The Role of Metacognitive and Politeness Strategies in Online Foreign Language Instruction

Ioana Mudure-Iacob, Ana Maria Hopârtean, Veronica-Diana Micle, Alexandra Cotoc, Daniel Andronache, Raluca Pop

The Role of Metacognitive and Politeness Strategies in Online Foreign Language Instruction

Ioana Mudure-Iacob [a*]**, Ana Maria Hopârtean** [b]**, Veronica-Diana Micle** [c]**, Alexandra Cotoc** [d]**, Daniel Andronache** [e]**, Raluca Pop** [f]

[a, b, c, d, e, f] *Babeş-Bolyai University, 1 Kogălniceanu Street, 400084, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

Corresponding author: ioana.mudure@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract	
Keywords: higher education (HE); online/hybrid learning; metacognitive strategies; pragmatic politeness strategies; digital pedagogical framework.	This paper aims at providing an insight into the online/hybrid foreign language teaching and learning system in Romania. Drawing on the theoretical body of research of metacognitive and politeness representations within the field, the study further offers an analysis of how metacognition and politeness strategies are perceived by the main stakeholders of academic education (language learners and instructors). The focus is on describing specific aspects where the support metacognitive and politeness strategies enable a more responsible and engaging digital pedagogical framework that empowers learner autonomy and engagement. Emphasis is placed on highlighting context-ridden challenges observed in online/hybrid learning/teaching connected to various degrees of preparedness to deal with the dynamic frontal/online teaching shift and also on suggesting student-centred solutions. The obtained results of the study may inform subsequent developments of language mediation through the activation of digital cognition and social and emotional learning practices.

Zusammenfasung	
Schlüsselworte: Höhere Bildung; Online-/Hybrid-Lernen; metakognitive Strategien; pragmatische Höflichkeitsstrategien; digitaler pädagogischer Rahmen.	Dieser Beitrag soll einen Einblick in das Online-/Hybrid-Lehr- und Lernsystem für Fremdsprachen in Rumänien geben. Aufbauend auf der theoretischen Forschung zu metakognitiven und Höflichkeitsdarstellungen innerhalb des Fachgebiets bietet die Studie ferner eine Analyse, wie Metakognitions- und Höflichkeitsstrategien von den Hauptakteuren der akademischen Bildung (Sprachlernende und -lehrende) wahrgenommen werden. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Beschreibung spezifischer Aspekte, bei denen die unterstützenden metakognitiven und Höflichkeitsstrategien einen verantwortungsvolleren und ansprechenderen digitalen pädagogischen Rahmen ermöglichen, der die Autonomie und das Engagement der Lernenden stärkt. Der Schwerpunkt liegt auf der Hervorhebung kontextabhängiger Herausforderungen, die beim Online-/Hybrid-Lernen/-Lehren beobachtet werden, verbunden mit verschiedenen Graden der Bereitschaft, mit der dynamischen Verschiebung des Frontal-/Online-Unterrichtens umzugehen, und auch auf dem Vorschlag von schülerzentrierten Lösungen. The obtained results of the study may inform subsequent developments of language mediation through the activation of digital cognition and social and emotional learning practices. Die erhaltenen Ergebnisse der Studie können spätere Entwicklungen der Sprachvermittlung durch die Aktivierung digitaler Kognition und sozialer und emotionaler Lernpraktiken beeinflussen.

1. Introduction

The shift from traditional, onsite to exclusively online, remote classes brought on by Covid in early March 2020 in Romania was reason for concern for both HE instructors and students. While some studies suggest that there is no significant impact on learning outcomes when switching from a traditional to an online learning environment (Johnson et al., 2000), there is still little research on how the entire pandemic related anxiety impacted language learning. Language learning is inherently a field highly dependent on direct communication that regulates communicative exchanges by contextually, socially and emotionally supporting interactants towards the execution of outcomes. Meaning is negotiated through language mediation and development of language proficiency cannot happen outside the establishment of genuine communicative rapports. It is our contention that online teaching and learning can be effective as long as both teachers and learners understand that the lack of face-to-face communication and its in-real-time effects may be compensated by using certain autonomy enhancement strategies.

The aims of this paper are on the one hand to investigate the extent to which metacognitive strategies and manifestations of pragmatic politeness

are perceived as useful and effective by both HE language instructors and learners and to suggest a learner centred approach within a more caring digital pedagogical framework. In terms of metacognition, extensive research shows that metacognition improves learner autonomy and performance (Wenden, 1998; Raoofi et al., 2014, etc). In the context of both online and onsite learning, the paper aims to establish whether there is coherence between the teachers' and students' attitudes towards metacognitive strategies and whether teachers and students consider metacognitive strategies to be more useful in online rather than onsite settings. Additionally, pragmatic politeness strategies in language learning enable participants to engage in communicative exchanges by carefully considering their *face* wants and interactional needs and by mitigating collaboration through a mutually beneficial quid-pro-quo. Politeness is the intentional ingredient that gives contextualised and individualised flavour to language use as it fosters engagement and care. Drawing on Erving Goffman's (1967) concept of *face* and Brown & Levinson's politeness theory (1987), the study investigates applications of this complex phenomenon onto language learning/teaching. Moreover, the paper investigates the reasons for which instructors and students may not place enough emphasis on the informed use of metacognitive and politeness strategies.

Following a theoretical framework that encompasses both metacognitive and online politeness strategies, the paper analyses a selection of results coming from two mirrored questionnaires (one for teachers and one for students) designed and administered within the DIAL4u (*Digital pedagogy to develop Autonomy, mediate and certify Lifewide and Lifelong Language Learning for (European) Universities*) Erasmus+ project. The questionnaires address the respondents' perception regarding a multitude of aspects pertaining to digitalised language learning.

