE to think of ways of using smartphones to deal with the lockdown situation. On the one hand, smartphones seem to have restricted the delivery of and types of resource, as mentioned above; on the other, students' ease of access and frequency of use have revealed to the Classics teachers an opportunity to configure learning in entirely different ways – not book- or word-based, perhaps, but more visual and aural. It remains to be seen how much this impacts on future developments in teaching and learning: already textbooks such as *Cambridge Latin Course* (Cambridge School Classics Project, 1998) and *Suburani* (Hands-Up Education, 2020) operate on multiple platforms; however, the text-based presentation of content remains broadly the same as before. How much might increased smartphone usage affect the way commercial and other interests – including teachers – think about ways to make full use of the devices' functionality? It is noticeable, for example in the discussion above, how much the Classics teachers talked of the importance of the use of the recorded voice, such as reading a text, or providing guidance through a PowerPoint presentation, or in a video presentation. In one way, this chimes with research that suggests that in multimedia learning, the instructor's voice is of great importance in leading students to deeper cognitive processing and improved performance (Mayer, 2005). Students who have access to the internet through their smartphones are reading, listening, watching and speaking for much of their time outside of class at home and with friends and family. As long ago as 1996 Mal Lee suggested:

Rather than seeking to replicate the resources of the home is it not time to consider developing models that marry the technological needs and resources of the home with those of the schools? (Lee, 1996).

One of the ways teachers might consider it worthy of experimentation is spoken Latin and Ancient Greek. Communicative approaches to teaching ancient languages have not integrated themselves into UK teachers' practices as much as they have in the US. Perhaps teachers might experiment with introducing a spoken element of Latin and Ancient

Greek as a result of the positive experience lockdown has had on their thinking about learning by oral/aural means (See *Communicative Approaches for Ancient Languages* (Lloyd & Hunt, forthcoming 2021)). Similarly, the Classics teachers referred to the use of ready-made videos on the internet as a source of information and, in some cases, language acquisition: Jessie Craft's YouTube channel (Craft, 2020) has already been mentioned as a source, but there were other similarly home-made videos, podcasts, and PowerPoint presentations freely exchanged via social media. A glance on the internet reveals numerous examples of student-created videos, animations, memes, and creative writing. Students with time on their hands, the technology to do so, and an interest in Classics are finding all sorts of informal ways to create and display their responses to what they are learning about the classical world. Teachers might consider finding ways to include these more student-centered approaches to learning post lockdown (See Blake Ch. 7 (2013) for an interesting discussion of these possibilities).

Recruitment to Classes

One of the immediate concerns for the Classics teachers was recruitment for September 2020, when the new academic year starts. The picture was mixed. Rebecca, who worked in a state-maintained school in a country town, was pleased to see that the continuation of visible teaching for her Year 9 classes led to no discernible drop-off of enrollment for Year 10. Most of the Classics teachers in secondary schools did not think that recruitment had been much affected. The Classics Teachers who worked in Sixth Form Colleges were more downbeat. They were more dependent on holding a recruiting event in Spring, as the majority of their students had not been taught any classical subjects in the feeder secondary schools. This was just when the lockdown commenced. One of the Classics teachers, who worked in a rural Sixth Form College, found that recruitment was too low for his course to be financially viable. Another was only allocated one class instead of the usual two, as students were more evenly spread across the core subjects of English, Mathematics, and Science. Schools considered students' performance in the future would most likely be stronger in subjects where the students had had prior experience.

There was concern also about the students who were due to sit examinations at GCSE and A Level this year. The National Foundation for Educational Research (2020b) argued that not much work was being set for them once the examinations had been canceled. But the Classics teachers disagreed. It was in their interests in teaching minority subjects to

keep students involved and engaged as long as possible: GCSE students would potentially become A Level students, and the older students would be passing on to university in October. Thus ‘bridging projects’ had been sent out to students at the different levels to support them in preparation for their next steps. The Classics teachers had prepared notes for incoming Year 7 students, preparatory reading and video links for the Year 9s going to start their GCSEs and the Year 11s going to start their A Levels in September, and documents containing links to university level resources for Year 13s preparing to study Classics at university in October.

