



Austrian Armed Forces Language Institute  
National Defence Academy

# ***Challenges and best practices in online language training in the Austrian Armed Forces***



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# Agenda

- Language policies and digitalization in the AAF
- Digitalization in the AAF Language Institute
- Challenges and best practices in online language training during COVID-19





# Language policy for the Austrian Armed Forces (2016)

**L** Language and Cultural Awareness

**I** Interoperability and Cooperation

**N** **Novelties and Innovation**

**G** Governance of Defense Language

**U** Unified Civil and Military Security

**A** Adaptability and Transformation





## Reasons for the digitalization campaign 2016

- Time required for **LEARNING** versus time **AVAILABILITY** of staff
- **OPTIMIZATION** of **RESOURCES**
- **INTEROPERABILITY** through **EVOLUTION** of **LEARNING**



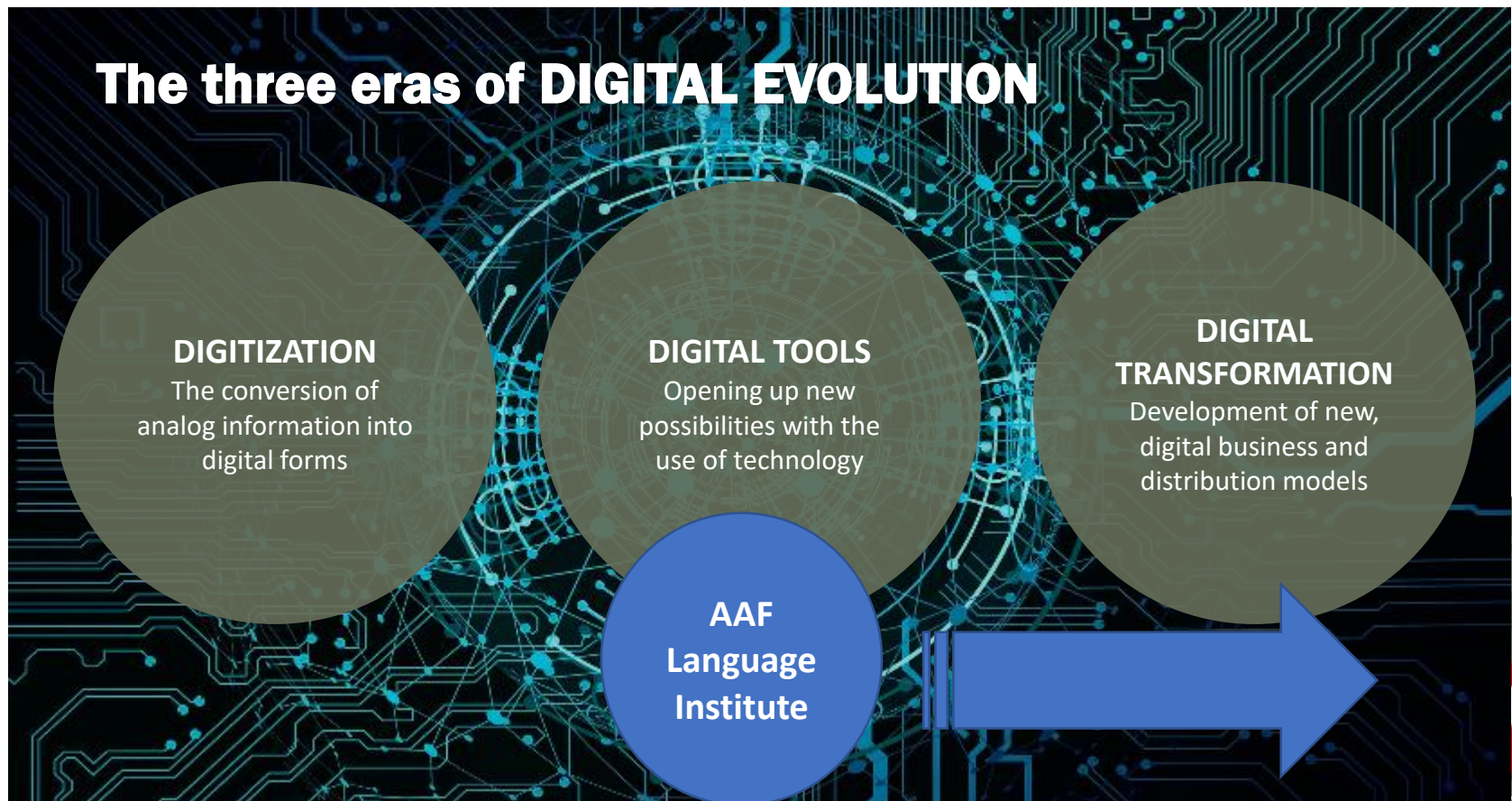