2. Theoretical framework

Metacognition, widely defined as cognition about cognition, was first theorised by Flavell, who distinguished between metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive processes (Flavell, 1979). While metacognitive knowledge refers to the knowledge that learners have about their cognitive abilities, metacognitive processes are about hands-on regulation of learning, through metacognitive strategies such as

planning, monitoring and self-evaluation that can be used while addressing a task.

Since the 70s, a lot of progress has been made in the field of metacognition applied to language learning (Anderson, 1991; Cohen, 1998; Macaro, 2001; O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 2003; Wenden, 2002), the focus being on the importance of metacognition for learning in general and language learning in particular. Oxford's the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) (Oxford, 1990) included metacognitive strategies, among cognitive strategies, memory strategies, compensatory strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies as the basis for strategic language learning.

Learners are generally recognized as more successful and effective if they can use metacognitive strategies, as they tend to plan their learning, apply monitoring strategies and revise after learning has been completed. (O'Malley & Chamot, 1990, p. 8). David Perkins (1992) distinguishes between students based on their metacognitive abilities and identifies four categories: tacit learners (students who lack metacognitive knowledge), aware learners (those who know something about the types of thinking used to generate ideas), strategic learners (those who can apply strategies to help them learn more effectively) and reflective learners (those who are strategic and can also reflect on their learning as it is happening). Thus, it becomes obvious that metacognitive strategies play a major role in language acquisition. Anderson (2003) argues that they help language learning progress at a faster rate, while Veenman et al (2005) show how metacognitive skilfulness is more relevant than intelligence as a predictor of learning performance. Most importantly however, metacognition has a significant positive impact on increasing autonomy.

The global lockdown during Covid increased the focus on online and remote learning, which meant that learners needed to assume even more responsibility for their own learning in order to manage and organise their learning without the continuous support from teachers. Metacognition becomes an essential asset in this context. Whether students returned onsite or stayed online, the entire teaching-learning paradigm has changed, as the shift to digital learning has become more pronounced after the pandemic. Several studies have shown that there is a positive correlation between the use of metacognitive strategies and online learning performance (Dumford & Miller, 2018; Broadbent & Poon, 2015; Goradia & Bugarcic, 2017). Learners

without self-confidence due to insufficient technical skills and possibly a lower level of language proficiency are at a disadvantage, but they may compensate by using metacognitive strategies. However, if learners have not been previously exposed to metacognitive strategies, it may be more difficult to acquire them in a remote setting, as they may not be able to self-regulate, co-regulate and may not have access to shared-regulation experiences (Hadwin et al., 2018). Unfortunately, university students appear to be lacking in terms of metacognitive knowledge and use of metacognitive strategies (Anthonysamy et al., 2020; Boser, 2018). Therefore, while it appears that metacognition is even more relevant in a remote learning setting, due to the virtual and often asynchronous nature of online learning, metacognitive strategies may be more difficult to teach than in a traditional setting. Learners seem to use metacognitive strategies differently in traditional and online scenarios (Broadbent & Poon, 2015).

Under the theoretical framework of this study, the second research focus relates to manifestations of pragmatic politeness at linguistic, discourse and engagement/relationship management level. Next, we will offer an overview of politeness research within the scope of this paper thus limiting politeness conceptualisations to three elements: importance of politeness theory and strategies in shaping pragmatic competence and mutual relationship management, the construct of (e)-face/self-image within the politeness framework, and the role of engagement as a major driver of contextually polite discourse and behaviours.

Brown & Levinson's politeness framework (1978, 1987) remains one fundamental source material that continues to be the starting point for a rich body of research within various fields such as linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, foreign language acquisition, oratory, economics and public relations, etc. In Brown and Levinson's view, politeness is universal and a highly rational phenomenon that marks an added effort interlocutors make in order to communicate and negotiate interactional goals. Politeness entails both linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour that is meant to mitigate the overall impact of Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) through the application of five different politeness strategies: the bald on-record strategy, the positive politeness strategy, the negative politeness strategy, the off-record strategy and the strategy to choose not to engage in any Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) (Brown

& Levinson, 1987). When engaged in communicative instances, interactants employ and tap into their use in order to maintain face and further encourage collaborative participation. Consequently, politeness "becomes a key means by which humans work out and maintain relationships." (Kádár & Haugh, 2013). Within the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), politeness is not only an essential tool but rather one of the most advanced pragmatic competences that enable users to have an impact in an environment that has different coordinates as well as different dynamics where the screen becomes a third communicative party in need of maintenance and constant management as it intermediates the transmission of shared meaning and learning experience.

Foreign language instruction by definition encourages the equipment of learners with tools that support the use of language skills across fields and social, cultural or economic limitations. "Learning autonomy represents the main ingredient in empowering students with the necessary tools and strategies to continue learning in other settings, non-formal or informal ones" (Cotoc & Pop, 2022, p.119).

In online instruction politeness strategies become a tool that can mediate the transmission and interpretation of messages collaboratively towards gaining mutual benefits that enable discourse participants to express their views by negotiating and co-constructing meaning. Politeness does not exist outside the participants' willingness to have an impact that rests on acknowledgement and consideration of both/all parties' communicative needs and face wants. In a computer-mediated environment, there are challenges that occur regarding the smooth transmission and interpretation of messages especially in foreign language mediated instruction. Digital skills and competences must therefore include pragmatic politeness skills that confer a socially and emotionally engaging form to a content that is transmitted by paying attention to both the interactional instructional goals and to participants' needs for approval (*positive face*) and autonomy (*negative face*) (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 311).

