UNIVERSITY OF EL SALVADOR
SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES

TOPIC:
"THE IMPORTANCE OF EFFECTIVE ONLINE TEACHING TRAINING TO FACILITATE THE LEARNING PROCESS OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGES"

"LA IMPORTANCIA DE UN ENTRENAMIENTO EFECTIVO EN ENSEÑANZA EN LÍNEA PARA FACILITAR EL PROCESO DE APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS"

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INFORME FINAL DE CURSO DE ESPECIALIZACION
ADMINISTRACIÓN DE AMBIENTES VIRTUALES PARA LA ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS

IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE DEGREE OF:
BACHELOR OF ARTS IN ENGLISH WITH A MAJOR IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

It was well known that during the last decade, online learning has gained much more popularity at the educational level because it has great benefits in different levels even though it was not until the pandemic affected the University of El Salvador that the members of the major authorities decided to opt for online teaching method for all the students. This report aims to evaluate how a strong education in online teaching methods can affect the learning process of students from the University of El Salvador. The college has been facing different issues to carry out the learning process via online, particularly during the lockdown period of the coronavirus pandemic in El Salvador. To test the importance of good online teaching training to facilitate the learning process of the foreign languages, diverse e-learning platforms were studied in order to know the different ways to carry out the teaching process. The achievement showed that even if there are many platforms to provide a class, educators need to know how to use well at least five different platforms to supply the needs from the students. The report suggests that even if taking classes online can be as exasperating for the student as for the instructor, particularly for those taking an online course for the first time, the command of the online teaching should be crucial for smooth teaching-learning experience through virtual learning.

Keywords: covid-19, online learning, online teaching, tools, virtual platforms

INTRODUCTION

The importance of a good education in online teaching is necessary to facilitate the learning process at any level of education. However, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic forces not only language students to take classes online but also educators who do not have enough knowledge to carry out this new method of teaching. The problem with E-learning teaching may incline in the lack knowledge with the new platforms that might be considered obstacles in students' process of learning. And there are now many who have taught online, but feel that they have barely scratched the surface in terms of learning how best to adapt their teaching to the new environment. The Department of Foreign Languages of the University of EL Salvador started offering a new graduation option for future graduates. The specialization course was entitled: The Management of Virtual Environments for the Teaching and Learning of Foreign Languages. It started in August, 2021 and finished in February, 2022. The present report describes the experiences, the learnings, achievements, conclusions and recommendation that the participants of the first cohort experienced in this new academic endeavor.

I. OBJECTIVES

General objective:

- To evaluate how a strong component in online teaching methods can affect the learning process of students at the University of El Salvador.

Specific objectives:

- To study the impact of the covid-19 in online teaching-learning process

- To describe the different technological tools to carry out online classes

- To explain the importance of the good use of technological tools during online classes

II.   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Online Learning in Pandemic Times

During the last decade, e-Learning has gained much more popularity at the educational level because it has great benefits in terms of time, place, pace of study, easier and more effective access to a wider variety and greater quantity of information, and lower financial cost (Chen, 2010, Khurana, 2016). This is why online learning has become the best option in education during the pandemic. Therefore, different educational institutions decided to implement new strategies to continue the learning process at all educational levels. Due to the global pandemic caused by Covid-19, the University of El Salvador has been one of the institutions that had to opt for online learning for all the different majors. This change of modality was used not only during the confinement decreed by the government of El Salvador, but the authorities of the University of El Salvador decided to continue working online during the semester I-2022, too. Even though, the problem with E-learning teaching may incline in the lack of knowledge of new platforms that might be considered obstacles in students' process of learning such as decreased motivation in students, delayed feedback of help due to the fact that teachers are not always available at the time students may need help while learning, or feeling of isolation due to lack of physical presence of classmate based on the article written by Claudio Coman, Maria Cristina Bularca from Transilvania University of Brasow and Laurentiu Gabriel Tiru from West University of Timisoara (December 11, 2020).

Susan Ko and Steve Rossen (2017, p. 28) state that some faculty may now have general notion of what is involved in online education, but they do not know how to get started, or they feel some trepidation about handling the issues they may encounter. And

there are now many who have taught online, but feel that they have barely scratched the surface in terms of learning how best to adapt their teaching to the new environment. Perhaps this range of feeling exists in part because the online environment is so different from what most instructors have encountered before. They two state that what makes teaching online unique is that when you teach online, you do not have to be someplace to teach. You do not have to lug your briefcase full of papers or your laptop to a classroom, stand at a lectern, scribble on a chalkboard (or even use your high-tech, interactive classroom "smart" whiteboard), or grade papers in a stuffy room while your students take a test.