## **Pilot: Networked – Virtual – Paperless Classroom (2017 – 2018) – aim and purpose**

- **Language Training TO GO** – increase of learning autonomy
  - mobile language training for everyone, independent of time and place
- **Networking of the Language Learning Community**
  - individual, acquisition- and competence-oriented training
  - Individually attainable learning progress
- **Optimization of the use of resources**



# Digitalization processes at the AAF Language Institute (2019 – 2023)



# 2019 – 2023



# Digital language services

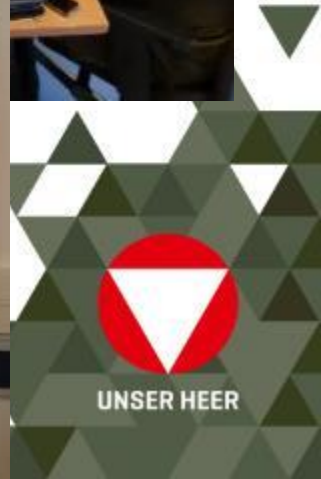


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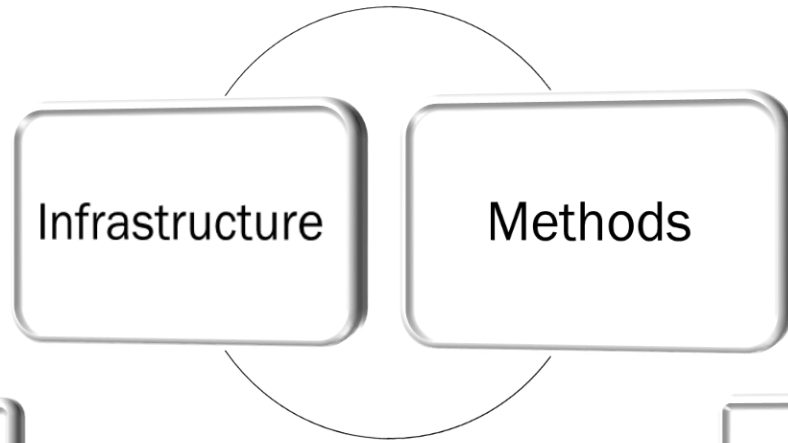
# Digital language training







# Digital language training



Tablets, Interactive Whiteboards

Learning Management Systems

E-books, Language Apps

Digital Transformation

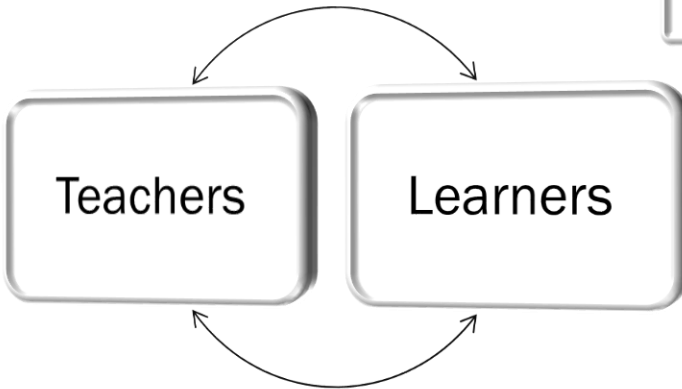


Blended Learning

Mobile Learning

Language Training "To Go"