The construct of face/self-image is crucial to understanding and effective use of pragmatic politeness in communication. Erving Goffman defines *face* as the "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". (Goffman, 1967,

p.5). The more aware individuals become that e-face is profitable currency for empowered and impactful communication, the more likely it is for them to turn facework or face management into an interactional priority that generates competitive communicative advantages. Face is our self-image, our self-worth, hence one's ability to control, project and enhance it to its full potential leads to the development of digital pragmatic competence. "Politeness arises when face is "maintained", "saved" when otherwise (potentially) "threatened", or "enhanced", while impoliteness arises when face is "lost" or "threatened". (Haugh, 2013, p.20).

Online/hybrid language instruction in a post-Covid 19 context has begun to adapt to learners' newly emerged needs that are rooted in computer mediated communication realities. "In addition to having to adapt worksheets, textbooks and materials to suit the digital framework, language instructors also dealt with a recurrent lack of interest and disengagement from students, caused either by online fatigue or limited digital literacy skills." (Mudure-Iacob, 2022, p.7). Ineffective management of face projection in an academic environment is a source of anxiety and stress as such formal educational contexts demand the upheaval of high standards of conduct and intellectual performance. Anxiety is generated by the exposure to an online environment where nonverbal cues and stimuli do not always come across successfully and have to be substituted by strategy employment (metacognitive and politeness) in order to compensate for timely face-to-face communicative exchanges.

Consequently, there are different pedagogical needs to take into account on the part of educators and instructors within the HE environment: online well being and psychological safety, the design of academic content that is interactively negotiated as well as the formulation of guidelines that promote and viably sustain student wellbeing. The unprecedented development and influence of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) feeds back into these realities that deserve attention and regulation. "Social and Emotional Learning represents a useful framework against whose backdrop foreign language instruction may occur as it regulates language production, language proficiency, emotional intelligence and intercultural competence development." (Mudure-Iacob et al., 2022, p.131). SEL has a certain urgency attached to its research within the domain of online/hybrid foreign language instruction as it has

become relevant fast: there is on the one hand heightened awareness connected to the need to focus on learners' mental health as pandemic contexts have re-formulated CMC academic education and, on the other hand, the issue of anxiety and performance related stress are connected directly to instructors' and learners' academic performance. The CASEL model of Social Emotional Learning stipulates that there are four major elements SEL encompasses. These elements are still being researched at various levels and are relevant to the development of a student-friendly learning framework that is both humane and caring: *self-awareness* (one's ability to understand one's emotions and values that may differ across national and cultural borders), *self-management* (one's ability to control one's emotions, thought patterns, attitudes and behaviour), *social awareness* (one's ability to display understanding, empathy and intellectual humility), *relationship skills* (one's ability to establish and engage in social relationships that are mutually beneficial), and *responsible decision making* (making informed choices on task based scenarios) (Adapted from The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning CASEL). SEL is the process of developing one's ability to integrate thinking, feeling, and behaviour in order to achieve important goals in life (Zins, 2004). It impacts the interactants' ability to relate to academic content in an effective way by promoting enhanced motivation and student engagement.

To this end, changes have been made in recent years to language proficiency assessment criteria in the Common European Framework of References for Languages. Companion Volume with New Descriptors (2018). Among other important additions and claims, newly included changes acknowledge the difficulty language learners encounter when adapting their *perspective* to the other participant's mindset by accepting the fact that there may occur differences in the communicative quid-pro quo that can only broaden the scope and quality of discussion. Attention is also provided to the reality that on certain occasions, "people need a third person or a third space in order to achieve this" as "delicate situations, tensions or even disagreements" may occur in communicative exchanges that require collaboration. (Mediating communication CEFR-CV, 2018, p.114). Linguistic competence comprises various elements in need of attention: vocabulary range, grammatical resources, pronunciation, sociolinguistic appropriateness, pragmatic competence, pragmatic politeness and

interactive engagement. Foreign language instructors in CMC are agents of change, trailblazers in acknowledging the perils associated with online/hybrid interactions that deserve recognition, informed awareness, creative processing and knowledgeable interpretations of obtained research results into student/teacher support handbooks/resources as well as SEL guidelines.

When asked to list certain positive outcomes of online teaching in Romania, language instructors have-among other items- mentioned student autonomy, genuine student engagement as well as the fostering of a warmer, closer relationship between students and instructors. (Table 1 below provides a visual representation of some of the aspects that have been mentioned). This instructional accomplishment deserves research focus. It is our contention that interactional engagement is created and supported through the use of pragmatic politeness, the marked efforts to be a part of a communicative context and not outside/behind a screen as an isolated remote participant.

Figure. 1: Positive outcomes of online teaching in Romania. Teachers' perspective.
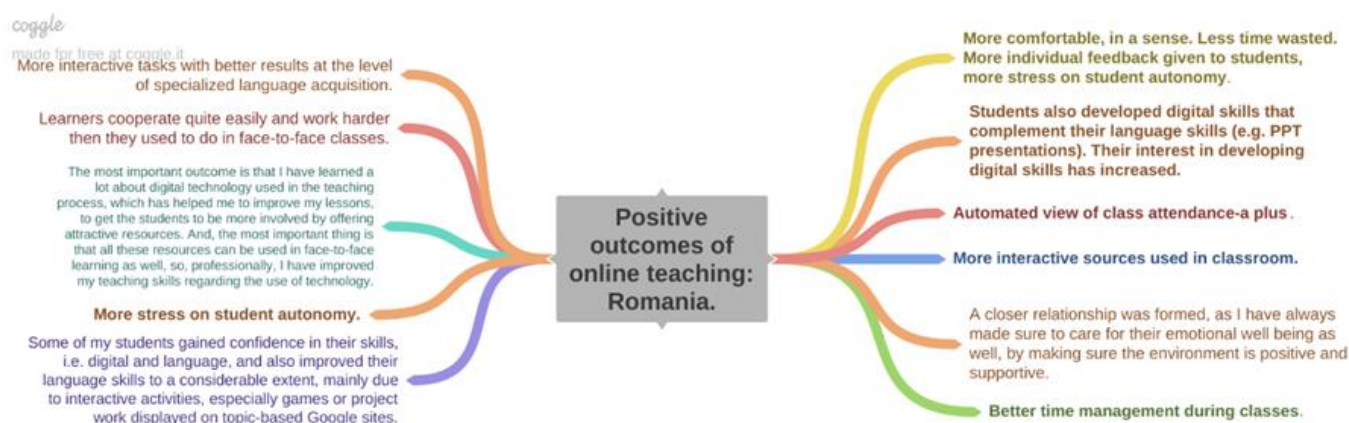
3. Research methodology