On the other hand, online learning offers more freedom for students as well. They can search online for courses using the internet, scouring their institutions or even the world for programs, classes and instructors that fit their needs. They can assemble in virtual classrooms, joining other students from diverse geographical locales, forging bonds and friendships now possible in conventional classrooms, which are usually limited to students from a specific geographical area. Online learning activities may be conducted in asynchronous format, allowing for access and posting by students at different times during the week, or via synchronous sessions or a combination of both. Susan Ko and Steve Rossen (2017, p. 29).

Blended method

Martha Cleveland-Innes and Dan Wilton (Guide to blended learning, Athabasca University, 2018) state that simplest definition of the term blended learning is the use of traditional classroom teaching methods together with the use of online learning for the same students studying the same content in the same course. There are also blended programs, in which students study some courses in face-to-face classrooms and other courses are delivered fully online. It is a "thoughtful fusion of face-to-face and online learning experiences" (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

Michael B. Horn and Heather Staker, (Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014), state that the majority of blended-learning programs resemble one of four models: Rotation, Flex, A La Carte, and Enriched Virtual.

- **Rotation model**: is a course or subject in which students rotate on a fixed schedule or at the teacher's discretion between learning modalities, at least one of which is online learning.

- **Flex model:** is a course or subject in which online learning is the backbone of student learning, even if it directs students to offline activities at times.

- **A La Carte model**: is a course that a student takes entirely online to accompany other experiences that the student is having at a brick-and-mortar school or learning center.

- **Enriched Virtual model**: is a course or subject in which students have required face-to-face learning sessions with their teacher of record and then are free to complete their remaining coursework remote from the face-to-face teacher.

Teaching-learning experience

Susan Ko and Steve Rossen (2017, p. 309) state that taking classes online can be as exasperating for the student as for the instructor, particularly for those taking an online course for the first time. Suddenly thrust into a world in which independent or collaborative learning is heavily stressed, students accustomed to traditional classroom procedures-taking notes during a lecture, answering the occasional question, attending discussion sections-must make unexpected and often jolting adjustments to their study habits. Dr. Grace Pinto (July 24, 2020) states five key elements that are crucial for smooth teaching-learning experience through virtual learning such as:

- **Communication:** effective and constant communication is critical from both teachers and students as regular constructive feedback has been a significant factor in enhancing the e-learning process to get better learning outcomes. Communication from teachers with the school administration ensures that there are no technical glitches and the process is seamless all through. As this entire online learning phenomenon is fairly nascent, the interaction of teachers and students with the appointed counselors is equally important from the emotional well-being perspective of all the involved stakeholders.

- **Engagement:** We have observed that E-Education brings out a sense of independence and discipline in students. It also involves a lot more commitment from the teachers who are seeking diverse teaching methodologies to keep the children academically encouraged and engaged. For them maintaining student interest levels and focus through collaborative learning is a priority.

- **Adequate learning environment:** it is imperative that the teachers and students choose a location conducive for the online teaching-learning process with rare disturbance. Not only while e-learning but also when attending webinars and other online activities, a corner at home with good ventilation, effective light, stable internet connection, and quiet location enable an appropriate learning environment.

- **Counseling sessions:** maintaining good mental health, emotional well-being, and staying calm often helps in solving and easing pressing situations. It is vital for teachers to take necessary help to look after their mental wellness in order to be effective and fruitful mentors and facilitators, making valuable contributions to the lives of their students'.

- **Parental support:** it was encouraging to witness parents becoming co-learners alongside their children during the initial days of online classes. Though schools are trying their best to provide every possible academic essential to the students, it is the responsibility of the parents as well to guide their children properly in this learning process. Parents need to motivate their children and make them comfortable and confident and independent learners during this new normal. Also, make them understand the importance of safety measures and lead an emotionally and physically healthy lifestyle.