Collaborative Learning





## Digital on-site teaching

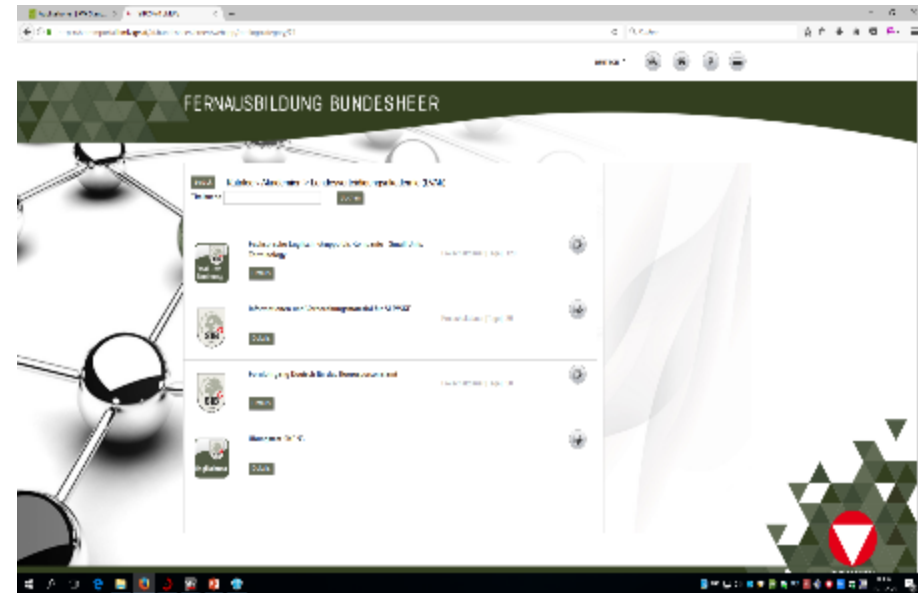
- **iPads**, mainly for self-study purposes (CLMS), but also for writing and submitting essays, uploading handouts (“Schoolwork”).
- **Interactive Whiteboard**, for presenting content (often in connection with **iMac** computer), vocabulary, grammar (slides can be saved!).
- **Apple TVs**, for sharing content from the iPads (group work) or iPhones, videos, listening comprehension etc.



