Mind map, MindMup:

A material package of digitally available applications for language teachers

Master's thesis

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Tekijä – Author Anna Harju	
Työn nimi – Title Mind map, MindMup: A material package of digitally available applications for language teachers 	
Oppiaine – Subject Englanti	Työn laji – Level Pro Gradu -tutkielma
Aika – Month and year Kesäkuu 2018	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 60 + liite (51 sivua)

Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Digitalisaatio on vuosien saatossa kasvattanut osuuttaan ja merkitystään moderneissa yhteiskunnissa. Sitä on myös edistetty lainsäädännöllisillä toimilla, kuten esimerkiksi Juha Sipilän hallitusohjelman osaamisen ja koulutuksen tavoite tähtää siihen, että Suomesta tulisi modernin ja innostavan oppimisen kärkimaa. Digiloikaksikin kutsuttu päämäärä on vahvasti läsnä Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteissa ja sen elementtejä näkyy myös digitalisoituvassa ylioppilastutkinnossa; tieto- ja viestintäteknologian osaaminen on yksi oppiainerajat ylittävä kokonaisuus. Uusi formaatti ylioppilaskokeessa mahdollistaa esimerkiksi kielten kokeissa entistä laajemman lähdemateriaalien käytön, kun kuvaa, ääntä ja videota voi olla yhdistettynä jokapäiväisiin materiaaleihin, kuten mainoksiin tai nettisivuihin. Kansallisella tasolla tämä tarkoittaa sitä, että digitaalisen oppimisen on tarkoitus olla läsnä koko koulutussysteemin läpi.

Tämän materiaalipaketin fokuksena on tarjota merkityksellisiä digitaalisesti tehtäviä harjoituksia lukion englannin kursseille. Tässä tapauksessa "digitaalinen" tarkoittaa laitteita, kuten tietokonetta, tablettia tai älypuhelinta, mutta myös sovelluksia, jotka ovat saatavilla laitteissa ja nettiselaimessa tai vastaavasti jotka vaativat lataamista. Merkityksellisyys puolestaan viittaa siihen, että tehtävät on suunniteltu tukemaan valmistautumista digitaaliseen englannin ylioppilaskokeeseen kuin myös tulevia opintoja ja työelämää varten. Samalla pyritään myös yhdistämään formaalia ja informaalia opetusta. Kieltenopetuksen haasteita ja periaatteita on puolestaan tarkasteltu monilukutaidon ja Task-Based Learning and Teaching -lähestymistavan kautta sekä miten autenttisuus näkyy esimerkiksi opetusmateriaaleissa ja digitaalisessa oppimisessa.

Materiaalipaketissa on yhdistetty kolme laajaa teemaa kahdesta eri kirjasarjasta, jotka noudattavat Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteiden linjauksia. Tehtävät on suunniteltu siten, että niitä on helppo muokata opettajan opetustyyliin ja oppilaiden tarpeisiin nähden, esimerkiksi vaihtamalla teemaa tai toteuttamalla vain osan yhden tehtävän harjoituksista. Tehtäviä voi siis käyttää suureksi osaksi lukion kurssien pääsisällöstä riippumatta. Oppilailla on myös aktiivinen rooli harjoituksien toteuttamisessa, sillä he saavat pitkälti itse vaikuttaa sisältöihin ja suunnitteluun tehtävärungon sisällä. Materiaalipaketti on järjestetty siten, että jokaisessa tehtävässä on oma otsikko, jonka alla on lyhyt kuvaus tehtävän perusperiaatteista, itse harjoitukset sekä vinkkejä opettajalle, mitä ottaa huomioon tehtävien toteutuksessa tai miten niitä voi muokata.

Asiasanat – Keywords digitalization, curriculum, multiliteracy, authenticity, task-based learning and teaching
Säilytyspaikka – Depository JYX
Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1 INTRODUCTION

It could be suggested that digitalization is an inevitable trend in modern societies. Nowadays aspects of digitalization can be encountered in many areas of life, such as in the use of everyday objects like washing machines as well as in social interaction at large, like e-mails. Thus, the term 'information society' seems appropriate for describing our current time. (Martin 2006: 3-4). The phenomenon of digitalization has also led to creating a notion of 'digital natives', which refers to children and adults who have learnt to use devices and applications because they have used them during their whole life. In other words, they can be called as 'native speakers' of the digital language, because this language has been prevailing in their whole life, starting from birth. (Prensky 2001: 1-2).

Instead of being a phenomenon that would just happen by itself, digitalization is also implemented by different institutional regulations and strategies. For example, in the Finnish educational context there is a governmental key project, which aims to make Finland a top country of modern and inspiring learning with respect to digital learning. One of its objectives, also known as 'the digital leap' (*digiloikka*), is strongly present in the National Core Curriculum of Basic Education. Further, also the Finnish Matriculation Examination is gradually digitalized which is the final school leaving exam of the upper secondary studies in Finland. (Osaaminen ja koulutus n.d.; Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 16). This means that on a national level, digital learning is supposed to be pervasive in the sense that it would be present through the whole educational system. (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: kansallinen ohjaus n.d).