3.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the attitudes of Romanian higher education foreign language instructors and students towards specific manifestations of metacognition and pragmatic politeness and to identify convergent and divergent patterns between these two groups. Another focus is to transfer our observations based on questionnaire analysis output into recommendations for an effective implementation of metacognitive/politeness strategies in online/hybrid language classes and to suggest integrating them in more supportive digital course designs and resources that foster student autonomy and genuine engagement.

3.2. Participants and Procedure

A total of 104 teachers and 150 students were involved in the study.

38.5% of the teachers were aged 41-50, 33.7% were 31-40, 19.2% were 20-30, 7.7% were 51-60 and 1% were over 60 years old. As for their teaching experience, 22.1% had 21-25 years of experience, 17.3% had 16-20, 17.3% - 11-15 years, 15.4% - 6-10 years, 19.2% - 26-30 years, 2.9% - 26-30 years, 3.8% 31-35 years, 1.9% - over 35 years of experience. 50% of the teachers had a PhD, 12.5% were PhD candidates, 27.9% had a master's degree and 9.6% had a Bachelor degree. 61.5% assessed their digital skills as advanced, 31.7% as intermediate and 6.7% as expert.

96.7% of the students were doing a bachelor's degree, 2% were Master's degree students and 1.3% were PhD students. 78% studied English as the main foreign language, while 5.3% studied French, 2.7% German, 3.4% Hungarian, 1.3% Italian, 1.3% Spanish, 5.3% Romanian and 2.7% other languages. 38% assessed their level of language competence as advanced, 24.7% as upper-intermediate, 18% as intermediate, 12% as proficient, 4.7% as elementary and 2.7% as beginner. In terms of digital skills, 60% assessed their level as advanced, 28% as intermediate, 9.3% as expert, 2% elementary and 0.7% as beginner.

Regarding the research procedure, the study used two questionnaires (one for teachers and one for students) to collect both quantitative and qualitative data via Google forms and targeted the timeframe spring 2020- autumn 2021.

In Romania this timespan was relevant as 2020 was the moment of sudden transition to exclusively online teaching due to the lockdown. By 2021 teachers had gained some experience in online instruction. Participation was voluntary, personal data was kept confidential and the participants granted their informed consent. The quantitative data obtained were statistically analysed using Jamovi software, version 2.3.21, and since the research instrument that we used is not standardised, we used a cut-off point of -1/+1 mean standard deviation for setting the cut-off points. The qualitative data were processed using content analysis.

3.3. Research Instruments

The questionnaire for teachers consisted of 56 items, out of which 4 (demographics)+4 (metacognition) + ...(politeness) were used for the purpose of the present study. The questionnaire for students consisted of 48 items, out of which 4+5+...(politeness) were used for this study. Some items used a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 represented strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree, but also as dichotomic and open questions. To identify the internal consistency of the survey, we have calculated Cronbach's Alpha = .85. Therefore, taking into consideration the value of Cronbach's Alpha, our research instrument is relevant and consistent.

3.4. Research Hypotheses

1. There is a similarity between the teachers' and students' attitudes towards metacognitive strategies, i.e., both categories (teachers and students) find them useful for language learning.

2. The reasons for teachers not encouraging the use of metacognitive strategies and for students not using them differ.

3. Both teachers and students consider metacognitive strategies to be useful in online settings more than in traditional classrooms.

4. Language instructors and learners acknowledge the existence of anxiety in online foreign language instruction.

5. The successful projection of a professional self-image/e-face in hybrid/online environments is perceived as difficult to accomplish.

6. Language instructors and learners are aware of how important student engagement is in online classes.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of our research study will be presented as follows: first, we will analyse the students' and teachers' interpretation of the provided answers related to metacognitive strategies by discussing the most relevant findings; secondly, we will then apply the same mirrored analysis *on three selected items* connected to manifestations of pragmatic politeness within the online/hybrid environment, consequently interpreting the findings on this dimension and by including additional explanations of their implications for the present study. The type of validation obtained with reference to the posed hypotheses will also be provided.

For the metacognition section of the questionnaires, the research hypotheses were partially confirmed.

Upon analysing the first set of questions, i.e. "How much do you encourage students to use metacognitive strategies in online foreign language classes?" (teachers' questionnaire) and "How much are you encouraged to use individual learning strategies in foreign language online classes?" (students' questionnaire), the results show consistency in the teachers' and students' attitudes, except for the monitoring strategy. As it appears in table 1, teachers encourage students to monitor themselves, while students do not feel encouraged in this direction (t=-2.23, p<0.05).

Table 1. Comparison between students and instructors regarding the use of metacognitive strategies in online foreign language classes

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Planning	Student's t	-1.303	448	0.193	-0.1257	0.0965
Self-monitoring	Student's t	-2.235	449	0.026	-0.2163	0.0968
Self-evaluation	Student's t	-0.298	447	0.766	-0.0296	0.0993

Note. H_a $\mu_{Students} \neq \mu_{Teachers}$

[a] Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

This inconsistency might be due to students focusing too much on the cognitive aspect of the learning tasks, with little resources left for metacognitive strategies.