- **Technological training & integration of digital pedagogy:** Ed-tech is growing into one of the most popular technologies in the world. In this situation, understanding their changing role, teachers need to adapt to it with innovation. While openness to be trained and learn through technology will greatly help in

getting the best of e-education, exploring newer ways, pedagogy, and teaching methods will keep the child motivated in this new environment. Understanding the changing dynamics of the education ecosystem, usage of digital pedagogy more strategically will ease the process of transition to virtual learning. The blended model of teaching-learning is nowhere to stay in this new normal and assimilating the latest technology trends is of utmost importance to remain relevant in the segment of education.

III.   DESCRIPTIONS OF ACTIVITIES

MODULE I: ONLINE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
(Check figure I in appendix)

Rules of Netiquette

During the first classes from the module I, students got familiar with the different rules that can be applied during online class to keep the order while teacher is presenting the topic or when he tries to let students work in groups. Some of the most important rules that were applied are: **make sure identification is clear in all communications, respect others' privacy, do not spam, forgive and forget.**

Virtual teaching (online) and its application in teaching English language.

Participants learned that there are typically three types of virtual courses depending on the nature of instructional interaction between the teacher and learner, particularly the point of time of occurring interaction.

- **Asynchronous course**: students learned that this online courses do not take place in real-time. Students are more self-directed, doing the course work and assignments within a time frame. The teacher-student interaction takes place through discussion boards, blogs, and email. As example the tool that students used to interact with teacher and others students was Moodle.

- **Synchronous course**: during this space students learned that this online course requires the instructor and student to interact online simultaneously. Students receive instruction from teacher and interact with their teacher and course mates through texts, audio chats, and video chats in a virtual classroom. Synchronous learning environments enable students to participate in a course from home in real time.

- **Hybrid online course:** the last course that were explained to us is the alternatively blended courses; facilitate both in-person and online interaction. Hybrid courses require meeting in person during a semester and provide for computer-based communication in between those face to face sessions. Hybrid type of virtual learning therefore can be both asynchronous and synchronous, and face to face interaction.

Learning Management Systems for the creation, feeding and use of online courses

Participants learned that LMS can be categorized into three main types: learning skill tools, communication tools and productivity tools. Students learned some of the most common steps that an online course should have such as: greeting message from the teacher, the description of the module, objectives, main topic and its respective PDF file with the information about the topic, activities, extra material and others.

In order to create a complete online course using some LMS participants learned how to use some Language Management Systems such as: Moodle, Teams and Google Classroom.

- **Moodle:** the research team learned step by step about how to create personalized dashboards for our course. Students were able to practice with this LMS creating as for example personal space for draft, writing and journals dashboards.

- **Teams:** Students learned that this LMS is easy to use. It is flexible and accessible for students. When the teacher showed how to use the different tools that this LMS provides students saw that Teams platform can have synchronous and asynchronous interaction.

- **Google classroom:** participants learned that this LMS is a little bit similar to Moodle; this is why it was a little easy for students to create a complete course

using this LMS. Google Classroom is accessible, flexible and user-friendly. Participants can add PDF files, upload videos either created from us or from YouTube, students can add homework and they can have a control of student's score.

Inphographic

The research team learned that an inphographic is a visual representation of information or data. An infographic is a collection of imagery, charts, and minimal text that gives an easy-to-understand overview of a topic. In order to practice we elaborated an infographic to communicate the importance of the use of technological tools in teaching-learning languages.

Theories of learning in virtual learning

During module I, participants learned about four types of learning's theories such as: behaviorism, cognitivism, constructivism, connectivism from students.

- **Behaviorism:** with this theory students learned that thoughts and the feelings of the students depend on the environment in which they are taking their classes. Therefore behaviorism believes that if teachers provide positive reinforcement, or rewards, whenever students perform a desired behavior, they will learn to perform the behavior on their own.

- **Cognitivism:** in the second theory participants learned that it is focused on how the information is received, organized, store and retrieved by the mind. In this case, it has been shown that online learning led a higher cognitive load than that required for face to face class because students have to learn how to use the online platform and other resources asked by the professor.

- **Constructivism:** with this theory participants learned that knowledge is constructed, rather than innate, or passively absorbed. Constructivism's central idea is that human learning is constructed, that learners build new knowledge upon the foundation of previous learning.

- **Connectivism:** with the last theory the research team learned that students should combine thoughts, theories, and general information in a useful manner.