Changes to Practice

The Classics teachers were thoughtful about what they had learned from the experience of teaching under lockdown. On the one hand, the usual classroom interactions no longer applied. ‘Drama, communication, being there – it’s all going nowhere,’ said Maria. The Classics teachers noted that how they interacted with students had changed: there was tension between what they wanted to do with the technology and what the technology could let them achieve. Their wariness chimed with what Walker and White’s description of how the use of technology changes teachers’ perceptions of their roles:

Teachers’ anxieties are mainly centered around two things: firstly, that the software will in some sense “take over” and dictate how teaching is carried out; and secondly, that it may make the learning experience less effective than it was without technology (Walker & White, 2013, 145).

Similarly, the easy switching between tasks that a physical classroom allows – open the books, look at the board, listen to the teacher, work with each other, feedback – had to be planned out carefully so that the teaching and learning sequence worked without anyone being there.

The Classics teachers had to deal with difficult moments without rehearsal. Other teachers’ experiences retold on social media helped, and some pop-up continuing professional development (CPD) became available.

The Cambridge group of Classics teachers were perhaps better prepared than most. Nearly all of them had either been trained by the author or by his predecessor. They were all very familiar with using the *Cambridge Latin Course* digital resources and had clear

views as to what to teach at each level. As mentors, they also had responsibility for training graduate teacher trainees from the faculty, who were learning online alongside them. The mentors and teacher trainees formed an excellent network to share ideas and resources and be mutually self-supporting and affirming. Nevertheless, times were hard. Finding time to absorb it all was a challenge. Ben said, ‘There’s lots of CPD going on. It’s good, but it takes time, and then you have to plan lessons as well *and* teach them.’

In practice, fewer activities were planned per lesson and more time allocated to the carrying out of tasks. Initially, the Classics teachers had found that they were overwhelmed with emails from students who had not understood or simply not read instructions. As time went on, they chose tasks more carefully, with an eye to clear purpose, efficient delivery, and clarity of outcome to the student.

Several of the Classics teachers had used flipped learning models. While there has been some recent discussion of using flipped classroom models for classical subjects in university settings (Gilliver, 2019; Natoli, 2014), until now, there has been little discussion of their use in the school classroom. This had been inspired by the success of using PowerPoint presentations as lesson starters. Language learning had been partially successful under lockdown: simplicity and brevity were key features that worked well for student understanding. Students often had not listened to the full explanation or become disinterested in the finer grammar explanation points. Most of the Classics teachers had made their own rather than use some of those available on the internet, which were felt to be of variable quality and usefulness. YouTube offers many different video resources for learning about Latin grammar; however, the Classics teachers felt that many of them were too complex for their students and preferred to make their own. The YouTube channel LatinTutorial was mentioned among those more suited to university-level learning (LatinTutorial, 2020); but for an example of a more personalized presentational style, see Mr Tanner Teaches (Mr Tanner Teaches, 2020). They were wary of using even these in preparation for lessons in true flipped learning model, saying instead that they intended to use them as revision aids for students to refer to after the initial instruction was over. On the other hand, flipped learning models were thought to work well for students to prepare for lessons in non-linguistic classical subjects. The length and difficulty of the translated texts set for compulsory comment by students in the GCSE and A Level examinations has long been a cause of concern, especially for students with poor reading skills (Jones, 2016 and 2017). The Classics teachers were surprised at how easy it was to record their voices

over PowerPoint, and were in favor of recording the texts in full for their students to use at home. This freed up time in lessons for discussion. Students had also been instructed to watch videos as preparation for, or revision of, topics to be discussed in the online classroom. Some of the Classics Teachers had compiled lists of these to be used in the future.

As ever, practicalities. In the panic of sudden lockdown, asynchronous teaching is by far the easiest. But it can easily lead to a model of lesson as mere delivery of information – as it were, "download lessons". Simply put, there has to be a place for these slightly old-fashioned lecture-style lessons. The Classics teachers were reticent about exploring new media, however. While several mentioned that they had asked their students to make memes on classical subjects, for example, they were seen as 'fun activities' for motivation and rewards rather than for any serious language learning possibilities that they might bring. On social media, again, there had been considerable excitement about the release of the latest video game *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*, to the extent that an enterprising Classics teacher had devoted a YouTube channel to it for teachers and students of classical subjects (Mr Hinde's Classics Channel, 2020). Gee (2008) has written how video games have much to teach students about literacy: *Assassin's Creed Odyssey* has much to teach about Classics as well. Online games for learning Latin, such as Operation Lapis, have long been in operation (Slota & Ballestrini, 2019); and there are many apps available to support student-created and student-centered learning, such as Twine (2020) which are becoming more familiar. Meanwhile, the synchronous online lessons revealed the importance of the intricate interactions and personalized nature of classroom teaching and the failure of online teaching to capture it. In a sense, that is reassuring: teachers know that their jobs will not be replaced with a bank of computers. But what was learned was more than that. Synchronous teaching forced teachers to be thoughtful about how they spent the precious time, their choice of activities, the way in which they framed questions, received and developed responses. The Classics teachers reported thinking of bigger, open-ended, inquiry questions since the standard triadic questioning model of checking understanding and moving on did not work well. Now questioning focused on how to get students to think rather than merely answer.

