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DIGITAL PLATFORMS AND APPLICATIONS USED IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE CLASSES AT THE HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL

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Abstract: *It is well known that there is a continuous relationship of interdependence and reciprocity between education and digital technologies, as technological progress is driven by the evolution of education, while education utilizes these technological developments. Technology supports the education system by facilitating the teaching process. In this age of information and digitalization, we are witnessing significant transformations in how people interact with each other and with various institutions. Adapting to this new paradigm of remote interaction has become essential, especially in the educational context, where the teaching-learning process has undergone remarkable changes. Both students and teachers have faced considerable challenges in adapting to these rapid changes. In this context, the emphasis on lifelong learning has been reaffirmed by the support given to teachers by various entities that have developed training programs tailored to their needs, providing practical examples and suggestions, as well as interactive courses designed to stimulate student participation and interest in knowledge.*

Keywords: *new technologies; education; Romanian language and literature.*

The Impact of New Technologies in Pre-University Education

The use of digital technologies in classrooms leads to a revitalization of traditional methodologies, bringing a modern and innovative aspect to education. The relationship between education and technology is becoming increasingly dynamic, as technology evolves day by day, requiring constant adaptation from those interacting with it. Simultaneously, this constitutes a necessity for the optimal functioning

of the educational system, keeping pace with current developments. The adoption of technologies in the teaching-learning process contributes to enhancing the quality of education, offering students multiple learning opportunities and fostering their growth. Additionally, limited access to information disappears, with resources becoming available to everyone, anytime, and in diverse and abundant forms. Teachers can utilize digital information and resources through new, engaging methods that captivate students and make them more involved in the educational process.

For teachers, there are numerous advantages as well. In addition to making lessons more interactive and attractive, digital resources offer ease of use and reduce workload time—for example, through digitalized assessment. To fully leverage the benefits of digital assessment, it is important for teachers to use technology creatively and strategically. For instance, they can use e-learning platforms to create interactive and challenging activities that encourage collaboration and critical thinking. Additionally, they can use online assessment tools to monitor students' progress and identify any gaps in understanding the material. The evolution of these tools and digital platforms is a consequence of their frequent use and demand from users, aimed at improving quality and continuous optimization.

Considering the use of these technologies in education, teachers need to possess a set of skills and knowledge for their correct implementation and use. "In other words, it is necessary to develop a certain level of computer literacy, understood not only as specialized knowledge and skills but also as a new orientation and approach to reality. Teachers must be able to identify both pedagogical situations and appropriate IT solutions with beneficial effects on education and training" (Nan, 2021, p. 164). The possibilities for presenting information in computer-assisted instruction are much more numerous compared to traditional teaching.

Ana Maria Marhan states in her work The Psychology of Using New Technologies that "Due to new technologies, our working environment is changing, and as a result, the skills we need to navigate through a highly information-saturated environment are also changing. However, what makes us intelligent—the ability to learn, think, adapt, and grow in the context in which we live—will never fundamentally change. On the other hand, information technology, from personal computers to mobile devices and the Internet, radically changes the way we understand the concept of intelligence necessary to function in the modern world" (Marhan, 2007, p. 6).

Applications Used in the Teaching Process

It is well known that there are a multitude of interactive applications and platforms that can be used in the instructional-educational process to

improve learning outcomes, increase student engagement, and enhance information accessibility. The variety of these tools is a major benefit for the teaching process, facilitating learning. In addition to the significant advantages of using these applications, there are some limitations, the most common being the high cost of some of them. Unfortunately, many applications are only accessible after making a payment. Depending on the stage of the lesson, various applications and digital tools can be used. Below, we will illustrate some of them, categorized according to their role in the teaching process.

