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NETMODERATING AS A MAINSTAY OF E-LEARNING

Diploma thesis

Brno 2008

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I hereby declare that this diploma thesis is completely my own work and that I used only the sources of information that are listed in the bibliography. I approve that this diploma thesis is stored and available for study and academic purposes in the library of the Faculty of Education at the Masaryk University in Brno.

16th January 2008

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signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the supervisor of my diploma thesis PhDr. Tamara Váňová for her worthy advice, inspiration and patience in her leadership. I am also grateful that she enabled me to use the discussion forum of the course Online_A for my analysis.

I kindly thank my parents who gave me willing help and support.

ABSTRACT

The diploma thesis *Netmoderating as a mainstay of e-learning* provides a survey focused on the description of basic roles and competences of the netmoderator. This description is completed with the issues that are closely related to the work of the netmoderator, i.e. e-learning and communication. The thesis is based on the in-depth analysis investigating how the netmoderating is realised in practice.

The theoretical part deals with the classification and characterisation of three main topics of the subject. It starts with the chapter about e-learning that is considered especially from educational point of view. The second chapter provides the theoretical background about the communication. The essential part of this chapter is concerned with online form of communication. The third part of the thesis deals in details with the principle theme, i.e. netmoderating.

In the practical part, the analysis of the discussion forum is carried out and illustrates the theory by concrete examples.

The main goal of the analysis is to illustrate how the work of the netmoderator functions in practice and to provide a kind of practical manual for the teachers who teach via the Internet.

Keywords:

netmoderator, netmoderating, e-learning, communication, online, CMC, netiquette

ANOTACE

Diplomová práce *Netmoderování jako součást e-learningu* se zabývá rozбором základních rolí a kompetencí netmoderátora. Dalšími stěžejními tématy diplomové práce jsou kritéria, která jsou velice úzce spjata s působením netmoderátora, tedy e-learning a komunikace. Práce je založena na podrobné analýze zaměřené na to, jakým způsobem je práce netmoderátora realizována v praxi.

Teoretická část práce se ve třech hlavních kapitolách zaměřuje na hlavní témata problematiky. První kapitola popisuje e-learning především z hlediska vzdělávání. Druhá kapitola přináší teoretické poznatky o komunikaci. Její podstatná část se týká online formy komunikace. Třetí kapitola detailně popisuje hlavní téma práce, tj. netmoderování.

Praktická část vychází z analýzy diskusního fóra a ilustruje teorii na praktických příkladech.

Hlavním cílem této práce je ukázat, jak práce funguje v praxi a vytvořit tak praktickou příručku pro učitele, kteří učí pomocí internetu.

Klíčová slova:

netmoderátor, netmoderování, e-learning, komunikace, online, komunikace mediovaná počítačem, netiketa

ČÁSOVÁ, Barbora. Netmoderating as a mainstay of e-learning : Diploma Thesis. Brno: Masaryk University, Faculty of Education, Department of English Language and Literature, 2008, 93 p. Supervisor PhDr. Tamara Váňová.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of the information technology caused that it becomes more and more essential for everyday life in all branches. The educational sphere follows this trend as well and therefore, new issues and roles need to be included.

In my diploma thesis, I will deal with the topic that is entirely new and only little explored: the netmoderating and the netmoderator. I think that this work will be of a great importance in the future, not only in the educational sphere, but also in other different expert communities (within the companies, in marketing agencies, in the cultural and IT sphere).

First of all, at the beginning of the theoretical part, I would like to focus on the environment in which the netmoderating takes place, i.e. e-learning. This issue is restricted to those forms of e-learning that are used within the educational process. Further, I will describe the most important tool of the netmoderator, i.e. the communication. From the general definition of the communication, I will move towards the relations within the online communication. Within, I will devote attention to the communication channels that represent the nature of online interaction. The last section of the theoretical part treats the netmoderator in connection with previous two chapters. The practical part will be based on the analysis. I will try to describe individual contributions from the discussion forum and underline those features that are important for the teachers who want to work as netmoderators. I will then analyse the representative samples of those communicators whose activity within the forum is typical for appropriate behaviour. I will also include the issue of netiquette.

The main goal of this diploma thesis is supposed to be a contribution to an unexplored area of netmoderating from the future teacher's point of view.

PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR THE THESIS

Since I entered the university, I have been attracted by the new forms of teaching that were developed essentially via the LMS Moodle. I got in touch with some courses that were taught by PhDr. Tamara Váňová and I became one of the e-tutors in her courses. During the studies, I found out that the issue of e-learning is not yet fully covered in our country and that it needs a lot of work to do and that is one of the reasons why I decided to deal with the topic of the netmoderator.

My diploma work is therefore the result of my experience in the educational sphere, the theoretical background gained during my studies at the Faculty of Education and my will to discover something new.

II. THEORETICAL PART

1 E-learning

1.1 Definition

As cited on Wikipedia¹, electronic learning or e-learning is “a general term used to refer to computer-enhanced learning.” The definition indicates the plurality of the notion caused by the rapid development of various learning environments.

In general, there are two concepts of the definition of the term, one in the United States and the other one in our country. In the USA, the term e-learning has been used for a long time and the Czechs have just started to use this term especially in the university sphere and in corporate education. Therefore, the development of the issue is more complex.

The American concept deals with e-learning in connection with the term Technology-Based Learning (TBL) which refers to all types of learning using technologies like television, radio, computer etc.

As a subordinated term, Web-Based Learning (WBL) is used. It is learning supported by information and communication technologies.

The European concept means something different, i.e. the term Technology-Based Learning includes only learning supported by certain technology while learning by means of computer network is called e-learning.

Another interpretation of the term e-learning can be found in Průcha, Walterová, Mareš²: “E-learning refers to different kinds of learning supported by the computer, usually with the usage of modern technological devices”. However, this definition does not mention the importance of network connection that is nowadays essential for e-learning.

In practice, the term e-learning is used to refer to many types of learning contexts ranging from “all forms of learning delivered by using a computer” as stated by Černá³ to learning “specifically delivered over the Internet and intranet” (ibid).

¹ Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 13 October 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

² Průcha, J., Walterová, E., Mareš, J. *Pedagogický slovník*. Praha: Portál, s.r.o., 2001. 328 p. ISBN 80-71-78-579-2.

³ Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

From the point of views of the teacher we can understand the e-learning as the educational process that makes use of information and communication technologies. In this way, the pedagogical objectives can be attained.

E-learning is naturally closely connected with distant learning but it can also be used in combination with face-to-face teaching. As Skalková¹ underlines, the basic question is how e-learning can be implemented into practice to make the education more effective and how to interconnect the face-to-face teaching and autonomous learning via Internet. As presented on Wikipedia², there are a number of pedagogical approaches in e-learning that includes:

- Instructional design as the traditional pedagogy of instruction that is curriculum-focused and that is developed by a teacher
- Social constructivist pedagogy is enabled by the use of discussion forums, blogs, wiki and online collaborative activities.
- Cognitive perspective focuses mainly on cognitive processes involved on learning.
- Emotional perspective underlines the emotional aspects of learning, like motivation, engagement etc.
- Behavioural perspective focuses on the skills and behavioural outcomes of the learning process.
- Contextual perspective highlights the environmental and social aspects which can stimulate learning, e.g. interaction with other people, collaborative work, peer support etc.

1.2 The advantages and disadvantages of e-learning

As well as other forms of teaching and learning, also e-learning has got both positive and negative features. The list presented below summarises the most essential pros and cons of e-learning. These vary according to the specific learning environment, objectives, target learners and organisational background.

¹ Skalková, J. *Pedagogika a výzvy nové doby*. Brno:PAIDO, 2004. 158 p. ISBN 80-7315-060-3

² Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 13 October 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

1.2.1 The advantages of e-learning

Some of the most significant advantages of e-learning teaching and learning are:

- Flexibility definitely belongs to the most important advantages. It causes higher effectiveness of learning, because each learning environment can practically at any moment be adapted to special needs of learners. The learning process is thus limited „only“ by the access to the technology that mediates learning which enables students to learn conveniently at any time, at any place.
- E-learning can be individually adapted to learners with different needs, preferences, rhythm of learning and learning styles. The overview of the main groups of learning styles is presented below in the chapter 1.3.
- Another advantage of e-learning can be seen in the possible constant access to information in the learning environment. The materials presented online can be modified at any time and with an immediate impact. This assures that the contents of the materials are delivered permanently up-to-date.
- From the pedagogical point of view, the important feature of the e-learning is the fact that it leads to the autonomous learning and creativity of learners. It arises from the basis of e-learning, since the learners not only learn online (within the meaning of passive receiving of knowledge), but also search online additional information and the connection between the materials presented by the teacher.
- The system of control and the feedback towards the learners can be even more worked out in comparison with the face-to-face learning via new processes. The human activity is omitted and therefore, the most significant advantage in this issue is the objectivity of the process.
- Reduced learning and teaching time

1.2.2 The disadvantages of e-learning

E-learning has got its limitations, among them the following:

- Firstly, it is the dependence on technology (software, hardware and specific required technologies availability) together with constant access to internet. Some learners need to overcome the limits of their technology skills or to use the medium more effectively.
- The use of e-learning is contingent on the ability of learners to use computer.

- Another disadvantage is a time-consuming work on the online courses not only at the beginning of the course, but also during the course when updating of the course content is necessary.
- The fact that the course once developed is not universal can also be regarded as a drawback.
- E-learning can sometimes be unsuitable for certain types of teaching. Sometimes, the interpersonal contact is necessary although the teaching can be supplemented by e-learning as well.
- The autonomous learning mentioned beforehand as one of the advantages, can cause difficulties to certain types of learners since it requires time management and self-discipline.

1.3 Main characteristics of e-learning

- Expanded educational process
- The materials are assembled from texts, graphics and multimedia components
- The teacher(s) and the learner(s) are not in face-to-face contact, either partially or entirely
- Technical support is based on standard internet technology, so called TCP/IP protocol and web browsers
- Enables the broadest view of learning, goes beyond the traditional understanding of learning
- The use of synchronous and asynchronous communication channels
- Active and autonomous learning. The learner is supported by the teacher being given a considerable autonomy and being expected to decide about his own learning process.
- Supports various form of interactions and group work

1.4 E-learning and learning styles

One of the features that characterises the learners is their learning style. It is a specific way of perceiving the environment, responding to the environment and interacting with it. Furthermore, the term includes also the way of thinking and information processing. Within the e-learning, it is possible for the teacher to adapt to distinct learning styles of his or her learners. There should not be a mismatch between the activity and the

learning style. Each learner should be treated as an individual with his or her study habits and practice even if the online course has got a large number of students. If this criterion is fulfilled, appropriate activities can be set up.

Below, I introduce two basic classifications of learning styles that are, in my opinion, the most essential with the brief comments on their roles in e-learning.

1.4.1 Active, reflective, experimental and theorising learners

One of the most common classifications of learning styles is based on theory of experimental learning and it is offered by Higgison¹. She distinguishes four types of learners: active, reflective, experimental and theorising.

- Active learners learn through concrete learning experience. They like doing things for themselves rather than being told how to do them. Therefore, slow methodology is not useful for them and they often push forward the activity by themselves. The most convenient form of activity is an asynchronous interaction that will keep them occupied.
- Reflective learners learn through observation. Then, they reflect about the process and require more information before they react. Sometimes, they are uncertain about what they do and tend to search for the feedback from other people. They profit mostly from an asynchronous interaction in which they contribute with considered responses.
- Experimental learners briefly experiment which means that they try to invent some new way of doing something or to put into practice any new experience. Sometimes, they are too energetic and impatient. For experimental learners, learning is mainly looking for new challenge. For experimental type of learner, the activity that offers the self-evaluation is important.
- Theorising learners learn through the logical concept they try to build. Concrete concepts are too limited for understanding the complex situation for them. In

¹ Higgison, C., A. *Online Tutoring e-book*. OTIS. Retrieved on 15 October 2007, from <<http://otis.scotcit.ac.uk/onlinebook/>>.

learning process, they consider the hypotheses and make rules. Sometimes, they avoid emotions and personal opinions and thus seem to be less sympathetic. Within the learning process, they need time to connect the situations and the ideas. The best type of activity is the asynchronous communication because they offer the possibility to explore things. On the other hand, the structured activities are not suitable.

1.4.2 “Global” and “detailed” learning

This classification is based on the way how the learners perceive and interact with the text. Since the text is very important for e-learning, this classification is of a great importance within chapter one. Tluchoř¹ differentiates two different kinds of learning:

- Global learning means that the learner takes the presented text in a holistic approach and focuses on structure and meaning. He or she employs different strategies for conceptualisation, his approach is rather reflective and he has a personal responsibility for learning.
- Detailed learning is focused on key words and phrases. This may lead to the false comprehension and interpretation of the original meaning. Adopting the detailed form of approach does not sometimes achieve the objective – the students do not learn what the text tries to convey. The learners do not often use conceptualisation, do not consider critically the text and usually complete the task with minimal effort.

It is evident, according to the features mentioned above, that global learning is more effective. The global learning can be encouraged by using positive reinforcement, providing the connection between the theoretical and practical, providing “personal space” in the learning environment.

1.4.3 Auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners

These forms of learning are divided according to the senses that serve to perception within the learning process:

- Auditory learners need to hear words and sounds in order to learn. They prefer speaking and discussing certain topic to writing.

¹ Tluchoř, J. *E-learning a blended learning ve vzdělávacím procesu*. Plzeň: Západočeská univerzita, 2005. 21 p. ISBN 80-7043-420-1 (brož.).

It is useful to provide them with discussion topic and utilise audio and audiovisual materials

- Visual learners need to see things during the learning process. They learn primarily through the written text. They tend to be very diligent readers. The learners should be provided by written texts, visuals and graphics and involved through visual sense.
- Kinaesthetic learners learn the moment they feel and do things, they need physical action. The best way to learn is through the practising. They should be provided by real-life situations and involved mainly physically. They also like to know the principle of functioning things.

1.5 The differences between the “traditional” teacher/teaching and the online instructor/instructing in e-learning

With the development of information technologies, the online teaching has become as influential as face-to-face teaching. Both forms have its positives and limitations.

This chapter compares these two types of teaching.

1.5.1 Teaching methods

The teacher changes his or her role in the online environment, i.e. the role of content provider moves towards content facilitator. Nevertheless, the role of knowledge provider is remained both in online and face-to-face teaching.

As well, planning of learning tasks and time management remain the same in both environments.

According to McGreal¹, the online environment offers many educational possibilities over face-to-face teaching, such as the usage of informational or knowledge-providing resources (e.g. online reading assignment, project, searching for information on the internet, online dictionaries, online databases etc.) that can be invented in more natural way than on face-to-face class.

1.5.2 Interaction of the participants

¹ McGreal, R. *Learning objects: A practical definition*. International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning (IJITDL). Retrieved on September 24 2007, from <http://www.itdl.org/Journal/Sep_04/article02.htm>.