These being the starting points, the focus of this material package is to introduce meaningful assignments for English language teaching that are digitally available. The term digital in this case means devices such as computer, tablet and mobile phone (Palaiologou 2016b: 305, cited in Arnott 2017: 10) as well as applications that are either already accessible in the devices or on a website and the ones that might need downloading. By meaningful, in turn, is meant that the tasks of the package are designed to contribute in preparing for the matriculation examination of English and for time after the upper secondary studies. What is more, the tasks are created so that their execution should as simple as possible i.e. they do not involve high technology resources. Pedagogic background for these digital exercises mainly lie in perspectives of multiliteracy, authenticity and task-based learning and teaching.

I begin by taking a look at the role of digitalisation in the language education of Finland. I discuss aspects of digitalization in general and after that more specifically how they are present in the Finnish

educational context. These include observing effects of the digital leap in schools and how digitalization affects the Matriculation Examination. Digital aspects are also examined from the National Core Curricula of Basic Education (NCCBE) and for Upper Secondary Schools (NCCUSS). The chapter ends by surveying the relations between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and language teaching, in addition to taking a look at digital learning environments, e-learning and principles of hybrid learning.

The third chapter delves into pedagogical approaches of multiliteracy, authenticity and task-based learning and teaching with the focus on how they are used in language teaching. The central focus is on how these principles can be developed by using digital means. Different aspects of multiliteracy are discussed in relation to the National Core Curricula, in addition to why the union of authenticity-centred approach and task-based learning is useful in language teaching. Authenticity is also discussed in terms of context, materials and e-learning, whereas task-based learning suggests a framework for the execution of meaningful exercises. Chapter four, in turn, presents the structure and contents of the material package on the whole. The teaching material can be found in the Appendix.

2 THE ROLE OF DIGITALIZATION IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION OF FINLAND

This chapter focuses on digitalization from the perspective of language education in Finland. Digitalization is discussed as a larger phenomenon in modern societies and how it affects the Finnish educational system especially from the language teaching point of view, with an emphasis on the English language.

2.1 Digitalization in modern society

It could be suggested that digitalization is an inevitable trend in the world. As Martin (2006: 3-4) points out, e-encounters have become both 'ubiquitous and global': they might be present in the use of everyday tools or objects, such as computers and washing machines, and in social interaction at large. For example, e-mails and video conferencing are examples of the possibilities that digitalisation has offered at vastly greater length than previous communication technologies could provide. In addition, the internet offers limitless information, whether it be reliable or unreliable. In this light it is understandable that in many cases our times have been called as the 'information society'.

The problem with notions such as the *technological revolution* and the *information society*, as Martin notes (2006: 5-7), is that they are 'powerful metaphors without clear content'. He writes that these notions create an impression of social change being determined by technology, which obscures the fact that change and technology are both products of human action as well as interaction. The notions also somewhat mislead in suggesting that social change would be characterized by revolutions, i.e. sudden and simple shifts from one mode of activity to another, whereas this social change is actually gradual and complex. In addition to this, Martin expresses concerns over how the digital plays a part in the increasing uncertainty of knowledge. While limitless information is accessible via the internet, the validity of knowledge as well as its stature are challenged, because the quality of what can be accessed is unknown.

While digital aspects have become increasingly more common in the everyday life, it is not surprising that there are currently children and adults who have used digital devices and applications during their whole life. These people are called as the 'digital natives', as Prensky (2001: 1-2) states. For this closeness of digital objects in their immediate living environment they are, and have been, able to learn to use devices and applications effortlessly. Regardless of the name for their demographic

cohorts (e.g. Generation Y or Z, Millenials, N- or D-gen), Prensky presents that more illustrative grouping could be the division into *Digital Natives* and *Digital Immigrants*. In short, digital natives are 'native speakers' of the digital language of e.g. computers, video games and the internet, whereas digital immigrants are the ones who were born before digitalization made properly headway but became interested and adopted aspects of the new technology at a later point in life. The most important distinction according to Prensky is, nevertheless, that digital immigrants retain 'their foot in the past' i.e. their 'accent', which means that they learn to adapt to their prevailing environment rather than having grown naturally in it.

Therefore Prensky (2001: 1) argues that these digital natives are cognitively different from the previous generations and this would have fundamentally changed the way they acquire and assimilate information. While it is most likely that this view presented by Prensky, in which the thinking patterns or even brains of the digital natives have physically changed, holds true to some extent, there are supposedly some challenges in this proposition. Whitton (2010: 4-8) namely points out that although this is commonly used as an argument, it is still rather limiting to conclude that whole generational groups would have similar capacities. Furthermore, Whitton notes that the differentiation cannot be regarded that straightforward, because even though one was confident in using technology, it does not mean that this person would like to use e.g. computers for learning or would instinctively know how to use them effectively in that context.

Whitton (2010: 7) also refers to two studies conducted in the United Kingdom (IPSOS MORI about student expectations of higher education, 2007 and CIBER about information-seeking behaviour of young people in the virtual environment, 2008), which provided evidence that the digital native generation had not been that comfortable in using technology already ten years ago. The researchers of IPSOS MORI found out that the students who took part in the study did not appreciate technology as an absolute value, in addition to thinking highly of face-to-face teaching and teacher-student interaction, even though they had grown up with technology. The findings of CIBER, in turn, provided results that questioned the conception of people grown up in the information age being more web-literate than older people. Granted, the younger ones were more ease with computers, but they nevertheless relied heavily on search engines and lacked critical and analytical skills. In addition, the study also suggested that character traits more often associated with younger web users, e.g. lower tolerance on the delays in search and navigation, were actually tenable of all age groups of web users.