In the Online Environment

The end of 2019 brought an atypical situation that affected several fields, including the education system. The outbreak of the pandemic caused by the Sars-Cov2 virus forced the world to adapt to limited social interaction. The teaching activity had to be reimagined, becoming a constant challenge. The key players in education faced various scenarios during this time, from online to in-person or hybrid formats, each with different particularities. "If online and 'traditional' teaching are the two extreme situations in terms of the learning relationship, the difficulty in hybrid teaching arises precisely from the need to harmonize these two scenarios. Hybrid teaching is a mix of the two approaches, aiming to maximize the benefits of each or at least minimize the disadvantages of both scenarios" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 151).

The effort made by teachers to adapt to this situation brought numerous benefits to post-pandemic teaching, as many developed new skills in using computers and digital resources in their lessons. Many of the applications that can be used online are also useful in physical classroom teaching.

LearningApps is an educational app designed to support the learning and teaching process through interactive activities. "The app is easy to use and provides a variety of exercise types that teachers can use at any stage of the lesson, adapt, or create from scratch" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 153).

Advantages include the creation of interactive and innovative resources for any part of the lesson. A notable limitation is the lack of a tool to track student progress during tasks, and the inability to filter resources, as anyone can create materials, making them public. Teachers need to be cautious when selecting them.

Wordwall allows "the creation of interactive educational games in digital format, which can be embedded into other learning platforms or shared via link and PDF resources related to the created games"(Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 156).

Advantages include creating interactive resources accessible to any age

group. The major disadvantage is that the app limits the creation of materials to five free resources, with additional ones being paid.

At the Beginning of the Teaching Activity

Regardless of the format of the class, whether physical or online, the beginning of a lesson involves capturing students' attention and introducing them to the topic of study. The methods used must be as engaging as possible, a principle that also applies to applications. There is no general rule for classifying digital applications based on the stage of the lesson, as some can be used in multiple phases. For example, the **Mentimeter** app can be used at the beginning of a lesson to introduce the topic for study, as this app energizes the presentation and sparks students' interest in the subject. "The Mentimeter app is widely used and allows for the creation of interactive presentations, interactive quizzes, competitions between students, and opinion polls. No account is needed, and it can be used with a Gmail account" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 76).

Another app that can be used in the teaching process is **Plickers**. This interactive tool allows for the creation of questions to which students can respond. It is easy to access, with a user-friendly interface. The teacher creates a virtual class and adds students to it. Each student receives a personalized card that they use to provide answers to questions projected by the teacher. After the teacher creates the questions, they project them using an interactive board. Students respond by raising their cards, with each position of the card representing a different answer. The teacher scans the answers to interpret the results, which are automatically recorded in the app, giving students a clear view of their scores.

Most games created in apps like **LearningApps**, **Wordwall**, and **Kahoot** can be used to capture students' attention. Additionally, videos accessed from **YouTube** or created using tools like **Loom**, **Screencast**, **Animaker**, **Clipchamp**, **Stupeflix Studio**, **Kizoa**, or **Renderforest** are digital resources that can help spark student interest in the topic being discussed in the lesson.

The most extensive part of a lesson is the actual teaching process. Numerous applications and digital platforms can be used during this stage, which must be adapted to the specific class and content being delivered. The range of applications is varied, and the choice of which to use depends on the objectives and competencies the teacher sets. A major disadvantage is that many of these applications involve a cost or limit the number of free resources available.

StoryJumper is a useful app that can be used during the teaching process. It allows for the creation of virtual books, which help develop linguistic and digital skills. "The app gives students the opportunity to write, create, and publish their own texts, drawings, insert audio/video

materials, and add photos from the internet or ones they took themselves" (Bauer, 2021, p. 2).

GoConqr is an app that allows the creation of concept maps, which highlight the logical connections between events, concepts, or ideas. "Concept maps allow for the logical organization of the teaching material, schematization, and systematization of concepts and their interrelations, either dynamically (if used during a presentation as the lecture unfolds) or as an overview of the taught content, clearly highlighting all correlations" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 71).