It is clear, that social interaction within the learning process is very important. On the contrary to face-to-face learning, in the online form, distance between the participants causes that the learners are in a manner tied in the communication. To minimise this, new forms of communication strategies are invented in the online learning (for example discussion boards).

In face-to-face, the discussion supports further exploration of the issue. The teacher uses such a technique that encourages learners to share their opinions, knowledge and experience.

The same situation is in the online teaching. As studied by An & Frick¹, the learners are encouraged to participate in discussion by means of specific techniques. Moreover, the great advantage of the online discussion is that the learners are not limited by time and thus have enough time to think about the issue before they participate in the discussion.

The common feature of both environments is that the teacher organises the discussion, provides guidelines and suggestions for it by designing various activities (e.g. brainstorming, projects, group work, problem-solving activities etc.).

Considering the way of communication, the apparent difference between online and face-to-face class is that the former uses mainly written form and the later mainly spoken words. A common form of interaction in the online class is the threaded discussion. The learners contribute to it in written and, being aware of the fact that their contributions will be read by their peers, these contributions are often very coherent.

The online form of interaction enables the teacher to focus on every single learner of the class at any time and every learner has got a possibility to interact.

In face-to-face, seldom every learner participates on the discussion within one lesson because the lesson is time-limited.

Another interesting issue is the feeling anonymity. Sometimes, the feeling of anonymity in the online class can be useful because it allows learners who are usually shy in the face-to-face interaction to communicate online (ibid.).

¹ An, Y.-J., Frick, T. *Student perceptions of asynchronous computer-mediated communication in face-to-face courses*. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. Retrieved on 27 October 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/an.html>>.

2 Communication

2.1 Definition

In general, the term communication can be understood as the transmission of the information between its participants, in either verbal or non-verbal way.

As it is defined by Schwarz¹, the communication involves exchanging information to convey the meaning.

He also believes that “the communication process is embedded in all other group processes” (ibid.).

The traditional concept takes the communication as face to face communication which takes place in the school, within the family or in different educational institutions.

Nevertheless, with the increasing possibilities of the technology in today’s world, the virtual communication seems to be of the same importance as the above mentioned face to face communication.

Communication stands as the inseparable part of the education. As Šimoník² presents, it is necessary, for all the participants of the pedagogical process, to be able to communicate, that means to be able not only to share information, knowledge and opinions but also to transmit the emotions, human relations and attitudes. He also claims that pedagogical communication is focused on reaching the pedagogical goals, it has got certain content, proceeds with respect to the participants’ social roles and given rules of the process of communication.

Under the term communication, DeVito³ understands such an exchange of information in which comes up to the sending or receiving of the message as well as to the decoding of signals from other people. Thus, as Cejpek⁴ ads, the communication is the condition and presumption of the existence of any human community.

Furthermore, as Vybíral⁵ emphasises, people communicate to share the information as well as to be in social contact. He also presents different motivations of communication:

¹ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7.

² Šimoník, O. *Úvod do školní didaktiky*. Brno: MSD, spol.s.r.o., 2003. 91 p. ISBN 80-86633-04-7.

³ DeVito, J., A. *Základy mezilidské komunikace*. Praha: Grada, 2001. 420 p. ISBN 80-7169-988-8.

⁴ Cejpek, J. *Informace, komunikace a myšlení: úvod do informační vědy*. Praha: Karolinum, 1998. 179 s. ISBN: 80-7184-767-4.

⁵ Vybíral, Z. *Úvod do psychologie komunikace*. Hradec Králové: Gaudeamus, 1997. 118 p. ISBN:80-7041-002-7.

- Cognitive motivation – to share the information
- Socializing motivation – the main purpose for communication is the socialization
- Motivation of self confirmation – to confirm one's place in society, by talking with other is confirmed one's identity
- Adaptation for motivation – to integrate to the community by communicating, by eliciting the rules and taboos of particular community, the aim is to achieve the acceptance of the community
- Motivation to win recognition – the aim is to achieve the respect of community
- Pleasure seeking motivation – to have a good time, to relax

2.2 Patterns of communication

Many factors need to be considered when examining the patterns of how group participants communicate. As summarised by Schwarz¹, these factors include essentially the following:

- Who communicates? The participants of the discussion do not contribute to it the same amount. People's ability to speak depends partly on whether they are spoken to or not and also on their social status. Hence, participants with higher social status normally interrupt the other ones.
- How do participants communicate with each other? The manner of interaction depends on the theme being discussed and on the general ability of the speakers to interact which includes the quality, relativity and accuracy of their contributions. The incorrect communication is held when the participants make false interferences or assumptions, do not discuss them with the relevant co-speakers and act as if they are true.
- What the participants communicate about? The topic depends on the orientation of the group of participants, which means that the group discusses the topic members are interested in.
- Non-verbal component of the communication. People also interact non-verbally by using their bodies in order to emphasize, repeat, substitute for or contradict their verbal behaviour.

¹ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7.

2.3 Online communication

In general, as presented by RMIT University¹, online communication is the one using communication technologies. These can be used to supplement and enhance delivery of education.

There are many forms of communication technologies:

- E-mail
- Telephone
- Fascimile
- Audiograaphs
- Video teleconferencing
- Two-way interactive television
- Bulletin boards
- Discussion boards
- Asynchronous forums (threaded discussion)
- Synchronous chat (real-time)

As cited in Salmon², talking online, sometimes called “Netspeak”, lacks the facial expressions, gestures and conventions that are important in communicating face to face and in conveying personal opinions and attitudes.

One of the most important features of online communication is that it allows to communicate anywhere and anytime at any place. It can decrease isolation and facilitate the learning process. The feeling of community can be achieved via different asynchronous³ and synchronous⁴ communication.

2.3.1 Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) can be defined as any form of data exchange across two or more networked computers. As suggested by Abrams⁵, more

¹ RMIT University. Learning technology service. *What is online communication?* Retrieved on 1 November 2007, from <<http://www.lts.rmit.edu.au/renewal/onlcomm/what.htm>>.

² Salmon, G. *E-tivities*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002. 223 p. ISBN 0-7494-3686-7

³ The asynchronous communication is such an interaction where the sender and receiver do not need to communicate in the real time, e.g. threaded discussion. This will be further discussed in section 2.2.1.1.

⁴ The synchronous communication requires a real-time conversation with two or more online logged users e.g. chat. This will be further discussed in section 2.2.1.1.

⁵ Abrams. In Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

frequently, the term is narrowed to include only those communications that occur via computer-mediated formats (i.e., instant messages, e-mails, chat rooms) between two or more individuals.

As Haythornthwaite, Wellman & Garton¹ quote, Computer-Mediated Communication includes text-based, audio, visual exchange between people using computers. Jones² presents that Computer-Mediated Communication is a space with different tools. These tools enable the individuals to enter the space and create various social relation. In fact, CMC is a social space based on conversation and interaction and mainly a kind of mobility that helps to move through this space. This mobility is either a possibility to move from place to place without the physical movement or changing of status, social identity and characters (ibid.). This issue will be discussed later.

Computer-Mediated Communication is different from face-to-face communication. Therefore, it requires a different rules and different type of interaction. It is evaluated by Černá³ as “an altered state of communication, which includes an altered physical environment, altered time and space, and altered structures in communication”.

2.3.1.1 Synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication

As mentioned above, computer-mediated communication can be either synchronous or asynchronous.

Synchronous communication is real-time, mostly text-based. Two people or a group of users are connected to the Internet at the same time in order to be able to interact. According to Tinker & Haavind⁴, synchronous technologies include two-way communication channels, e.g. “real-time chats and shared applications”

Asynchronous communication is above all time-independent, it is more convenient. An obvious advantage of asynchronous communication is the possibility to adapt the time of the interaction to a person's needs, i.e. 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

¹ Haythornthwaite, C., Wellman, B., Garton, L. *Studying Online Social Networks*. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication. Retrieved on 1 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol3/issue1/garton.html>>.

² Jones, S. *Using the News: An Examination of the Value and Use of News Sources in CMC*. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication. Retrieved on 1 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol2/issue4/jones.html>>.

³ Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

⁴ Tinker, R., and Haavind, S. In Zorfass, J., Remz, A., and Ethier, D. *Illustrating the Potential of an Online Workshop through a Case Study Example*. CMC Magazine. Retrieved on 2 November, 2007, from <<http://www.december.com/cmc/mag/1998/feb/zorfass.html>>.

Participants may contribute in their own time and their own pace. The traditional classroom stereotypes are neutralised. On the other hand, Crystal¹ announce that in asynchronous mode there is a time-delay, a so-called lag, which involves inherent uncertainty in knowing the length of the gap between the posting and receiving a reaction or a message. This lag, however short it may be, causes the lack of all the important features of the synchronous communication as predictability and the rhythm that can be found in e.g. phone call, face-to-face conversation (ibid.).

The aforesaid characteristic of synchronous and asynchronous interaction can explain strong preference for face-to-face communication and quite high resistance to computer-mediated communication.

As presented by MacKenzie², the online communication allows “less dominant students to contribute, and sensitive issues to be discussed without the immediacy of peer pressure in the classroom”.

These pieces of knowledge are proved by Warschauer³ who presents the results of the experiments on the effect of computer-mediated communication on classroom dynamics. The results show that “shy foreign language students participate much more frequently in electronic discussions” (ibid.).

An important function of the asynchronous communication is the possibility to interact on the international level without the time pressure.

On the other hand, we have to mention some of the disadvantages of the computer-mediated communication. CMC does not allow to share the same physical environment, the communication is then restricted to the linguistic forms written on the keyboard.

2.3.1.2 Text-based computer-mediated communication

Even though the technological progress has speeded up, as foregrounded by Černá⁴, broadband connections are still far from being widely used. Therefore, CMC is mostly

¹ Crystal, D. In Danet, B., Herring, S., C. *Introduction: The Multilingual Internet*. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication . Retrieved on 3 November, 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol9/issue1/intro.html>>.

² MacKenzie. In Ellison, N., Heino, R., Gibbs, J. *Managing impressions online: Self-presentation processes in the online dating environment*. Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. Retrieved on 2 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol11/issue2/ellison.html>>.

³ Warschauer. In Abrams, Z., I. *Asynchronous CMC, Collaboration and the Development of Critical Thinking in a Graduate Seminar in Applied Linguistics*. Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology. Retrieved on 3 November 2007, from <http://www.cjlt.ca/content/vol31.2/abrams.html>

⁴ Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

written. It is evident, that the main advantage of the text-based communication is the possibility to re-evaluate, to re-write and to store the message and last but not least the text can be easily transmitted. Moreover, the text can be saved for the future reference. Apparently, this is first of all valid for the asynchronous text-based communication. In the synchronous text-based communication, as Crystal¹ announces, the message stays for the certain time on the screen but the backward revision is not possible to such a degree.

On the other hand, the written form of the message can cause problems for kinaesthetic and auditive types of learners, since it is very difficult for them to express themselves comfortably in writing. Furthermore, for some of these learners, the online text-based applications can be very time consuming and difficult to cope with.

2.3.2 Netiquette

Netiquette is a neologism; it is in fact wordplay on the word etiquette. It combines two words: network and etiquette.

In short, netiquette in an online environment should remember the people online that they are still real, and sometimes they do not know the conventions or they use the conventions from face-to-face communication which is not desirable. All these wrong assumption may often lead to all kinds of mistakes.

In the past the population of people using the Internet was developed with it, they were technically minded and understood the nature of the transport. Today the community of Internet users includes people who are new in this environment. These people are unfamiliar with the culture and do not need to understand the technical support. In order to bring these new users into the Internet culture quickly it was necessary to come up with a minimum set of rules which organizations and individuals may respect and follow.

As stated by Černá², the term netiquette refers to “the set of guidelines that are meant to provide helpful hints on what is considered acceptable behaviour when communicating via the Internet”. The guidelines are not to be misconceived as laws or rules that detract from the concept of free expression on the Internet (ibid.).

¹ Crystal, D. In Danet, B., Herring, S., C. *Introduction: The Multilingual Internet*. Retrieved on 3 November, 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol9/issue1/intro.html>>.

² Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

Obviously, there are a lot of modified online guidelines how to behave on the Internet. It is clear that some basic rules should exist for any online environment. Naturally, further specification of these rules is required to be adapted according to the needs of particular online environment and channels of communication.

The following rules offered by Duggleby¹ stand as an overall idea of desirable online behaviour:

- All the online users have feelings. Treat them with same politeness and respect that you would in any other social situation (face-to-face conversation).
- Do not forget that different people are of different cultures, mentality and manners. This must be respected in the computer-mediated communication as well.
- Do not waste other people's time, the CMC should be of appropriate length.
- Respect people's bandwidth. The attachments should be of appropriate size.
- Respect people's privacy.
- Check what you have written (grammar, spelling, style and sense).
- Try to avoid some angry arguments, disagreement is possible but try to do so politely.
- Be tolerant of other people, especially to the newbies².
- Be generous and share the knowledge you have acquired.
- Do not type exclusively in capital letters. It is considered to be the bad form in the online environment.

Writing about netiquette, it is necessary to introduce the term "flaming". Flaming is an angry interaction between Internet users. These users are called flammers. They believe that their opinion is the only one that is valid. As a result, they personally attack those Internet users who disagree.

2.3.3 Language in computer-mediated communication

The Internet has not always been a public thoroughfare: it used to be a clique inhabited by students and researchers nurtured on a diet of UNIX programming, scientific nomenclature, an in-jokes. Meanwhile, in a parallel world, thousands of low-speed modem jockeys logged into independent bulletin board networks to trade files, post

¹ Duggleby. In Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

² Someone that is new to something, especially a novice at using computer technology or the Internet.

messages and chat in public forums. These groups were largely responsible for the birth of an exclusively online language consisting of acronyms, emoticons (smileys and such), and tagged text. The popularising of the Internet brought these two cultures together, along with, more recently, the less digitally versed general public.

It follows that language in CMC is an important issue that is in constant development that cannot be ignored.

If we consider the relation between the language and ICT, generally speaking, it is evident that ICT has got an amazing impact on the language. There are two different approaches taken to the language use in CMC. Some authors are primarily worried about linguistic issues of CMC. For them, as claimed by Crystal¹, it is “language in general and individual languages in particular, which are going to end up as Internet casualties”. Černá² asserts that Netspeak will rule, standards will be lost as well as creativity. Crystal³ argues the reverse, that the Internet in fact provides unprecedented opportunities for personal creativity when using the language.

He analyses the language used in different forms of CMC (e-mail, chat groups, Web) and introduces a new term, Netspeak. Netspeak is a medium with an uncertain linguistic identity that combines spoken, written and electronic properties (ibid.).