In this light, it seems to be irrational to assume that particular generations or age groups of learners would be homogenous. Instead, as Whitton (2010:7-8) remarks, it is more profitable to take into consideration different ranges of technical competence and confidence, as well as accept that many

people might prefer doing different tasks without technology, regardless of their age. Thus, Whitton further argues that for example digital game-based learning should not be seen as a revolutionary solution that changes teaching and learning, because it arguably appeals to younger generations. Instead, it should be regarded as another tool that has possibilities to provide effective and engaging ways to learn if implemented in relation to appropriate pedagogic models. Even though Whitton treats the topic mainly from the viewpoint of higher education, this is also applicable to the lower levels of education, as will be discussed later in this thesis.

In the next section, digitalization is examined from the perspective of the Finnish educational context.

2.2 Digitalization in the Finnish educational context

While being a large phenomenon in the societies around the world, digitalization is also implemented by regulations and strategies in the Finnish educational context. According to the key project in knowledge and education of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government (Osaaminen ja koulutus n.d.), one of its objectives is to make Finland a top country of modern and inspiring learning with respect to digital learning. This objective is also known as 'the digital leap' (*digiloikka*), and its aspects are strongly present in the National Core Curriculum of Basic Education and in the process of gradually digitalized Finnish Matriculation Examination. (Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 16). In response to the planned digital leap, *Opetusalan Ammattijärjestö* (OAJ), the Trade Union of Education, conducted a survey on the current state of digitalization in the educational context. As a result, the OAJ created guidelines for implementing digitalization in schools, which consist of four parts: national instruction, digital knowledge, digital devices and learning materials. (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan n.d.). The most relevant aspects according to the thesis are discussed next.

In their publication, the OAJ (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: kansallinen ohjaus n.d.) states that on a national level, digital learning is supposed to be pervasive in the sense that it is present through the whole educational system. The Trade Union argues that currently digitalization has been 'enhanced as quite separate entities', by which is probably meant that the implementation and use have not been consistent in different subjects, grades or schools. This could be considered as a question of equality, because in this way learners may proceed from one educational level to another with different

readinesses. Thus, the Trade Union further states that equal educational possibilities can be ensured by executing a national strategy, which includes common quality criteria for using ICT as a part of the digital leap objective.

Consequently all the teachers, regardless of the educational level, should have the same skills and knowledge to put into practice with respect to the digitalization. It could be suggested that in the current teacher education, it is easier to introduce digital pedagogy as a normal part of the studies rather than teach it in separate courses. (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: digiosaaminen n.d.). However, the situation may not be as good among teachers in working life, while there can be variation in teachers' ICT skills. Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen (2016: 17) namely report that even though teachers' technological command on devices and softwares is generally good, the pedagogical use of these is often weak. Another reported notion is that teachers' digital in-service training has apparently been somewhat insufficient with an emphasis only on the technical use of devices, whereas it should have been on the pedagogy and how ICT can be used as an appropriate tool for studying and learning. Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen write that this is in contravention of teachers' stance on digitalization, which has been enthusiastic as long as the in-service training offers enough resources to implement it.

Improvements in teachers' ICT skills have also been made, for example, with tutor teachers. These tutors are teachers whose central aim is to enhance the appropriate use of digital teaching and the development of communal operational culture. This tutoring is also linked to transmitting knowledge from region to region, by which is aimed to ensure equal possibilities for learners around the whole country (2500 tutoropettajaa 2016; Tutoropettaja 2017, the source headlines are in a shortened form). The tangible effect of the tutor teachers can be seen in practicality: while previously teachers had to specifically go to trainings, nowadays the tutoring is organized in their own school during working hours. Tutor teachers are not, however, a fast track to happiness. Even though ICT skills can be developed with tutor teachers and the direction is right, the process is not entirely finished. There is still plenty of work to be done, and the next phase in the digital leap could be to fully harness students' knowledge on the matter. In this way, it could be possible to gain a collective experience of a school as a learning community. (Tikkanen and Manner 2017: 23).

Nonetheless, the reported lack of in-service training has not been the only challenge in the digitalization process. According to the OAJ's publication (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: digiosaaminen n.d.), the number of devices and their working order is apparently not on a satisfactory level in schools. It is understandable that sufficient ICT equipment and learning materials are necessary prerequisites for educational digitalization, and a shortage of them can slow down the whole

digitalization process as well as put learners in unequal positions. The OAJ also states that as it is on the educational organizers' responsibility to provide the ICT equipment, one of the first essential steps in the digital leap is to equip all the teachers with a personal device, such as a computer or a tablet. Without proper devices, teachers cannot practise and implement digital learning. To illustrate the case, in a survey made by the *Opettaja* magazine about the new National Core Curriculum for age groups 1-6 (Tikkanen 2017b: 28), one of the respondents described the situation in their school with the following words: "At the moment, there are 470 students, 12 laptops and 16 tablets, ancient indeed."

In this students' case, however, the OAJ (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: digivälineet n.d.) states that the use of their own personal devices is encouraged throughout the grades with given rules, but schools should still be able to provide enough equipment for daily use. Nevertheless, if transferring completely to the use of digital learning material in basic education, then each student must be given a device of their own, because the basic education is free of charge in Finland. For example, in secondary education the starting point is to mainly use students' individually invested devices, but naturally taking into consideration the learning possibilities for students of limited means. In addition to the devices, functional and comprehensive wireless networks are vital for learning in schools.