MODULE II: TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING-LEARNING
(Check figure II in appendix)

In module II, the research team learned a lot about what educational technology is and why and how it can help us to develop a class regardless of the age of the students. Participants consider the technologies that are available to teachers to support their teaching strategies and that both the student and the teacher feel comfortable

Some of the reasons that the group consider that they may be good options to be able to use technological tools are:

Some reasons to use technology

- Accordance with different learning styles

- Prepare students for their roles in society

- Improve learning outcomes

- Increase motivation and engagement of learners

Students learn to use different technology tools for example:

- **Liveworksheets:** participants learned how to use this technological tool online since they always used it physically, but it is much easier for students to complete these worksheets online and send their answers to the teacher. This is good for the students (more motivating), for the teacher (saves marking time) and for the environment (saves paper). In addition to this, liveworksheets take advantage of the advantages offered by new technologies applied to education: they can include sounds, videos, drag and drop exercises, join with arrows, multiple selections and even spoken exercises, which students have to complete using the microphone.

- **Flippity:** the research team learned to use this technological tool and to elaborate in a very simple, fast and attractive way different activities or tasks for our students to reinforce the same contents in different ways and that are not monotonous.

- **Flipgrid:** students can equate it to a class or project, we can select if we want our project to be public for everyone, share it only with a list of students and only be active with the domain of the university or school. Students also learned how to create a password that we would have to know. In this way, students protect their identity. As teachers, we can determine if we receive an email every time they post a new video, we can allow video downloads and we can even customize the image that identifies the Grid.

- **Edpuzzle:** it is a tool in which participants had fun and learned to use, since it is very easy to use. It allows to edit any video to introduce questions, create questionnaires or add voice notes. Thanks to this, Edpuzzle is one of the fundamental tools if you carry out active methodologies such as Flipped Classroom or have your own synchronized classroom and virtual class, both teachers and students can enjoy and make use of this technological tool.

- **Nearpod:** for us as a group it caught our attention a lot since Near pod allows us to hold a class in a fun way to motivate and increase participation to

MODULE III: DESIGN OF DIDACTIC MATERIALS FOR VIRTUAL ENVIORAMENTS

(Check figure III in appendix)

In Module III, the research team learned about the Use of Multimedia, as well as the different technological tools that are involves in the process that learners use to transforms the learning experience from a solitary to a collaborative one. The research team learned about the intuitively beneficial in educating online students as it provides a course designer with the opportunity to optimize the use of the senses of sound, vision and spatial awareness. It enables the benefits of face-to-face learning while allowing asynchronous delivery (AL-Hunaiyyan et al., 2008). Multimedia can be expensive to produce in a professional format as it may require careful design and extensive editing for example the use of multimedia needs to be considered carefully to ensure that the benefit due to its cost and cultural ramifications.

Also in module III, the research team learned to do a podcast using different technological tools such as:

- **Audacity:** participants learned about how to manipulate the different tools that audacity offers to create a podcast. It is a multi-track audio editor and recorder for Windows, macOS, GNU/Linux and other operating systems. Participants learned about the digital media file, or a series of such files, that is distributed over the Internet using syndication feeds for playback on portable media players and personal computers.

- **Sound Cloud:** participants also learned that it is an online audio streaming and distribution platform that allows users to upload, stream, promote, and share music and podcasts.

In module III the research team practiced modifying format images

Participants learned that a format image is helpful to understand the common file format of digital image, how these file formats differ and what their recommended use is. TIFF (.tif), JPG (.jpg, .jpeg), GIF (.gif) and PNG (.png) are file formats (and their respective file extensions) that you are likely to encounter. Other image file formats are used to a lesser extent; these formats are often proprietary, such as Photoshop .psd files. To edit an image, you can use:

- **Genially:** participants practiced using a web-based tool, available in a free version that allows you to create animated infographics, interactive presentations and even escape games.

- **GIMP:** participants learned about how to provide a free way to create and edit image files for your business, and it supports the PDF file format. The program can open PDF documents consisting of a single page or multiple pages, and while it doesn't support multi-page PDF exports, it does let you export each page individually. You can also use the GIMP to export any of its other supported image formats to PDF and the export settings let you maintain any layer masks you used in the original image.

  Then, the research team learned about created a google sites and google presentation.

- **Google Sites**: participants practiced a free web application for creating websites. Here you can develop the website by yourself or collaborate with others to create the content of the pages. You can decide the level of sharing you would like to permit, who the owners of the website are, and to whom you'd like to give permission to edit or revise the site. You can also provide permission to visitors for viewing purposes only.

