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Language Training in Times of Crisis: A Paradigm Shift at the Military Academy (MILAC) at ETH Zurich



BILC Webinar, 19th – 23rd October 2020

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Military Academy (MILAC) at ETH Zurich

- Training institution for the Swiss Armed Forces' career officers founded in 1877
- Training on a practical basis and preparation for the duties
- Three different courses: Bachelor course of study, the diploma course and the Military School
- Internationally renowned centre of excellence for military science
- Six departments: leadership and communication, military history, military economics, military psychology and pedagogics, military sociology, and strategic studies.
- Organisationally subordinate to the Armed Forces College (AFC) in Lucerne and scientifically part of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) Zurich



ETH zürich





Embedding in the AFC



Language Training in Times of Crisis: A Paradigm Shift at the Military Academy (MILAC) at ETH Zurich
Swiss Armed Forces / Training Command / Armed Forces College / MILAC / Head of Language Training
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Insights of Language Training at the MILAC "pre CORONA"

- Language training as attendance courses in Birmensdorf and Zurich (at ETH during the semester)
- Training of grammatical structures and military vocabulary
- Heterogeneous learning groups must all attend CEFR B2 level in German/French and English
- Densely packed training programme with many sequences outside Birmensdorf
- Salary relevant specifications by the Swiss Confederation: Ordinance on the National Languages and Understanding among the Linguistic Communities (Languages Ordinance)
- Language training as a crucial criterion for passing the course
- Language learning does not only take place during lessons
 - *The foreign language must be actively used by course participants outside the classroom*
- Link with the technical language/specific vocabulary



Technical Means (1/4)

Besides the Classical Language Teaching

1. The Learning Management System (LMS)

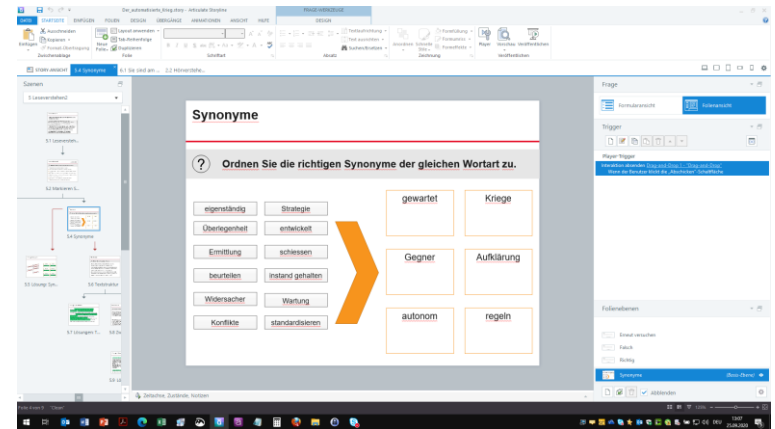
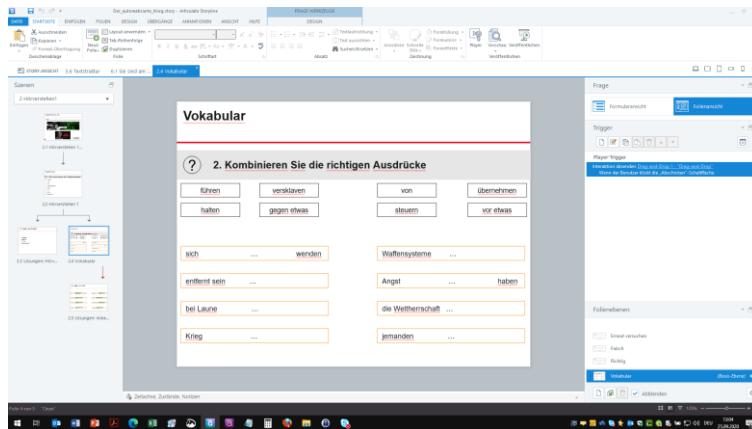
- LMS as the central knowledge collection since 2007 with over 14,000 items of content items are available online
- Since January 2011: The sole official repository for all current regulations and directives of the Swiss Armed Forces
- More than just an electronic library: Training management
- Adobe's virtual classroom application accessible through the LMS
- Login for every member of the Swiss Armed Forces (militia or professional military) to access the platform



Technical Means (2/4)

2. Web Based Training (WBT) Lessons

- Since November 2018, several language training WBT have been produced to train the students outside of the classroom.
- Developed and produced by the language training department at the Military Academy using the software "Articulate Storyline" which allows the authoring of interactive WBT lessons.





