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ADDED ESL LEARNING SUPPORT FOR HOME-SCHOOLERS WITH E-LEARNING SELF-STUDY MATERIALS FOR BASIC SCHOOL LEARNERS (Grade 9)

Master's thesis

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Jelena Korsak 10.05.2022

PREFACE

The absence of students from school has always had a negative impact on their academic performance. Students who regularly attend school perform better than those who do not do it (Child Trend Databank 2015). In previous years, the school has focused on eliminating the reasons why students miss classes and improving attendance. However, the situation has changed in recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Frequent absences have become a norm. Even those students who were not previously referred to as regularly absent are now forced to to miss classes from time to time miss classes, either due to having been in contact with infected people or due to infection. In this regard, there was a need to create additional electronic material for those students who study at home in order to support them in independent learning.

The research task is to understand if additional materials for self-study in English, created in an electronic environment for absent students of basic school (grade 9), help to learn the subject better and improve academic performance. The aim of the research is to determine how to support the learning/teaching process during the period of frequent absences of students from school, to develop additional materials in electronic environment for students who study at home. The study is also aimed at analysing the impact of this kind of support on the performance of students of Narva Orthodox Gymnasium in English.

The paper consists of four parts: the introduction, two main chapters and the conclusion. The introduction discusses main reasons for the absence of students from school and the impact of missed lessons on their academic performance, as well as possible methods of supporting those students who, due to various reasons for their absence, study subject topics on their own. The first chapter, "E-learning Self –study Materials for Home-schoolers" considers various additional materials and forms of support to students who are forced to study the subject of English language on their own. In the second chapter "The Influence of Additional E- materials for Self-study in English on the Academic Performance of Grade 9 Students" an analysis of the results obtained during the study is presented. The outcomes of this research are summarised in the conclusion.

INTRODUCTION

Reasons for Absenteeism and the Impact of Absence on Academic Achievement

In recent years, schools have faced acute problems with the completion by students of the National Curriculum because many students often miss classes. Absence from school directly affects students' knowledge and academic performance. Students who attend school regularly score higher on tests than their peers who are frequently absent (Child Trend Databank 2015). Literature on school absenteeism dates back to 1932 when Broadwin characterised some children to exhibit a set of behaviours in refusing school that "are an attempt to obtain love, or escape from real situations to which it is difficult to adjust" (Rasasingham 2015). Cook and Ezenne (2010) determine absenteeism as absences from school that are persistent, habitual, and unexplained or explained with good reason. Kearney (2001) defines absenteeism as legal or illegal absence from school or class. Legitimate reasons for missing school include illness, religious holidays, having to attend family funerals, hazardous weather, and exceptions to attend college or certain jobs. Lee and Miltenberger, (1996) also write about such a definition as "School Refusal Behaviour". School Refusal Behaviour is a child's motivated refusal to attend school. This is different from truancy, which is defined as illegal absence from school without parental knowledge and consent. A truant child usually tries to "hide" this fact from his parents.

Absence of 20% or more of the total school days in a school year is defined as chronic absenteeism. The reasons for the absence of students can be different. Poor health, parents' nonstandard work schedules, low socioeconomic status, changes in adult household composition (e.g., adults moving into or out of the household), residential mobility, and extensive family responsibilities (e.g., children looking after siblings)— along with inadequate supports for students within the educational system (e.g., lack of adequate transportation, unsafe conditions, lack of medical services, harsh disciplinary measures, etc.) — are all associated with a greater likelihood of being absent, and particularly with being chronically absent (García and Weiss 2018). In addition to reasons that are drawn from home, there can also be bad relationships with classmates. Many studies based on interviews with teachers, students and parents have

shown that school violence is a common cause of absenteeism. Parents perceived the main cause of truancy to be bullying, problems with teachers and peer pressure to stay away from school (Wilson and Davidson 2013).

Jacob and Lovett (2017) categorise the underlying causes of truancy into four groups:

- Student-specific factor which includes such reasons as teenage motherhood, low academic performance and repeating grades, lack of caring relationships with adults, negative peer influence and bullying.
- Family-specific factor which includes low parent involvement, at-home responsibilities, stressful family events conflicting home and school priorities.
- School-specific factor is poor conditions or lack of school facilities, low-quality teachers, etc.
- Community-specific factor which includes unsafe neighbourhoods, low compulsory education requirements, lack of social and education support services etc.

It should also be emphasised that in different age groups the reasons for absenteeism are also different. Moreover, students who often miss school lessons may subsequently exhibit behaviour that is contrary to social norms and principles. In addition, school absenteeism is often embedded in a broader pattern of social deviant behaviour: youth with attendance problems have an increased risk of stealing, getting involved in vandalism and are more likely to partake in behaviours at the risk of their health (Keppens, Spruyt and Dockx 2019).

The most serious factor that significantly exacerbated the problems with students' attendance and academic performance in the last two years was the COVID-19 pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted every aspect of society. In mid-April 2020, 192 countries closed their schools, putting 9 out of 10 enrolled children out of school (Chávez, Valenza, Rigole, Dreesen 2021). Due to the danger of infection, students were forced to learn distantly, and many students were not able to cope with the educational process in this form. The distance form of education primarily affected the psychological state of students and, as a result, led to a decrease in learning outcomes. During and after the pandemic, many studies conducted in different countries showed that COVID-19 had a negative impact on students' attendance and

academic performance (Mahdy 2021; Dorn, Hancock and Viruleg 2021). Unable to cope with the changed form of teaching, some students refused to participate in educational activities. Student absenteeism and disengagement during the pandemic, regardless of the modality of learning, have increased in many jurisdictions (Goldstein et al. 2020). Primary and secondary school students experienced the greatest difficulties during this period, but the most vulnerable students were at risk. This category includes those students who already had problems attending school before the pandemic. Whitley, Beauchamp and Brown (2021) describe vulnerable students as those who under the influence of various factors are more likely to be adversely affected by events that cause significant disruption to daily life. Support for vulnerable students, unlike those who study at home and are absent for objective reasons, by the school is aimed at eliminating the factors that influence the reason for the absence, including online lessons.

However, a study by non-profit research organisation ImpactEd also found that those children who struggled the most were not always those previously identified as vulnerable (Whittaker 2021). Moreover, after the lockdown and distance learning, almost all students are periodically forced to be absent. Because of the risk of infection, contact, and also due to illness, students continue to miss classes. Upon contact with a person who has been diagnosed with covid-19, the student must be in self-isolation for at least a week. This results in students being absent from school for weeks at a time. As a result, even those students who were not at risk are forced to miss a large number of lessons, which inevitably leads to the loss of knowledge.

Whittaker (2021) also states that the study has shown that remote learning has had the greatest impact on exam students. According to the data of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (2021), the results of compulsory exams in both basic and upper secondary schools have deteriorated over the past three years. Graduates showed the worst results in 2021. While absent from school, the responsibility for learning lies with the student, because with a long absence, the greatest loss in knowledge occurs. As long as the risk of infection with covid-19 persists, the absence of students from classes will be permanent and, as a result, the issue of maintaining students' knowledge at an appropriate level continues to be acute.

To conclude, with regular absences from school, students lose knowledge, which leads to a deterioration in academic performance. Despite the fact that the reasons for absence from classes may be different, students need support. The right methods and resources are essential for students to improve their learning outcomes.

Distance Learning and Home-schoolers Support

Due to the fact that absence from school is now inevitable, distance learning should be organised in such a way that to minimise the loss in students' knowledge. Distance education is defined as a method of teaching where the student and teacher are physically separated. It can utilise a combination of technologies, including correspondence, audio, video, computer, and the Internet (Kentnor 2015). Bates (2005) defines distance education as a method in which students can learn at their own pace, choosing the most suitable location and without personal contact with the teacher.

The concept of distance learning has been around for a long time as a necessity for those who could not be present in the classroom. Distance learning first appeared in the late 1800s at the University of Chicago. It was the first correspondence programme for students (McIsaac 2004). Bates (2005) describes the development of distance education in three major generations. In the first generation, students were given lists of books to read on their own, and interaction between students and teachers was mostly in the form of correspondence. In the second generation, a multimedia approach was created with educational materials specifically for distance learning. Due to the fact that this method of distance learning made it possible to serve many students at the same time, this training was cost-effective. Third generation distance education is based on two-way communication, such as video tutorials, to create a more personalised approach and provide support to the student from the teacher.

For students who, due to certain circumstances, study at home, distance learning offers a number of advantages. This form of education can contribute to the continuation of previously interrupted studies, as it allows an adult learner to plan their time more flexibly and combine study with work, family and personal life (Edwards, Cordray, Dorbolo, 2000). Distance learning offers flexibility for students who are unable to attend school due to temporary illness or permanent special needs such as limited

mobility or social anxiety. Technological opportunities enable students with special needs to participate in learning remotely. With the expansion of distance learning opportunities at the turn of the millennium, the participation of people with special learning needs has increased significantly (Moisey 2004). Moreover, distance learning offers students the opportunity to study at their own convenience and in a more individual way.

However, some researchers also describe the disadvantages of distance learning. The main disadvantages of participating in distance learning are the factors that can interfere with learning in the student's home. Technological disruptions and complex digital solutions also hamper distance learning. Lack of contact with the teacher has also been cited as a disadvantage of distance learning (Doug 2002). Some authors note that distance learning is more suitable for older or more successful students who can plan their time, stay focused and take responsibility for the consequences of their actions. Pupils of elementary and secondary schools, as well as less successful students, risk not coping with learning (Dag 2002; Rashid, Rashid 2012; Safiullin, Fatkhiev, Bagautdinova 2013). The situation can also be aggravated by insufficient attention and support from the teacher.

As already mentioned previously, distance learning meant working independently with a list of necessary literature. Recently, much has changed and distance learning is primarily online learning. Kentnor (2015) determines online learning and teaching as one of four forms of distance education (post, radio, television, the Internet). Moore and Kearsley (2012) state that for successful online teaching, the educator must understand the nature of stages of interaction. The authors distinguish three types of interaction: learner-content interaction, when the student works independently with the provided educational materials, and the presence of the teacher is necessary only for support in case of any questions; learner-instructor interaction, in which the teacher actively supports the learning process by presenting content and motivating students, and learner-learner interaction in which groups of students support each other in the learning process. The task of the teacher is to determine the appropriate form of interaction and, in accordance with it, provide support to students who are permanently or temporarily studying at home. When selecting and compiling materials, the teacher must take into account the age of students, needs and level of knowledge of the subject.

The teacher should also pay attention to the student's self-study competence. As mentioned earlier, it is more difficult for a student who studies at home, and s/he bears a lot of responsibility, and the deterioration of examination results in Estonia confirms it too. The pandemic began unexpectedly, and later studies showed that teachers were generally not prepared to provide students with the necessary support during distance learning (Andarwulan, Akbar Al Fajr, Damayanti 2021). It is clear that living and learning in the era of covid-19 is a new reality and the development of additional materials for students at home is an urgent need. During this period, pupils of the basic school (grade 9), who have to take an examination in subjects, including English, find themselves in a particularly difficult situation. Based on the foregoing, it can be hypothesised that additional self-study e-learning materials in English for home-schoolers improve students' academic performance.