The second set of questions attempted to clarify the extent to which each group considered metacognitive strategies to be useful for the improvement of language skills. The teachers were asked "To what extent do you think each skill can be improved when using metacognitive strategies?" and the students: "If you use learning strategies, to what extent do you think they can help you improve each skill?" The results presented in Table 2 show a significant difference between teachers (M=4.01, SD=0.70) and students (M=3.62, SD=0.78); the former consider metacognitive strategies significantly more relevant than the latter (t=-5.26, p<0.05).

Table 2: Comparison between students and instructors regarding the usefulness of using metacognitive strategies

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Usefulness of strategies	Student's t	-5.25 [a]	438	< .001	-0.396	0.0754

Note. H_a $\mu_{Students} \neq \mu_{Teachers}$

[a] Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Thus, the first hypothesis is partially confirmed, as teachers and students agree on encouraging/ being encouraged to use planning and self-evaluation, but students consider metacognitive strategies to be less useful than teachers do in terms of language skill improvement.

The third set of questions aimed to investigate reasons for not using metacognitive strategies. While teachers mainly blame lack of time (40.4%), learners level (35.6%) and needing to learn more about metacognition (35.6%), students mainly admitted to not knowing much about learning strategies (66.2 %). This might be an explanation for the students' reaction to the previous question, more precisely they did not find metacognitive strategies to impact language skills because they did not know how to use them.

The second hypothesis is therefore confirmed. Teachers feel they lack time for strategy training (considering the learners' level unsuitable for strategy training or admitting they need to learn more about metacognition), which is in line with students feeling they lack strategy training.

The last set of questions aimed to compare the usefulness of metacognitive strategy in online vs onsite classes perceived by teachers and students. Most teachers (62.5%) believed metacognitive strategies to be more useful in online as opposed to onsite classes. 57.3% of students shared this attitude, with 70.8% saying they preferred using them in self-study as opposed to online classes. The third hypothesis is therefore validated. It appears that students think that metacognitive strategies would give them more independence and autonomy, provided, of course, they received training in using them.

In the following section of this research study, our analysis of online politeness and face management applications in online foreign language teaching and learning concentrate on providing an insight into Romanian respondents' (learners and teachers) attitudes and perceptions. The approach we have used was to correlate students' answers to a series of questions with the teachers' answers to virtually similar questions (focussing on the same issue but slightly differently phrased) thus obtaining a twinned image of pragmatic politeness elements that may support effective communication and development of digital competence and online relationship skills.

Related to the issue of experienced anxiety in teaching and learning foreign languages online/in a hybrid environment the two mirrored questions have been Q39. in the teachers' questionnaire: *Have you felt communication related anxiety when teaching online?* and Q37. in the students' questionnaire: *Have you felt stressed when learning / communicating online*?

The purpose of this particular focus is twofold: to identify the existence of *anxiety* in online environments that lack the (human) warmth and directness of frontal teaching and learning as well as to assess possible reasons behind *students' online anxiety* and how it connects to any of the four skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing. When such instances are brought into discussion, language instructors become more empowered by acknowledging the coping mechanisms students employ and by creating digital resources and strategy

based handbooks that enable students to deal with their perceived difficulties.

Table 3. Comparison between students and instructors regarding the anxiety in online environments

|		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Stress	Student's t	1.09 [a]	450	0.276	0.0538	0.0493

Note. H_a μ Students $\neq$ μ Teachers

[a] Levene's test is significant ($p < .05$), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Although the percentage of teachers that report the presence of anxiety (M=37.8%) is higher than the one reported by students (M=20.6%), we can state that there is not a statistically significant difference between the two groups, as it can be seen in table 3. Anxiety in online performance is acknowledged by both respondent groups as it regulates intellectual outputs to a great extent. Additionally, stress and anxiety in foreign language instruction are difficult to pinpoint correctly and to articulate into words especially on the part of students who regularly blame their anxiety on the environments, language level or their peers as opposed to ineffective self/face management, relationship skills or informed decision making that could lead to better pre-class preparation of inputs. Romanian students have identified the following elements that may be connected to their online anxiety: the online learning process/style-68.1%, the instructor's teaching style-42.9% and technical aspects that may impede on the overall quality of their online performance thus leading to stress driven outputs-51.6%.

Figure 2: Students' perception of the most difficult language competence to develop

41. Which language competence did you find most difficult to develop in the virtual classroom?
150 responses

- Speaking — 53.3%
- Listening — 16.7%
- Writing — 24.7%
- Reading
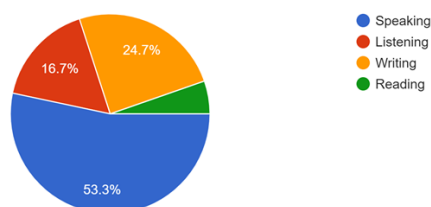
It is also relevant to mention the fact that for Q 41. *Which language competence did you find most difficult to develop in the virtual classroom? Romanian* respondents have identified the Speaking skill as being the one that is the most difficult to develop and enhance in online/hybrid classroom contexts as it can be observed in the Figure 2.

The second analysis we have included in the present study is connected to a fundamental concept within the pragmatic politeness theory: the concept of *face/self-image/our self-worth* that is constantly mitigated and negotiated in communication sequences for the benefit of co-constructing meaning and common ground. The e-face students and instructors project is mediated by a screen (CMC) and consequently it may be challenging for discourse participants to project an image that is both academically valid/professional and in accordance with an individual's own needs and wants. *Face* in foreign language instruction is rooted in the linguistic, cultural and contextual appropriation repertoire of the user. Face can be lost when confronted with the inability of performing a task to the best of one's abilities and-more importantly- one's own expectations of an ideal professional image that is promoted in order to be appreciated, respected and accepted in/by the online community one belongs to.