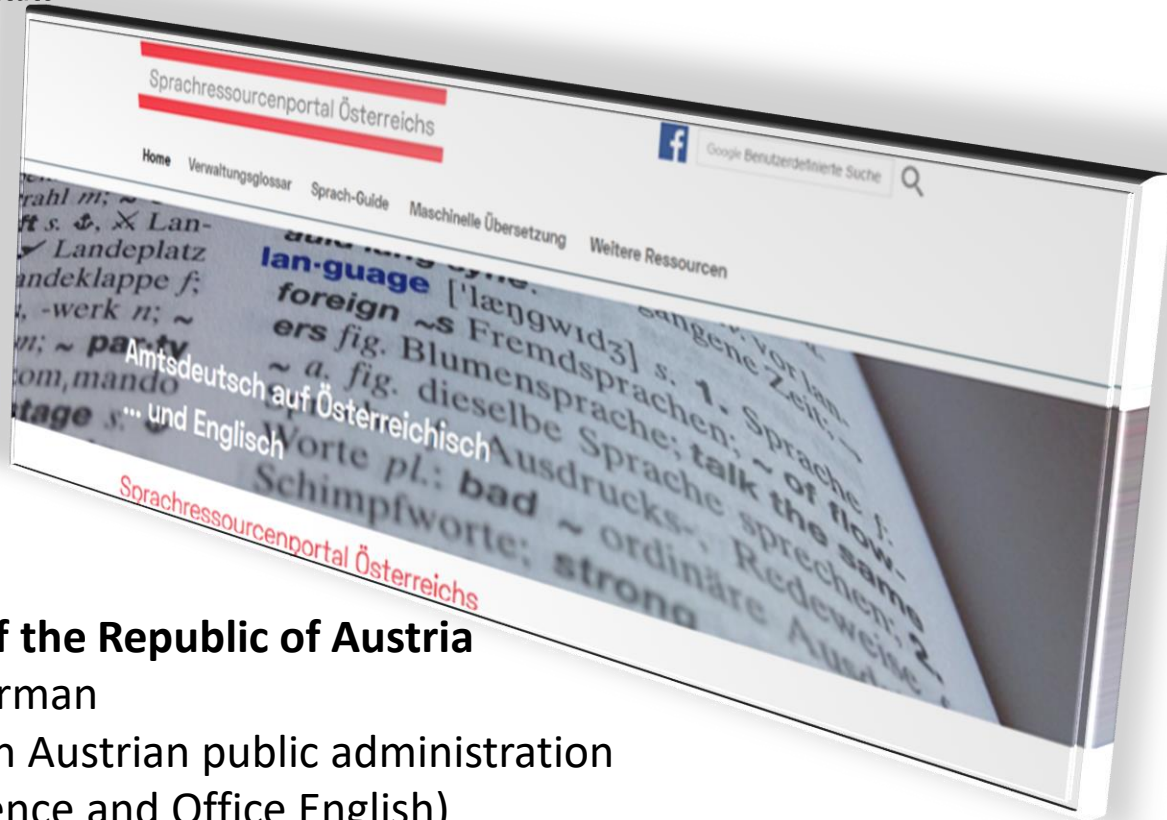


# AAF Learning Management System “Sitos SIX”

- **Self-assessment tests** in ENG, FRE, RUS, GER
- **Digital courses:** ENG, FRE, GER, RUS, ITA, ARA, CZE starting at Level 0+
- **Special seminars** in CZE, SLO, SLV
- **ESP:** Aviation English, Cyber English, Tactics/Operation, Logistics, Aviation Logistics English
- **Operations preparation** of armed forces (incl. AAO)
- **Digital learning resources** and STANAG-test preparation





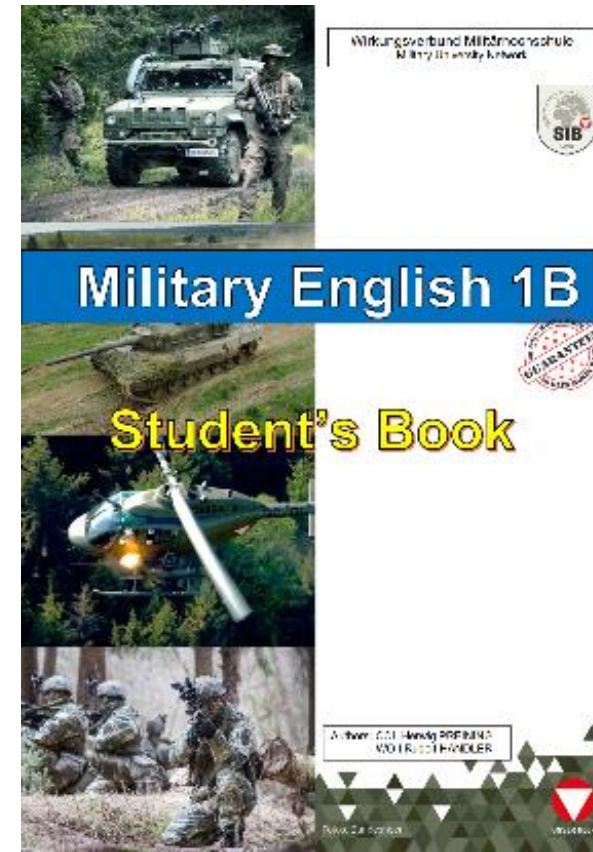
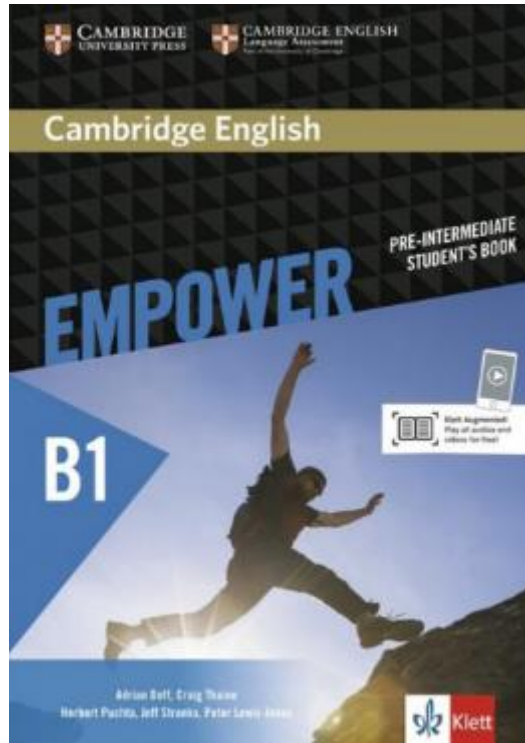