In online world or let's say in virtual world in general, the ambiguity of the interaction of all the participants in the online communication seems to be inseparable part of CMC. This phenomenon caused the development of “smileys” or “emoticons⁴” as a substitute. In a very short time, the large number of emotional icons was produced within the online community. The emoticons help to express the emotions by way of symbols. Let's introduce the most common ones:

: -)	[Smiling]
: -o	[Shock],
: ' - (	[Crying],
X -)	[I see nothing],
: -X	[I'll say nothing]

Table 1: The most common emoticons

¹ Crystal, D. In Danet, B., Herring, S., C. *Introduction: The Multilingual Internet*. Retrieved on 3 November, 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol9/issue1/intro.html>>.

² Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

³ Crystal, D. In Danet, B., Herring, S., C. *Introduction: The Multilingual Internet*. Retrieved on 3 November, 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol9/issue1/intro.html>>.

⁴ A sideways facial glyph used in e-mail to indicate an emotion or attitude, as to indicate intended humour.

Moreover, Netspeak is also typical with its use of different graphic symbols. These symbols in fact substitute various aspects used in face-to-face communication, especially its non-verbal components. They also spare time and place within the online interaction.

Here are some examples of graphic symbols used in Netspeak with their equivalent explanations:

AFAIK	[As far as I know]
A/S/L	[Age/Sex/Location]
BBL	[Be back later]
BD	[Big deal]
BFN	[Bye for now]
BRB	[Be right back]
BTW	[By the way]
CYA	[See ya]
CUL8R or L8R	[See you later]
F2F	[Face to face]
GR8	[Great]
HTH	[Hope this helps]
IMHO	[In my humble opinion]
IYSWIM	[If you see what I mean]
IOW	[In other words]
LOL	[Laughing out loud]
NRN	[No reply necessary]
OIS	[Oh I see]
OTOH	[On the other hand]
SOL	[Sooner or later]
TTYL	[Talk to you later]
YL/YM	[Young lady/young man]
LY & + LY	[Absolutely and positively]

Table 2: Graphic symbols used in Netspeak

To conclude, language is the basic condition of the existence of the communication in general and it is very important to understand the online language to avoid ambiguity

and misunderstanding. The language in CMC is a topic of great importance and it is a vast area for future research, mainly in the pedagogical-psychological course of study. This problem will be further discussed later.

2.3.4 The participants of the online communication, their relationship and identity

The online environment allows the communication with inexhaustible number of users within the various communication channels. People meet online on the basis of different criteria e.g. common interests, quest to find somebody/something or purely and simply because of curiosity.

As well as in the face to face communication, the participants in the online environment interact. Nevertheless, the interaction and the identity online are present under the different form.

2.3.4.1 The participants and social groups in the online environment

The virtual community is a community formed by way of computer mediated communication. Many people believe that the virtual community arises the moment the users are logged in the concrete communication channels of computer mediated communication, but the truth is that the term virtual community can be used no later than those users are connected via the networks. This social environment comprises information, knowledge and experience taken from the real world.

Similar to the real world, the interaction in virtual social environment is based on various groupings. The number of members within the grouping may vary, number from a few to thousands users. Online groups have got specific features in which they differ from the real world groups, e.g. text-based communication, possibility to change or hide the identity or equalization of the social status. The establishment of the wide range of unusual and sometimes completely new social roles is typical for the online environment.

There is no doubt that the Internet has got a powerful social role in the contemporary society. As cited by Parks¹, it is regarded as a social meeting place, it provides opportunities for the development of the interpersonal relationship. The Internet brings many new extensive social situations, such as participating in online virtual

¹ Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace*. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html>>.

communities, meeting people, developing business relationships. So, Internet users, besides traditional face-to-face interaction, create new social genres of interpersonal transaction with the assistance of the technology, and new configuration of group work. As shown in the research on learning processes in face-to-face groups, the development of social climate is very important in order for student to feel like insiders in the learning environment. This incontrovertibly contributes to students' motivation, their satisfaction and involvement (ibid.). There is a little bit different situation in virtual groups, some authors like Sproull & Kiesler¹ are convinced that the network does not help to the creation of a social climate, because the virtual meetings are anonymous and lack the necessities of physical appearance, non-verbal cues of face-to-face meeting. Sproull & Kiesler also claim that the online relationships are more hostile, divisive and uninhibited as face-to-face meetings seem to be.

However, some other authors are not so sceptic about the social climate in the virtual world and argue with this pessimistic view on online social relations. Parks² suggests that when limitations of time are removed and long term processes are observed, online social groups are similar to the features of the face-to-face groups.

2.3.4.2 Group norms

Every group has a set of norms. They may apply to everyone in the group or only to certain members.

Common group norms include: challenging of the tutor, length and frequency of interactions, taboo subjects, open expression of feelings, avoiding conflict etc.

Group norms, as commented by Řezáč³, are represented by a certain system of rules that ensure the running of the activities within the group as fluent as possible.

As defined by Schwarz⁴, “norms are expectations about two people should or should not behave that all or many group members share.”

Generally speaking, norms determine what the members can or cannot do.

Norms are created in order to make significant contributions towards enabling the interaction in online environment from different social backgrounds, just as they do in the face-to-face communication.

¹ Sproull & Kiesler. In Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html>>.

² Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html>>.

³ Řezáč, J. *Sociální psychologie*. Brno: PAIDO, 1998. 268 p. ISBN 80-85931-48-6.

⁴ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7.

They are important to help members to integrate into the group because they insinuate the way other members will behave in certain situation.

2.3.4.3 Online Communities

The use of the communication has always been connected with the education role (among other important roles). Modern form of learning via communication is becoming more and more popular. There is no doubt that the online communication has an immense impact on the society and many new terms appear in connection with this fact – for example, recently the notion netocrat¹ was invented. The term netocracy can refer to the educational situation in which the online community could be lead by anyone. This could have a fall-out on groovy conventions and patterns in the educational field.

The term “online community” has become the “trendy-term” for almost all groups of the participants who use Internet technologies to communicate with each other. Online communities tend to be named by the activity, people or technology they support or are supported. Wellman ² states that the sociologists, social psychologists and anthropologists are the guardians of the term but for more than 50 years, they have defined and redefined the concept of community.

Forerunners of online community development and research Rheingold and Hiltz³ used the term “online community” to connote the intense feelings of camaraderie, empathy and support that they observed among people in the online spaces they studied.

The way we define community boundaries online is another important issue. Online communities rarely exist merely online; very often, an online community starts its existence as face-to-face interaction and have many offline components. Later on, the communities move towards the virtual world, this can be caused by the technological progress or simply it can be the need of the community.

¹ In this context, netocrats are “those who can harness global networks of information and master new forms of communication will inherit the power. They are the Netocrats”. Retrieved on 8 November 2007, from <<http://www.techsoc.com/netocracy.htm>>.

² Wellman, B. In Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html>>.

³ Rheinhold, H. and Hilty S., R. In Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html>>.

The fact that the computer mediated communication is not difficult and is nowadays easily accessible gives the opportunity to online communities to be established in a huge amount and of different types according to their aims and objectives:

- **Expert community** – there is no clear definition of this type of community, but written in simple terms, it is a community that unites a group of people who are experts in a specific field of activity, e.g. Open Logic Expert Community.
- **Learning community** is a group of people who share common values and beliefs, are actively engaged in learning together from each other. Such communities have become the template for a cohort-based, interdisciplinary approach to higher education. This is based on an advanced kind of “educational” or “pedagogical” design. The people who facilitate learning communities may contribute from several distinct fields of study.
- The concept of a **community of practice** (often abbreviated as CoP) refers to the process of social learning that occurs when people who have a common interest in some subject or problem collaborate over an extended period to share ideas, find solutions, and build innovations. It refers as well to the stable group that is formed from such regular interactions.
The term has its origin outside the online context, but nowadays, the communities of practice have become one of the most important methods of sharing information.
- **Knowledge Management Community** is a community that attract its attention both in academic and practitioner circles. Most projects appear to be primarily concerned with knowledge that can be quantified and can be captured, codified and stored - an approach more deserving of the label Information Management.

The members of the communities do not necessarily need to meet in reality, but still their co-operation and its following results can have an immense impact on the life of the society.

2.3.4.4 Online identity and names

When speaking in general terms about the human identity (including the name of a human being), it is necessary to consider the fact that it is psychological quality that is formed from the day of birth. As Piaget's¹ theory explains "infants are aware of their names as part of their "selves" from as early age of one year or two. They hear their names called and are sensitive to compliments or criticism accompanying them. Children learn to speak their names before they learn to say "I", and they need their names in order to refer to themselves".

Even after the children have grown, become educated, and developed a personality of their own, their name remains one of the unchanging aspects of their identity. And it is this word, the one most closely linked to our identity, which is given to us by others, sometimes even before we are born.

One of the most interesting and discussed topic in the online communication issue is the online identity. It is the identity that Internet users establish in online communities. The point is that the user chooses certain name or a nickname and he or she uses this name when communicating on the Internet. Some people prefer to use their real names, but most people identify themselves by means of pseudonyms.

As cited in Morgan, O'Neill and Harre² "upon entering IRC, a person chooses a nickname, known in IRC jargon as a "nick," for short. To choose a nick one must enter the following command: /nick "nickname". Nicks can be changed at any time, even every few seconds, by repeating the same command. Since a person's physical existence and identity must be condensed textually into a single line which states the nickname and the electronic address, the person will attempt to make these representational elements as prominent as possible. The way to do so is to choose an original nick which conveys something about the person's "self" and which will tempt other participants to strike up a conversation with that person".

They also claim that "in this form of interaction, where one cannot see the speaker or obtain even minimal information such as sex, approximate age, skin colour, race etc.-information which is easily obtainable in face-to-face interactions. Nicknames are thus a

¹ Piaget, J. *The child's conception of movement and speed*. New York: Basic Books, probably 1970. 306 p.

² Morgan, O'Neill and Harre. In Bechar-Israeli, H. <Bonehead> TO <cLoNehEAd>: NICKNAMES, PLAY, AND IDENTITY ON INTERNET RELAY CHAT. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 8 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue2/bechar.html>>.

critical means of presenting ourselves. They are the only initial way of saying who we are, in literally one word or one expression” (ibid.).

An online identity is as quoted on Wikipedia¹ far more malleable than a real life identity; the latter is shaped by factors that are difficult to control (including race, class, occupation, and level of educational achievement). Therefore, the most attractive feature of the CMC is the fact that the interacting users can introduce themselves in different ways which means that if they want to, they can possibly play with their identity.

In simple terms, by means of online identities, people are free to redefine themselves as they wish. It is an opportunity to become someone they are not be able to be in a real life. Thus, we can make an experiment with our age, gender, race and appearance as well as with the data from our life, for example social status.

An online pseudonym can afford some level of anonymity; however, very often, it may be possible to draw a connection between an online identity and a real life legal identity, especially when the user provides online information that reveals its real identification. The selected identity, either real or virtual, has got an influence on our co-communicators and on the way they understand us.

A person’s name is a kind of marker which defines the inner and outer being of that specific person. Although it may consist of a lone word, it can evoke a complex image in the mind of a person who utters it. Our name is an important part of our identity and accompanies us for a long time, usually from the day we are born till the day we die.

2.3.4.5 Avatar

Avatar is an online identity that may be either selected from a group of choices or create on one’s own to represent oneself to the virtual world environment. An avatar is a caricature, not a realistic photo and can be a simple image or a bizarre fantasy figure.

As quoted on Wikipedia² “an avatar (abbreviations include AV, ava, avie, avy, avi, avvie, avis, avies, avii, and avvy) is computer user’s representation of himself or herself, whether in the form of a three-dimensional model used in computer games, a two-

¹ Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 10 November 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

² Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 10 November 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

dimensional icon (picture) used on Internet forums and other communities, or a text construct found on early systems such as MUDs¹. The term "avatar" can also refer to the personality connected with the screen name², or handle, of an Internet user.

2.4 Communication channels

Communication channels or media have captured increasing attention of late. There are several reasons for developing new effective communication channels and one of the major one according to Rice³ can be that “there is an optimal match between channels and organizational tasks which will lead to more effective organizational performance”. The most important feature of all the communication channels is that they transfer information. The information within the communication channels is carried by a signal. In the last few decades, the most common channels like television, telephone and radio were developed. Since these medias are limited by space and time, the information transmit cannot be based only on these types of media. Moreover, these channels are used for one-way communication but rarely for interpersonal interaction. Until recently, the direct interaction between people was possible only via telephone and shortwave radio under the circumstances that the users were connected at the same. Similarly, also recorded communication (tape, compact disc) is restricted because the record has to be physically transported.

Face-to-face communication has its limits because of the necessity of the temporal and spatial simultaneity of the speakers.

Briefly, all types of interaction channels are somehow limited and these limits are more and more minimized.

Here are some examples of the communication channels that more or less break through the above mentioned limits:

E-mail is short for “electronic mail”, it is a system for writing, sending and receiving messages electronically within the network. E-mail is in fact much older than Internet itself. The beginnings of e-mail were very simple, it was just a message left in someone’s file directory and the users could see the message only when logged in.

¹ MUD (Multi-User Dungeon, Domain or Dimension) is a multi-player computer game that combines elements of role-playing games, hack and slash style computer games and social chat rooms.

² Another term used for user or nick name.

³ Rice, R., E. In Parks R., M. *Making Friends in Cyberspace. Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*. Retrieved on 7 November 2007, from <<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol1/issue4/parks.html#>>.

Probably, the first e-mail system was introduced in Massachusetts in 1965. It was nothing else than Mailbox. The first important and still in use e-mail standard was called SMTP, or simple message transfer protocol. With the World Wide Web, e-mail appears as a standard service offered by majority of providers (<http://www.seznam.cz>, <http://www.hotmail.com>, <http://www.google.com>, etc.).

Forum uses the Web browser for access. It is a discussion group on the Web about the particular topic. Forum is mainly a text-based activity, often requires registration of an e-mail address, username and password. People can share videos, files, web pages, images as well. The anonymity is a typical feature of forums and the discussions are organized in threads.

Chat is a real-time conferencing communication among two or more users logged into the same computer or via the Internet. In chat, there are many systems of channels in which people can talk and send one-to-one messages. The conversation is accomplished by writing, not speaking. The forerunners of the real chat conversation were the chat rooms. Some well-known chat systems are ICQ, IRC and Skype.

Internet Relay Chat (IRC) is kind of real-time Internet chat or synchronous interaction, it is an international computer network of Internet servers, using its own protocol through which individual users can hold real-time online conversations.

Internet Relay Chat was developed in Finland by Jarkko “Wiz” Oikarinen who wrote the first IRC client and server at the University of Oulu. Oikarinen’s IRC client allowed real time discussions and similar features.

Skype is a type of a voice chat. It is an internet telephony network (VoIP).

2.4.1 Communication modules in education

Sojka¹ mentions that the increasing influence of online interaction, the rate of progress and easy availability of computer devices caused interest to extend these aspects to all fields of everyday life. This fact influenced of e-software publishing as well. The publications are those that are shared electronically (CD, DVD, Internet), they are

¹ Sojka, P. *Produkce filmů a DVD na PC - daleká budoucnost či dnešní realita?*. In Rambousek, J., Mikšík, D. Sborník příspěvků ze setkání SCO 2004: E-learning přichází. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2004, p. 83-86. ISBN 80-210-3409-2

designated for computers, mobile devices, PDA or mobile phones (ibid.). These devices can react to the users' instructions (ibid.).