CHAPTER I E-LEARNING SELF-STUDY MATERIALS FOR HOME-SCHOOLERS

1.1.Teaching-Learning Materials and the Basis for their Development

Teaching and learning a foreign language is based on the complex development of reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. At the end of grade 9, the student should have an intermediate level of English in reading, listening and speaking. To achieve the required level of foreign language proficiency among students, teachers select appropriate methods and materials.

The basic school national curriculum of Estonia states that the most important principle of student-centred teaching of a foreign language is the correspondence of the content of the material used in the study of the language to the interests of the student, as well as the openness of educational materials, their adaptation and addition in accordance with the goals and needs of the student (Riigi Teataja 2011)

As a rule, teaching materials present some tools provided by a teacher or school for learning. In other words, it is a set of materials that includes textbooks, templates, or additional information about classroom activities, etc. that teachers can use to help students accomplish learning objectives. Some researchers give similar definitions to the concept of teaching-learning material. The teaching-learning materials are defined as the instruments of presentations and transmission of the prescribed educational material (Busljeta 2013). Researchers Pedastsaar (2013) and Mikk (2000) define learning materials as teaching and learning support materials that include both written and illustrated information. Teaching and learning materials have different content and volume, and their task is to help teachers in solving various topics and conducting activities (Pedastsaar 2013). Tomlinson (2011), on the other hand, states that educational materials include everything that can be used to study and teach a language. The design of learning materials is based on the following: relevance to the curriculum, the structure and appearance of the material and its content (Tomlinson 2011). The preparation of teaching-learning material should be guided by the National Curriculum, which states that activity planning is based on expected learning outcomes, which are usually based on the development of speaking skills, vocabulary and grammar. Sheils (1993) identifies the following criteria that should be considered

when compiling teaching materials: tasks should be linguistically correct; the level of difficulty of the tasks should correspond to the language level of the students; assignments should use as much authentic language as possible; assignments should provide students with the opportunity to communicate with each other.

Teaching materials can be compiled based on various models. The process of designing educational materials is similar to such disciplines as programming, logistics, design and applied psychology. This is a sequence of well-defined procedures that are grouped into a number of stages and have specific tasks and methods for their solution. One of the oldest and most common is ADDIE (Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation). The ADDIE model of instructional design is a generic instructional model that provides an organised process for developing instructional materials (Shelton, Saltsman 2006). It divides the development process into five stages: analysis, design, development, operation and evaluation. The content of the steps in this model depends on the end goal (Branch 2009). At the analysis stage, the needs of students are highlighted, goals are formulated and a list of expected outcomes is compiled. At the design stage, detailed scenarios and prototypes are created, interface designs are made and content is defined. The development stage includes the creation of content and training materials based on the results of work in the design stage. At the implementation stage, the process of interaction between the teacher and the student is developed. Materials are delivered to students. After implementation, the effectiveness is evaluated. At the evaluation stage, it is necessary to correlate the tasks set at the analysis stage with the results obtained in practice. The teaching-learning materials themselves, the achievement of learning objectives, the feasibility of a particular type of task and their compliance with the overall task are evaluated. Also, other models are often taken as the basis for compiling study materials, such as Dick and Carey Model or Kemp's Model. Dick and Carey Model is based on the relationship between educational content, context, learning behaviour and teaching methodology. Development here begins with setting a learning goal, but the further work process consists of parallel developing stages and iterations.

Kemp's model is also termed as the Morrison, Rose, and Kemp model, which represents innovation to the instructional design by its non-linear structure and the

interrelated nature of its components (Morrison, Ross, Kemp, Kalman 2010). The Kemp Model is different among most of the models because it is focused on the learner. It is represented by a continuous cycle which includes planning, design, development and constant evaluation to ensure effective instruction (Sims and Jones 2002).

1.2.Types of Teaching-Learning Materials and Benefits of Using them

The teacher uses study materials to make teaching-learning effective. They also help students achieve learning outcomes. The following are some of the reasons for using teaching-learning materials. The first reason is student motivation. Teachers use different instructional materials to motivate learning by using textbooks, charts, models, graphics, real objects as well as improvised materials (Awiotua-Efebo 2001). Interesting teaching materials attract the attention of the student and increase his motivation. The second reason is to help in longer retention of information. The more sensory channels are involved in interaction with study materials, the longer the information will be remembered. Therefore, studying will be effective and will last for a long time. The third reason is to facilitate holistic learning. In the learning process, various learning objectives related to different areas - cognitive, affective and psychomotor - should be achieved. Therefore, in order to achieve different goals, it is necessary to provide a variety of learning experiences, which can be done with educational materials. The fourth reason is to help in organising classroom teaching, i.e. assistance in the organisation of teaching in the classroom. The teacher needs to organise the learning process, making it as realistic as possible. Visual or verbal teaching-learning can be used to present accurate data in a consistently organised manner, which aids teachers in verbal and visual communication in the classroom. Thus, study materials can be used to overcome the shortcomings of verbal or visual communication. Next, the materials help to facilitate change in attitude: the use of additional learning materials, such as pictures or models, helps to instill a positive attitude in students, which has a positive effect on students' attitudes towards the subject as a whole. Moreover, there are some practical applications: the use of teaching and learning materials helps to put theoretical knowledge into practice, which helps to make learning more effective. In addition, the use of teaching-learning materials helps to make learning in the classroom more fun. Students enjoy working

with new objects and learning new concepts with them. Mathew (2012) states that the use of educational materials makes teaching effective because it allows students to actively participate in learning in the classroom. Finally, the reason to use teaching-learning materials is to support concept formation: study materials help facilitate the formation and acquisition of concepts in children. They help to concretize abstract concepts so that children can understand them without resorting to rote memorization.

Teaching learning materials can be classified in a variety of ways. Dale (1969) proposed a Cone of Experience for classification. He experimented with various teaching-learning materials and classified them based on the type of experience the learner had, from the concrete to the abstract. Another possible classification of teaching materials is based on the feelings they stimulate in students, which in turn affects the effectiveness of the learning process. They can be divided into three categories: audio materials; visual materials; audio visual materials.

Audio teaching-learning materials primarily stimulate student's hearing through voice, telephone conversations, audio CDs/MP3 files, or radio broadcasts.

Visual types of teaching-learning materials include vision. They stimulate visual impulses. Jane (2004) states that the use of visual teaching materials also encourages body movement and can increase control. They can be of various types, such as visual printing, textbooks, handbooks, encyclopedias, magazine, newspaper, documents and clippings, written materials, programmed materials, case studies and reports. Pictorial visual materials can also be non-projected and projected. Non-projected materials can be two-dimensional such as charts, posters, maps, diagrams, graphs, photographs, and comic strips and three-dimensional such as models, mock-up, diorama, globe, relief map, specimen, puppet, and hologram. A three-dimensional image of a real object or phenomenon helps students to comprehend it. Projected visual materials include images that are displayed on a screen and are thus closer to reality than visual non-projected ones. It includes slides, filmstrips, microfilms, microcards, etc.

Audio visual learning materials are projected aids that use both auditory and visual senses to make learning more effective. Their biggest advantage is that they are the closest representation of reality. These include movies, television, video discs / files, slide presentations, multimedia computer.

Kapur (2019) states that the main purpose of creating educational materials is to motivate the student towards acquisition of education. She also describes the main benefits of creating educational materials as follows:

- They support the learning of students. The use of teaching-learning materials will contribute to the effective learning of students. They can update their knowledge and generate information in terms of various aspects.

- They facilitate impartment of instructions. Teachers use teaching materials to convey knowledge and understanding to students in terms of lesson plans and academic concepts. Therefore, facilitating the transmission of instructions is considered one of the most obvious benefits of teaching materials.

- They promote differentiation of instruction. Sometimes students cannot understand concepts with one teaching method or only one teaching material, in which case teachers use additional technologies, audio-visual aids and other teaching and learning materials that may be useful in achieving the goal.

- They lead to increase in motivation levels. The effective use of teaching and learning materials helps to increase the motivation of not only students, but also teachers. Increasing the level of motivation will allow teachers and students to focus on tasks and activities in a well-organised manner, gain an effective understanding of lesson plans and academic concepts, and achieve academic goals and objectives.

- They promote pleasurable learning. When teaching materials are used in a well-organised and effective manner, teachers and students create a friendly and enjoyable learning environment and contribute to an enjoyable learning experience.

- They lead to enrichment in academic goals and objectives. In the context of rapidly changing goals and objectives of education and adaptation of educational institutions to new conditions, the enrichment of academic goals and objectives is achieved through the introduction of teaching-learning materials.

- They lead to up-grade of decision making and critical thinking skills. In the process of working with diverse and new teaching-learning materials, students get a new experience and learn to make decisions, which leads to the development of critical thinking skills.

- They facilitate application of concepts in personal lives. The concepts that are learned, including through teaching-learning materials, should not only provide educational knowledge, but also facilitate their application in the student's life.

1.3. Digital or E- learning Materials

Modern education is increasingly influenced by technology and the most relevant today are e-learning materials, because they provide more opportunities for teachers and students, especially those who cannot attend lessons at school. In recent years, the need for e-learning materials has increased significantly. Alenesi (2020) argues that e-learning materials provide a wide range of opportunities that teachers can take advantage of to expose their students to new information. It improves the quality of teaching by expanding the scope that any interested teacher or tutor can have. Removing barriers to achievement, e-learning presents new and creative ways teachers can use to motivate and engage their students, regardless of their abilities, offering differentiated learning. Differentiated learning is especially useful for students who need additional support in areas such as literacy, numeracy and ICT. Feng Teng (2019) states that rich and fluid digital content is needed to make online learning more attractive to learners. Online learning should be a combination of different forms of digital content. It must be adapted to the characteristics of the students and to the learning objectives. Additional e-learning materials are no longer just a means to further increase student interest in the lesson, but a necessary resource, especially during the COVID-19 period. According to the Education and Youth Authority, digital learning materials or e-learning materials are study materials published in digital format. These include e-textbooks, e-workbooks, educational videos, e-tests, etc (Education and Youth Authority 2022). Yang (2014) writes that digital learning materials combine words, pictures, cartoons, and audiovisual films to digitise information. The main role of educational material is to provide content (learning content) in a certain form (textual, auditory, visual, or a combination of these forms). Examples of learning materials are digital textbooks, presentations or MOOCs (Schuwer, 2019) The Internet offers a huge variety of content that can be used for teaching and learning a foreign language, but which requires careful selection and

possible modifications to ensure adequate and effective use of such content in the distance education system.