Liveworksheets allows traditional worksheets to be transformed into interactive online exercises, offering immediate feedback on the exercises. These can be completed in class, replacing traditional worksheets, saving time, and being more environmentally friendly by reducing paper use. Sounds and videos can be included in these worksheets. The types of questions in the worksheets are varied, including objective, semi-objective, and subjective categories.
Presentations created using **Prezi**, **Google Slides**, or **PowerPoint** can serve as teaching materials. The information covered in the lesson can be synthesized into interactive presentations using these applications. Animations, transitions, and attractive designs can be incorporated to capture students' attention and stimulate their interest in engaging with the lesson.

For Feedback
Evaluation is an important part of the teaching process and can take many forms, utilizing various tools and techniques. Evaluation not only aims to assess the level and quality of knowledge acquired but also focuses on formative aspects such as the skills and competencies being developed, which are equally or even more important than knowledge accumulation. "Continuous assessment involves checking after each teaching step how well the delivered knowledge was understood and assimilated, and the ability to apply this knowledge. Evaluation should identify not only the level of knowledge or quality of understanding but also the capacity to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 103). Therefore, continuous assessment should provide as clear feedback as possible. Many of the methods, techniques, and applications used for teaching, such as **Mentimeter**, **LearningApps**, or **Wordwall**, can also be used for evaluation. Additionally, digital apps can be used to track student progress.
The **AnswerGarden** app can be used "to stimulate and identify real-time participation and engagement. It is useful for online brainstorming sessions, providing rapid feedback as mentioned earlier" (Andron,

Kifon, 2021, p. 103). The app offers several work modes: Brainstorming Mode, Moderator Mode, and Classroom Mode, each with different features. Responses can be limited or unlimited, and answers can be pre-approved by the creator. There are also control options based on a password. The final product allows the visualization of responses as a word cloud, based on their frequency.

Quizizz is "a free learning and assessment tool that any teacher can integrate into the teaching-evaluation system. The student progresses through the material either in the form of flashcards for learning or knowledge consolidation, or interactive quizzes, all at their own pace" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 105). The advantages of using this app include: the integration of exercises from other apps, easy access to the platform, the ability to generate detailed reports on student progress, storing exercises in a public library accessible to teachers, editing existing resources to suit students' needs, and personalizing the feedback students receive after answering each question.
Google Forms is a tool for collecting and verifying student responses. The questions created in this app can serve as a way to record answers as well as evaluate them, as a certain score can be allocated to each question. Major advantages of this app include the ability to create various types of questions: objective, semi-objective, and subjective, with short answers. Additional advantages include unlimited forms, free access, quick feedback, the storage of responses, and the ability to interpret results as downloadable statistics.

Kahoot "can be used for reviewing and reinforcing previously learned knowledge as well as in evaluation, especially formative evaluation" (Andron, Kifon, 2021, p. 122). The app's user-friendly interface makes students perceive the test as a game, reducing the stress associated with assessment. A drawback of the app is the limitation to short answers in the free version. However, there are numerous resources with tests that can be adapted to meet the needs of students. These include the **Discover** page. The tests in this app are well categorized for efficient searching. The **Reports** page provides clear insights into the lesson with prompt feedback recorded.
The mini-research was conducted at the high school level, involving a sample of 150 subjects aged between 15 and 18 years. The initial hypothesis was that if multimedia technologies are used by the teacher during Romanian language and literature classes, students will better understand the concepts related to this subject. Several research tools were used in the experiment, including the survey method (questionnaire tool), the written test method (test tool), and the interview method.

Methodology

The experiment was carried out over fourteen teaching activities. I selected four to five activities for each experimental class, during which I used digital tools, followed by a common activity involving all students from the classes included in the experiment. For the 9th-grade students, the experimental activity began with the thematic unit "Play and Games." I presented several contents from this unit, using multimedia technologies in their study. The first content was "Everyday Conversation," where students developed skills related to the correct and appropriate use of oral and written expression in various communication situations. These skills were formed with the help of digital tools. During this activity, I used games created in the LearningApps application, and the use of the Smartboard, which facilitated the application of digital technologies, proved to be particularly beneficial in conducting these interactive games. In this phase, digital applications were used both during the teaching activity and at its conclusion.