Technical Means (3/4)

3. WBT Lessons Examples

WBT for language training in German, French and English

Comprehension exercises (listening & reading) and vocabulary training:

- Der automatisierte Krieg [Automated Warfare]
- Les armes autonomes [Autonomous Weapons]
- Les robots intelligents [Intelligent Robots]
- Mines antipersonnel [Anti-personnel Mines]
- UN Peacekeeping Cordon and Search
- Commuting to War – the Emotional Toll of Drone Warfare
- Hard Rules for Rotten Wars
- Military vocabulary (> 40 lessons, German → French → German)



Technical Means (4/4)

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... this includes such tasks as:

locating and confiscating illegal weapons or war like stores (explosives equipment, and materials); to find and confiscate contraband materials;

to arrest and detain suspects, unauthorized personnel and wanted criminals or persons countering the reconstruction of peace and stability;

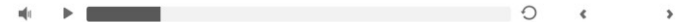
to protect potential targets by timely action; to obtain evidence on ongoing illegal activities;

to build confidence of the local population (especially of women) and deny access to belligerents to the area or population;

to help advance demobilization and deter violence and risks of gross human rights violations and to display UN resolve to enforce the mandate for the furtherance of peace and security.

Première partie

Vous allez visionner un document sonore et vous ferez l'activité proposée.



00:10 / 10:00

MilVoc

Bekleidung und Packungen - Habillement et paquetages

? das Schanzwerkzeug

- le sac de couchage
- l'outil (m) de pionnier
- l'embase (f) du sac de couchage
- le masque de protection



Digital Teaching in Short

As an Addition to Face-to-Face Teaching

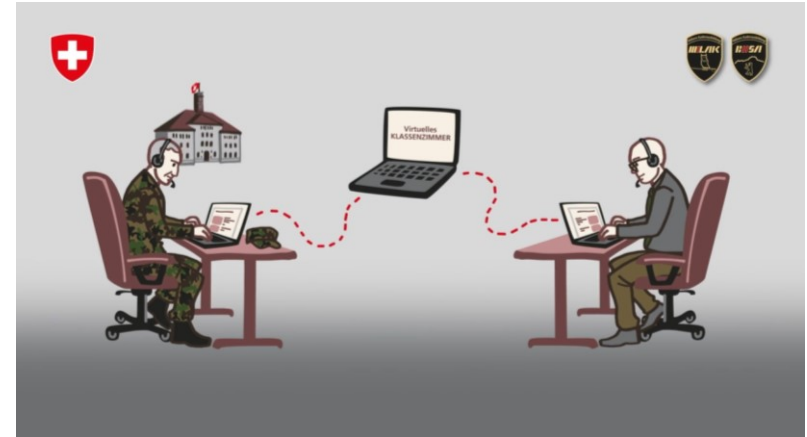
- Production of WBT lessons involves a certain effort
→ Time and resource planning within the department
- Continuous creation of WBT lessons (3-4 WBT lessons per year) produced by the language training of the MILAC
- Added value for teaching:
 - Different target groups in class
 - Independent of location, time and device
 - Training control and tracking via LMS (SCORM Interface between WBT lessons and the LMS)
 - WBT lessons can be linked to other curricula on the LMS e.g. for the electronic advanced language training courses ("elektronischer Weiterausbildungskurs Sprachen, eWAK Sprachen")

SCORM: Shareable Content Object Reference Model is a collection of standards and specifications for web-based electronic educational technology.



Electronic Advanced Language Training Courses ("eWAK Sprachen")

- Virtual classroom pilot project launched in 2019
- Training of language skills (conversation/language structures)
- independent of location and device
- Feb-Sep (MILAC) CEFR B2 German
- Mar-Sep (NCOS) CEFR B1 French
- Topics:
 - The Corona-pandemic
 - Left- and right-wing extremism in armed forces
 - Conscription for women
 - New fighter aircraft
 - China, the uncomfortable superpower...
 - ...



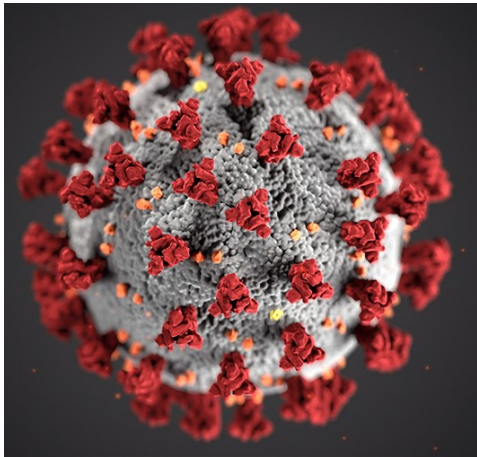
Screenshot Video:

https://video.zem.ch/watch_video.php?v=2763

- LMS curriculum with virtual classroom and linked WBT lessons
- 12 lessons, including 2 evaluations:
- L6: Interim evaluation
- L12: Final evaluation with confirmation



... and then there was this virus ...