Berg, Blijleven and Jansen (2001) present the following classification of types of digital learning materials and briefly describe their role in learning processes:

• Drill and Practice. The most popular digital learning materials are programmes for practising acquired knowledge. In essence, these programmes build on what learners already know and give students the opportunity to reinforce and repeat knowledge and practice (Weber 1999). The educational value of these programs depends on the quality of its educational and technical design. The advantage of drill and practice programmes is that students can complete tasks at their own pace without much help from the teacher.

• Tutorial. Unlike Drill and Practice programmes, tutorial programmes promote the acquisition of knowledge and/or skills. Tutorials basically offer predetermined sequences to build the desired knowledge and skills. They often use immediate feedback to guide learning effectively.

• Multimedia. Like teaching aids, multimedia tools are primarily intended for the acquisition of knowledge. Multimedia programmes usually contain a large amount of information encoded in a non-textual way, such as images, animations and videos.

• Simulations. Simulations make optimal use of the interactive capabilities of computer technology. They allow learners to simulate and deal with tasks that would be too laborious in real life.

• Educational games. Educational games have an (often hidden) educational purpose. Knowledge and skills are transferred in a fun way in the game. This type of entertainment is the integration of play and learning. This brings us to the most distinctive educational feature of games, their ability to induce high motivation in students.

• Tools. There is a wide range of tools that can serve educational purposes such as blogs, online tutorials or online encyclopaedias.

To ensure that educational materials meet quality requirements, when compiling e-learning materials the teacher should rely on certain criteria. Compliance with the principles of quality when creating digital educational materials makes it possible to improve the quality of training and expand the possibilities of its delivery. Learner-centred content helps create and maintain motivation to learn. Willems, Aluoja, Pilt et al. (2015) propose to be guided by the following criteria when compiling e-learning materials based on the Learning Object Review Instrument (LORI) (Leacock et al. 2007):

- Support of learning - the previous knowledge, needs, volume of study material and expected learning outcomes of the target group have been taken into account;

- High quality of the content - the study material created must form a unified whole, the language and content used must be correct;

- Motivation- the age specifics and interests of the target group must be taken into account, tasks of different difficulty levels must be offered and different learning strategies must be applied;

- Adaptability - good study material can be used in different study groups, with students with different prior knowledge and skills;

- Interactivity - the learner must also be able to act, research and discover independently, receiving immediate feedback on the knowledge they acquire;

- Compliancy with copyright – the material follows the Copyright Act (2015), uses an appropriate licence and refers to co-authors;

- User-friendliness - the content of the study material is well thought out, the design and pictures are attractive;

- Technical correctness and compatibility - the study material can be used with a common operating system, software and equipment;

- Discoverability - digital learning materials are publicly visible and accessible on the web, metadata is included.

When developing digital learning materials, the authors also recommend relying on the ADDIE (analyse, design, development, implementation, evaluation) model, which has already been described.

As mentioned earlier, additional online learning material is needed not only for variety and motivation, but also to support those students who cannot be at school and are forced to study on their own. Creating additional e-learning material in an electronic environment would help such students, because in this case they are not left without support. By creating e-materials for absent students, teachers provide them with necessary support, while students can work in a way that is comfortable for them. They work at their own pace and may have access to multi-modal materials (text, visual elements, video, audio etc.) (Curtis et al 1999).

Moreover, the creation of additional educational materials is necessary for both the student and the teacher. The successful application of such support will help the teacher avoid additional workload in the future, because in case of unsatisfactory grades, the school year is extended for the student and the teacher must develop an individual programme to correct the grade. The Republic of Estonia Education Act (2011) states that a student who has an unsatisfactory annual grade in one or more subjects or has not submitted an annual grade in order to achieve the required study results of the curriculum is left for additional studies. After the end of the study period, the student is left for additional studies for 5–10 study days at the time determined by the decision of the Board of Studies until 25 August. The length of the study day is up to five lessons (Põhikooli Riiklik Õppekava, lisa 2, 2011) Hence, it can be concluded that additional support in the form of electronic materials can positively affect learning outcomes and help students learn independently.

CHAPTER II

E-COURSE WITH E-LEARNING MATERIALS FOR ABSENT STUDENTS OF GRADE 9 IN GOOGLE CLASSROOM.

To study the impact of additional digital educational materials on the performance of students who are absent from school, the research was conducted among students in the 9th grade of the main school. The purpose of the study was to determine whether the use of additional digital educational materials positively affects the performance of students who are forced to be absent from school. Recently, students have to be absent a lot due to the danger of the spread of COVID-19, which negatively affects the academic performance of students. According to data published on the website of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research (2022), distance learning has also affected the results of state exams. The lowest figures were in 2021. To test the hypothesis, the author created an additional digital course, in which students were offered additional materials for independent study.

Despite the wide variety of learning platforms for conducting e-learning courses, such as Moodle, Edmodo, Blackboard, SEVIMA EdLink and Schoology the choice to create an online course with additional learning materials for those absent from school was made in favor of Google Classroom for a number of reasons. Several studies (Mafa, 2018; Nizal, Shaharanee, Jamil, Syamimi, & Rodzi, 2016) have found that working with the Google Classroom platform is fascinating for students and they expressed satisfaction with learning activities in the Google Classroom. Moreover, the use of additional learning materials using a digital environment helps students develop digital competence. The materials and tasks presented in the e-course are compiled taking into account the digital competence model, which is based on areas of the digital competences listed in the international DIGCOMP1 framework:

- Information: identify, locate, retrieve, store, organise and analyse digital information, judging its relevance and purpose.

- Communication: communicate in digital environments, share resources through online tools, link with others and collaborate through digital tools, interact with and participate in communities and networks, cross-cultural awareness.

- Content-creation: Create and edit new content (from word processing to images and video); integrate and re-elaborate previous knowledge and content; produce creative expressions, media outputs and programming; deal with and apply intellectual property rights and licences.

- Safety: personal protection, data protection, digital identity protection, security measures, safe and sustainable use.

- Problem-solving: identify digital needs and resources, make informed decisions as to which are the most appropriate digital tools according to the purpose or need, solve conceptual problems through digital means, creatively use technologies, solve technical problems, update one's own and others' competences. (Ferrari, 2013)

The tasks presented in this electronic course are aimed at developing such areas as Communication, Content-creation and Problem-solving. Wherein, Google Classroom is not too difficult digital platform for students and teachers to use. Janzen (2014) stated that the app is easy to use and interact with. At the same time, using the application saves time because it has a user-friendly interface and integrates other Google applications such as documents, slides and spreadsheets. Hussaini and Lebata (2020) in their study, cite the following benefits of using Google Classroom for teachers:

- Allows teachers to publish lecture notes, create assignments, make announcements, set deadlines for assignments.

- Teachers can divide the class into different groups, then give each group different tasks, thus making the learning process active and interesting.

- The learning platform makes it easy to identify students who miss assignments and students who turn in their assignments late.

- At the same time, the platform allows teachers to extend due dates so that all students can submit their assignments, and it also allows teachers to update or view students' grades.

- Also it gives teachers opportunity to reuse previous messages in order to post them to the same group or to another group.

Futhermore, Narva Orthodox Gymnasium has recently started using the Google platform on a permanent basis and each teacher and student of the school has a personal Google account.

Lee and Cha (2021) in their study, they write that despite the fact that the educational program developed by Google as a free online service for schools was launched back in 2014, it was first released to the general public in 2017. As a Google Suite educational component, it allows anyone with a Google account to create, teach, and join a class. The main goal of Google Classroom is to make it easier for teachers and students to share files over the Internet. The platform allows users to link to his or her other Google services such as Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, etc. This gets rid of paper copies of documents. The teacher creates the class and provides the class code to the students. The teacher can compose tasks using Google documents, presentation tables, add links and videos. It is also possible to create texts for verification in Google Forms, which has the ability to automatically check. There are different types of questions in Google Forms: Short answer; Paragraph for longer answers; Multiple choice Checkboxes; Multiple-choice grid and Tick Box grid.

In addition to the opportunities offered by Google Classroom, the Liveworksheets service was used to create worksheets. It is an educational tool that allows teachers to transform traditional worksheets (doc, pdf, png or jpg format) into interactive online exercises. With the help of this service, additional tasks and materials were created and added to the class folder. Worksheets in this learning environment are checked automatically, but the teacher can change a student's grade at their discretion.

A course that was created for 9th grade students of the Narva Orthodox Gymnasium in Google Classroom duplicates the materials and topics that are studied in the classroom, as well as includes additional tasks and explanations. The online course with additional materials began to work on January 17, 2022. Additional materials were compiled taking into account the topics that should be studied in the 9th grade, as well as taking into account the competencies that should be developed during the

assignments. According to the National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011) in the 9th grade, the following topics are studied:

- •Me and others - abilities; interpersonal relationships; virtual communication;

- Family and home - home and surroundings; behaviour in the home environment and nature, environmental sustainability, safety; family traditions;

- My motherland Estonia - geographical map of Estonia; administrative division; nature protection; Estonian sights;

- Countries and cultures - continents, countries of the world, their natural and cultural characteristics, places of natural beauty, natural phenomena;

- Everyday life. Study and work   - healthy lifestyle; money; emergencies; medical care; further education; student exchange; stakeholders at school; media and advertising;

- Spare time - travel preparation and modes of travel; trips to other countries; leisure activities.

Topics that were covered in the selected period and presented in the Google Classroom: *Me and others, Countries and Cultures and Spare Time.* In addition to subject competencies, assignments should develop general competencies.

According to the Estonian National Basic School Curriculum (2011) general competences are the following:

- Value competence
- Social competence
- Self-management competence
- Learning to learn competence competences
- Communication competence
- Mathematics competence
- Digital competence
- Entrepreneurship competence.

To develop the competencies, the curriculum offers the following activities: Listening to and reading different types of age-appropriate texts, including independent reading; Use of media and authentic audiovisual materials (eg newspaper articles, news, films); Creative work (e.g., poems, short literature, personal letters, announcements, announcements, short reviews); Short abstracts and simpler research; Project work; Oral presentations (e.g., summaries of project work and independent reading); Role and communication games; Searching for information from various foreign language reference sources (e.g., translation dictionary, the Internet).

When compiling e-learning materials for the online course texts, audio and video materials and presentations were used. Also, the materials of this course are aimed at developing value, social, self-management, learning, entrepreneurship and digital competences.

According to the Estonian National Curriculum the required level of language proficiency in reading, writing, speaking, listening and grammar of the 9th grade is B.1.2.

Listening to level B1.2 implies that student understands the hearing, understands the main message as well as the details when talking about common topics (e.g. news, sports reports, interviews, presentations, lectures) and the speech is clear and general.

In reading, the student understands multi-page texts with clear reasoning on various topics (e.g. media texts for young people, adapted fiction texts). Can find the necessary information in a longer deliberative text. Collects relevant information from several texts. Uses different reading strategies (eg general reading, selective reading). The details and nuances in the texts may be unclear.