[www.sprachressourcen.at](http://www.sprachressourcen.at)

- **Language Resources Portal of the Republic of Austria**
  - Focus on English and German
  - Glossary of terms used in Austrian public administration
  - “Sprach-Guide” (Conference and Office English)
  - Machine translation tool of the European Commission
  - Link portal to language resources in Austria and in the EU
- Developed by the AAF Language Institute in cooperation with the Center for Translation Studies (University of Vienna), the Federal Academy of Public Administration, and the Diplomatic Academy Vienna
- Use of the portal during the **Austrian Council Presidency (2018)**

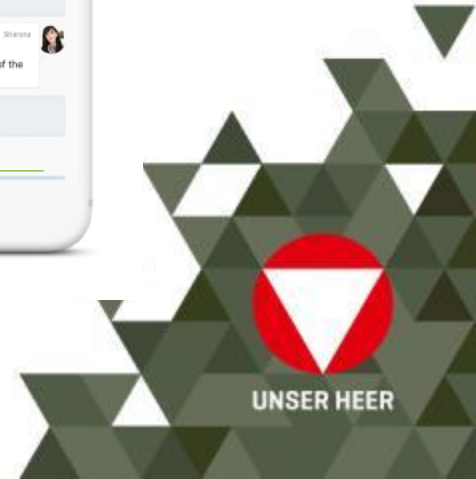
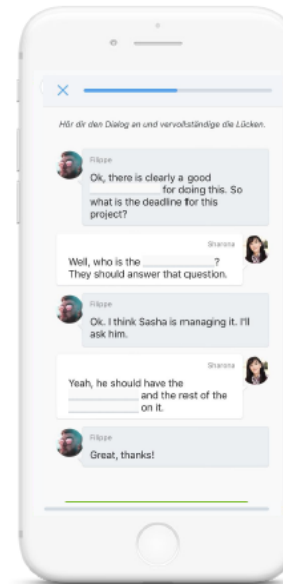
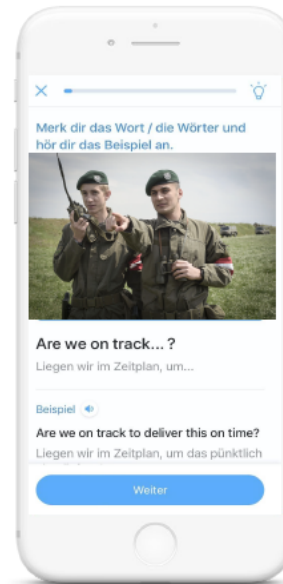
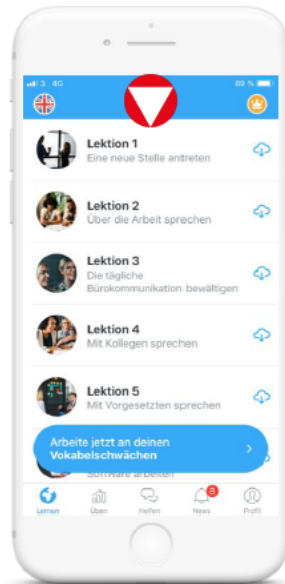
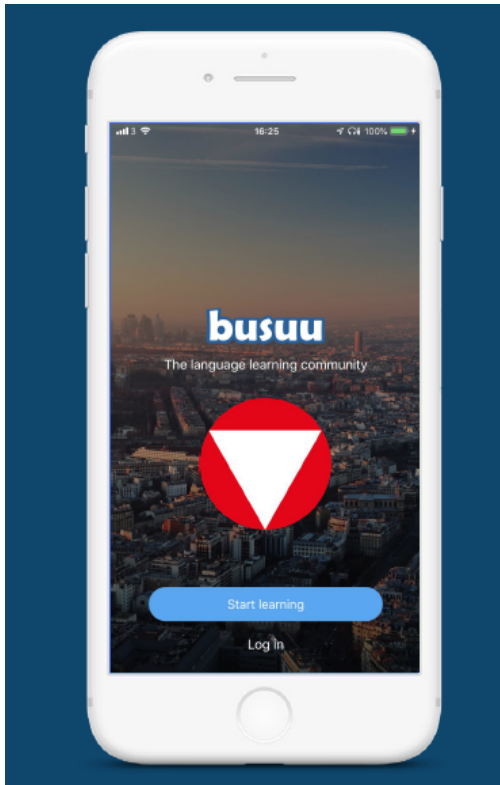