The methods of invention of various media play an important part in the educational field and take advantage of the centre of basic communication channels. These channels are being developed and adapted to the teachers' special needs and today, they can be found in so-called Learning Management System (LMS). It is a software application or Web-based technology used to plan, implement, and assess a specific learning process. As quoted on SearchCIO.com¹, typically, a learning management system provides an instructor with a way to create and deliver content, monitor student participation, and assess student performance. A learning management system may also provide students with the ability to use interactive features such as threaded discussions, video conferencing and discussion forums.

Another important system for managing the various courses online is so-called CMS. Course Management System offers a set of tools that enable to create an online course and subsequently to teach and to organise the course.

In the United States, CMS and LMS are the more common terms, however LMS is more frequently associated with software for managing rather than courses in traditional education institutions.

All these e-learning systems are generally called virtual learning environments (VLE). VLE is defined on Wikipedia² as "a software system designed to help teachers by facilitating the management of educational courses for their students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration. The system can often track the learners' progress, which can be monitored by both teachers and learners. While frequently thought of as primarily tools for distance education, they are most often used to supplement the face-to-face classroom."

As mentioned above, more and more areas are forced to deal with this new type of communication, especially schools like universities and the institutions of higher education. Wikipedia³ notes that these institutions are increasingly turning to VLEs in order to:

¹ SearchCIO.com. *Technology management strategies for the enterprise CIO*. [online]. Retrieved on 1 November 2007, from <<http://searchcio.techtarget.com/home/0,289692,sid19,00.html>>).

² Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 1 November 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

³ Wikipedia. *The Free Encyclopedia* [online]. Retrieved on 10 November 2007, from <<http://www.wikipedia.org>>.

- Economize on the time of teaching staff, especially when they are also involved in research and administration. The extent of the economy over traditional "talk-and-chalk" teaching is not yet clear, but using a VLE almost certainly absorbs less instructor time (and requires less expertise, while producing a more professional result) than creating a home-grown website for a course.
- Provide a service for students who increasingly look to the internet as the natural medium for finding information and resources.
- Ensure that quality control requirements are met by providing a standard vehicle for collecting the required information
- Facilitate the integration of distance and campus-based learning.

2.4.1.1 Course Management System Moodle

There are many VLEs that are available on a web server as so called Open Source, which defined on Open Source Initiative¹ as “a development method for software that harnesses the power of distributed peer review and transparency of process. The promise of open source is better quality, higher reliability, more flexibility, lower cost, and an end to predatory vendor lock-in”.

One of the most famous free Open Sources is CMS Moodle. Moodle is a software package using the pedagogical principals and trying to help the educators to create effective online learning. The teachers are not necessarily supposed to know the programming “xhtml” language. Moodle can be downloaded to any computer and can be used by a single teacher or the whole university containing a great number of students.

Moodle enables to the user to manage the course, here is a brief overview of some of the possibilities that can be voluntary changed within the course presented on Moodle².

- Choice of course formats such as by week, by topic or a discussion-focused social format (divided in fields)
- A course can have its own theme of colours and layout.

¹ Open Source Initiative [online]. Retrieved on 10 November 2007, from <<http://www.opensource.org>>.

² Moodle [online]. Retrieved on 11 November 2007, from <<http://www.moodle.org>>.

- Flexible array of course activities - Forums, Quizzes, Glossaries, Resources, Choices, Surveys, Assignments, Chats and Workshops.
- A course has got a full teacher. He or she has full control over all settings for a course, including restricting other teachers (tutors).
- Groups - teacher(s) and students can be placed in one or more groups.
- Recent changes to the course since the last login can be displayed on the course home page - helps give sense of news in community.
- Most text entry areas (resources, forum postings etc) can be edited either in users' interface similar to the Microsoft Word or in html editor (voluntary)
- Full user logging and tracking - activity reports for each student are available with graphs and details about each module (last access, number of times read) as well as a detailed "story" of each student involvement including postings etc on one page.
- Mail integration - copies of forum posts, teacher feedback etc can be mailed in HTML or plain text.

Principally some of these modules support the computer mediated communication between the teacher and his or her students. The following modules are the most important and the brief description of their communication constituents is also provided by Moodle¹:

- **Chat** module allows participants to have a real-time synchronous discussion via the web. This is a useful way to get a different understanding of each other and the topic being discussed – the mode of using a chat room is quite different from the asynchronous forums. The Chat module contains a number of features for managing and reviewing chat discussions.
- **Assignment** module allows the students to upload their assignments. Lateness is possible but shown to the teacher. The teacher gives a feedback for each student, which is immediately posted to the student's e-mail.

¹ Moodle [online]. Retrieved on 11 November 2007, from < <http://docs.moodle.org/en/Features>>.

- **Forum** module is available in different forms such as teacher-only, course news, open-to-all, and one-thread-per-user. Discussions can be viewed nested, flat or threaded, can be ranged from the oldest to newest first or vice versa. Individual forums can be subscribed to by each person so that copies are forwarded via email, or the teacher can force subscription for all. The teacher can choose not to allow replies. Discussion threads can be easily moved between forums by the teacher.
- **Glossary** offers to the students the possibility to contribute to the glossary and to create a kind of online dictionary. Glossary items may be grouped in categories and be searched using alphabet, category, date or author. The entries of students can be previewed by the teacher before publishing. Teacher's feedback can also be provided because the teacher can rate the entries using teacher-defined scales.
- **Lesson** module is the example of improved traditional lesson. It can replace the traditional course. In fact, it is a series of pages which can be presented in a linear fashion, like a slide show, or in a non-linear, branching manner, or a combination of the two. This type of module offers many different possibilities of rating and directing the students, for example through directed questions, different scores and grades, multiple choice questions, True/False answer, short answers or essays. The teacher can also view students' attempts, time limits, minimum score and retakes, see their progress bars and running score.
- **Quiz** module enables easy testing of students. The set of the questions created by the teacher can be reused in different quizzes in any course. If the teacher has already created a set of questions in the external text file, he or she can import these questions into the quiz. It is possible to limit the time of the filling of the test. The answers are graded automatically. To avoid cheating, quiz questions may be shuffled. After the student answer the questions, teacher's feedback and/or correct answers can be shown. The module offers many possibilities of question types, for example multiple-choice questions supporting single or multiple answers, short answer questions, True-False questions, matching questions, random questions, numerical questions etc.

- **Wiki** module is a web page that can be edited. It enables to add a text or an article within either individual or collective learning.
- **Workshop** is a very flexible module that allows peer assessment of documents. The teacher can manage and grade the assessment and provide sample documents for students to practice grading.

3 Netmoderating

3.1 Main roles of the teacher in e-learning

Without doubt, the possibilities offered by online technology are increasing and are becoming useful for teachers, particularly at the university level, where the opportunities for greater use of e-learning are often available and encouraged.

The flexibility and variety that characterize e-learning are seen as new opportunities that were not previously available to language students and teachers.

In order to make use of these technological potentials, however, new kinds of materials, different forms of their presentation and new roles of the teachers are required.

The “traditional” texts and exercises that work well in the classroom are not always appropriate for e-learning and may also require professional input from the teacher.

For this reason, if we consider ways in which new technology can be incorporated into teaching programs to achieve certain objectives, it is also necessary to think carefully about teaching materials and about the way how to put them online.

As underlined on iHNed.cz¹, the successfulness of electronic education depends on not only the quality of educational program, general organisation conditions and individual educational preconditions, but primarily on the way of providing the personal consultations and on the boost to learners², educational effort that can help to surmount initial difficulties with new forms of learning.

The basic conception stems from the idea that the role of the teacher in face to face school teaching is replaced by the role of the advisor or e-moderator in online education. The function of the educator in e-learning is determined and further specified by a field of interest of online learning, that means by the content and knowledge that is supposed to be transmitted in certain online environment. For that reason, different appellations are used in practice to refer to various roles of the educator, for example a tutor, a mentor, a facilitator, an instructor or an e-moderator.

The encouragement of the students should be provided by a qualified teacher. The basic question in this issue is: What are the main roles that teacher holds in e-learning?

¹ iHNed.cz. *Teletutor a virtuální třídy*. ZPRAVODAJSKÝ SERVER HOSPODÁŘSKÝCH NOVIN [online]. Retrieved on 9 October 2007, from <http://vzdelavani.ihned.cz/3-14052670-teletutor-d00000_d-79>.

² In this context, the term learner is in common sense used to refer to anyone who educates himself.

Furthermore, it is also necessary to consider the competencies that are fundamental for the teacher in e-learning. Generally speaking, as every teaching method needs particular set of roles from teacher's quarter, we may state that some new roles of the teacher appear in online education.

Usually, the role of the teacher in e-learning includes diverse activities: informing, monitoring, motivating, providing technical, organizational and professional support, creating and continual improvement of the educational content.

3.1.1 The roles of the tutor in different forms of online learning

There is a broad range of e-learning forms. The basic subdivision of online learning, provided by Ulmer¹ follows:

- partially autonomous learning with learning media on the internet
- moderated learning communities
- virtual learning

Very often, the combination of these three forms appears in so-called blended learning.²

3.1.1.1 Partially autonomous learning with learning media on the internet

Autonomous learning is self-managed learning, which means that the learner has much of the responsibility for planning and organising his or her learning, for doing it, for assessing its value to him or herself and even for suggesting the mark that his or her work should get. In online form, there is only a little personal support. The orientation of learning is clearly defined.

The main difference of autonomous learning can be seen in the time period: either the learning focusing on various topics or learning that lasts just for a short time, e.g. vocabulary practice, preparation for the exam etc.

It has to be added that this type of learning can be very closely connected with e-learning because if the students are able to make use of e-learning without the direct

¹ Ulmer, P. *Úloha teletutorů v profesní přípravě*. In Zpravodaj - Odborné vzdělávání v zahraničí[online]. Retrieved on 11 October 2007, from <http://www.nuov.cz/public/File/periodika_a_publicace/zpravodaj_odborne_vzd_v_zahr/2007/Zp0702a.pdf>.

² Blended learning is a combination of different approaches to learning. It can be realised through the use of virtual and physical resources. A typical example of this would be a combination of technology-based materials and face-to-face sessions used together.

supervision of a teacher, this offers great potential for the enhancement of autonomous learning and the encouragement of student responsibility for their own learning.

The role of the tutor is rather restricted, especially in short-time forms. He or she is the responsibility of the technical support of learners.

3.1.1.2 Moderated learning communities

The term online learning community refers to a social and collaborative environment that uses an online space and its members use technology to bring together. They discuss issues, seek advice, work together on projects, hold meetings, and share knowledge.

Within the moderated learning community, the learning process is governed by the learners themselves. This results from the fact that unlike the content of a traditional website, the content in an online community emerges from the users' own activities.

In contrast to the form mentioned in the previous subchapter, the communication constitutes its considerable part. The participants create an environment that is aimed at a specific topic and they communicate via different communication channels. To be more concrete, the users use e-mail, chat or forums to share information and knowledge.

The tutor provides information about the possibilities offered by the particular environment and controls the run and the content of the forums and stands also as a moderator. The length and the intensity of learning depend mainly on learners and their needs.

3.1.1.3 Virtual learning

Virtual learning can be defined as a kind of learning outside the „traditional“ classroom, where the learners and educators have the flexibility to connect with their peers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Virtual learning environment allows learners to assess situations and performance, perform actions and proceed through experiences and lessons that will allow them to perform better with more experience on repetition on the same task in similar circumstances.

In principle, the major part within the virtual learning community is managed by a tutor. In this type of learning, either synchronous or asynchronous computer mediated communication predominates. The role of the tutor is very close to the role of the

teacher in the “traditional” form of education, namely to submit the goals, to motivate and to control the progress of every learner.

As mentioned above, in connection with various forms of online learning, several roles of the tutor arise. The division is based on Zlámalová¹:

- He or she can be a guide and the moderator. This appears especially if learning activities are autonomous. The tutor thus surveys the learning process and moderates the discussions.
- Tutor can also be a consultee or else a provider of knowledge. This role is important primarily in the environment in which the synchronous communication is used.
- In view of the fact that the tutor tries to help to the learners to easily adapt to the new learning environment, the next important role of the tutor is to facilitate. A facilitator helps a group of people understand their common objectives and assists them to plan to achieve them.

3.1.2 The competencies of the tutor

The required professional qualities of the tutor do not fundamentally differ from the qualities of the “traditional” teacher but the specific features of online learning like reduced sense perception, the lack of non-verbal components of the interaction etc. attach great importance to these qualities.

Here is the selection of the most important ones mentioned by Ulmer²:

- flexibility
- technical and organisational support
- support of the learners’ autonomy that can be encouraged by effective planning of time, time syllabus or by the development of different learning strategies
- learners’ motivation assured by regular and quick providing of the feedback

¹ Zlámalová, H. *Úvod do distančního vzdělávání*. Praha: Centrum pro studium vysokého školství, 2000. 79 p. ISBN 80-86302-10-5

² Ulmer, P. *Úloha teletutorů v profesní přípravě*. In Zpravodaj - Odborné vzdělávání v zahraničí[online]. Retrieved on 11 October 2007, from <http://www.nuov.cz/public/File/periodika_a_publicace/zpravodaj_odborne_vzd_v_zahr/2007/Zp0702a.pdf>.

- Communicative approach that creates the positive communicative atmosphere with respect to the netiquette. The communicative competencies may partly compensate the limits of online communication.
- basic IT competences

3.2 What is netmoderating/netmoderator?

As the forms online learning develop and change, the competencies required change as well. The most general term “tutor” described above is enriched by many other skills and techniques, for example facilitating, online communication and the group work.

Netmoderating can stand as one of the examples of extended roles of a tutor. The term is quite new in Czech literature, but abroad, many similar conceptions appear. Examples include the famous conception of e-moderating of Salmon¹. She enriched the role of a tutor with group work and its facilitating.

Briefly stated, the netmoderator is someone who controls an online interaction, thus netmoderating is the work done by a netmoderator online.

The term netmoderator is defined in great detail as a connection of several basic tutor key competencies (described in subchapter 3.3). As claimed by Franc & Všetulová², the most essential skill is the ability to use efficiently the facilitation (e.g. introducing e-tivities³), online communication (e.g. the ability to expose the curriculum merely under the online form, the stimulation of the participants’ activity with the help of various synchronous and asynchronous communication tools), group work and technological knowledge (meaning mainly the capacity to fit together the pedagogical goals and the wide range of technological tools).

Since these competencies in fact characterise the work of the netmoderator, some of them will be further discussed in the following chapters.

Netmoderator’s skills are apparently useful not only in e-learning, but also for the work in virtual environments and for building-up the online communities (ibid.). In any of

¹ Salmon, G. *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000. 240 p. ISBN 0-415-33544-2.