In speaking, the student is able to convey the content of a book, film, performance, etc. and describe his / her impressions. Can usually cope with less typical communication situations. Uses basic vocabulary and common phrases correctly; errors occur when using more complex sentence structures. Expresses himself quite freely, asking for help if necessary. Pronunciation is clear, intonation and stress errors do not interfere with communication.

In writing can compile a summary based on information from different sources (eg a brief overview of events, persons). Can describe a real or imagined event. Can convey experiences, feelings and events in a personal letter. Can write a short article expressing his / her opinion on a learned topic.

In grammar, the student can use formation patterns quite correctly. Uses a fairly grammatically correct language in a familiar situation, although the effect of the mother tongue is noticeable. There are mistakes, but they do not interfere understanding.

Learning outcomes by the end of grade 9 are the following:

1) Student understands everything important on a familiar topic;

2) is able to describe experiences, events, dreams and goals and briefly justify and explain his or her views and plans;

3) is able to compose a simple text on a familiar topic;

4) can usually cope with everyday communication with people who speak the language they are learning, based on the cultural practices of the country of the language being studied;

5) is interested in the cultural life of the countries speaking the language being studied, reads age-appropriate literature in a foreign language, watches films and television programs and listens to radio programs;

6) uses foreign language reference sources (eg translation dictionary, Internet) to search for necessary information in other fields and subjects;

7) works independently, in pairs and in a group;

8) with the help of the teacher, evaluates his / her strengths and weaknesses according to the set goals and adjusts his / her learning strategies. (Põhikooli Riiklik Õppekava, lisa 2, 2011: 12-14)

As mentioned earlier, all students of Narva Orthodox Gymnasium have their own Google accounts, there was no need to create new ones, they were added to the Google

class as users. The course was introduced to the students, its structure and requirements for completing assignments, as well as assessment criteria. Additional instructions on working with Google Classroom was not required for students of this class, because they already have experience working with this platform. In the course sub-topics were created that included digital versions of the tasks that were completed in the classroom, as well as additional tasks for reading, writing, vocabulary and grammar.

To develop tasks for improving reading skills and reading comprehension, texts were selected from the textbook used in the class in the form of a Google document with instructions for implementation. The document was copied for each student individually and the students could not see each other's answers. Tasks and tests in Google forms are attached to the reading material. The level of difficulty of the materials corresponds to the level of a 9th grade student in accordance with the language proficiency requirements of the Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools. Also, audio files were attached to the texts with the opportunity to listen to the text and practice reading aloud together with a native speaker. The exercises began with pre- reading. At this stage of reading, the teacher gives students the new information they need to work on the text - they explain new vocabulary and clarify concepts. While-reading activity, the purpose of which is to help students understand the text and acquire elements of the structure of the text, such as acquiring new vocabulary and sentence structures. It is the task of students to relate new knowledge to previous knowledge during reading. Next were post- reading, the purpose of which is to refine and use new information from the reading text to check the reader's understanding of the text. This kind of summarization helps to better consolidate what has been learned and to relate new information to everyday life (Farmer 2008; Medina 2008; Pardo 2004). According to the Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011), by the end of the 9th grade, the student must be proficient in a foreign language at a level that allows them to communicate "and read and understand age-appropriate foreign language texts" in a daily situation (Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools). Annex 2 (2011) to the National Curriculum for Basic Schools specifies that by the end of basic school the student must be able to read A-foreign language age-appropriate literature and use different foreign language information sources to find the necessary information in all subjects. Additional learning materials for those absent from class include: a) a true/false task; b) a giving headings task; c) a summary-type

task; d) an answering/making questions task; e) a word formation task. f) choosing the right option task.

When writing, a basic school graduate must be able to write a simple related text: personal letter, congratulatory, greeting, thank you card, invitation, notice, simple user letter, (descriptive, narrative) short essay; short report. To maintain and develop the writing skills of the absent, it was proposed to write letters and descriptions. The task was selected taking into account the fact that writing an informal letter and compiling a description is an examination type task. Before starting to write a letter, the student had to read an example text and learn new expressions to apply them in practice when compiling a written work. Students must write a text similar to the sample. A file was attached to this assignment, in which the student performs his work. To consolidate the new vocabulary in Google Forms, a test was proposed.

To improve the listening skill, tasks from the textbook were selected and translated into a digital format, as well as videos from YouTube for listening to the speech of native speakers corresponding to the required level were selected. When listening, the 9th grade student must be able to hear the content, using global, selective or detailed listening according to the listening task or need. To check the understanding of what was heard, tests and tasks were compiled. Post-listening activities in Google docs included the following types: a) a true/false task; b) fill-gap task; c) an answering questions task; d) choosing the right option task.

To clarify grammar, students were offered various ways of conveying information, both presentations and videos. After the student learned the grammar rules, he was given exercises such as filling in gaps, choosing the correct option, or making a sentence. Tests were also in Google Forms and Liveworksheets, from the simplest to the most difficult.

Students had to practice speaking skills with the help of dialogues. Audio files with dialogues were placed in a presentation, where, after processing and removing some of the lines, the student could practice speaking in different roles. In order for the student to have the opportunity to develop not only the skill of independent learning, but also not to suffer from communicative competence, a category of tasks was offered,

where the students were asked to discuss, for example, on the topic of the text they read.

From January 17 to April 10, three topics were covered: *Me and others*, *Countries and cultures* and *Spare time*.

The topic *Me and others* included 4 reading texts and tasks for them, three grammatical topics (future will, be going to and Using Either, Neither and Both) and tasks for them, 5 tasks to increase vocabulary, 2 tasks for development writing skills - a paragraph expressing opinion and an essay discussing advantages and disadvantages, 4 listening task.

The *Countries and Cultures* topic includes 3 texts for reading practice and tasks for them, 2 grammatical topics (Reported speech, Present Perfect, Past Perfect) with explanations and tasks, 3 tasks for the development of listening, one task for the development of speaking, 4 tasks for increasing vocabulary and 2 tasks for developing writing skills (an account of a true event and informal letter).

The *Spare Time* topic includes 3 texts for reading with tasks for them, 3 grammar topics (Passive Voice, Clauses of result, concession and purpose, Indirect questions), 4 listening tasks, 2 tasks for developing writing skills - description and informal letter, 4 tasks for vocabulary development and one speaking exercise.

Tasks were assessed both manually and automatically. Assignments that were created in the form of a Google form test and Liveworksheets were usually graded automatically, while assignments that included open-ended questions were graded by the teacher. The teacher entered the scores in e-school journal, and then graded the e-school in accordance with the grading system:

- 90% "5" Excellent,
- 76% "4" Good,
- 51% "3" Satisfactory,
- 20% "2" Poor
- 0% "1" Very poor.

2.1. Application of an E-course with E-learning materials for Home-schoolers: Procedure, Analysis, and Results

Procedure

The experiment was conducted among students of the 9th grade. To begin with, attendance and the main reasons for the absence of students were analysed to make sure that students were absent for a valid **reason** and needed this type of support. If the majority of students had problems with attendance for no good reason, then it would be necessary to choose a different, preventive, form of student support.

The course with digital materials for students was opened on 01/17/2022 and is still running. The level of English proficiency among students in this class is different. Students were added to the Google Classroom course with additional materials for absentees from school. During their absence they had to study topics and complete assignments on their own in order not to lose knowledge and get positive grades. If necessary, the students turned to the teacher for additional instructions.

After the students completed the assignments, the teacher checked them and put marks in the e-school journal. Those who were absent were given deadlines for completing assignments, as a rule, the deadlines were longer, since the student himself studied the topic and then proceeded to complete assignments, and also, for example, in the first days of illness, the student, as a rule, could not complete assignments. Also, students were allowed to complete some tasks while attending school after illness. It was also decided to conduct a survey among students who completed assignments in this course to find out their opinion on whether the course supported them during their absence and whether it affected their academic performance in their opinion.

Analysis

The experiment data analysis describes the experiment by comparing the results of the overall academic performance in the classroom before and after the use of an additional digital resource with educational materials. Also, the results of assignments for various *subject* competencies and the results for tests of those who missed classes were analysed using e-school data.

To determine the main reasons for the absence of students from English lessons, the monitoring of the e-school journal was performed. Table 1 below shows the results of the analysis of data on the reasons for the absence of students in grade 9 from the beginning of the school year to April 10: 77% of the absences were absences due to illness or quarantine. 13% of students were absent due to household reasons, 9% were absent without a valid reason, and 1% of students were absent due to participation in a school event. The data obtained confirm that the majority of students were absent due to illness or isolation and therefore need additional support from the school in the form of distance learning in order to minimise the loss in knowledge and academic performance. This suggests that the best support from the school may be the creation of additional materials rather than the work to improve attendance.

Table 1. *The main reasons for the absence of students from school.*
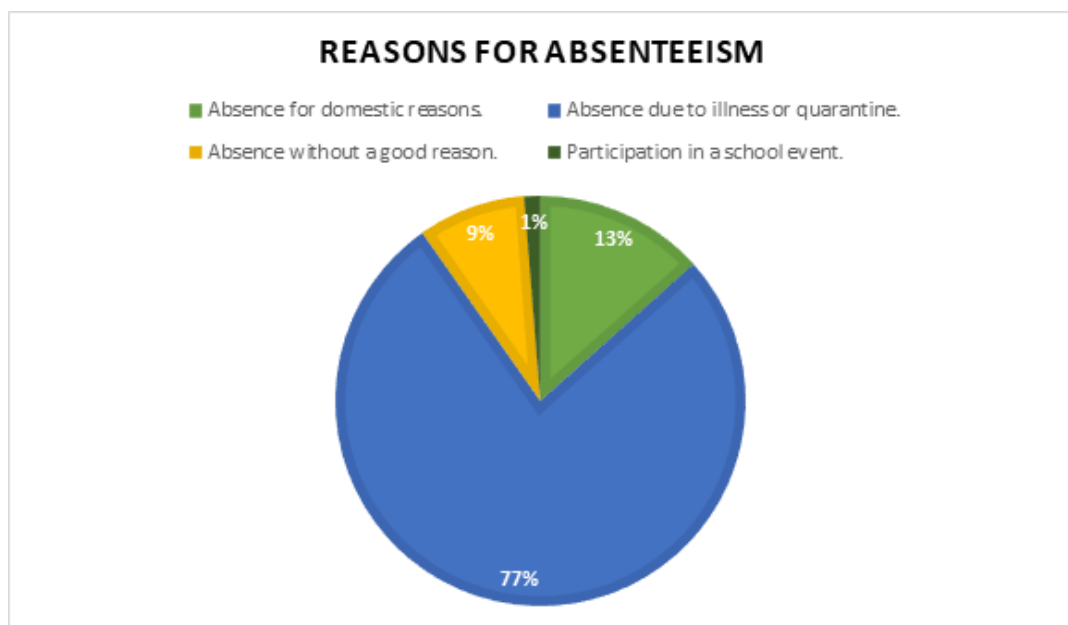
To compare academic performance before and after applying the digital course with educational materials, the academic performance of students was monitored from September 1, 2021 to January 17, 2022 and from January 17 to April 10. Table 2 below shows students' grades in the first semester before the course was applied.