With respect to teaching materials, the OAJ (OAJ:n askelmerkit digiloikkaan: oppimateriaalit n.d.) emphasizes that the digitalization should not restrict the possibilities to choose the materials based on pedagogic grounds, whether it would concern e.g. the availability or costs of the materials. The OAJ also suggests that high-quality learning materials, especially those which are free of charge, should be collected to easily used material banks whenever possible. Nevertheless, this is also a question of copyrights. Thus, sufficient knowledge on copyrights should be ensured in teachers' in-service training according to the OAJ, because gathering learning materials from the internet as well as based on other authors' work has become more common.

The guidelines are a good starting point for enhancing digitalization. However, Tikkanen and Manner (2017: 22-23) report a couple of remarks about schools' decisions with respect to this. For example, sometimes all the financial resources may have been used to purchasing devices, and eventually there has not been enough money to invest on high-quality teaching materials. In addition to this, some schools have apparently found themselves in a situation that when purchasing the devices and the learning environment in different years, it was noticed that they were not compatible together. Another reported aspect has concerned the wireless connections in schools, which go down whenever students try to join them. As common conclusion, it was suggested that there has not been enough knowledge in the subject.

Another overall observation could also be that every initiative, reform or innovation takes time to succeed. The digitalization process is not an exception, and it could be suggested that almost everything of this kind faces at least some challenges and even resistance before becoming established. With respect to this, Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen (2016: 15, 17) and Pelander (2017: 64) have interviewed a couple of specialists in the field of education. For example, a Special Advisor in the OAJ (Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 17) summarizes that at its best, the digitalization really can engage students more, diversify methods of learning and improve motivation to learn. He also emphasizes that digitalization is not an end in itself, but an opportunity to improve pedagogy and learning environments.

Häkkinen, a professor at the University of Jyväskylä, has also a strong point on the matter (Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 15). She argues that the digital leap leads too easily to think gadgets and the 'techno hype' than its correlations to learning. Digital learning is not a leap *per se*, rather it is based on a persevering work that teachers and students do on a daily basis. According to her, the digital leap is also a superficial word, as if the new technology was ready to be taken into teaching and learning in the raw. Determining factors are more likely *how* and for *what* the new technology is used – it can be harnessed to benefit traditional pedagogy, but on the other hand activating pedagogy can be carried out without the newest innovations. Thus, she remarks that a good rule is 'simple tools, rich pedagogy' when using new technology.

What is more, Häkkinen notes (Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 15) that the support for learning is more essential than the gadgets. This can, of course, be clearly achieved with the devices at their best: with more easily usable technology, teachers have more energy to think about how it could be harnessed to reinforce learning. However, she also points out that digital technology is often connected to motivation as it were a magic trick which would solve e.g. the thriving of boys at school. Unfortunately it is not an automatic solution, even though it can undoubtedly enrich learning situations as well as working methods.

Kaarttinen, who has discussed the state of contemporary pedagogy in his doctoral dissertation, is on common ground with Häkkinen (Pelander 2017: 64). He states that the digitalization is indeed the future, but it must always serve learning, because digitalization does not replace hard work and diligence, even though it may facilitate them. In this sense, Häkkinen (Korkeakivi, Manner and Tikkanen 2016: 15) states that the digital leap should be rather observed through the possibilities which it can offer in relation to the National Curriculum's pedagogical aims, as the emphasis is on active participation, problem-solving, meaningfulness of learning and cross-curricular studying themes. In this

light, it could be suggested that when the focus is on the right aspects, the implementation of the whole digitalization process can, indeed, reach its underlying aims.

With respect to this, there is already some data that when digitalization is implemented successfully, it really has great possibilities to support learning. This is apparently the case with the upper secondary school of Äänekoski, which began the school year of 2017-2018 in a completely new building along with new technology (Siljamäki 2017: 55-56). In the article, an interviewed language teacher told that the devices and the network are "to a T", and together with digital learning materials they serve teaching with flying colours. One reported benefit according to the teacher is that differentiated teaching is easier, while it is possible to do digital exercises at one's own pace. An example of this is from a Swedish lesson, in which all the students practised independently doing a listening comprehension test with laptops and headphones. In addition, the digital form enables simple checking of students' essays only by using teacher's tablet: notes can be made with an electric pen straight to the screen as well as give oral feedback.

2.2.1 The digital Matriculation Examination

The Finnish Matriculation Examination has a long history of being a school leaving examination after the Upper Secondary School, and it also gives a general qualification for tertiary studies. Traditionally the exams have been done with pen and paper, but the digitalization at large also affects them and in this way their format is under change. The whole Matriculation Examination is planned to be completely digitalized by 2019. (YTL, Historia n.d.; YTL, Digitaalinen ylioppilastutkinto n.d.). The OAJ, in turn, sees the digitalization of matriculation exams as a development of education following its time, because these exams are not the only testing method under digitalization. For example, 'exam aquariums' i.e. electronic exam rooms enable students to do tests already in over 20 higher education institutions. In these rooms, the supervisor is a recording camera and students can sign up for an exam when they are ready to take it. (Tikkanen 2017a: 9).

Nevertheless, the project is currently on that stage where the first exams have already been executed digitally, beginning from Autumn 2016 (YTL, Ylioppilastutkinto digitalisoituu asteittain n.d.). According to von Zansen (2014a, 2014b), one of the main reasons for digitalizing the exams, especially

from the viewpoint of languages, is that they enable a wider-ranging use of source materials in the exam exercises. By this is meant that the used texts can relate to everyday life and vary from their layout better than before. The texts can be, for example, advertisements, announcements or websites. The use of different layouts combined together with sound, pictures and videos is suggested to enhance authenticity in the exercises and bringing them closer to daily situations, in which language occurs naturally. This point has also been regarded as central in the material package of this thesis.