Question *41.How much stress and anxiety have you experienced in projecting a professional image while teaching online?* in the instructors' questionnaire has been related with Question 46 in the students' questionnaire: *How successful do you think you have been in projecting the professional image you wanted to?* The instructors' question has been phrased based on the existing challenges of rapidly moving towards an online/hybrid environment post Covid 19 with little or no digital pedagogical experience in operating the intricacies of PDC (pedagogical digital competence). The students' question has been more positively phrased due to the fact that image projection resulting in various degrees of success may need additional theoretical explanations (i.e. pragmatic politeness related explanations with reference to the concept of face management). This aspect has been essential in offering deliverables for online classroom use that render themselves both informative and practical.

Table 4: Comparison between students and instructors regarding the professional image projection

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Projecting a professional image	Student's t	5.11 [a]	451	< .001	0.563	0.110

Note. H$_a$ μ $_{Students}$ ≠ μ $_{Teachers}$

[a] Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

The anxiety level generated by professional self-image/face projection is significantly higher in students than in the case of teachers/instructors (t=5.11, p<0.05) who have been also asked to assess the face projection challenge in hybrid/online teaching/learning environments. There is high research potential in assessing the reasons behind students' difficulty in projecting an academically appropriate face as well as in instructors' knowledgeable management of students' anxiety through implemented strategies that aim at offering a safe communicative environment supported by appropriate use of politeness strategies that take into account both the interactants' face needs and wants. Some of the elements we suggest should be taken into account by future research are connected to but do not limit themselves to: achieved CEFR linguistic level that may render students more confident in articulating their opinions in the foreign language in front of their colleagues and teacher while performing assigned tasks, the heightened peer pressure that regulates online student-student interactions where their image is mediated/intermediated by an e-face lacking nonverbal cues that normally support traditional face-to-face interaction, the difficulty online interactions entail in the case of oral student performance that occurs and unfolds in real time.

By relating the respondents' answers to the 3rd selected pair of questions, the importance of student engagement/participation has been brought into focus. Student engagement in foreign language instruction is both an aim and a prerequisite for developing language skills, functional, communicative and pragmatic digital competence, cultural and intercultural sensitivity. The analysed correlations (Q 44 for teachers: *How important is student participation/engagement in your instructional goals*? and Q 39 for students: *How important was it for you to engage with your colleagues and teacher online*? have resulted in the following answers as presented below.

Table 4: Comparison between students and instructors regarding the importance of student engagement.

	Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Engage	Student's t	-14.3 [a]	451	< .001	-1.13	0.0787

Note. H$_a$ μ $_{Students}$ ≠ μ $_{Teachers}$

[a] Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

Figure 5: Strategies used for student engagement
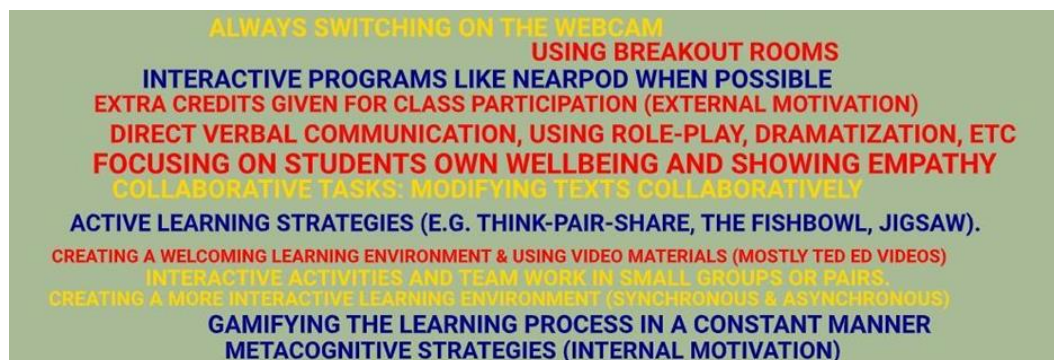
Our statistical data shows the fact that teachers consider the importance of achieving a high level of student engagement as being more important in the learning-teaching process than students do (t=-14.3, p<0.05) for the completion of foreign language instruction objectives. In Figure 5, we have included a physical representation of some examples of strategies Romanian language instructors use to engage their students in classes.

It is our contention that there *is an important connection* to be established between the level and quality of student engagement in CMC (computer mediated communication) and the issue of whether or not the student's camera is turned on. Subsequent research on this matter is necessary within the field of foreign language training where genuine communication is anchored into both verbal and nonverbal cues that may modify the recipient's assessment and overall validation of task-based performance. Both the teachers' questionnaire and the students' questionnaire have included such a focus under the following questions: Q45-Teachers: *To what*

extent have your students kept their video camera on in online classes? And Q45-Students: *To what extent have you kept your video camera on in online classes*?

In regards to the issue of students starting their camera during online classes, the teachers' perception (related to students' habit of using cameras) and the students' appreciation of the use of their camera coincide as there is little discrepancy between the two groups (t=1.15, p>0.05). Both teachers and students admit that Romanian students rarely turn on their cameras during courses. We argue that the necessity of consistently formulating the request for students to start their cameras during online classes has to be further researched within the field of language teaching and learning as the issue is culturally, socially, psychologically and technically bound. Reasons such as student performance anxiety, students' home environment and/or location, quality of the Internet connection as well as their willingness to engage at all levels may be tapped into by future research.

Table 6: Students turning cameras on during classes (students' perception and teachers' perception).