Table 2. *The academic performance of the class before and the introduction of the course with digital assignments.*

THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE BEFORE THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COURSE WITH DIGITAL ASSIGNMENTS
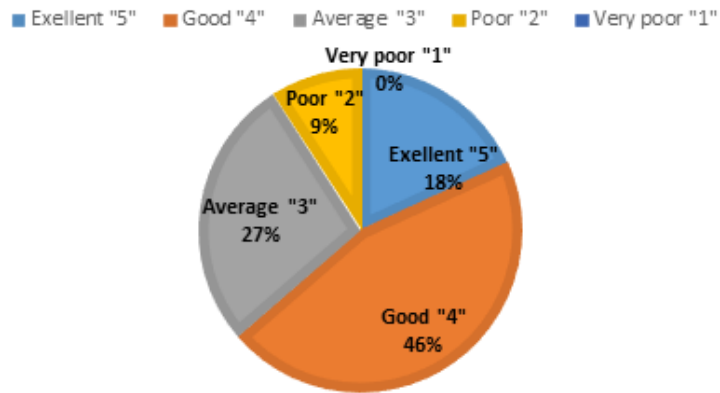
According to the data, in the first half of the year there were 18% of students with a grade of "5" in the class, with a grade of "4" there were 46%, with a grade of "3" there were 27%, with a grade of "2" there were 9% of students. There were no students with a grade of "1" in this class.

Table 3 below presents students' grades in the second semester after the course was applied: there were 25% of students with a grade of "5" in the class, with a grade of "4" there were 50%, with a grade of "3" there were 25%, with a grade of "2" there were 0% of students. There were no students with a grade of "1" in this class.

Table 3. *The academic performance of the class after the introduction of the course with digital assignments.*

THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF THE COURSE WITH DIGITAL ASSIGNMENTS

■ Exellent "5" ■ Good "4" ■ Average "3" ■ Poor "2" ■ Very poor "1"

Very poor "1" 0%
Poor "2" 0%
Average "3" 25%
Exellent "5" 25%
Good "4" 50%
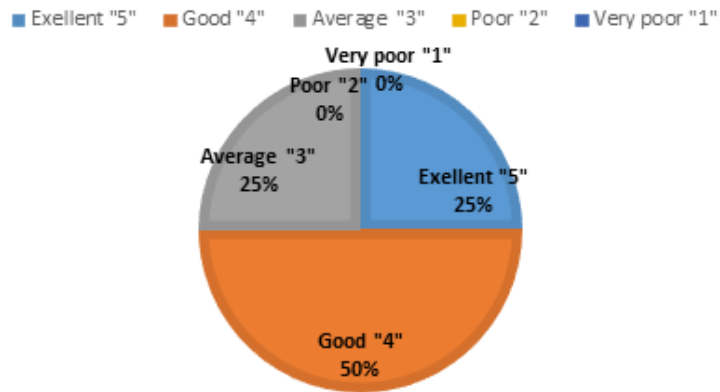
The results of the academic performance of students in grade 9 in English from September to the end of the first semester and the results during the period of using the digital course from the beginning of the second semester to April 10 are summarised in Table 4. The numbers 1-7 on the horizontal axis show the number of students, and on the vertical axis the grades they received. The "blue" bar shows academic performance without digital support and the "orange" bar shows learning outcomes with an additional digital course.

Table 4. The academic performance of the class before and after the introduction of the course with digital assignments.

The academic performance before/after the introduction of the course with digital assignments.
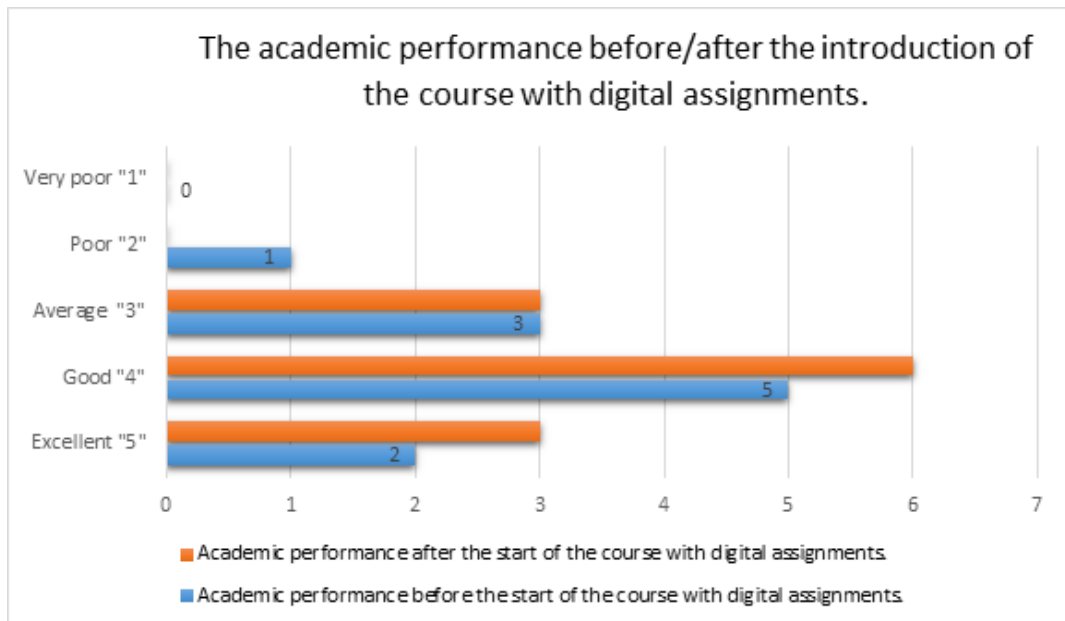
As it can be seen from the table above, the main difference is among the results of students who received 2, 4 and 5. It follows from the table data that during the period when the students were offered an additional digital course, there were no those students with an unsatisfactory learning result, and before that, as shown by the "blue" bar, one student had a very poor result in the subject. The "orange" bar shows that there has been an increase in the number of excellent students per one, as well as good students also per one, and there is not a single student with an unsatisfactory grade in English.

Table 5 below shows the average result for the class in English before and after the experiment. from September to the end of the first semester and the results during the period of using the digital course from the beginning of the second semester to April 10. The numbers 3.1 - 4.1 on the horizontal axis show marks, and "orange" and "blue" bars show the time period. The "blue" bar shows the average grade of the class without digital support and the "orange" bar shows the average grade with an additional digital course.

Table 5. *The average result for the class in English before and after the experiment.*
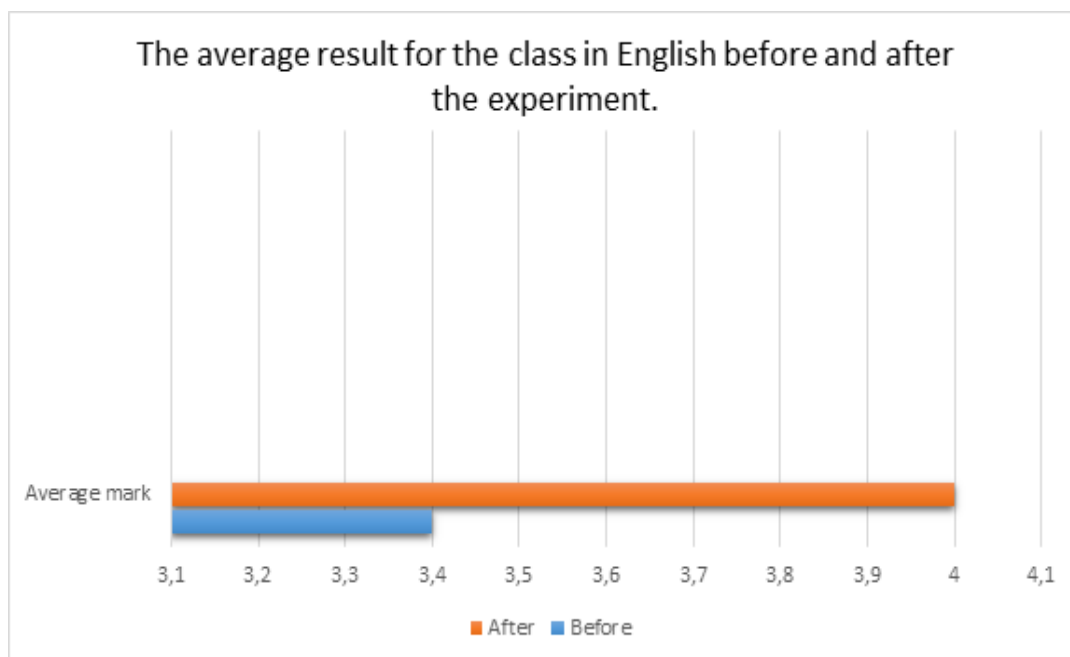
According to Table 3, the average result for the class before the beginning of the second half of the year was 3.4, and in the second half of the year it is 4. Therefore, the overall result of the class in English after applying the additional digital course improved by 18%.

At the end of each topic, students write a progress test on the material covered, which includes grammar, reading, writing, listening and vocabulary. The student can write this test only in contact when he comes to school. If the student was absent during the test, then he can write the test during the consultation by agreement with the teacher.

From September 1 to April 10, 5 topics were covered. Before the use of additional digital materials for absentees, three topics were covered: Me and others, Studying and working, and home and surroundings. In the second half of the year, starting from January 17, when the course had already started, 2 topics were covered: Countries and Cultures and Spare Time. Table 6 below presents the results for the progress tests. Numbers 0-4,5 on the horizontal axis demonstrate the grades for the progress test scored by the class before and after the introduction of the e-course .