Another significant reason for the digitalization was the fact that it would simplify the correction process: it is easier to read typed texts than decipher handwritings. The automatic correction process can also be realized faster than previously, especially in the multiple-choice exercises, and it arguably saves costs in the long run, as there will be no need for the traditional mailing process of the paper exams. What is more, the digital exam form offers a possibility to include an oral part to the exam. Equality of the candidates, in turn, can be increased with anonymous evaluation of the digital exams, as well as facilitate researchers' access to the available data. The ultimate aim has, therefore, been to create an up-to-date exam, in which the possibilities of ICT are used. This was validated in the guidelines of the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools of 2003 as well as with the notion that these skills are important both in working life and further studies. (von Zansen 2014a, 2014b).

From the viewpoint of censors, the examiners of the matriculation exams, the digitalization has indeed brought many facilitative factors. An interviewed censor (Kosola 2016) confirms that fastness, logistics and anonymity have greatly improved. By this he means that, for example, the access to the digital exams can be reached already in the same evening of the exam day instead of up to a two-week delivery by mail, and with a computer it is smooth to browse as many exams as to one's own preference. Anonymity is also useful according to him especially in the cases when there is a difference of opinions with the scores. In other words, it is more likely now that a distinguished teacher's assessment does not affect a censor's evaluation when the names are not visible.

Now that there have been four consecutive examination periods of the digital matriculation exams, there is also some data about its execution. In Spring 2017 (Tikkanen 2017a: 8), the transition had gone well so far: the problems mainly concerned some technical issues, but reportedly less than was expected. Despite the anxiety that might have been associated with the digital exams, teachers and students had also given positive feedback on the exam form at the time. For example, in an interview about the first digital Geography exam in Autumn 2016 (Hotokka 2016: 21), the exam was said to be 'quite a daily experience', which had also used the possibilities of a digital form 'quite well' from the student perspective of one school. However, more comprehensive instructions on using the

programmes to make figures would have been needed, as well as more openness in informing about the programmes to be used in the exam in general.

One of the interviewed teachers (Hotokka 2016: 22), in turn, pondered that the digital Geography exam clearly demanded applying knowledge more than previously. Her first reaction was shocked on the amount of material to analyse, but with a closer examination on the following day, the review turned to good: for the first exam, it was apparently well designed. She thought the materials showed the essential features of the subject. Critique on the exam, in turn, concerned the challenges in comparing different materials. In the paper exam, maps and figures were easy to put side by side, whereas on a laptop's screen it was now possible to place conveniently only one at a time. An aspect to develop would also be shielding of the computers, because big diagrams can be seen alarmingly far from the screens according to her.

According to the news on the renewed exam of English in Spring 2018 (English language matriculation exam 2018, a shortened source headline), its reception is contradictory. Tähkä, the Secretary General of the Matriculation Examination Board, comments that the feedback has been both positive and negative for the advanced level English exam, also stating that 'some find the difficulty level good, whilst others have focused on particularly difficult aspects of the exam'. Students, however, have seemingly found the exam rather difficult, as can be observed from a questionnaire on Yle's exam revision service *Abitreenit*.

One of the English teachers summarises in an interview (Korkeakivi 2018: 4) that the exam was apparently quite similar as in the previous years. She states that an old-style exam was transformed digital, but there were, nevertheless, also videos and pictures in addition to a couple of new exercise forms. Background material relating to the essays was also a new element according to her. In the future (Takala 2018), it is hoped that the exam will extend the conceptions of language skills as well as help schools to focus more on the language instead of the exam form. By this is meant that the advanced English exam has a reputation of being a difficult test which also includes gimmickry and trick questions, along with training for specific exercise forms, such as multiple-choices and fill in the gaps. Now with the new format allowing more variation in the exercise types, the exam would not measure whether students know just an equivalent of a word but rather what kind of general understanding they have on the language.

The teachers of Geography mentioned above also commented digitalization in general. They saw a lot of good in it. For example, they thought that it is possible to examine phenomena in their natural environment, such as with a virtual globe one can 'go on an expedition wherever'. When things taught

in lessons are connected to real life, learning becomes more meaningful as the materials can be used more comprehensively. In addition, group work and distance learning are easier to realize when common platforms for working can be used regardless of location. In the same sense it is understandable that the methods of teaching are also in transformation: when the need to lecture reduces, teachers can shift their focus and concentrate more on advising students. In the future, the interviewed teachers believe that the use of versatile technology in school prepares students better to move on to working life. (Hotokka 2016: 22).

Nonetheless, the interviewed Geography teachers presented other valid perspectives on the digitalization (Hotokka 2016: 22). According to them, the biggest problem in the digitalization is the lack of time. Even though students spend a great deal of their everyday life in the world of games and social media, few of them know to use 'adult programmes' that are needed during courses and in the digital matriculation exams. They remark that the time used for teaching how to use technology is always taken from the subject teaching. This is also in linked to the notion of applying knowledge in the exams. When there is barely enough time to teach the basics of a subject, it is difficult to include application on the matter too – applying knowledge cannot be the starting point. As a conclusion was suggested that teaching should not be expected to transform over a night. It is not only a question of teachers responding to the new National Core Curriculum, but also what kind of a responsibility the students are willing to take on their own learning. In this sense, the transformation of teaching must also happen inside the students' minds.

