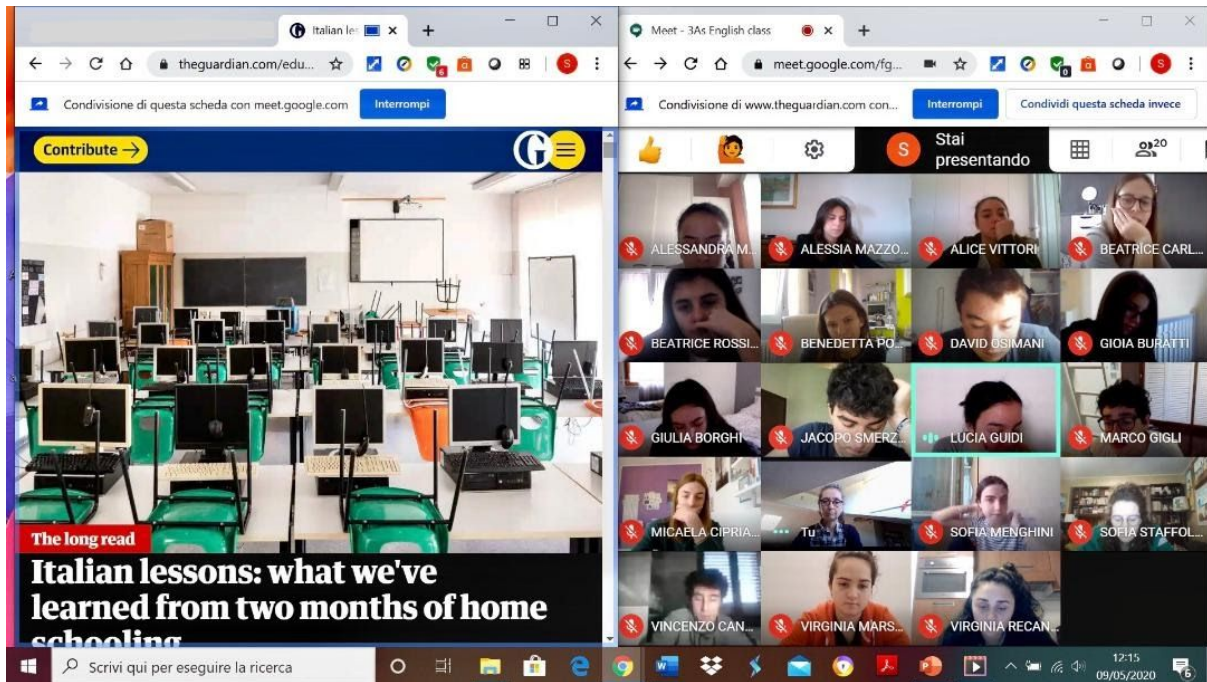


Why we are not “empty vessels to be filled with knowledge”



Italy has been one of the most infected countries in the world by Coronavirus, ([Italian lessons: what we've learned from two months of home schooling](#), 24 April) counting almost 30.000 deaths in two months. Forcing us on lockdown, it has overthrown our usual routine compelling us to keep social distancing thus losing contact with our friends. Particularly, during this period we haven't been allowed to go to school and must follow lessons online. This whole situation was very unexpected for everyone, causing a lot of chaos. It's true, not all teachers and students were prepared to this overwhelming change and most schools took a long time to adapt to it. Despite these difficulties, all students in Italy have now to follow online lessons, so they are no longer left to “otium” or disengagement. Indeed, by studying and continuing with our school schedule, we are back to the balance between “otium” and “negotium”, also meant as our involvement in helping common health by staying in quarantine.

We attend Savoia-Benincasa, a scientific secondary school in Ancona in the Marche region. During the lockdown, our teachers have only changed the tool, as they have always had a teaching method which does not consider us as “empty vessels to be filled with knowledge”. The teaching method has evolved since 1854, when Dickens wrote it! We feel and are very involved in

our learning process and education. Everyday, we have normal lessons, which are video calls with our teachers. In addition to that, we also keep on using digital platforms such as Google Documents, Google Classroom, Google Drive, digital textbooks, mind maps, videos, stuff we were already familiar with, and more. By the use of these tools we are not left behind and our education becomes way more active, even if now we are at home. Moreover, our school was already on a steady and long-lasting process of major overhauling even before Covid-19. So, the tough side of our current school work is not the change but the pace. Team working has always been a main feature of our learning practice as well as peer teaching and cooperative learning, as a matter of fact, in our classrooms we don't have rows of desks but isles. On lockdown, our teachers have increased team working, which makes it less hard for us to do our homework. This way, we also have the opportunity to communicate and keep in touch.

One of the main problems the closing of schools has caused in Italy is that families with lower incomes struggled to provide their children with the digital devices necessary to keep up with the lessons. Fortunately, this hasn't been our case but, anyhow, the principal made it very clear that whoever needed computers or tablets could borrow them from school.

Also, on Savoia-Benincasa Instagram page, we launched an initiative asking friends and people to share their own Wifi with neighbours so that everyone have the possibility to attend the lessons as best as they can.

COVID-19 overall repercussions on Italy's school system have been very serious, upsetting many students around the country. Anyhow, distant learning has also brought up some silver lining: schools are one of the few aspects of our life that has been maintained stable and firmly fixed, giving us the balance and reassurance we needed day after day in this harsh and unforeseen period.

As for our experience, it has allowed us to follow a day-routine, to work with the same involvement as before the pandemic. The overall psychological impact of school work, even if it is distant learning, has been pretty positive also because we have been able to maintain social relations with our peers and with people who are out of our home walls.