Table 6. *The average result for the progress test in English before and after the experiment.*

Progress test results before/aftter the experiment
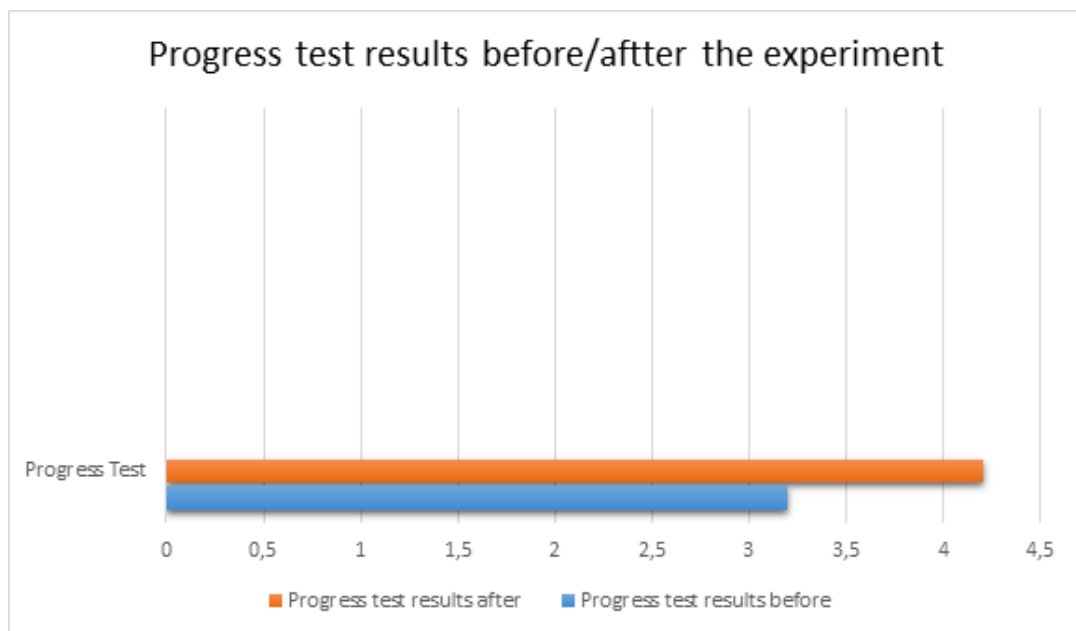
The data indicate that the students showed the best results for the progress test in the second half of the year, when the course with additional e-learning materials for absentees has already started to apply. The average score improved from 3.5 points to 4.2, which is indicated by the "orange" bar. The results obtained during the monitoring of the e-school journal indicate that the overall score for progress tests has improved by 20%.

Table 7 below shows the results for different types of tasks: listening, grammar, reading, writing and vocabulary that students had before and after using additional electronic materials. Numbers 0-5 in the horizontal axis demonstrate show grades. The vertical axis denotes different types of tasks. The "blue" bar shows the average score for the different types of tasks before the online course with additional materials began to be applied. The "orange" bar shows the average score for the different types of activities after the online course with additional materials began to be applied.

Table 7. *Average results for various activities before and after applying the online course.*

Average results for various activities before and after applying the online course.
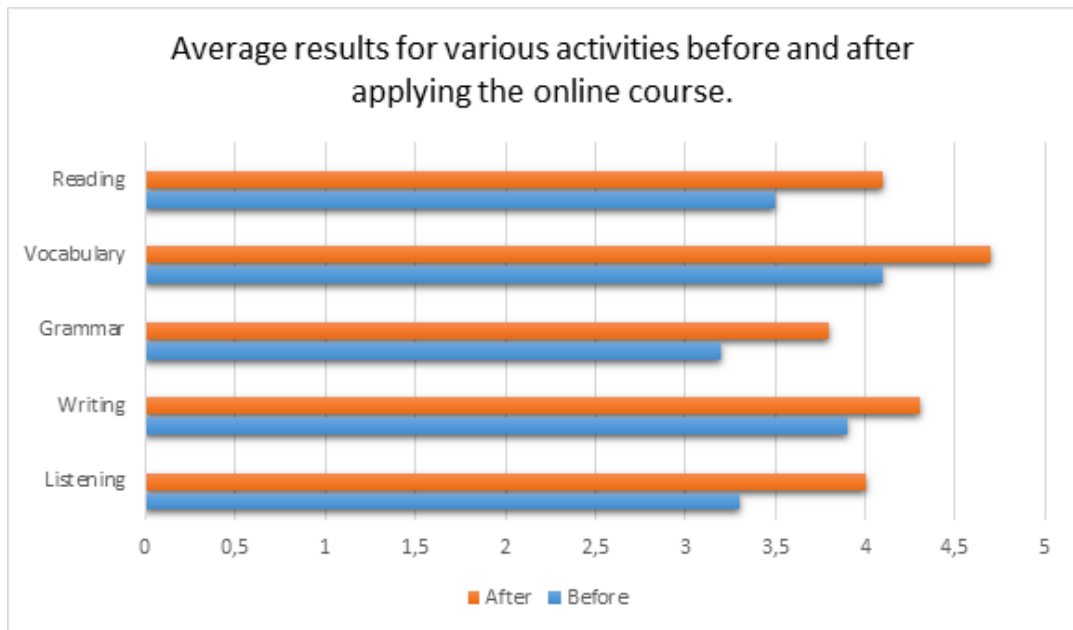
Table 7 illustrates that students' English language scores for different types of assignments were higher during the period when students were asked to study/ practice topics and tasks on their own during their absence from school using an online course with e-learning materials. The greatest difference in the period before and after was the result for listening assignments. As the "blue" bar shows, in the first half of the year, the average score of students for listening tasks was 3.3 points, and in the second semester 4. From this it can be concluded that the performance for listening tasks increased by 21%. Therefore, it can be seen that the results of vocabulary, grammar and reading tasks in the second trimester also changed for the better. The result for grammar tasks after the start of the additional online course with e-materials improved by 18%, reading by 17% and for vocabulary exercises by 15%. The result for written tasks also improved in the second half of the year, however, among other types of tasks, the result for this type of task improved by only 10%

Before summing up the results of this study, 9th grade students were asked to fill in a questionnaire to get information about how the introduction of an additional online course with e-learning materials and tasks affected their academic performance. The questionnaire contained 6 multiple choice questions.

The questions were the following:

1. Did you miss classes this academic year?
2. For what reason were you absent from school?
3. In your opinion, did the additional online course with e-materials help to improve your academic performance?
4. What tasks of the online course were the easiest for you to study and practice on your own?
5. What tasks of the online course were the most difficult for you to study and practice on your own?
6. How do you think, is it necessary to continue using this course?

To the first question of the questionnaire, all students answered in the affirmative. Of the 12 students in the class, each missed classes at least once in a given academic year.

Table 8 shows the students' answers to the question why they were absent from school. As a response, students were asked to choose one possible option: domestic reasons, illness or quarantine, participation in a school event, absence without a good reason, more than one reason.

Table 8. Question 2. For what reason were you absent from school?
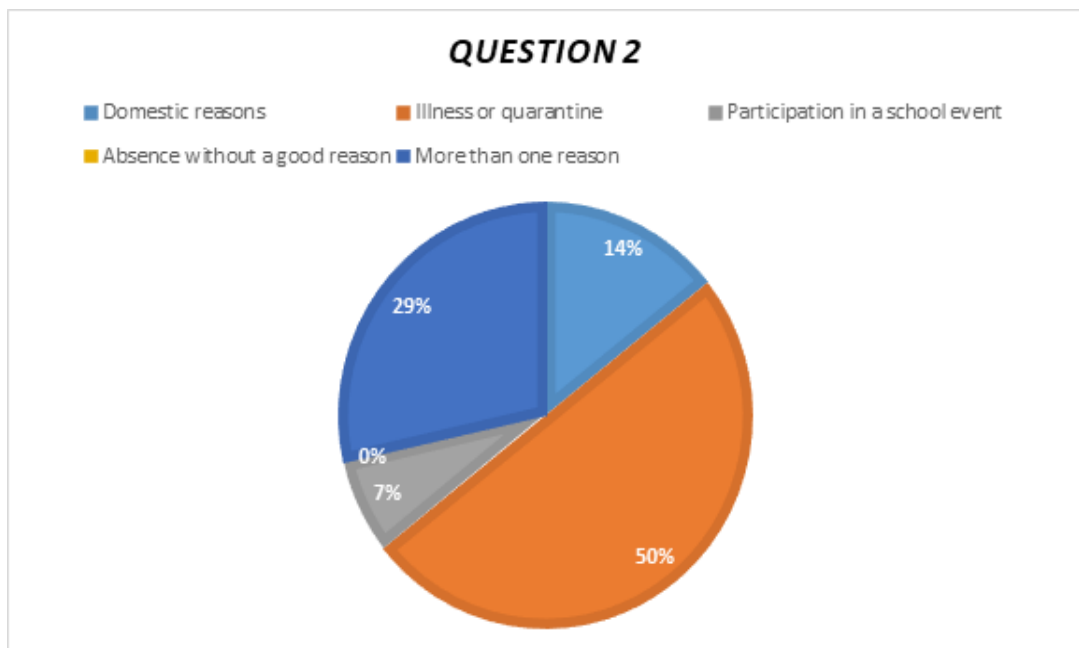
As follows from the information in Table 8, the largest number of students 50% answered that they missed school due to illness and quarantine, 29% of students answered that they missed classes for various reasons. 14% answered that they missed classes due to domestic circumstances and 7% answered that they took part in school activities.

Table 9 shows the answers to the students' question about whether they think that the availability of additional electronic materials that they could use for self-study of the topic helped them not to lose, but rather improve their academic performance. The suggested response options were "yes", "no", "not sure".

Table 9. Question 3. In your opinion, did the additional online course with e-materials help to improve your academic performance?
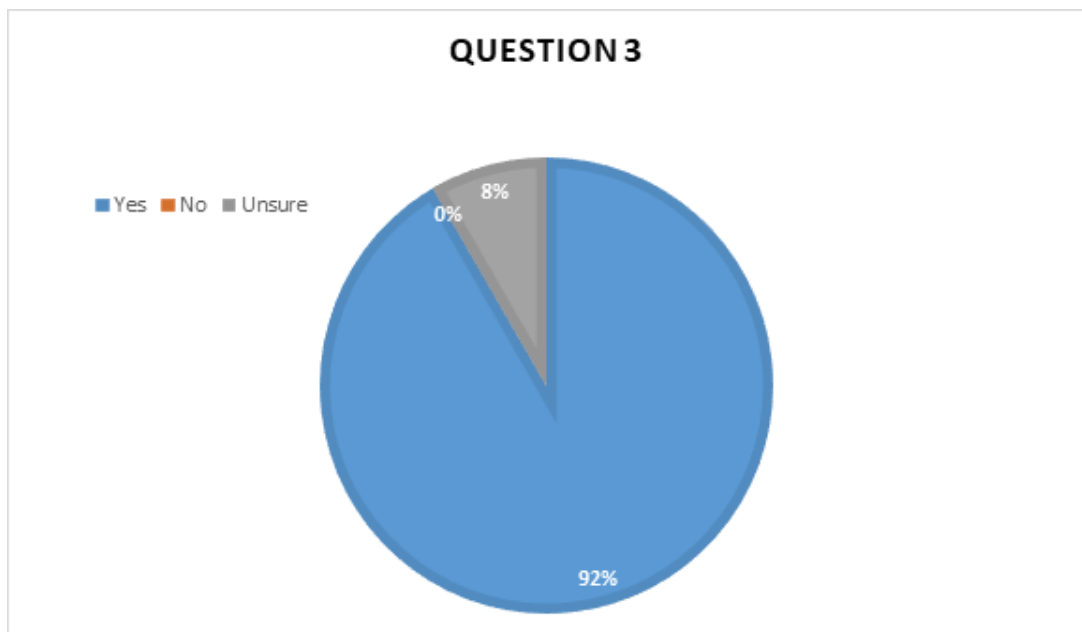
The data demonstrate that 92% of students are absolutely sure that an additional course with e-learning materials helped them improve their academic performance. 8% could not confidently answer this question and chose "unsure". 0% responded negatively.