2.3 ICT and language teaching

In this section, relations between Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and language teaching are surveyed. In addition to an overview on the starting points for ICT, it is explored how digitalization can be useful in learning: how the internet and applications can be used appropriately and innovatively so that they support learning. In this sense, digital learning environments and e-learning are defined, and principles of hybrid learning are examined.

Should one use e.g. 'Digital technology' or 'Information and Communication Technology' when discussing the prevailing and developing areas of technology in our society? According to Evans (2009: 1), in a large sense the former has been more familiar in the United States area whereas the latter in

the United Kingdom. However, the acronym ICT is more widely accepted and used as an abbreviation in education by e.g. policy-makers, teachers and students. Evans namely notes that the label of Digital technology is seen to focus more on the technical medium itself (digital), while ICT refers more to the areas of use by the technology (information and communication). Nevertheless, according to Evans the term ICT provides a 'serviceable … common frame of reference for users', and it is used as the starting point in this section. The Finnish term *tieto- ja viestintäteknologia* (tvt), also found in the National Core Curriculum of Basic Education (Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2014: 23), is a direct linguistic equivalent for ICT.

It often may seem like ICT would be rather recent a phenomenon, even though there is data of it from the past two decades. For example, Goodwyn (2000: 7-8) refers to a study conducted twenty years ago, in which English teachers were surveyed about the place of ICT in the English language especially in relation to students' literacy. In this research, three categories of teachers were detected from the data. The teachers of the 'fearful' category saw computers as alienating and anti-social, something bewildering and threatening. These teachers felt closely attached to pen and paper as well as to books, computers representing an 'opposition'. Some teachers came out as 'unresolved' with much more mixed feelings especially with regard to the uncertainty of the future: they thought that ICT offered considerable potential for their students, but with dangers attached to children probably losing their social skills.

However, just over half the teachers were categorized as 'optimists' who found ICT being empowering and stimulating in this research (Goodwyn 2000: 7-8). These teachers felt that ICT provided generally new communication forms and means of gaining information, in addition to accessing all kinds of texts. They also saw that this broadened the whole concept of literacy and gave masses of opportunities being active learners and meaning makers for all ages. Nevertheless, they did not have false illusions of 'magic solutions' in relation to ICT, while they identified that many of the problems were associated with access to equipment, training of teachers as well as oversimplistic views, held by some people, of computers replacing teachers.

Goodwyn (2000: 9) also lists points about the reasons why implementing computers in education for the first time failed in the United Kingdom during the 1980's. The study mentioned earlier also showed that teachers' experiences with computers were only left to one or two days of training, which was enough to raise their interest but also to confuse them. This meant that they had to return to their work environments without possibilities to look deeper into the matter or further use these skills. Thus, Goodwyn concludes that when the first generation of computers came into schools, this early period served mainly to confirm negative attitudes towards the computer age by the majority of

teachers. Hamilton (2009: 158-159) attests to the same elements from a more recent study: before a certain programme about Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), the interviewed teachers were asked about concerns that deterred or hindered them using technology in the classroom. Both referred to the lack of confidence in technological expertise. This, in turn, was due to the fact that they could neither diagnose nor solve the problem in case of a technical failure. Their fear was to have a classroom full of students without being able to manage the lesson.

In short, even though there might have been, and arguably still be, opposition towards new things, Goodwyn (2000: 6, 9) points out that culture is always 'happening' and therefore every generation experiences and redefines it in their own way. In this light, it is understandable as Goodwyn suggests that the key changes in attitudes in the United Kingdom area were not made in schools but in the work and domestic environments, where the computer became 'normal, ordinary and integrated element'. As a result, most schools were left far behind and teachers without appropriate skills at the time.

From more recent viewpoint, Evans (2009: 2) also notes that the forms of teaching and learning, which depend on digital technology, are particularly prone to effects of change, innovation and transience. This, in turn, might cause some challenges for teachers to time their 'assimilation of technology' effectively into students' learning programmes, before new digital innovations present themselves. However, the situation can be seen as reciprocal. Stockwell (2007: 118, cited in Evans 2009: 2) namely states that 'many pedagogies exist as a result of technology and many technologies exist as a result of pedagogies'.

Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 10) sum up some issues concerning this theme. They note that as the constant changes in the operating environment set growing demands for individual and community learning, the challenges and need for change open up by examining the transitions in the society and working life. According to them, many parallel processes can be found behind these advancements, which include e.g. globalization, changes in economic structure, networking, ageing and immigration. In addition to these, demands for know-how are also in a change. It is clear that when the society is changing socially, technologically and economically, the education must also develop.

2.3.1 Learning in digital environments

The definition for the term *digital devices* in this thesis is used after Palaiologou's summary (2016b: 305, cited in Arnott 2017: 10) as follows:

> The term 'digital devices' is used here as a collective term for all equipment that contains a computer or microcontroller and to which adults and children might have access, a list which now includes toys, games consoles, digital cameras, media players and smartphones as well as handheld, laptop or desktop computers.

Digital learning environments, in turn, are understood based on Govender's (2004, as quoted by Suhonen 2005: 15) definition, in which they are 'technical solutions for supporting learning, teaching and studying activities. Suhonen (2005: 15) continues the discussion of these by stating that because digital learning environments can range from an online study programme to a piece of digital learning material, they are often combinations of different technical solutions.