A Different Way of Thinking?

If the GCSE and A Level examinations had been taken away, what did that leave

behind? UK teachers have not been in this situation ever since the examination system was developed with the National Curriculum in 1988. Out of such crises, new thinking often takes place. Ofqual has already offered consultation on what the national examinations might look like for 2021, bearing in mind the loss of several months of classroom learning (Ofqual, 2020). Ofqual has proposed the reduction of the content for the GCSE Ancient History examination, but, oddly, not for Latin, Ancient Greek, or Classical Civilization. Speculation for the reason for this omission has further prompted teachers to think more widely about assessment in general. As teachers have been asked to provide the examinations boards with grades based on their own judgments – a noticeable reversion to trust in their professional responsibilities – could this mean a revisit to considering the use of coursework or portfolios of evidence?⁸ This author has been long enough in teaching to remember the submission of recordings of students' spoken Latin as part of the GCSE. Could technology easily support assessment types that chimed with new developments in active teaching methods? Latin teacher Facebook threads were alive with the potential for technology such as Quizlet to mix and match vocabulary, sentences, questions – this seen as an answer to the problem of students cheating at home (See for example, recurrent threads in the Latin Teacher Ideas Exchange, 2020). Yet many of these forms of assessment are more about collecting grades than diagnosing understanding or developing learning. Alternatives are possible, such as analysis of comparative translations (see, for example, Ryan's blog on her experiments with non-traditional assessment at Oxford University (Ryan, 2020), and the online *ALIRA* tests which adjust their questions according to the performance of the student and assess a student's understanding of a set of Latin passages (ALIRA, 2020).

In yet more general terms, the whole panoply of national examinations at 16 and 18 have come under scrutiny even before the COVID-19 pandemic. The GCSE was originally designed as a leaving certificate at the end of compulsory education at 16. But now compulsory education or training finishes at 18 for everyone. Over the years, the GCSE has become an accountability measure as well: as a means of measuring the comparative success of schools, the effectiveness of individual teachers, and the success of the government's education policies. Discussions are already being held about whether the qualification as it stands has a future, with even the architect of the National Curriculum itself, Lord Baker, convinced that it has outlived its original purpose (BBC, 2020a). But the Government says there still needs to be some form of accountability for schools and

maintains the view that standardized testing is not just necessary but desirable (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). But Biesta notes anxieties amongst educators that standardized testing measures only what is measurable and misses out the more holistic nature of schooling (Biesta, 2009). When we try to measure something difficult to measure, the likelihood is that we give up and end up measuring something easier and then draw conclusions from it that takes no heed of the complexity of the learning process (Lingard & Sellar, 2013). But as it is easier to do it this way, we do it anyway. This is where the danger to the teaching of languages is greatest, because the easiest things to measure are only a tiny part of the things that combine to create an all-around languages student – especially in the case of the teaching of Latin and Ancient Greek, I would say, because of the linguistic and aesthetic complexity of the literature which is studied. And because there is no consensus about the most appropriate methodology for ancient languages in the UK, it could become quite easy to design assessments around the traditional grammar-translation paradigm – one where the memorization of lists of words and terminology and word-for-word translation into and out of ancient languages – because that was the easiest way to make the technology work. Meanwhile, the trajectory of language teaching – even of ancient languages – moves towards approaches that are more communicative or at least less interested in the knowledge of specialist grammar terms. Teachers are caught in a difficult place: to use technology in familiar ways and replicate the past, or to try to use the opportunity afforded to them to experiment during lockdown to envision a new type of classics education.

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