

Transition to online teaching at Tomsk State University (on the example of experience of an English teacher from Tomsk, Russia):

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In such unprecedented times a lot of school and university teachers are living with challenges and , at the same time, opportunities . And such events when you can share your concerns and get more information about new ways of connecting with our students and colleagues are of a great importance for all of us.

Here, at TSU, we started collaborating with ILTC of Sheffield University about 4 years ago. And the main person to contact was Will Nash with his expertise in EMI, the area we needed a lot after we started introducing English-speaking environment across the university.

It was his webinars and workshops in Tomsk when about 50 University subject teachers got clear understanding of EMI.

And since that time we have been in contact with Will with all our questions and problems.

Covid-19 connects, whether we like it or not, people in different situations on an emotional level . Each of us has had to adapt and learn smth new in our new situation. And it's crucially important when it comes to students having lived their happy and quiet lives so far.

Since 2019 Tomsk State University has been implementing the project of "Digital University" allowing various stakeholders to communicate in a digital space.

But extraordinary situation in education related to corona crisis demanded different tasks.

And the TSU unique experience in digital education helped us a lot.

At TSU online learning and teaching was introduced in the middle of March , and since this time we have to stay at home as a lot of people on different continents have to do.

Within 2 weeks the entire system of education at TSU was transformed to provide opportunities for remote studying and teaching and it helped that we had a lot of online courses supported by Institute of Distance Learning. Their unique experience was the foundation of our work today. We can opt for various online platforms as well.

I teach Business English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Institute of Economics and Management. Normally it's about 2 classes a week for each group .

For me, as an English teacher conducting conversational classes, the online format was quite relevant , but, I have to admit now, that before the corona crisis I was against teaching foreign languages online. I needed the emotional element that we , FL teachers , feel in a classroom.

But, we always learn from our experience, and I was so fortunate to have Will Nash as a guest in my classes of Business English for students of Institute of Economics and Management.

My students are so grateful to Will involving them into a different mode of studying. They have to analyze what is going on not only in our country but in different countries as well to be able to ask and answer questions in English in class.

The mixture of various approaches enables my students to implement their theoretical knowledge while discussions and find equivalents in English to define and exemplify their arguments.

But what I am mostly happy with, was our online conference “Current Issues of Economics and Management: Fresh Look and New Solutions”, our annual conference for students but in a new format.

Due to personal involvement of students having to study online and being affected by the corona crisis , the presentations were really interesting in spite of the fact that my students presented in English for the first time.

And, again, online mode allowed to have Will and teachers from Institute of Economics and Management as guests at the conference.

If “Digital University” was considered to be as something very remote only some time ago, now we believe that it’s the aim of a leading University. We have to gear up students for the future, and to achieve this target we have to own new instruments and to think in a different way.