² Franc, D., Všetulová, M. Netmoderování jako klíčová e-tutorská kompetence. In Sojka, P., Kvizda, M. SCO 2007, sborník 4. ročníku konference o elektronické podpoře výuky. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2007, p. 141-147. ISBN 978-80-210-4296-4.

³ Salmon (2002) characterises e-tivities as „frameworks for online active and interactive learning“.

these environments, as noted by Oren, Miodiser & Nachmias¹, it is someone who accepts the online status and other important tasks (welcome the participants, establish the netiquette, keep discussions active and relevant and many others).

3.2.1 Netmoderating as a set of roles and competencies

There are many competencies required for successful online instruction. A basic division into the groups completed by a brief description of these competencies follow:

- professional
- media
- didactic
- social
- technical

The professional skill forms the authority and the credibility of the netmoderator. This skill is determined by knowledge and experience in particular area. This means that the netmoderator contributes his or her special knowledge and insights.

This skill is closely connected with communicative skills since he or she poses the questions focused on critical topics and skills.

The media competence comprises own experience with e-learning and the ability to use new communication channels.

In the matter of didactic ability, this is essential for providing the feedback and for the acquirement of the active involvement into the learning process.

This role involves also management and organisation. It contains setting the objectives, time planning, procedure rules and decision-making.

The social skill enables to create a pleasant and friendly social environment which main role is the positive motivation for learning. This suggests promoting human relationships, affirming and recognizing students' contributions, maintain the group as a team and in other ways helping learners to work together.

The technical level means to use suitable technological devices and its involvement to the learning process.

¹ Oren, A., Miodiser, D., Nachmias, R. *The Development of Social Climate in Virtual Learning Discussion Groups*. In International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning [online]. Retrieved on 17 October 2007, from <<http://muse.tau.ac.il/publications/77.pdf>>.

The netmoderator must first become comfortable and proficient with the technology and then he or she may concentrate on the educational objectives.

The figure presented below builds largely on the thoughts of Salmon¹. In her conception, she focused on characterising the most essential skills of a moderator.

In the following chart, I tried to simplify the model of Salmon.

The constituent elements of the chart represent the basic components of online learning, or more precisely a connection between the basic skills of netmoderator and particular developmental parts of the online teaching. This connection outlines how the basic skills of the netmoderator are exploited in practice.

Horizontally, the chart shows the way the online teaching develops, that is from the recruitment, through training to the development.

Vertically, another conception of the basic skills of netmoderator is presented.

In fact, in comparison with the division presented above, this conception either partly underlines some other qualities or more precisely, it uses different terms.

	Recruitment	Training	Development
Understanding of online process	The netmoderator is experienced with an online form of learning and is he aware of differences between online and face-to-face teaching as well as of the potential of online learning. He or she should also know different teaching methods and learning approaches. Furthermore, the ability to set up and online trust is also necessary.	The netmoderator trains others, initiate discussions (including bringing in non-participants), challenge, monitor, sends feedback.	The netmoderator develops mainly ideas, promotes valuable threads and decides which of them are no more productive. He or she uses different approaches from structured ones to free activities.
Technical skills	In this area, netmoderator understands sufficiently the software he or she uses. As the teaching is realised mainly via internet, a regular and mobile access to the	The netmoderator knows how to use special features of software, e.g. controlling, weaving, archiving, evaluating etc.	The netmoderator creates links between online and other features of learning. He or she uses software to generate an online learning environment.

¹ Salmon, G. *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000. 240 p. ISBN 0-415-33544-2.

	internet is required. Netmoderator should derive benefit from the various communication channels, use various websites and internet for learning.		If necessary, he uses alternative software.
Online communication skills	Online communication skills include a mastery of basic rules of communication, respect within the interaction and using time appropriately. Netmoderator's contributions should be personal, motivating, encouraging and helpful.	Netmoderator is engaged with learners, responds to their messages, initiates interactions between others, elicits and manage students' expectations.	The essential skills at this stage are: cultural sensitivity, recognition of differences. Next, the ability to communicate without visual aspect, to handle conflicts and problems online, use of humour and emotions online are also important.
Content qualification	For this area, the matter of course is knowledge and experience to share and the ability to use valuable online sources when teaching.	At this stage, awarding marks fairly to learners for their participation and contributions is required.	The netmoderator knows valuable resources that he or she refers the learners to.
Personal characteristics	The basic personal characteristics needed are the determination and motivation.	The netmoderator adapts to new teaching contexts, methods, audiences and roles.	The netmoderator has got a positive attitude and enthusiasm for online learning. He knows how to create and sustain an online learning community

Table 3: Competences of the netmoderator (Salmon, 2000)

Collison et al. ¹ divide the main roles of the netmoderator into three categories:

- The netmoderator as a “guide on the side”. This model advocates an approach similar to the seminar where the netmoderator directs and guides multiple discussions that take place among the learners whilst avoiding participating in many direct interactions. This can be done by encouraging the students to seek feedback from their peers. Another strategy is to identify and then draw on, comments already posted in the interaction. Highlighting some contingent problems in the discussion can help to expand the dialogue as sometimes the “wrong” or “misty” ideas or answers can function as an opportunity for the

¹ Collison et al. In Salmon, G. *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000. 240 p. ISBN 0-415-33544-2

netmoderator to encourage learners to clarify their thoughts and explore their assumptions.

- The netmoderator as an instructor or project leader. This model refers to an instructive role that the netmoderator holds. Mostly, this includes developing a regular feedback, a private discussion thread between the netmoderator and the student. This thread can also be used for posting the grades, comments and to respond student's private questions.
- The netmoderator as a leader of group process. The basic condition for the run of the online community is active and regular posting of messages in the discussion area. In order to draw all the participants into the discussion, the netmoderator should be able to pose questions and offer reflective comments, to lead community-building activities, to recognize the diversity of learners, their background and interests, to organise the discussion threads, to balance private and public discussions, to ensure a timely response to postings and so forth.

3.3 How to reach an effective online group work?

When the learners get together in the online environment, they form a certain group. Within the group, learners share the ideas and exchange views because they enjoy learning from the experience of other people as well as from different resources provided online.

For that reason, one of the key learning skills of the netmoderator is the management of online group work that needs to be included in any learning programme.

There are various factors that might contribute to the group's success. The source information should be the diagnostics of particular group and its participants. The netmoderator should be aware of the factors that are affecting the group's effectiveness; he or she has to be able to recognize when things go wrong and what to change. This helps the moderator to determine the learners' behaviour and also to recognize the limits of the group netmoderating.

Since there are many things that influence the level of the effectiveness of online group interaction, there are many criteria that have to be considered within the issue. In general, we can state that the online group is formed by group processing, group structure and organisational context. Each of these factors has various elements that will

be described below. The interrelationships among these elements are complex as it is clear from the following description introduced by Schwarz¹:

1/ Group process

To be effective, the group must manage a number of processes:

- Problem solving and decision making. These processes both seem to be a core of the activities. Problem solving is the approach that the group uses to identify a problem, to think of the possible solutions, to collect information for the solution and to evaluate the solution at the end. For the effective solving-problem process, orderliness of the group is essential. This seems obvious but many groups are not systematic. Their members often begin to solve the problem by suggesting the solution before agreeing on the core of the problem.
Decision making involves reaching a conclusion or making a choice in problem-solving process.
- Communication. See chapters 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3
- Boundary management. Without some boundaries, a group cannot actually exist. By differentiating itself, a group clarifies who its members are, what tasks are possible to accomplish, what are the inner rules of the group functioning etc.

2/ Group structure

Group structure refers to the relatively stable characteristics of certain group, including the tasks, the roles of each member, members' values and beliefs and the group norms. In fact, the effectiveness of a group results from group members who are interacting with each other in certain ways. Thus, when members change the patterns of interactions, they change the group structure at the same time.

- Clear and achievable goals. To recognize the goals, the group has to be able to measure the progress toward them. There are many factors that influence the choice of the objectives, e.g. the age, the interests, gender etc. of group members.
- Motivating tasks should meet the following conditions:
 - the task should require members to use different skills, methods and learning styles

¹ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7

- the task should give a certain autonomy over the way they accomplish the task
- the task should also have a visible outcome
- the netmoderator should provide the appropriate feedback to the participants
- Clearly defined roles. Since the group is formed from individuals who fill the interdependent roles, its “members must understand clearly what role each member plays and what behaviours people expect of each role.”¹

In practice, the role a person plays is a result of formally defined role(s), the individual personality, the person’s perception of the role(s) and the interpersonal relationships that a person has with other members of the group.

- Sufficient time. In practice, this means the time that is required for learning and for completing the tasks.
- Group norms – see chapter 2.3.4.2

3/ Organisational context

This aspect is not controlled by the group itself but all the same, it is essential for the functioning of every group. To provide a clear and a user-friendly organisational context is one of the most important component parts of netmoderator’s work. It includes assuring mainly the following:

- Supportive culture means above all effective, including clear instructions and positive reinforcement.
- Rewards consistent with objectives. The netmoderator should try to reward certain behaviour to create more effective group. The rewards are closely connected with the course requirements as successfully completed requirements should definitely be rewarded.
- Providing feedback. As well as in the “traditional” classroom, it is possible to deliver the feedback in the online interaction as one of the fundamental component of learning and teaching.

The feedback influences the manner of the behaviour of the participants, it signals whether this behaviour is right or wrong, that means that it should be evaluative. The positive or negative evaluation enables the receivers to adjust their future performance.

¹ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7

- Training and consultation. Sometimes, the participants need help understanding either technical or learning matters necessary to perform the task. That is the netmoderator's time.
- Technological and material resources

There are many ideas on the way how to achieve the effective online group work. To illustrate, as stated by Pulichino¹, one of the most effective tools how to initiate an effective online group work is the informal learning. The methods of informal learning are one of the most developing approaches in e-learning today (ibid).

This type of learning supports the form of e-learning focused on the learners and hence enables the learners to interact within the learning environment. Netmoderator has to create the inspiring and controlled environment that would respect individual needs of every learner.

Besides the knowledge of the principles of the informal learning, the netmoderator needs to know the rules for the group work, which means, as quoted by Franc & Všetulová², especially to be able to:

- create the group from the individual learners
- know the fundamental characteristics of the development of the group and the group dynamics in the online environment and recognize the needs of the group in certain moment of its development
- speed up the development of the group. As Salmon³ suggests, "it is important to gradually establish group working through the stages of the model." According to this model, derived from her research, there are five stages of the group development. The stages describe the way in which participants approach the technology, engage with it and discover its possibilities for learning and teaching. In other words, individual access and the ability to use computer-mediated communication are the main conditions for online participation.

¹ Pulichino, J. *Future Directions in e-Learning Research Report 2006*. The Elearning Guild Research. Retrieved on 17 November 2007, from <<http://www.elearningguild.com/assets/files/1/apr06-futuredirections.pdf>>.

² Franc, D., Všetulová, M. *Netmoderování jako klíčová e-tutorská kompetence*. In Sojka, P., Kvizda, M. SCO 2007, sborník 4. ročníku konference o elektronické podpoře výuky. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2007, p. 141-147. ISBN 978-80-210-4296-4.

³ Salmon, G. *E-tivities*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002. 223 p. ISBN 0-7494-3686-7.

Salmon¹ claims that the level of interactivity with ideas increases as participants proceed to higher level.

On the first stage, the online group needs to get the technology under the control and get know how to use the software. The learners usually communicate merely within very small groups, with only few people.

This stage is followed by the socialization that consists in introducing oneself online, that means establishing online identity.

The third stage is represented by sharing and receiving the information relevant to the course.

The next stage consists in knowledge construction that is ideally resulted by the independence of a group.

The last stage is called development. When participants reach it, they can move beyond knowledge construction to active contribution, they search for more benefits provided by a system in order to achieve personal goals and they reflect on their learning processes.

More in-depth learning in groups is than possible to happen at last two stages. At the stage three, co-operative working (the group help each other towards individual goals) is often aimed, and collaboration (often linked with practice or knowledge construction, working together towards a group goal) at stage four.

Collaboration requires an active sharing of information and intellectual resources among the participants. The best experience of collaboration by learners for learning purposes enables them to experience both personal, individualistic, useful learning whilst contributing to a community of learners and the support and development of others. Netmoderator should never underestimate the resources that they work with: participants can comprehend, evaluate, question, debate and integrate information online, with suitable activities and support.

According to the above mentioned Salmon's² model, it is also important to remark that each of five stages illustrated above requires some skills from the netmoderator:

¹ Salmon, G. *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000. 240 p. ISBN 0-415-33544-2.

² Salmon, G. *E-moderating: The Key to Teaching and Learning Online*. London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2000. 240 p. ISBN 0-415-33544-2.

- On the first stage, mainly encouragement is needed. Learners are recognising the online environment and the interaction is only minimal.
- On the second stage, the familiarisation with the environment proceeds and the role of the netmoderator is to interconnect learning, social and cultural environment.
- On the third stage, providing online materials and supporting their use is essential role of the netmoderator.
- On the fourth stage, facilitating¹ seems to be the most important thing provided by the netmoderator.
- On the fifth stage, since the interaction is more or less fully developed, supporting and responding from the netmoderator is required.

Another important criterion for effective group work is a curriculum and the way of its presentation. This material serves as a basis for the group work because the learners go through the material, they try to understand it and subsequently react and interact with the teacher and their co-learners. That is the reason why the material presented within the course should initiate participation which needs clear activities to be presented.

Moreover, the material has to be presented with complete instruction; otherwise, it is very unlikely that it will meet the expected goals.

One of the best ways of encouraging the collaboration within the group is a highly invitational group task. Not just an assessment can be linked to the group's individual learning outcome, but also both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards can be given for the group processes achieved and for the quality and level of individual contributions.

Another important role of the netmoderator is to define the purpose of learning process and provide the environment that would enable collaboration of learners. With many groups, it may be necessary for the netmoderator to set clear targets and deadlines for the activities.

¹ Facilitating belongs to one of the most important roles of a tutor. The term refers to the process of helping groups, or individuals, to learn, find a solution without imposing or dictating an outcome. Facilitation works to enable learners to learn for themselves or find their own answers to problems without control.

As a summary, we can state that to be a successful netmoderator of effective online groups, one need to:

- be able to create structured activities
- be able to value contributions from all members of learning group
- be able to use a wide range of techniques for a group work

3.4 How the netmoderator can interact with his or her learners in the online learning process?

This subchapter explores different types of interventions that netmoderator makes. As separate chapters, I also included the issue of the online communication from the point of view of netmoderator.