Independent Samples T-Test

		Statistic	df	p	Mean difference	SE difference
Camera on	Student's	1.15	451	0.249	0.122	0.106

Note. Hₐ μ Students ≠ μ Teachers

ᵃ Levene's test is significant (p < .05), suggesting a violation of the assumption of equal variances

There are three hypotheses that this research study has put forward related to *pragmatic politeness manifestations* within the hybrid/online foreign language instruction. The 1st hypothesis (*Language instructors and learners acknowledge the existence of anxiety in online foreign language instruction*) has been validated as both groups (instructors and students) admit its emergence in the online context. Subsequent research projects should focus on documenting more on the one hand the existing reasons behind online anxiety as well as on identifying coping strategies to deal with it (e.g. Politeness Toolkit_DIAL4U Project).

The second pragmatic politeness related hypothesis (*The successful projection of a professional self-image/e-face in hybrid/online*

environments is perceived as difficult to accomplish) has been validated as both parties admit that professional image projection is associated with difficulty/anxiety. Our results show that students are more stressed by e-face projection than instructors. Consequently, language instruction has to highlight positive/negative politeness strategies that may enable students to consistently practise facework.

Finally the 3rd hypothesis (*Language instructors and learners are aware of how important student engagement is in online classes*) has been partially confirmed with teachers valuing the importance of student engagement more than students do.

5. Conclusions and Further Directions

The present study has focussed on selected representations of metacognitive and pragmatic politeness in the HE foreign language instruction as documented by the response analysis to two twinned questionnaires applied to a Romanian target represented by students and instructors. Such manifestations have rarely been analysed together by researchers in the field of online/hybrid HE formal and/or non formal education. The unique selling point of this paper lies in its twofold focus on strategy provision (metacognition and politeness) that should accompany emerging efforts in providing a digital pedagogical framework that starts and continues with a focus on improving the participants' learning experience through social and emotional learning (SEL) supported guidelines. Students develop language proficiency through engagement with both their instructors and peers on task based content. When this development of competences is enhanced by the pre/while/post metacognitive reflection on strategy use, there is a high probability for students to comprehend the inner mechanisms that foster, maintain and maximise learning. Additionally, in our research paper, we have highlighted the substantial gain learners and instructors have from being informed on the intricate ways pragmatic politeness permeates and regulates effective communication at a variety of levels: linguistic, pragmatic, social, and cultural. The *why* (metacognition) intertwines with the *how* (politeness) supporting an approach to teaching modern languages by acknowledging students' needs. As our study has shown, teachers and students generally value metacognition and its impact on language learning; however, students tend to feel that metacognitive strategies are less useful in terms of language skill improvement. This may be due to students not knowing how to use strategies, especially since teachers feel they lack time for strategy training. Metacognitive strategies are generally believed to be more useful in independent self-study and in online as opposed to onsite classes.

Additionally, our results show that anxiety is an issue that arises in CMC contexts where the rules for communicating effectively are different and existing conditions may put a strain on participants.Rapport management regulates this issue through the employment of politeness strategies that may manipulate, enhance and control the communicative output to better collaborative effect. Digital anxiety is a facet of rapport management that deserves recognition and subsequent research focus. Secondly, the conscious process of e-face projection in an online environment has been validated as challenging by both respondent groups. E-face is negotiated in order to maintain an individual's autonomy/freedom from imposition, but also to provide participants with the certainty that they are acknowledged, appreciated and their inputs are important. In this line of thought, it has become apparent that digital pedagogical frameworks within which content is mediated through foreign languages need to hold interactants' human needs (cognitive, intellectual, psychological and emotional) in high regard by safeguarding their online wellbeing and safety.

This study has been founded on the above-mentioned participants' feedback and it has therefore provided an unbiased account of the benefits associated with increased awareness regarding the use of metacognitive and politeness strategies in language learning. To date, these research topics are not sufficiently explored as they hold the potential for creating learning paths that develop autonomy and activate digital cognition.. The effective processing of the sea of information available at students' fingertips through such a generous array of electronic apps and resources may be controlled to a large extent by drawing more awareness to the benefit of using metacognition and politeness knowingly and purposefully.

Our future research will concentrate on testing the obtained deliverables on a larger respondent target as well as on engaging in a compare-contrast cross-cultural analysis of their benefits and drawbacks in the respective project participant countries. Further research endeavours may tap into such feedback as context is one invaluable element that shapes the digital pedagogy landscape in *unique colours*.

Authors note: Authors contributed equally to this paper.

Ioana Mudure-Iacob is Assistant Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages for Specific Purposes, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. Her scientific fields of interest include Content and Language Integrated Learning, Assessment using digital tools, Gamification in language teaching, incorporating ICT tools in teaching and evaluation.

Ana Maria Hopârtean is a lecturer PhD at the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, where she teaches English as a foreign language. Her main research interests are cognitive psychology, learning strategies, as well as postmodern and postcolonial literature.

Veronica-Diana Micle is a lecturer Ph.D. in the Department of Modern Languages and Business Communication, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. Her scientific fields of interest include English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes, Pragmatics, Sociolinguistics, Professional Communication, Intercultural Business Communication, and Testing and Assessment.

Alexandra Cotoc is a lecturer PhD in the Department of English Language and Literature, Faculty of Letters, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. Her scientific fields of interest are Internet Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Discourse Analysis, English for Academic Purposes, and Digital Pedagogy.

Daniel Andronache, PhD, is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Educational Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. He is graduate in Pedagogy (since 2008), master degree in School Counseling (since 2010) and PhD in educational sciences (since 2013). He made a research internship at the University of Vienna and in 2014 he received a Research Fellowship in educational sciences at Babeș-Bolyai University. Daniel Andronache' main fields of interest include: curriculum design, competence-based curriculum, and teacher training.