A second content studied within this unit, where multimedia tools were used, was the "Argumentative Text." In the introductory phase, I used a game created in the Wordwall application to review concepts regarding the structure of the argumentative text. The game contained paragraphs related to the structure of this type of text, and students were tasked with associating them with specific terms. Additionally, at the end of the activity, to collect feedback, I used a questionnaire created with Google Forms. Students appreciated this method of expressing their opinions about the activity, and the data was collected instantly, making it easier for the teacher.

In the unit "Love," I chose to use multimedia technologies for three different contents. The first was "Correspondence," where I aimed to develop the skill of analyzing the structural and expressive components of the literary texts studied and discussing their role in addressing themes. At the end of the activity, students were given a game created with the Mentimeter app, in which they synthesized key aspects of the lesson's content.

Another content covered in this unit was William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. After noticing that the concepts were not being adequately understood by the students, I chose to integrate digital tools into their study. To capture their attention, I used a game in Wordwall. The students were eager to participate, finding the game very interactive. In the comprehension phase, I used an animated video to extract essential ideas, which were then associated with the text of the play. To enhance their understanding, I created a comic strip using the Storyboard application. This proved effective, as students gained a better grasp of the text and the play's subject matter, presented in a simpler, more engaging manner. The final content studied with the 9th-grade students

was Mihai Eminescu's lyric poem "Desire." In this lesson, I used various games created in LearningApps to help students identify the poem's theme, emotions, figures of speech, and prosody elements. Additionally, I replaced traditional worksheets with interactive digital ones, created using the Liveworksheets app.

For the 10th-grade students, I selected four contents where various digital applications were employed. In studying the fairy tale *The Story of Harap-Alb* by Ion Creangă, I used the Tool Animaker application to edit a video that highlighted a specific part of the studied tale. I also focused on diverse methods of understanding and interpreting the studied literary texts, and students created a mind map using the GoConqr application. The activity concluded with a game created in Kahoot.

For the study of Ioan Slavici's psychological novella *The Lucky Mill*, students created a Google Slides presentation summarizing key elements of interpreting the novella: identifying the narrative theme, temporal and spatial coordinates, and the conflict. The students worked in teams, showed great interest in the activity, and, most importantly, consolidated important notions about the structure of the novella.

The same students conducted an interview for the content titled *The Interview*, using various digital tools. Most of them recorded themselves using mobile phones, demonstrating that these devices can be useful for learning when used with an educational purpose. The last content where I applied games made with the Kahoot application and collected feedback using Google Forms questionnaires was I.L. Caragiale's *A Lost Letter*. Students demonstrated a better understanding of the subject matter of the dramatic text.

The 11th-grade students used various digital tools to study literary movements. For the topic *The Origin and Evolution of the Romanian Language*, they engaged in several interactive games. While studying specific words, they used online resources to learn how to explain the meanings of certain Latin phrases, classify terms based on their origin, and more.

For the study of Romanticism and Mihai Eminescu's *The Evening Star*, I used a video created in LearningApps, which included an animation based on Eminescu's text. The students were captivated by the video, as it illustrated all the key moments from each section of the poem, making it easier for them to understand the subject and identify the various personas of the lyrical self.

Symbolism was approached interactively through lessons created in Livresq. Additionally, the students created a website using Google Sites, highlighting key notions about this literary movement. In the study of Realism, lessons were created in Livresq, and the StoryJumper application was used to create stories reflecting the characteristics of the

interwar period.
The final activity, presented within the school's reading club, was a collaborative effort where students actively engaged, encouraged by the use of digital technologies.
The premise of the mini-research—that the use of digital tools and technologies in the educational process is a necessity—was confirmed throughout the conducted activities.

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