3.4.1 General types of interventions

In this subchapter, general types of interventions, their purposes and forms are described. According to Schwarz¹, the netmoderator can intervene under the following forms:

- Exploring. Exploratory interventions are designed to help the instructor understand better a learning situation by getting the basic facts or finding out how learners think or feel about something.
- Seeking specifics. One principle for effective learning and instructing is using specific examples. Since learners are often used to talk in too abstract terms, the netmoderator needs to clarify the exact meaning.
- Emphasising process. To be able to improve the group process, the netmoderator needs to know the problems of the group and seeks for the specifics of a group.
- Diagnosing. Diagnostic interventions move beyond simple exploration. This intervention includes exploring learners' interests, identifying the causes and the consequences of the problem, pointing out similarities and differences among learners' comments, exploring learners' theories and expectations about various situations.
- Confronting and providing other feedback. Confronting interventions invites the group to reflect on some aspect of its behaviour that is regarded dysfunctional.

¹ Schwarz, R., M. *The skilled facilitator*. California: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1994. 432 p. ISBN 1-55542-638-7.

The netmoderator can point out the disproportion between what group espouse and what the group does.

- Managing group process and structure. In these interventions, the netmoderator helps the learners determine what topic will be discussed, when, how and how long it will be discussed. Managing this process includes various interventions, which include setting schedule, switching topics, reducing interruptions, monitoring time etc.
- Making content suggestions. In this intervention, the netmoderator suggests the possible ways the group can solve some substantive aspect of its problem. In any case, in order to suppress the role of the netmoderator, the solutions of the group should be based on members' previous attempted solutions.
- Teaching concepts and methods. The most appropriate approach is to teach the learners some concepts and methods they can use when solving a problem. An example includes teaching to use a general problem-solving model, advising how to identify causes of problems and so on.
- Reframing. Reframing interventions help learners to change the meaning they ascribe to events. If this meaning changes, it causes changing learners' behaviour.

3.4.2 Types of interaction in the learning process

Various interactions within the learning process are very important criterion for choosing certain learning environment.

Interaction patterns include two types of interaction: with the content and among the participants i.e. teacher-learner, learner-learner interaction.

Paulsen¹ presents an overview of methods, techniques and devices that appear in the online environment:

Methods	One-alone	One-to-one	One-to-many	Many-to- many
Techniques	Online databases Online journals Online applications Software libraries Online interest groups Interviews	Learning contracts Apprenticeship Correspondence studies	Lectures Symposium Skits	Case studies Discussion groups Transcript based assignments Brainstorming Forums Project groups
Devices	Online resources	E-mail	Bulletin board	Computer conferencing

Table 4: Methods, techniques and devices in the online environment (Paulsen, in Černá)

The devices in the chart are further used on the basis of particular interaction pattern.

3.4.3 Online communication as a principal device for the netmoderator

Computer mediated communication belongs to primary tools of the netmoderator because it is just with the communication that the netmoderator influences the group dynamics and stimulates the formation of the learning environment. Generally speaking, the online communication is a key part of any form of online education. If the general meaning of the online communication (see chapter 2.3) is left out, it is perceived as an instrument that makes both formal and informal interactions among the learners possible.

As Barnes² believes, the netmoderator needs to help the learners go surpass their experience with e-mail and this requires “passing bits of information of asking

¹ Paulsen. In Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

² Barnes, S. A privacy paradox: Social networking in the United States. First Monday Peer-reviewed Journal on the Internet [online]. Retrieved on 20 November, from <http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_9/barnes/index.html>.

questions” to be able to express their thoughts when they work with new ideas or take an active role in the discussion.

Barnes also agrees with Salmon that most participants are not able to go beyond the social level of email interactions, which corresponds to the Salmon’s second stage (see above in the previous subchapter), unless the netmoderator tries to use techniques that encourage in the interaction, promote trust and stimulate exploration of ideas.

These techniques include :

- support of the social interactivity to help the learners believe that they are inseparable members of the online community and that they can trust their peers (e.g. a kind of warm-up activity at the beginning of the course focused on getting to know the co-communicators. In the online form, this can be done for example via the forum in which the participants introduce themselves in written and they can ask other people various questions they are interested in. Some forums enable to load the photo. This also fundamentally contributes to the establishment of positive and trustworthy atmosphere.)
- questioning as a way of getting know the participants when the course starts and encouraging them to contribute to the discussions
- participation rewards including for instance some extra marks for thoughtful contributions on the theme. Minimal participation frequency can be stated before the course begins as one of the course requirements and the participation outside the terms of minimum required can be also extra rewarded.
- engagement in the content or readings may be maintained at high level e.g. by holding a discussion, by asking participants to find relevant website and explain how the material supports or extends the idea, or by posting a relevant material and asking participants to think its implications in relation to one or more themes of the subject
- role-play of a topic requires the study of particular aspect of a topic. This is then followed by taking an online role that shows what the topic implies from somebody’s perspective. The learners can play the role individually or they can form small online groups.

Likewise, a role-play can be used as a part of problem–solving method. This is particularly useful for topics that possibly ignore the social aspect.

To maintain the online communication, different techniques may be used, namely summarising and weaving.

Harasim et al.¹ claim that „a good weaving message refers to specific ideas and information contributed in previous comments”.

To compare weaving and summarising, the main features of both techniques worked out by Cox et al.² follow:

Summarising	Weaving
Acknowledge contributions	Acknowledge contributions Correct misconceptions Highlight “best” ideas
Summarise contributions in factual manner	Summarise contributions in more discursive manner Clarify areas of agreement and disagreement Point out perspectives vs. fact issues Identify “holes” in discussion Link to other discussions or resources
Comes at end of discussion, once	Many “weavings” as discussion progresses
Closure	Encourages and directs further discussion
Praising	Challenging
Done by teacher	Could be done by students, at least partially, particularly if weaving is “modelled” for them by the teacher

Table 5: Contrasting summarising and weaving

As the online communication is based on using communication channels, let us summarise the powers that netmoderators can have in particular communication channel, depending on the specific needs of learning environment:

¹ Harasim et al.. In Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

² Cox et al. In Černá, M. *ICT in teacher education: extending opportunities for professional learning*. Pardubice: Univerzita Pardubice, 2005. 197 p. ISBN: 80-7194-742-3 (brož.).

- Moving conversations to a different section. Within the e-learning, all forms of online communication are organized into various sections by topic to allow users to more easily read what interests them. Netmoderators should be able to move a conversation to a section more suited to it.
- Closing/locking threads. The threads can be organized sequentially by time of posting or by the topic discussed within. Most forums allow the netmoderators to close a given thread to further posting, effectively ending the conversation.
- Editing posts. Usually this method is used to remove illegal or grossly offensive material that would remain visible in a closed thread, or else to stop a single post from derailing an entire thread.
- Sticking threads. This may be used to, for instance, keep a copy of forum rules at the top of every section of the board, or a popular thread.
- Splitting and merging threads. If two threads exist on similar topics, or multiple topics are being discussed in one thread, the threads can be merged or the thread can be split.

III. PRACTICAL PART

4 Analysis of the online communication and the netmoderator

This chapter is engaged in analysing the propositions that were formulated before the survey of the discussion forum on grounds of my expectations and experience from the educational field.

Altogether, I formulated seven propositions.

4.1 Objective of the analysis

This diploma thesis sets itself a task to follow the theoretical knowledge and to observe how it functions in practice. The theoretical part deals with three main issues, I will try to focus on these in the sections 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and I will try to illustrate them in particular learning environment. The individual criteria are considered from different points of view, i.e. from the point of view of the teacher (netmoderator) and learners. Moreover, criteria like the learning environment and online behaviour are considered and analysed. The main goal of the practical part is to illustrate the function and the role of netmoderator, concretely how his or her netmoderating should or should not look like. I will demonstrate my knowledge on the basis of the discussion forum Online_A because I think those forums in general are rich sources of inspiration.

4.2 The target group of the analysis

The target group of the analysis is the group of communicators who interact in the discussion forum within the frame of the course Online_A (see below). People who communicate within the forum are either students or teachers. They are from different faculties of the Masaryk University and they study various fields as Faculty of Education, Faculty of Informatics, Faculty of Science, etc.

They enter the discussion forum in order to interact and learn something new in English language.

4.3 Presentation of the analysis environment

The analysis will be based on the online environment, specifically on the discussion forum of the course Online_ A (English Online). This forum can be found in the Information System of the Masaryk University (IS MUNI).

The learning process of the course takes place either in CMS Moodle or in the Information System (IS). Students are divided into different groups according to the results they reach in the diagnostic test that is filled at the beginning of the term.

At the end of the course students should have 1000 points to get the credit. Partly, these points can be acquired in the discussion forum.

The forum was established to enable the students of the course to participate in the course via the discussion, to fulfil the requirements of the course or to deal with various problems. The students can interact either in English or Czech language. This depends especially on the topic being discussed and on their level of English. For this reason my analysis will contain examples both in Czech and English.

There are about 1450 contributions at the moment in the forum. The subject Online_A and thus the forum is guided and moderated by PhDr. Tamara Váňová.

4.4 The structure and organisation of the discussion forum in IS MUNI

The discussion in the forum is further divided into several thematic threads. Each thread is dedicated to certain topic and within the thread the participants can go through the individual contributions.

When the user enters the course, he or she can immediately see the threads arranged in succession. Beside the title, one can see the photography and name of the person who set up the thread. At the first sight it is possible to recognise the threads that are new and that have not been read yet by the logged participant. New contributions in the thread are highlighted in red. The user can enter all the contributions or just the new ones. When the user enters appropriate thread, he or she can see the introductory contribution and then further contributions of other users. The reactions are not organized in tree diagram but there is a notice written right on the top indicating to which contribution the reaction is determined. There is also the photography of the person on the left side of the contribution, the name of the person is automatically generated at the bottom of the contribution.

There are some limitations concerning the technical possibilities of the discussion forum in IS. First of all, the user who creates a thread is not allowed to moderate it in the sense that he or she can not erase the threads or even individual contributions. This can be done only by the teacher of the subject to which the forum belongs.

Another limitation of the forum concerning is the above mentioned name at the bottom of the contribution. I would prefer the name next to the photography which is definitely more personal and better arranged.

Chaotic arrangement of the contributions sequence is another very limiting and at the same time time-consuming feature of the forum in IS MUNI.

4.5 Methodology

The practical part deals with the issue of online communication and the issue of the netmoderator. It consists of several propositions and is rather of exploratory character. These will be examined on the basis of the discussion forum of Online_A and illustrated by concrete examples in Czech and English language from the forum.

Practical part is based mainly on observation, detailed study of the above mentioned discussion forum and my own experience from other online environments.

The goal of the analysis is to comment the defined propositions and especially to examine how the discussion forum functions in practice and how the main features look like.

Besides that, I will focus on the netmoderator and his or her roles and behaviour in the forum as well as on the behaviour of the rest of the forum users.

The last issue of the analysis will be the participants themselves. I would like to point out the fact that the forum is not created merely by netmoderator(s) and other users. The significant aspect it is that it is the environment giving the birth to various groups and types of communicators on the discussion and that each of these groups has got a specific way of behaviour.

4.6 The netmoderator under the microscope

I described the netmoderator and his competences and roles in the theoretical part. In this section, I will try to characterise the real netmoderators, concretely four of them found in the Online_A forum. I will follow their interacting within the forum and try to highlight how their work is realised. This will be supplemented by the examples taken from the forum. Since the forum belongs to the logged area of the Information System, I decided to avoid presenting the personal data of all the participants of the discussion. Thus, all the contributions used for illustration of the propositions will be presented anonymously.

Each of the propositions will be then considered and I will be further described.

4.6.1 The propositions

The following propositions were formulated on the basis of my knowledge acquired when writing the theoretical part of my diploma thesis.

After the thorough examination of the forum is made, every proposition will be presented within the separate chart. The chart is divided into several parts. The first line summarises my expectations about particular proposition. The second line illustrates the proposition by means of concrete examples adapted from the discussion forum. The last line comments whether my expectations were right or wrong and describes other features that I possibly found interesting.

The characteristic features that clearly illustrate the netmoderator's skill referred to in the proposition will be highlighted in bold within the contribution.

- Proposition Nr. 1: Netmoderator should supervise and support.
- Proposition Nr. 2: Netmoderator praises and offers rewards.
- Proposition Nr. 3: Netmoderator motivates and provides encouragement.
- Proposition Nr. 4: Netmoderator provides feedback.
- Proposition Nr. 5: Netmoderator supports the social interactivity.
- Proposition Nr. 6: Netmoderator uses different techniques, e.g. brainstorming, audio/visual materials
- Proposition Nr. 7: Netmoderator invents new issues to enliven the discussion when it gets weaker or off-topic.

4.7 Participants under the microscope

In this section, I will focus on the users, their different roles that define certain types of groups of communicators, and the manner of their interaction in the forum. I will also try to analyse the way how netmoderator reacts to different behaviour of the groups of communicators.

This will be examined on the basis of the conception of Salmon (2000) that is presented under the title Patterns of participation.

I will also study the role exchange between the participants and netmoderator(s).

4.8 Netiquette under the microscope

In the forum Online_A there is in fact no officially given netiquette. Although every participant of the online communication is aware of the fact that there are some rules that have to be respected, not all of them really know what the netiquette includes.

Within this issue, I will deal with the different realisations of netiquette i.e. polite treatment, tolerance, contributions length, language of contributions, style of contributions (grammar, mistakes, spelling, writing in capital letters, etc.), flaming, etc.

4.9 Results

In this section, the findings that were made are presented.

In the first part, the charts are presented. Each chart is focused on one of the propositions formulated in the section 4.6.1. The charts include illustrations from the discussion forum.

The second part deals with the description of participants in the forum Online_A, their role exchange. The section is completed by the examples as well. The third part presents the findings about the netiquette.

4.9.1 Results – Netmoderator under the microscope

Proposition Nr. 1: Netmoderator should supervise and support.	
Expectation	I expect that the netmoderator will mainly control different kinds of activities, manage the time of learning and organise the structure of the forum, provide information and last but not least ask and answer the questions. As a true supporter he or she will treat the participants individually and will try to show them his or her personal interests on having them in the course and forum.
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Well, thanks for inviting these students to my favourite thread, but they might feel more comfortable here, since their English is less sophisticated than the average in the English club. Anyway it is important for them to feel safe in order to start to communicate in a foreign language fluently.</i> 2. <i>a) I think that to work effectively with a mistake is one way of learning a language (or anything else for that matter) b) If I say what I would use does not necessarily mean that yours usage is a mistake :-).</i> 3. <i>Hi, Kamila, nice to have you here. You will probably NOT learn much speaking in this course, but I think that speaking always starts in the mind, so in fact if you learn to express your ideas with ease, it will help you start speaking more quickly and with a richer range of vocabulary.</i> 4. <i>This problem is already dealt with in a thread called cvičení.</i> 5. <i>Tady vůbec nejde o ekvivalenty na úrovni jednotlivých slov, ale o smysl. Já Vám ty věty sice mohu přeložit, ale tímto způsobem Vás nenaučím chytat ryby, ale naservíruju Vám rybu na talíř, a to v žádném případě nechci. Podívám se na to, co a jak jste přeložila a ještě se k tomu vyjádřím, pokud se mi tam nebude něco zdát.</i>
Commentary	As I have expected, the netmoderators are mainly in the role of somebody who provides the information and supervise the learning process. They also give the participants pieces of advice about where to find different materials and information (4). Netmoderators teach the participant how to live within the forum and how to be independent to learn as much as possible (5).