# Digital teaching and study resources





# Support through learning and language apps







# Support through learning and language apps



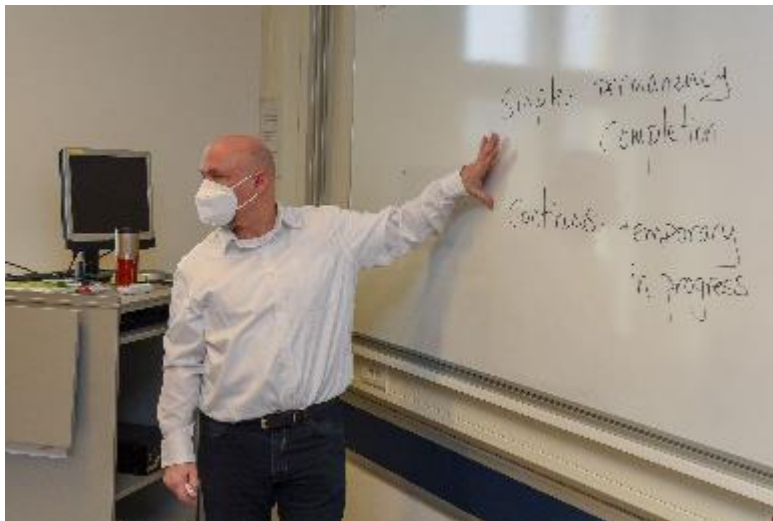
# Digital language testing

- Language Assessment Center  
**Computer-assisted language testing**
- Online  
**Computer-based language testing (self-assessment tests ENG, GER, FRE, RUS)**
- Distance testing
  - **VTC (orals) > successful**
  - **computer-adaptive language testing (Cloud) > 2021**
  - **individualized, randomized tests**





# Challenges COVID-19





# Best practices COVID-19

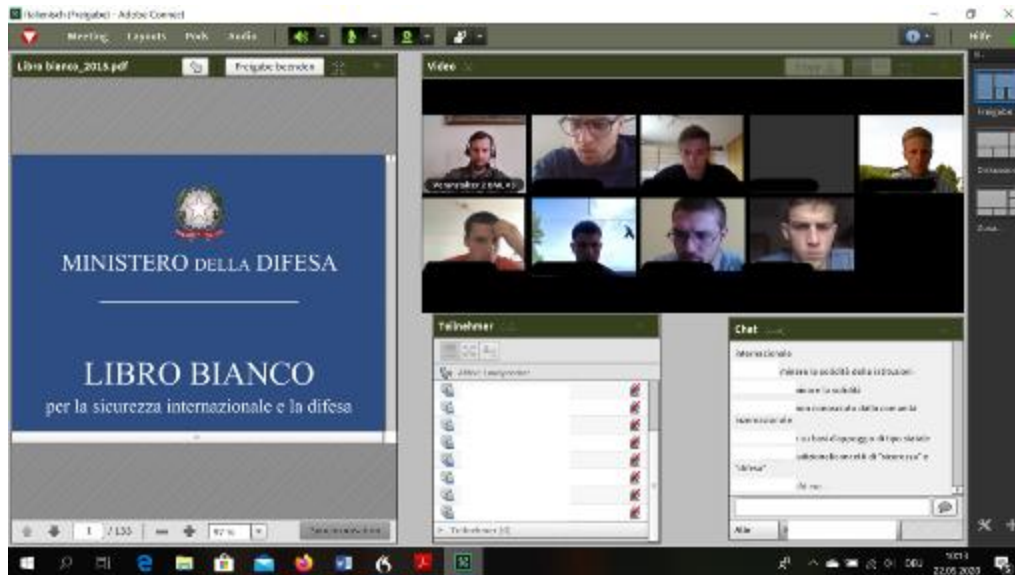
## Online teaching (weekly courses, all levels)