Tabot, Oyibo and Hamada (2013: 2) discuss early definitions of e-learning. They state that in a broad sense, e-learning can on one hand be simply defined as 'the use of the Internet, intranets or extranets to deliver a broad array of solutions that enhance knowledge and performance'. On the other hand, e-learning can be defined more specifically 'as an innovative approach for delivering electronically mediated, well-designed, learner-centred and interactive learning environments to anyone, anywhere, anytime … by utilizing the Internet and digital technologies in conjunction with instructional design principles'. Tabot et al. also state that the beginning of the Web 2.0 era in the early 21st century has further expanded the e-learning field, for example, by creating more opportunities for the learner, ranging from information sharing to interoperability and from learner-generated content to collaborative learning.

For limitations and drawbacks on e-learning, Tabot et al. (2013: 2) mention the relatively huge costs associated with the procurement and deployment of technology infrastructure as well as the need for standardization due to the lack of e.g. compatibility between existing learning technologies and poor learner motivation, which have previously led to high dropout rates from online programs. However, they also state that the e-learning industry has experienced a phenomenal growth in the last decade as well as giving rise to new paradigms such as e-learning 2.0 and blended learning (BL).

With respect to e-learning 2.0, Tabot et al. (2013: 5-6) discuss that its idea is to harness and utilize each learner's knowledge and experience in the way that everybody could benefit from it. They explain that whereas the traditional e-learning (e-learning 1.0) was a unidirectional teacher-centric

learning paradigm, e-learning 2.0 is a multi-directional learner-centric paradigm that enables both instructors and students to create contents, interact, collaborate and share in a way that heightens the learning experience. To achieve this next level of learning, Tabot et al. suggest the use of tools such as wikis, blogs and social bookmarking, which allow each learner to contribute their knowledge on a specific theme, design problem or subject area, naturally depending on how the learning experience is structured. In short, e-learning 2.0 is not about a technological change but rather a change in *how* the technology is being used and hence it is a social change. E-learning 2.0 is said to foster e.g. active communication and collaboration, rich and diverse contributions of content and comments as well as sustainable information sharing and updates among a community of learners and instructors.

As already mentioned, one paradigm stemming from the e-learning industry is blended learning. Glazer (2012: 1) states that at its simplest, blended learning courses are the ones in which a significant amount of time spent in classroom is replaced with online activities that involve students in meeting online course objectives. Stein and Graham (2014) acknowledge that there is not a single definition of 'blended', but they have a similar starting point like Glazer for blended learning courses, as the authors consider them a combination of onsite (i.e. face-to-face) with online experiences to produce effective, efficient and flexible learning. Simply, Stein and Graham present an example: if a traditional onsite course is on the left side of a spectrum and a fully online course on the right, a blended course would be located 'anywhere between the two'. They state that it depends on the perspective, while they also see that an online course becomes blended as soon as it introduces onsite, face-to-face meetings, and the same is typically true for onsite courses when online activities are designed to replace onsite sessions. Stein and Graham also note that the term 'hybrid' is often used interchangeably with 'blended', but apparently blended is more common.

In their report, Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 11-14; 20-21) discuss aspects of a hybrid learning model for understanding informal and formal learning with digital aspects. They state that as technology and the internet have created 'a competitive and reciprocally depending global economy', these phenomena have also changed almost every aspect of our daily life, e.g. the ways of working and playing, being with friends, family or communities as well as how we learn. In this sense, Kumpulainen and Mikkola write that learning is not limited only to school years or time spent inside classrooms. Instead, it should be seen as lifelong learning: formal schooling should offer versatile and flexible possibilities to learn and study, taking into consideration the ever-changing conditions of working life and society. At the same time, boundaries between formal and informal learning should be lowered to create relevant learning experiences that reflect learners' everyday life and future realities. A challenge is, therefore, to integrate 21st century media and technologies to education

in a meaningful way, so that learners of all ages can be reached, motivated and inspired as well as their learning be supported.

With respect to the hybrid learning model, Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 20-25) state that its meaning is to point out how different learning practices and knowledge resources could be brought meaningfully to mutual interaction so that it would also enhance learning. In hybrid learning, the information and knowing do not limit to teacher, curricula or exterior experts – it includes all participants. Moreover, participation is not tied only into expertise and knowledge, but also to the interests of young people. Thus, the interests of students are recognized, respected and used to enhance co-operation and participation in negotiating meanings and creating knowledge to educational ends. Access to information resources, communication and co-operation, in turn, has been facilitated with inexpensive internet devices, easy tools for producing digital content as well as with the internet itself. Moreover, they have enabled participation to online-learning communities, where the boundaries of e.g. different scientific fields, organizations, countries and cultures can be crossed.

Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 24-25) continue that because technology can present information by combining different media types in a varying way, it can be used to offer versatile learning experiences. This, in turn, makes possible to combine these media and representations to illustrate, explain and examine complex phenomena e.g. by creating interactional visualization in Geography or Chemistry. Technology can also help students to examine phenomena in the form of different space or time spectrums with simulation and modelling tools. In addition, technology can ease the combination of information by interactional tools. These are, for example, interactional mind maps, presentations of information and timelines, which combine visual connections between already learnt knowledge and new ideas. Examples of individual and communal learning forms enabled by digital technology are also games and learning environments that support communal information building, enhanced reality platforms as well as games and effective learning applications for online mobile devices, such as tools for language learning and mathematical games.