	As visible from the contributions, the netmoderators try to treat the participants individually (1). He or she calls them by their first name and welcome them in the forum or even in the concrete thread (3).
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Table 6: Proposition Nr. 1

Proposition Nr. 2: Netmoderator praises and offers rewards.	
Expectation	It is natural that in the normal life, people are praised and rewarded. In the learning process, it is even more important. It is great for the learners to do some activity correctly and to have a feedback from the netmoderator. Since the learners do not expect the positive reinforcements in the online environment to be as frequent as it is in face-to-face interaction, it is extremely necessary to provide praising to each learner if possible. Students must feel that their activity is not useless. This brings them satisfaction and motivates them for the future learning. I expect that the netmoderators will not only praise the students in words but also reward them by points. I also expect that the netmoderators will give the points to those people who successfully completed the task and they will do so openly to motivate others.
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Díky za nalezení chyby, podívám se na to, opravím a Vy dostanete bonusových 10 bodů.</i> 2. <i>Tak mám pocit, že i Vy byste měla dostat nějaký ten bonus za aktivitu a pomoc spolužákům :). Děkuji za ně.</i> <i>Tohle je na chyby ve cvičeních to správné vlákno. Díky, opravila jsem a dala Vám 10 bonusových bodů :-).</i> 3. Thread “Vlákno pro hlášení chyb ve cvičeních”, netmoderator offers the students an opportunity to inform about mistakes in excercises, netmoderator let the students to give her advice as well: <i>Tak jsem to podle Vašeho návodu opravila a při té příležitosti jsem zjistila, že čtečka nefunguje, tak jsem ji raději odmazala. Děkuji za upozornění a pokud na stejný problém ještě někde nerazíte, dejte vědět, opravím to a Vy zase dostanete body jako výraz mé vděčnosti.</i> 4. Thread “Chyby v překladech”: netmoderator offers another thread with the opportunity to get the points: <i>Přichází další možnost, jak se dozvědět něco nového o angličtině, tentokrát čistě z pohledu českého mluvčího. Budeme se zamýšlet nad možnostmi obou jazyků a rozdíly mezi nimi, "proč to v angličtině jde a v češtině né". Nebo se jen jednoduše pokusíme opravit chyby vzniklé neporozuměním originálu (nebo čímkoli jiným:). Výchozím materiálem</i>

	budou odevzdané překlady z cvičení Incomplete sentences: vyberu z nich nedostatky, zveřejním je (anonymně, samozřejmě) v tomto vlákně a vaším úkolem bude chyby najít a opravit je. Za každou odhalenou a napravenou nesrovnalost dostane první člověk 10 bodů a bonusových pět čeká na kohokoli, kdo dokáže problém zobecnit, event. vysvětlit, jak funguje daný jev v angličtině a jak v češtině (může samozřejmě i uvést další příklady, fantazii se meze nekladou)..... 5. <i>Exactly! Well done. This is what I meant when designating the sentence as incorrect.</i> 6. <i>Another perfect answer. I could just as well pack up and go home. I am not needed here...</i>
Commentary	In this case, my expectation about praising and rewarding was right but there was something more that I did not think off. It was the fact that besides the “traditional” rewarding, i.e. rewarding different kinds of assigned activities by points, another way of rewarding appeared. The learners were also given points for technical problem solving, skilful interaction with other participants and for motivating. Praising in words is visible (5, 6). The netmoderators are aware of the necessity of frequent praising in words. A very good idea of a netmoderator was creating threads that were directly intended for rewarding (3, 4).

Table 7: Proposition Nr. 2

Proposition Nr. 3: Netmoderator motivates and provides encouragement.	
Expectation	Motivation and encouragement are the essential elements helping learners to overcome various difficulties that can arise from interaction within the learning process. According to Salmon (2002), “it is very important never to assume that the “joys” of the software and the systems themselves will provide any kind of motivation.” I will expect that netmoderators will use especially the linguistic kind of encouragement like “thank you”, “I like your thoughts”, “I like recommendation”, etc. The netmoderators will also motivate by giving a chance to contribute (“any other comments”, “suggestions?”).
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Thanks for introducing yourself and for setting up this Club. You are right: no post is off-topic unless it is in Czech or Slovak, of course. Everybody is warmly welcome to join in. Nobody should feel intimidated by the fact that they might be making mistakes in their English. We all make them, but the more you express your ideas the better progress in your English can be expected.</i> 2. <i>Well, I quite like your suggestion, but what about the overuse of the passive in Czech when translating from English. I wonder if you (now I mean all you) know why there is so much passive voice in English compared to Czech? What is the reason?</i> 3. <i>Your sentence sounds to me much better with the active voice in Czech. I primarily meant that when translating the passive in English into Czech using passive as well, one should always be aware of the fact that English uses the passive voice much more than Czech does. The question why English uses passive more frequently still remains unsolved. Any suggestions?</i> 4. <i>Well, thanks for inviting these students to my favourite thread, but they might feel more comfortable here, since their English is less sophisticated than the average in the English club. Anyway it is important for them to feel safe in order to start to communicate in a foreign language fluently.</i> 5. <i>Well, if you have been studying only for a short period, I must say your English is really very good. Your vocabulary range is good, you can make yourself understood in the language of everyday topics as well as in the field of your study. The trouble with a word you once learn</i>

	<i>and then discover it's a mistake and it never goes away - oh my god, I've experienced that so many times. But you shouldn't worry about articles too much, since the majority of Czech speakers makes mistakes in articles as a matter of course.</i> <i>Motivation threads:</i> "Chyby v překladech" "Vlákno pro hlášení chyb ve cvičeních" "Test Your Grammar – questions" "Kredity za angličtinu" "Sbírání bodů" "Cvičení v Aj Online"
Commentary	As I have expected, the netmoderators use motivating phrases like "any suggestions?", "what is the reason?", "thanks for" and many others. Concerning the encouragement I was not surprised by the fact that netmoderators use thankful words but what surprised me was a way of encouragement by decreasing the level of authority of netmoderator and telling "stay with us" or "do not give up", "we all make mistakes" as well "that is normal" (1, 5). It is obvious, from the contributions in the forum that the assessment becomes the key tool for motivating students because direct trainer observation of participants is not available with the loss of eye contact and body language. Assessment of knowledge and skills using testing devices (test, participants' presentation, written assignment) give students a glow of satisfaction that they really study.

Table 8: Proposition Nr. 3

Proposition Nr.4: Netmoderator provides feedback	
Expectation	The main function of the feedback is to solve the situations where the participants hesitate or even are in trouble. This can be done by offering immediate feedback or by directing the participant to the source of help, i.e. to the concrete person or material. Feedback helps to indicate that the participants or netmoderators understand and that they are aware of the situation, etc. I think that the netmoderator will on one hand provide a feedback by instant reaction on the participant's contributions, on the other hand, he or she will give the participant an opportunity to react to his or her contributions. Some examples of possible feedback: "yes", "you are right", "I like your idea", "well done", "I agree", "oh, really?", etc.
Examples from the forum	1. Well, you seem to be behind the times :). 2. <i>Tohle je na chyby ve cvičeních to správné vlákno. Díky, opravila jsem a dala Vám 10 bonusových bodů :-).</i> 3. <i>Thanks for introducing yourself and for setting up this Club. You are right: no post is off-topic unless it is in Czech or Slovak, of course. Everybody is warmly welcome to join in. Nobody should feel intimidated by the fact that they might be making mistakes in their English. We all make them, but the more you express your ideas the better progress in your English can be expected.</i> 4. <i>Well, I quite like your suggestion, but what about the overuse of the passive in Czech when translating from English. I wonder if you (now I mean all you) know why there is so much passive voice in English compared to Czech? What is the reason?</i> 5. <i>Your sentence sounds to me much better with the active voice in Czech. I primarily meant that when translating the passive in English into Czech using passive as well, one should always be aware of the fact that English uses the passive voice much more than Czech does. The question why English uses passive more frequently still remains unsolved. Any suggestions?</i> 6. <i>Hi, Kamila, nice to have you here. You will probably NOT learn much speaking in this course, but I think that speaking always starts in</i>

	<i>the mind, so in fact if you learn to express your ideas with ease, it will help you start speaking more quickly and with a richer range of vocabulary.</i> 7. <i>Well, if you have been studying only for a short period, I must say your English is really very good. Your vocabulary range is good, you can make yourself understood in the language of everyday topics as well as in the field of your study. The trouble with a word you once learn and then discover it's a mistake and it never goes away - oh my god, I've experienced that so many times. But you shouldn't worry about articles too much, since the majority of Czech speakers makes mistakes in articles as a matter of course.</i> 8. <i>Na Vašem místě bych to nepřekládala, tudy cesta nevede, protože oba překlady jsou stejně nesmyslné. Pokud se nejlépe učíte z příkladů, pak si vygooglujte "Do as you are told" a "Do as you are said to" nebo "Do as you are said" a je to jasné. Ta druhá varianta a třetí v podstatě vůbec v angličtině neexistuje. A vysvětlení?</i> 9. Unappropriate feedback of the netmoderator: User (despite the clear instructions is asking): <i>Kam dáme přelady do ISu? Myslíte na "translation of incomplete sentence"? To je dobrý napád, to bych souhlasila.</i> Netmoderator answers: <i>"které i s anglickým originálem vždy vyvěsí do tohoto vlákna Individuální překlady"</i> <i>ja fakt uz nikdy nevím...</i> More skilled netmoderator's feedback on netmoderator: <i>Co fakt už nevíte? Vždyť se do všeho zapojovat nemusíte. Najděte si svou cestičku kurzem, která bude vyhovovat Vaším potřebám, a té se držte tak, abyste z tohoto kurzu měla maximum. :)</i>
Commentary	As I have expected, it proved that the netmoderators have to react somehow to hold continuing interaction within the forum. It was also evident that some students waited for the feedback and after that they somehow developed activity. In the example nr. 9 an inappropriate feedback of the netmoderator is illustrated. He or she broke one of the most important competences of netmoderators, patience. A nice feedback was demonstrated by more skilled netmoderator who restrained the other one. As visible from the example nr. 8, feedback also serves as a directional device of the interaction. Last but not least, feedback is a tool for praising (2, 4, 5)

Table 9: Proposition Nr.4

Proposition Nr.5: Netmoderator supports the social interactivity.	
Expectation	As it was already mentioned in the theoretical part, netmoderator should be able to create a group from the individual learners. Therefore, it is essential to provide space in which the learners develop themselves into a group. They must be given the sense of whole-group identity in order to feel comfortable within the group. There is no single method for developing a social interactivity within a forum, I expect that there will occur warm up activities like "Introducing", co-operative projects, etc. In this proposition I would like to find out whether there will be any social interactivity within the forum. I will then examine the concrete techniques of such interactivity in the next proposition.
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Thanks for introducing yourself and for setting up this Club. You are right: no post is off-topic unless it is in Czech or Slovak, of course. Everybody is warmly welcome to join in. Nobody should feel intimidated by the fact that they might be making mistakes in their English. We all make them, but the more you express your ideas the better progress in your English can be expected.</i> 2. <i>Hi Romana, I hope you're fine. I was born in Přerov but I don't live there any more. I left for Mosty u Jablunkova since we had a chance to live in a house. My husband and me. But I often go to my hometown to visit my parents and my friends. Bystřice pod Hostýnem has very nice surroundings. Do you like hiking? Where do you usually go swimming? Have fun.</i> 3. <i>Hi Dalibor, I'm happy that some newcomers have appeared since the thread was dead for some time. How long have you been learning Italian? And why did you start learning this particular language, which is not very common in Czech state schools. I have never heard of Black books. What's it about? Do you watch it on TV? Do you like working as a salesman? Looking forward to your reply.</i> 5. <i>Nice to have you in the course. I think that as a field of study bioinformaticS has the same spelling as informaticS. And I am sure that if you read the sentence "I was study" once again, you would know better. Wow, I have learned a new word: cattery! How many cats do you have? Do you sell them?</i>

Commentary	As I have expected, some “warm-up” activities appeared in the forum. Besides that, some others were also interesting and were definitely set up in order to support the interactivity among the participants of the forum, e.g. the whole thread “Introduce yourself” where the participants introduce themselves or the discussion thread English Club that is meant as a kind of virtual “pub” or “café”. In this thread, the users talk about different things concerning everyday life. The interesting fact in this issue is that the netmoderator tries to create different “sub-groups” within the forum. The netmoderator pairs people with particular skill or knowledge together in order to create such a social interactivity that is effective for learning process as well. Sometimes, when interacting with particular learner, he or she also uses references to other participants’ knowledge or completed task.
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Table 10: Proposition Nr.5

Proposition Nr.6: Netmoderator uses different techniques, e.g. brainstorming, audio/visual	
Expectation	Modern teaching techniques should be flexible and should use relevant materials and sources. I expect to find two different ways of setting up the activities: firstly, those activities that are formed as an input of the netmoderator and secondly, the activities on which the netmoderator and the learners cooperate, that means that they set up the materials within the learning process itself according to the content of learning. I expect that the netmoderators will use the above mentioned techniques to maintain a group's interest in a subject and to develop new teaching materials as well.
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Pokud si chcete vyzkoušet další příklady na procvičení anglického slovosledu:</i> <i>Http://users.pandora.be/eddy.vennekens/engels/Grammar/svompt01.htm</i> 2. <i>Čtečka: http://www.oddcast.com/home/demos/tts/tts_example.php? Zvolte hlas, vepište větu, nechejte si ji přečíst a můžete trénovat výslovnost.</i> 3. <i>Audiobooks in English: www.librivox.org you can find here tales, fiction, nonfiction, whatever and also the link to the e-book version of the chosen audiobook... useful and fun :)(recommended if your eyes are tired of reading :) and good for listening practice)</i>
Commentary	My expectations of using materials were right, as evident from the contributions chosen from the forum. Netmoderators use simple and effective methods of generating ideas and suggestions like linking some useful web pages related to the subject, audio-visual equipment and brainstorming. Brainstorming starts from the ideas of one person that initiate responses from another. It can be a great introductory activity. Brainstorming activities can be found in the thread “Individuální překlady”, in which the participants are asked to choose and translate the extracts from any book they like. One student brings the extract and the whole group translate it and discuss the possibilities.