- **Google Slides**: participants learned that it is similar to power point presentation app except that it is hosted online and allows for multiple people to collaborate on the same presentation in real time.

After that the research team learned about video production.

- **Camtasia Studio and Open shot:** participants learned how to use these software's suitable for created and published recording video tutorials and presentations via screencast, or via a direct recording plug-in to Microsoft PowerPoint.

Finally, at the end of the module we elaborated a collaborative task applying all the technological tools that we knew during the III modules.

IV. ACHIEVEMENTS

Module I

The students learned about the fundamentals of online education and its application on the English Language Teaching; specifically, the virtual or online teaching approach, like using an LMS (Learning Management System) to set up a virtual classroom and develop asynchronous activities, for instance, Moodle; and use platforms like TEAMS or Meet for asynchronous activities. Module I also provided participants with the experience of creating virtual classrooms in Learning Management Systems available on the internet.

Module II

The Students understood about the effective use of technological tools in learning developing students´ knowledge and skills related to information and communications technology (ICT). Also, students learned to manipulate different technological tools such as: Liveworksheets, Flippity, Flipgrid, Edpuzzle, Nearpood, Powtoon.

Module III

Students learned how to use Web tools for the design of educational materials and elaborate materials such as podcasts, online presentations, interactive images, videos, among others. As a fundamental part of the culmination of this specialization, students complete an integrative task through which they will apply the competencies acquired during the three modules.

V.   CONCLUSIONS

While there is no a clear idea about when face to face classes are going to return to the University of El Salvador, something minor as providing short trainings about how to manage an online course may be essential to facilitate the learning process for students.

Moreover, if professors are trained to carry out an online course, it may open the doors to new ways of education as could be blended method because its factors would help to provide new options at the moment when students need to organize the schedule for the semester and it is such opportunity because they can take some subjects from their houses and others in the campus of the university.

Whether such phenomenon as covid-19 still affects our normal lifestyles it is a separate discussion, but the evidence suggests that online learning is the future for the students from the University of El Salvador from now on.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the Foreign Languages Department provide their professors with the enough tools to carry out an online course such as good laptops, fast speed internet, and different paid platforms such as Google meet.

- It is very important for the Foreign Languages Department to provide an adequate environment with enough resources inside the campus, so teachers can feel comfortable at the time they teach online classes.

- The School of Humanities major authorities should organize training for the teachers where the main topics would be course design and development, building an online classroom, classroom management and all the sub topics online education entails.

- The School of Humanities authorities should encourage the teachers to take training about teaching online so they can improve even more their classes from now on.

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IX. APPENDICES

Figure I. Online English language teaching
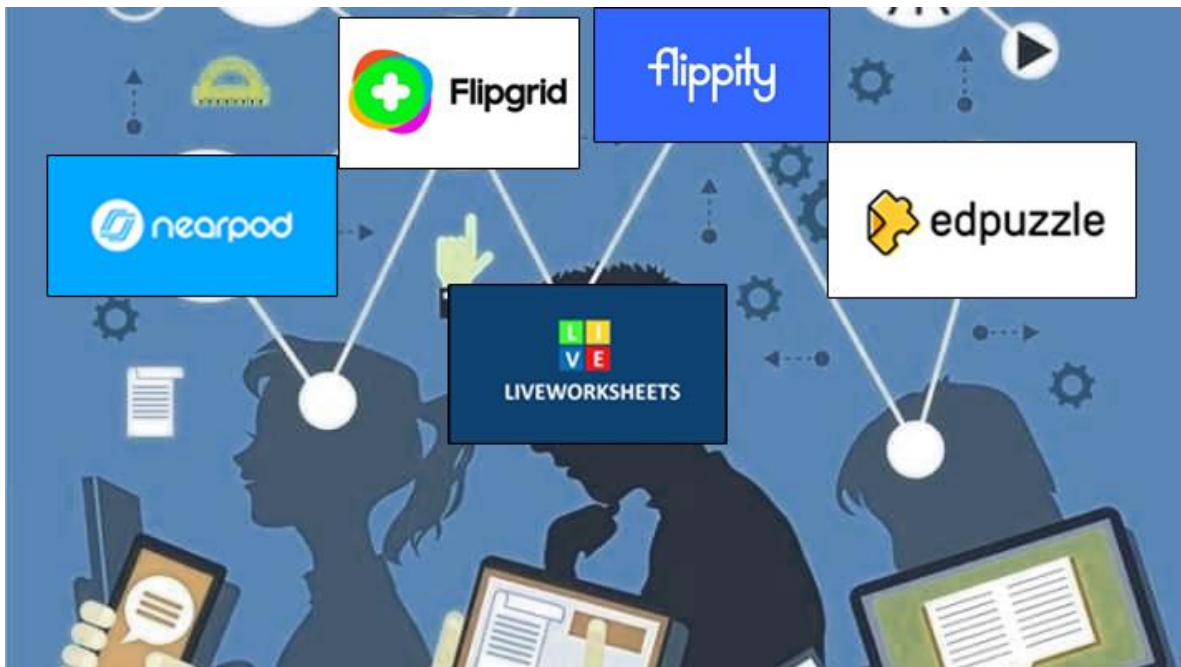
Figure II. Technology for teaching-learning