Table 10 shows data on which tasks from the electronic course seemed the easiest to students. Students had to choose from 5 options: listening, vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing.

Table 10. Question 4. What tasks of the online course were the easiest for you to study and practice on your own?

QUESTION 4

- Grammar
- Listening
- Vocabulary
- Writing
- Reading

0% 8%
25%
8%
59%
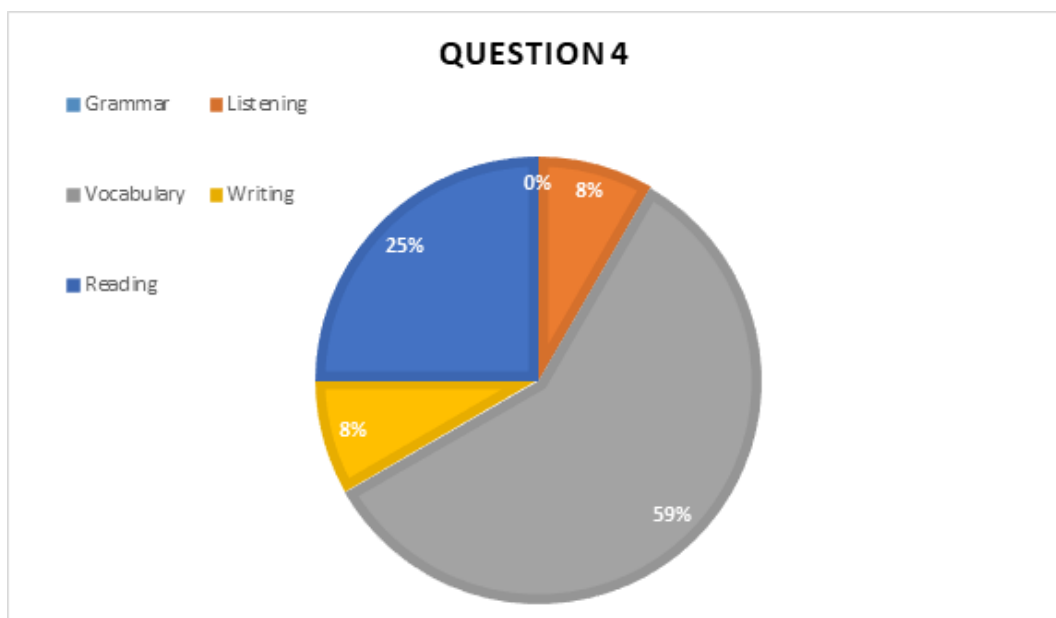
As can be seen from Table 10, vocabulary tasks were the easiest for students, 59% chose vocabulary tasks as the easiest. 25% thought the reading assignments were the easiest for them. 8% answered that listening was the easiest for them and also 8% of students chose the writing skills development tasks as the easiest. 0% chose grammar tasks as the easiest ones for self-study and practice.

Information on tasks, according to grade 9 students, that were the most difficult for independent work during their absence from school is presented in Table 11. Students were asked to choose from 5 options: listening, vocabulary, grammar, reading and writing.

Table 11. Question 5. What tasks of the online course were the most difficult for you to study and practice on your own?

QUESTION 5

Reading ■ Vocabulary ■ Grammar ■ Listening ■ Writing

0%
10%
90%
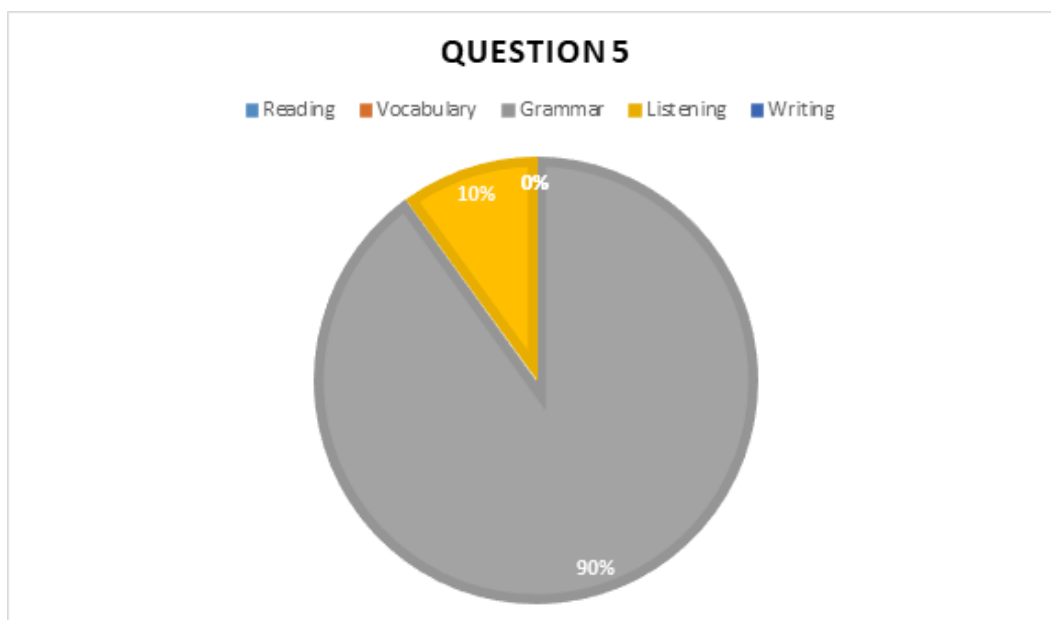
The data in Table 11 show that the most difficult activity for students was to independently study and complete grammar assignments. 90% of respondents chose grammar tasks as the most difficult. 10% answered that the listening tasks were the most difficult in their opinion. No student chose reading, writing or vocabulary as the most difficult task.

Table 12 presents the answers of students whether they consider it necessary to continue using this course in the future. The response options were "agree", "unsure" and "disagree".

***Table 12**. Question 6. How do you think, is it necessary to continue using this course?*

QUESTION 6

■ Agree ■ Disagree ■ Unsure ■

17%

0%

83%
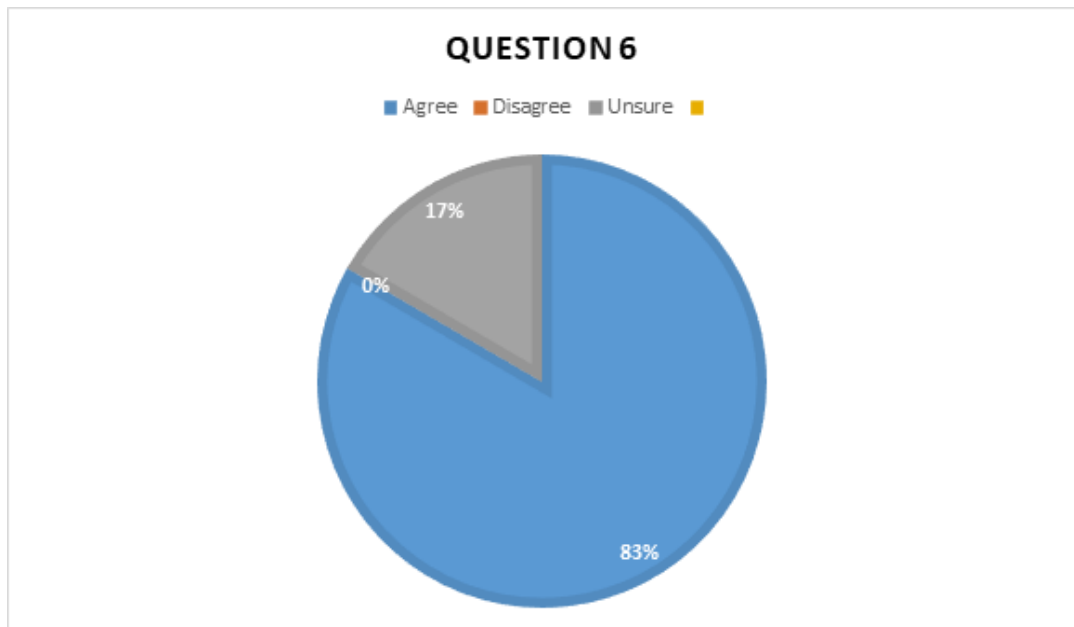
According to the data in Table 12, the vast majority of 9th grade students answered that they believe that the use of the online course with additional learning materials should be continued. 17% of students chose the option "unsure" and among the respondents there were no those who would consider that it is not necessary to continue using this course as a support during absence from school.

Results

The difference between the performance of 9th grade students in English before and after taking an online course with learning materials is obvious. As the results of the study of the electronic school journal show, the main reason for the absence of students from school is illness or quarantine, and at this time they need an additional supportive resource for self-study in order not to lose knowledge and academic performance.

The results show that after the additional online course was applied, the overall academic performance of grade 9 in English improved. Comparison of students' performance before and after the application of the course shows that this method of supporting students is effective. After using the additional online resource in the second half of the year, at the time of calculating the results of the preliminary progress, there was not a single student with an unsatisfactory grade. Based on this data, it can be concluded that additional explanations of the material in the digital course helps the students to understand better the material and cope with tasks.

The e-school data show that in the first half of the year before the e-course in the class there were 18% of students with excellent grades, 46% of students with good grades, 27% had a mark of "3" in English and 9% of students had a mark of "2".

In the second half of the year, there was a positive trend and the number of students with excellent results in English increased by 7% from 18% to 25%, the number of 'good-result' students increased by 4% from 46% to 50%, the number of students with a mark of "3" decreased by 2 %, however, there were no students with unsatisfactory results in this semester. As a result, it can be concluded that the overall result of the academic performance of the 9th grade in English after the start of the use of the electronic course increased by 18% compared to the first half of the year.

The results of progress tests for the first and second half of the year also show positive dynamics after the additional resource was applied. The analysis of the e-journal data show that the results for the tests improved by an average of 20%. The most obvious improvement was in listening tasks, which improved by 21%. Results for grammar exercises improved by 18%, reading - by 17% and for vocabulary exercises - by 15%.

Student survey data on whether they experienced a difference in learning and outcomes before and after taking the additional online course showed that the majority of students fully agree that this method of support during absence proved to be effective and also expressed a desire to continue working with this course. Also according to the students, vocabulary tasks were the easiest for self-study, and grammar tasks were the most difficult for the students.

Based on the data obtained during the study, it can be concluded that the use of additional electronic materials as part of English lessons for students who are absent from school improves their academic performance and minimises the loss of knowledge. Monitoring of the electronic journal has shown a positive trend in students' grades in English, and at the same time, the creation of additional tasks helped students who were absent from school for a long time to receive additional grades. Moreover, the use of additional e-learning materials in an online environment allows absent students to study on their own in a comfortable environment.