- Students use their own devices (laptops, tablets, PCs, even mobile phones)
- **Moodle:** for uploading content (handouts, attendances, summaries of course contents links)
- **Big Blue Button:** video chatroom, integrated into Moodle; sometimes also **WebEx** or **Zoom**
- **CLMS (Cambridge Learning Management System):** for self-study purposes, but also for Progress Checks done by teachers
- Self-assessment tests and Military English learning modules on **LMS Sitos SIX**

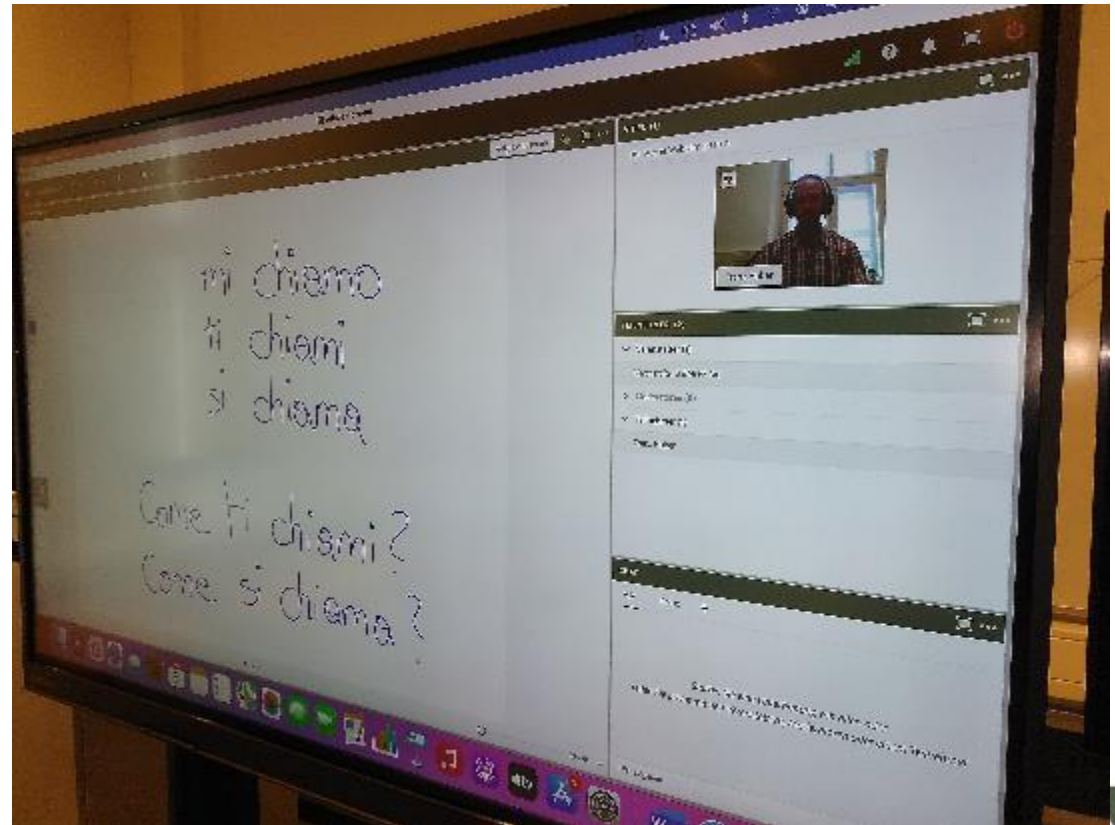
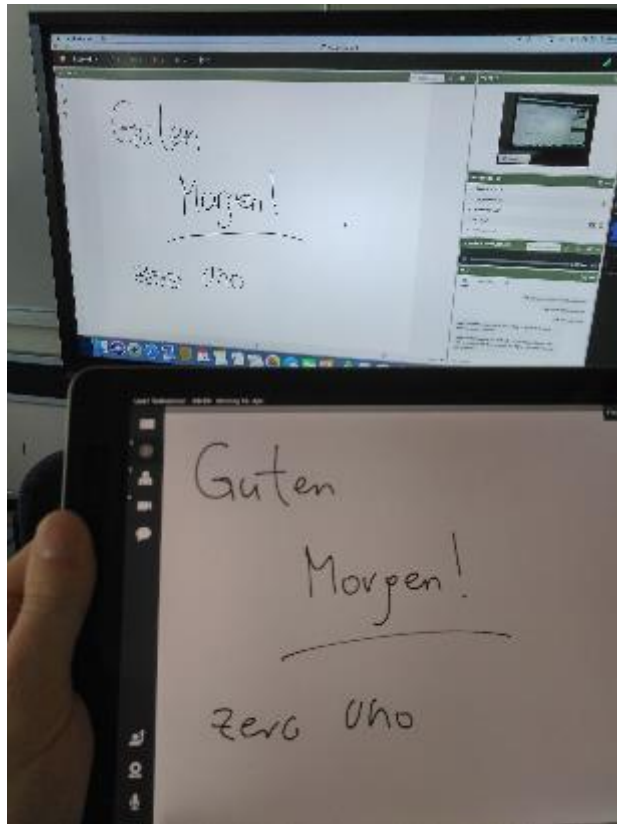