Figure III. Design of didactic materials for virtual

APPENDIX A: ONLINE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

A.1 BASED ON LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMS)

A.1.1 INFOGRAPHIC

APPENDIX B: EDUCATIONAL APLICATIONS FOR LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

B.1 THE USE OF TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS WHEN TEACHING ENGLISH

B.1.1 POWTOON VIDEO
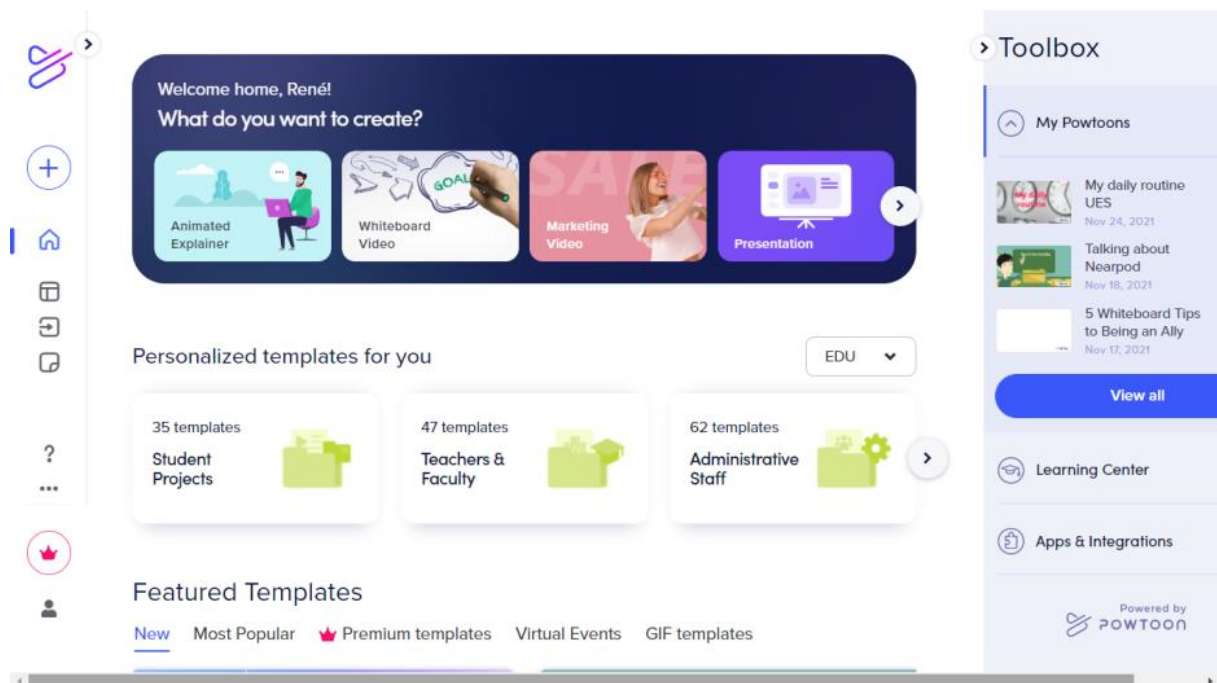
APPENDIX C: DESIGN OF DIDACTIC MATERIALS FOR VIRTUAL ENVIORAMENTS

C.1 EDUCATIONAL TOOLS IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

C.1.1 CREATION OF AN INTERACTIVE IMAGE IN GENIAL.LY