...and first actions were taken at the MILAC to ensure further teaching activities online.

Teaching possibilities in the event of the COVID-19 epidemic spreading (early march 2020)

Unterrichtsmöglichkeiten bei Ausweitung der COVID-19 Epidemie

Mittel	Zugang ⁱ	Voraussetzung	Ansprechperson	Bemerkungen
Skype/UCC (Audio/Files/Video)	IT Bund/RAS	Headset (mit Dongle und Station) USB-Headset (z.B. Logitech)	Support IT MILAK	Nur Angehörige der Bundesverwaltung
Virtual Classroom Variante 1 (BURAUT/AWB Card)	IT Bund/RAS	Headset (mit Dongle und Station) USB-Headset (z.B. Logitech)	Einrichtung/Schulung durch C Sprachausb	Nur Angehörige der Bundesverwaltung LMS-Login mittels AWB-Card
Virtual Classroom Variante 2 (privater Laptop)	extern	USB-Headset (z.B. Logitech), ggf. Externe Kamera	Einrichtung/Schulung durch C Sprachausb	LMS-Login muss bekannt sein! ⁱⁱ
Skype/Teamviewer	extern	individuell	individuell	private IT, Klassifikation beachten!



... classroom teaching was suspended ...



[Homepage](#) > [News & events](#) > [ETH News](#) > [All articles](#) > [2020](#) > [March 2020](#) > [ETH suspends classroom teaching](#)

ETH suspends classroom teaching

12.03.2020 | [Press release](#)
1 Comment

Due to the latest developments in the spread of the coronavirus, the Executive Board has decided to suspend all classroom teaching with effect from Monday, 16 March up to the end of Spring Semester 2020. The university is continuing to expand its offering of online study alternatives.



Die ETH Zürich stellt den Präsenzunterricht ab dem 16. März bis Ende Mai 2020 ein.

Since the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, the Executive Board has been monitoring the situation very carefully and continuously responding to it. In view of the current situation, ETH Zurich is now switching all teaching to other distance learning formats. Preparations for this transition, such as expanding the number of online lectures, have already been made and will now be implemented as a top priority.

Search news
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[Press release about suspension of classroom teaching \(PDF, 83 KB\)](#)
↓

Contact

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Media relations
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... and further actions were taken ...

16.03.2020 - Switch to distance learning including technical challenges:

- Every employee at the MILAC (lecturer, course commander and students) has a federally owned and managed computer

	MILAC	Private
Skype for Business/UCC	✓	✗
Access to the federal e-mail system	✓	✗
Access to internal File Shares	✓	✗
VPN/RAS Access to the federal IT Infrastructure ! Restricted service due to congestion caused by increased telework	✓!	✗
Access to commercial cloud platforms (Dropbox etc)	✗	✓
Installation of additional software, mostly provided by ETH (Zoom, MS Teams etc.)	✗	✓
Access to LMS/WBT/Virtual Classroom	✓	✓



Direct knowledge transfer with experiences from "eWAK Sprachen"

- Training for the lecturers, course commanders and students



... to realise the paradigm shift

- LMS/Virtual Classroom and WBT Lessons (MILAC & private computers)
- Skype for Business (MILAC computers only)
- Zoom (private computers only and ETH software licence and safety regulations, e.g. to prevent "Zoom Bombing")
- ...and lots of e-mails

Consequences:

- The independent teaching and learning require a high degree of self-discipline from everyone (physical distancing, social aspect during the language acquisition process).
- Pragmatism and common sense (classified information!) due to the general situation and the technical circumstances were the order of the day for both teachers and students.
- ETH regulations on distance learning
- Further development of electronic language training
- **What's next? → Preparations for a new shift to online teaching.**



ETH regulations

In the context of the switch from classroom teaching to online lessons at the ETH, the semester exams for the Bachelor course had to be adapted:

Before Corona:

- Written semester exam (2 hours), listening/reading/writing on CEFR B2

At the end of the spring semester 2020:

- Oral exam via videoconference (30 minutes), listening and speaking on CEFR B2

Diploma course and Military School:

- Online teaching during the semester and classroom test in Birmensdorf (Credit points are not awarded by ETH).

Result: All students of all courses passed the semester.



Questions

Thank you very much for your attention.
I would be pleased to answer your questions.