## Hybrid lessons

- Teacher in class, at home or in a studio
- Students in class and at home



## Hybrid lessons







# Lessons learned COVID-19

## General

- Due to COVID-19, we often had one option only: **online!** (game changer).
- We thus gained additional students/teachers but lost some **“online-refuseniks”**.
- All **teachers were forced** to teach online.
- Having purely online classes **means 1/3 more training** time, extended communication between teachers and course participants.
- The **higher the language level**, the easier it has been to change to online.
- **Higher test capacity** due to change of testers.



# Lessons learned COVID-19

## Personnel

- **Ratio** students : teachers (5:1)
- Doubling of **preparation time**
- **More time** required for practice and post-processing of course material / follow-up
- **Saturation effect** reached more quickly
- Training and constant use of **digital methods**
- **Backup precautions** taken by technical and teaching staff
- On-call **technical support** by experts



# Lessons learned COVID-19

## Tools

- **Implementation of an E-lab** for the production of instructional videos and for the Virtual Classroom



- **Instructional videos** for self-study
- **Podcasts and learning apps** for teaching
- **Dynamic Learning Management System**
- **Great variety of tools** necessary







# Global Online Language Service of the AAF

## Language training and Operations Preparation

- Digital language courses
- Digital learning resources
- Pronunciation software
- Learning app (Busuu)
- Digital intercultural Operations Preparation (language and culture)

## Language maintenance and expansion

- Learning app (Busuu)
- VTC tutorials
- Audio learning database (Accents Library)
- ESP terminology databases (Aviation English, Cyber English, etc.)

## Language assessment

- Self-assessment tests (incl. online diagnostic tests)
- Distance Testing: Online SKF and SLP language tests (computer-based)
- Preparation materials and information on exams

## Language support

- Terminology apps
- Language resources portal
- Machine translation system
- Video-interpreting
- Language Blog
- Links

## Developments until 2023





# Thank you for your attention!