The study also has helped to obtain information that students really need additional support from the school during a period of high risk of morbidity with COVID-19.

CONCLUSION

The problem of the absence of students in the classroom is not new. Educational institutions have been developing and implementing ways to support students who miss classes for years, because the school has a huge impact on how a student's life will be in the future. The reasons for the absence of a student in school can be different, both acceptable and not. Regardless of the reason why a student misses classes, this factor negatively affects the level of his or her knowledge in the subject and academic performance. However, school support for the student should be provided taking into account the reasons that affect their frequent absences. In the case of truancy, the task of the school will be to work with the factors that led to this situation, and in the case of illness, for example, assistance is required in establishing the process of studying the material by students independently, remotely.

In recent years, due to the spread of covid-19, children have become more often absent from school, which has led to a loss in knowledge and a deterioration in academic performance. Many studies conducted in recent years (Mahdy 2021; Dorn, Hancock and Viruleg 2021) have confirmed this fact. Studies have also shown that graduates were particularly affected by this situation and the exam results in 2021 were the lowest in recent years (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research 2021). In the 2022 school year, students also often miss classes and need support from the school in self-study during their absence in the form of additional electronic materials in order not to lose knowledge and improve academic performance during this period. To confirm this statement, an online course with additional e-learning materials was created for absent students of the 9th grade of Narva Orthodox Gymnasium. The conclusions were made after a comparative analysis of academic results in the period before and after the application of the course.

The results of the empirical research show that the academic results of students improved during the period when they were offered support in the form of a course with additional electronic materials. Master's thesis has revealed that applying additional self-study e-materials in English for home-schoolers improve students' academic performance. This study also confirms that the creation of a digital course with additional electronic materials is indeed an effective way to support the student during his forced absence from school.

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Õpilaste puudumise probleem pole uus. Õppeasutused on aastaid arendanud ja juurutanud viise tundidest puuduvate õpilaste toetamiseks, sest koolil on suur mõju õpilase edaspidisele elule. Õpilase koolist puudumise põhjused võivad olla erinevad, nii aktsepteeritavad kui ka mitte. Sõltumata põhjusest, miks õpilane tunde vahele jätab, mõjutab see tegur negatiivselt tema ainealaste teadmiste taset ja õppeedukust. Küll aga peaks kool õpilast toetades arvestama põhjusi, mis mõjutavad tema sagedast koolist puudumist. Kooli ülesandeks jääb puudumiste korral töötamine selle olukorrani viinud teguritega ning näiteks haigestumise korral on abi vaja õpilaste iseseisva kaugõppes õppimise protsessi paikapanemisel.

Viimastel aastatel on COVID-19 leviku tõttu suurenenud laste tõenäosus koolist puududa, mis on kaasa toonud teadmiste kaotuse ja õppeedukuse halvenemise. Paljud viimaste aastate uuringud (Mahdy 2021; Dorn, Hancock ja Viruleg 2021) on seda fakti kinnitanud. Samuti on uuringud näidanud, et see olukord on eriti mõjutanud lõpetajaid, kusjuures 2021. aasta eksamitulemused on viimaste aastate madalaimad (Eesti Haridus- ja Teadusministeerium, 2021). Ka 2022. õppeaastal jäävad õpilased sageli tundidest ilma ja vajavad puudumisel koolilt tuge iseseisvas õppes täiendavate elektrooniliste materjalide näol, et mitte kaotada sel perioodil teadmisi ja parandada õppeedukust. Selle väite toetuseks loodi Narva Õigeusu Gümnaasiumi puuduvatele 9. klassi õpilastele veebikursus koos täiendavate elektrooniliste õppematerjalidega. Järeldused tehakse pärast õppetulemuste võrdlevat analüüsi perioodil enne ja pärast kursuse rakendamist.

Empiirilise uuringu tulemused näitavad, et üliõpilaste õppetulemused paranesid perioodil, mil neile pakuti tuge kursuse näol koos täiendavate elektrooniliste materjalidega. Magistritööst „Täiendav tugi ESL- inglise keele õppimiseks koduõppele elektrooniliste iseõppematerjalidega põhikooli õpilastele (9. klass)" selgus, et täiendavate elektrooniliste materjalide kasutamine kodus õppivatele õpilastele inglise keele iseõppimiseks parandab õpilaste sooritust. Ka käesolev uuring kinnitab, et digikursuse loomine koos täiendavate elektrooniliste materjalidega on tõepoolest tõhus viis õpilase toetamiseks tema koolist sunnitud puudumisel.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix No 1

Screenshot of the Google course with assignments

Appendix No 2

Screenshot of the Google course with assignments

Appendix No 3

True/false reading test example in Google forms

Reading 1

Read the text p.48 and choose True or False

Электронная почта *

Допустимый адрес электронной почты

С помощью этой формы выполняется сбор адресов электронной почты. Изменить настройки

According to the text, learners can get individual attention both from teachers and computers. *

○ True

○ False

○ Другое...

Computers can help students who get destructed easily. *

○ True

○ False

Discoveries have shown that people with psychic powers use 100% of their brans. *

○ True

○ False

We don't use all of our brain all of the time. *

○ True

○ False

Einstein did better in some subjects than he did in other subjects. *

○ True

○ False

In the last year at school where Einstein studied "6" was considered a good mark. *

○ True

○ False

Teaching children at home instead of at school is impossible worldwide *

○ True

○ False

Supporters of homeschooling believe that homeschooled children socialise as much as non-homeschooled children. *

Appendix No 4

Example of multiple choice vocabulary test in Google forms

Vocabulary 3

1. Choose the right word.
2. Complete the sentences

Электронная почта *

Допустимый адрес электронной почты

С помощью этой формы выполняется сбор адресов электронной почты. Изменить настройки

TASK 1.   There are many creative and intelligent teenagers who *
never miss on 1)_____ experimenting.

○ in

○ out

○ over

Such teenagers often 2)____ that they can achieve major things. *

○ prove

○ focus

○ interact

In fact, some of the most 3)___ inventions have been seen inventions. This is just one example. *
Boise Pascal invented the first mechanical calculator to help his father with his work.

○ financial

○ unused

○ outstanding

In 1642 4)_____ Pascal was still at teenager, he started working on his invention which was *
completed 3 years later.

○ although

○ unlikely

Appendix No 5

Example of grammar assignment in Liveworksheets

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Search interactive worksheets 🔍

English - Español

Home | About this site | Interactive worksheets | Make interactive worksheets | Make interactive workbooks

Students access | Jelenakorsak ▾

Grammar test Future, Conditional, All-Both...
ID: 1-iy2328133ll

⬆ Add to my workbooks (0) ◇ Add to Google Classroom ◇ Add to Microsoft Teams ✎ Edit 🗑 Remove

Link to this worksheet: https://www.liveworksheets.com/1-iy2328 Copy Custom link Share through Whatsapp

---

A. Complete with the _Future will_ and _be going to._

John: Hi! Are you worried about something?

Linda: Well, I (1)[_____] (fly) to New York tomorrow and have many things to do.

John: Don't worry! Everything will be fine! I (2) [_____] (help) you.

Sally: It would be great!

John: What can I do for you?

Sally: (3)[_____] you [_____] (water) my flowers. please?

John: Yes, sure! Anything else?

Sally: Well, I probably won't have finished with my shopping by then either. [_____]

you[_____] (buy) me a toothpaste?

John: No problem. I (6)[_____] (order) sushi for dinner. Why don't you pass by?

Sally: Thanks.

B. Complete the sentences with all, both, neither, either or none.

1. [_____] Kate and Jessy are students.
2. My brother has got three dogs. They are[_____] brown with black years.
3. There are ten chubby students in my class, but [_____] like sweets.
4. [_____] Jack nor Tom have got any siblings.
5. I ate two pizzas this weekend. I didn't like [_____]of them.
6. When my boyfriend asked me if I wanted Cola or Sprite, I told him
   [_____] of the two. I don't drink carbonated drinks

C. Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in brackets to form Conditional Sentences.

1. The child [_____](start) crying if you wake her up.
2. If I had more time, I [_____] (go) to the cinema more often-
3. What would your teacher say if she [_____](know) that you cheated in the exam?
4. The snow [_____](melt) if you heat it.
5. Unless my brother [_____](apologise), I won't speak to him.
6. If Maria [_____](play) the guitar, she could be a music teacher.
7. Unless the bag is on sale, we [_____](buy) it.
8. I [_____](not miss) out the performance if I were you.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Finish!!

Appendix No 6

Example of vocabulary assignment in Liveworksheets

Vocabulary

1. **Complete the sentences with the opposites of adjectives in the box.**

Note! The opposites of many English words are formed by adding a negative prefix (un-,in-, il-,im-) to the words.

| able | correct | mature | logical | relevant |

1. Nataly was _____ to visit her grandmother because she was at home with the flu.
2. It is an _____ statement, because if one part is true, then the other must be false.
3. Even though my brother is 20, he is very _____ and often acts childish.
4. Whether I think you're good at English or not is _____. What matters is that you pass the test.
5. The teacher had to explain everything again, because all the answers we gave were _____.

2. **Look at the adjectives in the box. Which prepositions are they followed by? Complete the table. Then read the sentences and complete the gaps with the prepositions. (about, for, with or of). Then read the sentences 1-6 and complete the gaps.**

nervous	☐	1. I am capable ☐ doing anything I want to.
disappointed	☐	2. Are you responsible ☐ your life?
famous	☐	3. Are you familiar ☐ this computer program
ready	☐	4. Are you nervous ☐ English exam?
familiar	☐	5. Are you ready ☐ the exam?
responsible	☐	6. You are so successful, your parents must be proud ☐ you.
proud	☐	7. I am very disappointed ☐ the clothes I bought, and I would like to have a refund.
capable	☐	8. She was famous ☐ her ability to solve every mathematical problem presented to her.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Appendix No 7
Questionnaire for 9th grade students

Ответь на вопросы. Подчерки подходящий вариант.

1. Ты пропускал(а) занятия в этом учебном году?

           да   нет   затрудняюсь ответить

2. По какой причине ты отсутствовал(а) в школе?

    по домашним обстоятельствам
    болезнь/карантин
    без уважительной причины
    участие в школьном мероприятии
    несколько причин из предложенных

3. По твоему мнению, дополнительный онлайн-курс с электронными материалами помог улучшить вашу успеваемость?

           да   нет   затрудняюсь ответить

4. Какие задания онлайн-курса вам было легче всего изучить и отработать самостоятельно?

    чтение   письмо   грамматика   слушание
    работа с новыми словами

5. Какие задания онлайн-курса были для вас самыми сложными при самостоятельном изучении и выполнении?

    чтение   письмо   грамматика   слушание
    работа с новыми словами

6.Как вы считаете, нужно ли продолжать использовать этот курс?

           да   нет   затрудняюсь ответить