Table 11: Proposition Nr.6

Proposition Nr.7: Netmoderator invents new issues to enliven the discussion when it gets weaker or off-topic	
Expectation	One of the biggest problems of all online forums is that anybody can chat about anything with anybody. The netmoderators are those who should moderate it. They have in fact only two possible ways how to solve such a situation: they can either ban the user or try to make him or her leave the inappropriate thread or make him or her communicate about desirable topic. As the online communication needs to be supported by the netmoderators in almost every minute, I expect that they will enliven the discussion by different linguistic means.
Examples from the forum	1. <i>Oh c'mon people, I can't believe you have nothing to say. Perhaps I've scared everybody off with that long post above - I only wanted to provide some incentives to get a discussion started. If you think it will help you express yourself more accurately, dont hesitate to use your mother tongue. We are all learners after all, so let's share our learning experiences.</i> 2. <i>Are there other suggestions how to improve Czech of this particular sentence?</i> 3. In the thread "Introduce yourself" appeared the discussion off topic between two users who knew each other. After very long messaging about something that other users could not understand one of them suggested: <i>User: What about setting up a new thread just for chatting about LARP games or RPG ;-)</i> Should we? Netmoderator's reaction: <i>A great idea!</i> Positive but very clear response that made the inappropriateness of the discussion obvious.
Commentary	The off-topic discussion did not appear so frequently in the discussion forum, it was quite difficult to find there any contributions clearly illustrating the ways of enlivening the discussion. Within the examples, I included at least some of them. The possible reason that the enlivening of the discussion appeared only marginally is that the discussion forum is a part of the course where the main goal of the participants is to get credit for the communication.

Table 12: Proposition Nr.7

4.9.2 Results – Participants under the microscope

4.9.2.1 The participants' analysis based on “Patterns of practitioners”

After the detailed analysis I found out that there are some examples of the different roles of the participants in the forum ONLINE_A. Considering the huge amount of contributions it is not possible to illustrate everything. I decided to show what types I have found in the forum and what should the netmoderator do to encourage the participants: whether to change their manners in the forum or to make the manners better.

Regarding the unique features of the course Online_A, not all types of learners presented by Salmon can be found, here are the types of those learners who could be clearly identified:

- I found several participants who visit once a week, contribute very much but then vanish into thin air. Salmon (2000) calls those participants **the wolves**

What should the netmoderators do? (Salmon, 2000): Encourage the wolf to see the responses he or she sparked off.

- Another role of participants is an intelligent and good communicator: **the dolphin** (Salmon, 2000).

What should the netmoderators do? (Salmon, 2000): acknowledge dolphin's qualities and motivate him to share them with others.

Example of netmoderator's response to dolphin:

What I meant was that your English is on such a level that to find suitable exercises that would not bore you might be quite difficult. If you want to discuss various topics

*in English, you are more than welcome: there's a thread called English Club at the top. There are loads of exercises, indeed, and even more are coming if I get the advanced students work the way I envision it. There are some 600 more items coming soon covering the most common mistakes that Czech students make, but still, as I said, **your English is really very good**, so it might be a problem to meet your expectations. In any case, I will move your thread upwards a bit so that more people come to exchange their learning experience, which I think is really important.*

- I must say that there are many participants who tend to send “nonsense” messages – Salmon (2000) calls them **the moles**.

What should the netmoderators do? Salmon (2000): first of all, the mole needs support, netmoderator should summaries and try to response, netmoderator should learn the mole how to make the online communication better by interacting with her or him.

- The users who tend to dominate the discussion and think that they must be everywhere and respond to everything – Salmon calls them **the stag**.

What should the netmoderator do? (Salmon, 2000): support the stag and offer her or him a specific role, stags are perfect to be trained as netmoderators.

- Another very specific user who lives online responds very quickly and directly is called – **the rabbit** (Salmon, 2000).

What should the netmoderators do? Salmon (2000) suggest giving her or him appropriate activity that needs such behaviour, in case of course Online_A the rabbit was supposed to provide the technical support.

Here are some examples of contributions of the typical rabbit:

- *Lepší bude, když to napíšete přímo tutorkám na Moodlince.*
- *Tato gramatická cvičení je lepší dělat na Moodlince*
- *A která konkrétní cvičení šlo?*

- *Bez uvedení konkrétního se nedá hledat.*
- *Ano, počítají se všechna cvičení.*
- *Ano, zatím to ještě není přístupné :)*
- *Provedeno. Není zač.*
- *Máte to mít.*
- *Splněno. :)*

4.9.2.2 Role exchange

Role exchange is something very specific in the online communication. It differs from the traditional classroom because the lack of the face-to-face contact detracts the authority of the tutor. This causes that students feel freer to interact and sometimes they take a role of the netmoderator.

The action is continually directed by the teacher (providing materials, maintaining the conversation, etc.) in a face-to-face interaction. On the contrary, in the online environment, the participants initiate the learning process just by entering the environment or posting some message.

Here are some typical examples of role exchange:

Students in the role of the netmoderator:

Oh c'mon people, I can't believe you have nothing to say. Perhaps I've scared everybody off with that long post above - I only wanted to provide some incentives to get a discussion started. If you think it will help you express yourself more accurately, don't hesitate to use your mother tongue. We are all learners after all, so let's share our learning experiences.

Welcome Eva (and everyone), we are glad to have you here, we all have to learn English, that's why we are here. Can you tell us something more about the dangerous places you visited as well as the situations you experienced?

You want to improve your English. That's why you have enrolled this course, isn't it? So don't worry of making mistakes (not faults) and write, write, write and people will correct you. It's IMHO one of the best ways how to learn language.

The student is aware of his or her experience and gives advice as if he was in the role of netmoderator:

Mezi špičku v Brně patří BEC, PARK a ILC. Pohybuju se v této oblasti dost úzce už cca 5 let...

The student (A) responds as netmoderator to another student's (B) question and explains him or her vocabulary issue:

Ja si nemyslim ze by to byla chyba... "manzel" muze byt "husband" aj "man" i "guy" (napr. pesnicka od Mary Wells - My Guy, zname jako soundtrack z filmu Sister Act s Whoopi Goldberg) jenom jak uz bylo receno testy v isu nevidi rozdil (v tomto pripade podobnost) mezi slovicek...

Netmoderator evaluates the student (A):

Tak mám pocit, že i Vy byste měla dostat nějaký ten bonus za aktivitu a pomoc spolužákům :). Děkuji za ně.

The netmoderator joins the students, he or she is not sure about something mentioned before by the student, he or she appears in the role of a student who asks for advice:

I am not sure either. I wonder how you can find out. Do you use Google (I am not talking about Google Fight, but Google itself) as a tool for corpus linguistics purposes. I do, and that's the fastest way to find out which collocation or preposition suits best.

Role exchange of the students themselves:

The thread “Individuální překlady” the netmoderator set up the thread where the students are in the role of translators, which is a great way how to practice specific skills, to explore alternative actions and personal feelings.

The thread “Questions about English you would like to ask a native speaker”: the netmoderator set up the thread in order to give the participants chance to be „real students“ and ask. Students are really in the role of students, they ask questions in order to learn and know more.

4.9.3 Results – Netiquette under the microscope

There is no given netiquette in the course Online_A. As the course developed, it became clear that not all the participants really know the core rules of netiquette, although there was no serious break of the netiquette. Sometimes, the netmoderator had to react to some inappropriate ways of behaviour and also, one thread devoted to the netiquette appeared in the course.

Let's consider some features that are definitely part of the netiquette. The individual features are presented within the chart and completed by the examples. The components in the chart were considered and observed in the forum.

Graphics	
Important components and remarks	Type size and font: the user should avoid writing only in capital letters. The length of the contributions: the user should avoid too long contributions, he/she should be aware of the fact that he/she should spare time of other users Style and language of contributions: the user should use polite language, should avoid overuse of emoticons, punctuation, blanks, etc. Hypertext link: should open the link in the new browser window; there are many links that do not open in the new window in the Online_A discussion forum. Spelling
Examples	1. <i>I think it would be very useful, if you can change the font so that it would be easier to see at the first sight what is the original text and what is the translation. Do you know how to do it?</i> 2. <i>Klidně jste to mohla dát do toho Vašeho původního textu, ať se nám to vlákno zbytečně nenatahuje stejným textem :).</i> 3. <i>Hi, I recommend you to edit your previous version instead of posting new ones. Simply click on a heading of your article and then click on "upravit příspěvek". It will help us to read this thread.</i> 4. <i>Zdravim, mel bych takovou pripominku k te vami prosazovane interaktivni osnove. Ty modre ramecky a struktura mi neprijdou prilisprehledne, k nekterym odpovednikum se spatne prolouskava pres jinou urovnovou skupinu.</i> 5. <i>Hi, you'd like to be corrected, so you are not writting, but writing,everyone tries, not tryes... And he tries to correct someone's post (an apostroph missing). :)</i>

Threads titles	
Important components and remarks	The titles should begin with the capital letter and should reflect the heart of the matter. Threads titles like “help”, “question” or “warning” are inappropriate.
Examples of inappropriate threads	1. “chybné slovo” – it is not clear which word the user who set up the thread meant, whether the word is from the test, from the book, or whatever it is only a word he wants to ask, the user also begins with the small letter 2. “Listening Intermediate” – the user has got a problem with the downloading the audio file and she asks for help. I think that the title is wrong because it could possibly cause a misunderstanding of other users. 3. READING TASK FOR YOU – inappropriate style – capital letters
Remarks	As it is obvious from the examples above, it is very necessary to instruct the users how to write an appropriate name of a thread. The forum becomes very chaotic if there are a lot of names of threads like these and if there are many styles used together.

Flaming and other negative reactions within the forum	
Examples	The student tries to correct his schoolmate's mistakes and this involved the reaction of the netmoderator who found the contribution inappropriate. <i>B: Hi, you'd like to be corrected, so you are not writting, but writing, everyone tries, not tryes... And he tries to correct someone's post (an apostroph missing). :)</i> <i>A: Your correction are so nice! That's irony. And you can see that I'm able to use an APOSTROPHE. Have fun, dear 'corrector'.</i> <i>B: omfg what did I do? Well, I think I didn't write it to you, but to Romana, who understood my irony. Btw, "correction are" :P</i> <i>A: We all (even you) are just human beings. I am not omniscient. As an e-tutor it's my duty to read everything what is written here and react to it. Michal, your reactions are inappropriate, not the only one for Romana. And if it was just a joke, not everybody likes that kind of humour. Be kind, pls. And have a nice day.</i> <i>B: Sorry, but it wasn't me who began to talk to you this way...</i> Netiquette includes tolerance and patience, this is an example of the netmoderator whose patience snapped: <i>Student asks: Kam dáme přelady do ISu? Myslíte na "translation of imcomplete sentence"? To je dobrý nápad, to bych souhlasila.</i> Netmoderator answers: "které i s anglickým originálem vždy vyvěsí do tohoto vlákna Individuální překlady"ja fakt už nikdy nevím... More skilled netmoderator react on the netmoderator's answer: Co fakt už nevíte? Vždyť se do všeho zapojovat nemusíte. Najděte si svou cestičku kurzem, která bude vyhovovat Vaším potřebám, a té se držte tak, abyste z tohoto kurzu měla maximum. :)
Remarks	There were not many contributions that would show some signs of flaming in the forum Online_A. Nor the negative contributions were written frequently. This could be caused by the fact that this forum Online_A is targeted on a specific group of people whose main goal is to learn English.

Here are some contributions from the Thread – “Základy netikety Online_A“, all these contributions are devoted to the netiquette.

Big sister maže podvodně získané bodíky jako zběsilá. Dnes jsem jich jednomu expertovi smazala asi 300, všechno nasekal na jednom jediném průchodu asi během půl hod'ky. Musím to zřejmě co nejdřív znovu zdůraznit v hromadném mailu, že takhle by to teda nešlo.

Přijde mně zvláštní, že na předmětových fórech nejde moderovat vlastní vlákno, když ve všech ostatních fórech je to nastavené tak, že to jde. Podle toho, co se různě psalo kolem, jsem nabyla dojmu, že tato práva se v předmětových fórech přesouvají z (nezodpovědných?) studentů - zakladatelů vláken na vyučující, aby vyučující mohli rozhodovat o tom, co se bude dít na fóru "jejich" předmětu a současně mít přehled o tom, že se tam nedějí nějaké nekalosti. Místo toho je situace taková, že nikdo nemůže mazat spam tak, aby tím neodstřelil případné hodnotné vlákno.

to množství zmatených studentů je fakt hrozný a začínám si myslet, že takový test bude asi vážně nejlepší ... nevychovaní :) možná by se tu takový člověk hodil, protože já jsem si s ISem poradila tak nějak sama, tak si nedokážu moc přestavit, jak moc složité je to pro jiné

4.9.4 Analysis Overview

The analysis proves that the role of netmoderator is very specific and difficult. It also proves that the role and competencies that are described in the theoretical part of this diploma thesis are really required in the learning process.

I find it very interesting to discover that all of the most important roles, competencies and teaching method and techniques mentioned in the theoretical part were found within such a specific forum as the forum Online_A is.

The analysis also proves that the role of netmoderator needs a bit different qualities than face-to-face teacher. First of all, this is caused by the online environment itself. The online environment changes the qualities of the learners as well and this fact must be considered by netmoderator beforehand. It is than obvious, that the analysis proves that netmoderator has to deal with many circumstances that do not occur in the “real world” environment and according to this fact he or she must adapt behaviour, teaching methods and techniques, materials, assessment, evaluations etc.

IV. CONCLUSION

The diploma thesis brings the overview of the criteria that are necessary for the successful work of netmoderator.

It is divided into theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part is focused on the description of the areas that are necessary to be considered for the successful netmoderating, i.e. the e-learning and communication that both seems to be essential tool that enables the netmoderating.

The practical part is based on the analysis, its main goal was to consider various criteria and complete them by practical examples. I picked up the most important criteria considered in the theoretical part and I tried to find them in the discussion forum in order to bring the theory and practice together. The results of the analysis clearly proved that the competencies and roles of the netmoderator mentioned in the theoretical part are really needed while teaching in the online environment. At the same time, it emerged that the practical training is required because a mere reading a theory about netmoderating, or about online tutoring in general, is not sufficient and the practice and experience is the core of the work. The online training should not be neglected and should be applied in the educational sphere as broadly as possible.

As for the references, I must say that it was very difficult to find at least some literature dealing with the topic of the netmoderating. Mostly, I used the foreign sources for my diploma thesis. Indeed, I discovered many valuable sources dealing with the issue that will be useful for me as a future teacher.

Regarding the methodology, the most demanding task for me was to define the propositions that would represent the most important roles and competences of the netmoderator. As for the practical examples, it was extremely interesting to go through the discussion forum and look for them. The only negative thing in the forum was the structure of the forum itself because sometimes it was slightly not clearly arranged.

As a future teacher, I tried to underline the fact that the profession of the teacher, either in online or face-to-face interaction is very demanding and requires holding many roles. Moreover, as the e-learning has become integral part of teaching and learning, I think that it is very important to train the future teacher also for the online form of instruction and that the courses for online teaching should be introduced at the Faculties of Education.

Subsequent research could possibly deal with examining various aspects of online teaching, e.g. could compare the teaching methods used by netmoderator and face-to-face teacher, the output level of knowledge in the online environment and traditional class, the possibilities of netmoderator's training in the Czech Republic or the subjects of individual faculties of Education in the Czech Republic that would be meant to students who want to deal with online teaching.

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