Raluca Pop is lecturer Ph.D. at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Babeș-Bolyai University, Romania. Her research area comprises communication skills, intercultural communicative competence, digital literacy, and teaching English, Norwegian, and Swedish as foreign languages. She teaches various pre-service teacher training courses.

References

Anderson, N. J. (1991). Individual differences in strategy use in second language reading and testing. *Modern Language Journal*, 75, 460-472.

Anderson, N. J. (2003). Metacognitive reading strategies increase L2 performance. *The Language Teacher*, 27, 20-22.

Anthonysamy, L., Koo, A-C., Hew, S.-H. (2020). Self-regulated learning strategies and non-academic outcomes in higher education blended learning environments: A one-decade review. *Education and Information Technologies*, 1–28. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-020-10134-2.

Boser, U. (2018). Learning Is a Learned Behavior. Here's How to Get Better at It. Retrieved December 10, 2022, from https://hbr.org/2018/05/learning-is-a-learned-behavior-heres-how-to-get-better-at-it? utm_medium=social

Broadbent, J., & Poon, W. L. L. (2015). Self-regulated learning strategies & academic achievement in online higher education learning environments: A systematic review. *Internet and Higher Education*, 27, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iheduc.2015.04.007.

Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL Model of SEL): https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/ (last accessed on 27.02.2023)

Cohen, A.D. (1998). *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. Harlow: Longman.

Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment. Companion volume (2018), (pp. 1-235).Link: https://rm.coe.int/cefr-companion-volume-with-new-descriptors-2018/1680787989

Cotoc, A., & Pop, R., (2022). Students' attitudes towards the use of digital apps in two online courses: an English course and a Norwegian course. in E. Bobkina, J. Herrrero, C. Radoulska, S. Vanderschelden, I. Vanderschelden. (Eds). *Visual literacy and digital communication: The role of media in new educational practices (pp.117-135)*.Granada: Comares.

Dumford, A. D., & Miller, A. L. (2018). Online learning in higher education: Exploring advantages and disadvantages for engagement. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 30(3), 452–465. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-018-9179-z.

Flavell, J. H. (1979). Metacognition and cognitive monitoring: A new area of cognitive developmental inquiry. *American Psychologist*, 34, pp. 906-911.

Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, 18(3), (pp.213-23)1.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual. Essays on Face-to-face Behavior*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Goradia, T., & Bugarcic, A. (2017). A social cognitive view of self-regulated learning within online environment. *Advances in Integrative Medicine*, 4(1), 5–6. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aimed.2017.05.001

Greene, J., Schunk, D. (coord.) (2018). *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance*. New York: Routledge, 83–106.

Hadwin, A.F., Järvelä, S., Miller M. (2018). Self-regulation, co-regulation and shared regulation in collaborative learning environments. In J. Greene, D. Schunk, (coord.), *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance* (pp. 83–106). New York: Routledge.

Harwood, C. (2017). Politeness and University Student Online Communication. *The Journal of the Faculty of Foreign Studies, Aichi Prefectural University*. 49, (pp.35-45). Link: (PDF) Politeness and University Student Online Communication (researchgate.net)

Haugh, M. (2013). *Disentangling face, facework and im/politeness: Desentrañando la imagen social, la actividad de imagen y la (des)cortesía*. , *1*(1), 46-73. https://doi.org/10.1515/soprag-2012-0005

Johnson, S. D., Aragon, S.R., Shaik, N. (2000) Comparative analysis of learner satisfaction and learning outcomes in online and face-to-face learning environments. J*ournal of Interactive Learning Research* 11: 29–49.

Kádár, D., & Haugh, M. (2013). *Understanding Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. doi:10.1017/CBO9781139382717.

Macaro, E. (2001). *Learning strategies in foreign and second language classrooms*. London: Continuum.

Mudure-Iacob, I. (2022). Mapping Language Learning with Emojis: From Phatic Communication to Idioms and Flash Fiction, *STUDIA UBB PHILOLOGIA*, LXVII, 4, 2022, p. 275 - 294 DOI:10.24193/subbphilo.2022.4.14. Link: STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS - Abstract (ubbcluj.ro).

Mudure-Iacob, I., Cotoc. A., Hopartean A., Micle V. D., Andronache D. (2022). *Autonomous Digital Language Learning in Higher Education. The DIAL4U Erasmus+Project*, International Conference on Virtual Learning, ISSN 2971-9291, ISSN-L 1844-8933, vol. 17, pp. 127-141, 2022. https://doi.org/10.58503/icvl-v17y202211. Link: https://icvl.ro/current-issue/autonomous-digital-language-learning-in-higher-education-the-dial4u-erasmusproject/ Full article: https://icvl.ro/documents/20/art._11_MUDURE-IACOB_et_al..pdf

O'Malley, J. M., and Chamot, A. U. (1990). *Learning strategies in second language acquisition*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Oxford, R. (1990). *Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know*. New York: Newbury House Publishers.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). *Language learning styles and strategies: An Overview*. Oxford: GALA

Perkins, D. (1992). *Smart Schools: Better Thinking and Learning for Every Child*. New York: Free Press.

Raoofi, S., Chan, S. H.., Mukundan, J., & Md Rashid, S. (2014). Metacognition and second/foreign language learning. *English Language Teaching*, *7*(1), 36-49. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v7n1p36

Veenman, M. V. J., & Spaans, M. A. (2005). Relation between intellectual and metacognitive skills: Age and task differences. *Learning and Individual Differences, 15*(2), 159–176. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2004.12.001

Wenden, A. (1998). Metacognitive knowledge and language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 19(4), 515–537.

Wenden, A. L. (2002). Learner development in language learning. *Applied Linguistics*, 23, 32-55.

Zins, J. E. (2004). *Building Academic Success on Social and Emotional Learning : What Does the Research Say*? Teachers College Press.