However, as discussed above, Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 22) note that students may react negatively to technology and media being used in formal education without meaningful educational and pedagogic agenda. They may namely see superficial use of technology as an attempt of school to 'colonize' their free time environments, so it is not wise to suppose that every youngster's interest, motivation or preference towards schooling would automatically improve only by increasing digital technology and media. It is more central *how* these digital technologies and media can be harnessed to education to support authentic, meaningful and transformative participation and learning.

Moreover, Kuuskorpi (2015: 4-5) writes that successful managing in the future society requires critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and this is also when capacities to use ICT skills is highlighted. It is evident that even though some youngsters may possess wide-ranging technological skills, there are still some others who have insufficient skills. This discussion has the same thematic content as when talking about digital natives being able to use inherently every form of technology with ease. Nevertheless, this is not only a challenge to students but also to teachers, as Kuuskorpi continues: the view of ICT being rather 'a separate supporting device for learning instead of a comprehensive tool' is still strongly held.

The reason why increasing ICT usage in schools has not proceeded with required speed, Kuuskorpi (2015: 4-5) suggests that it is partly explained by teachers' insufficient proficiencies in using ICT. However, when these skills are developed, teachers naturally use more ICT in their teaching, but a possibility to make these kinds of pedagogical choices demands teachers' in-service training on the matter. He concludes that for educational equality to perform, the whole operating culture in schools need to change. The topic about teachers' proficiencies on ICT will be treated more deeply in the chapter about the curricula.

In this sense, education learning possibilities that cross the time and space, which also respond to the needs of the youth and the changing society, demand pedagogic innovation and change, as Kumpulainen and Mikkola (2015: 23) express. For this they suggest that the hybrid learning model responds to the gap between school's internal and external learning, because it ties modern technologies and digital media to connect the information resources of home, school and the community. According to them, the hybrid learning model can also be viewed as a part of a long-term progressive educational tradition, which has emphasized the importance of citizen participation, education being connected to world larger than only school context, functional learning and societal impact (see Dewey 1916). Modern technologies, therefore, offer a possibility to reach for these educational aims with ways in which different functional environments and information resources of learners and practices cross each other. From this perspective, they note that the role and status of school in the digital era needs to be seen as more than only an opposite to the youth culture or 'digital enriching' of the traditional education.

2.4 National Core Curricula

In this section, the National Core Curriculum of Basic Education (NCCBE) and the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (NCCUSS) are discussed in relation to the thesis' topic. However, examples from other subjects than languages are also presented to give a comprehensive view on the matter but in a succinct way.

The new curriculum for compulsory basic education for the age groups from 1 to 6 were implemented in all municipalities and schools beginning from 1 August 2016. For the age groups from 7 to 9, the curriculum is gradually implemented during 2017-2019. The meaning of the NCCBE is to provide a uniform foundation for local curricula, which enhances equality in education throughout the country. The curricula of each municipality and school give guidance in instruction and schoolwork in more detail, while it also takes into consideration local needs and perspectives. (Perusopetuksen opetus-suunnitelman perusteet 2014 n.d.; The new curricula in a nutshell n.d.).

What is somewhat different in the current curriculum of basic education regards the concept of *transversal competences* in the instruction of different subjects. The core idea of these competences lies in the thought of studying, working life and active citizenship requiring a command of different knowledge and skills, as well as capacities in combining these. The aims of transversal competences include thinking and learning-to-learn, interaction and expression skills in addition to multiliteracy, which is, in short, the ability to produce and interpret many kinds of texts. Transversal competences also comprehend aspects such as managing daily life and taking care of oneself. Other aims are cultural competence, interaction and self-expression, ICT competence, working life competence and entrepreneurship as well as participation, involvement and building a sustainable future. These general transversal competence skills are promoted in each subject. (The new curricula in a nutshell n.d.). In other words, each subject builds knowledge by using their own field's contents and methods (POPS 2014: 20), and by this, pupils are equipped with good general and specific skills to get on in life.

With respect to the general upper secondary education, it is the Government that decides on its general national objectives in addition to the allocation of the time used for instruction in different subjects and subject groups as well as for student counselling. The national core curriculum is drawn up by the Finnish National Agency for Education. The most recent National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools came into effect on 1 August 2016, and the local curricula are based on this new national core curriculum. The definitions of the objectives and core contents of the different subjects,

subject groups, thematic subject modules and student counselling are found in the core curriculum. (General upper secondary education n.d.)

The aspects of transversal competences are also strongly present in upper secondary school education. Here, they are called as *wide-ranging cross-curricular themes*. These cross-curricular themes are transversal competence areas that cross the boundaries of individual subjects, and these have been taken into consideration both in the sections on individual subjects and in themes that are in relation to the development of the whole school culture. (Teaching and Learning in General Upper Secondary Education n.d.). Common cross-curricular themes for all upper secondary schools are active citizenship, entrepreneurship and working life; well-being and safety; sustainable living and global responsibility; internationality and knowledge on cultures; multiliteracy skills and media, as well as technology and society. (Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2015: 35).

2.4.1 ICT in National Core Curricula

When delving more deeply into both curricula, it is evident that digital aspects are also strongly present throughout the guidelines. To illustrate the case, it is written in the transversal competence of Information and Communication Technology (POPS 2014: 23) that a good command of ICT is an important citizen skill in itself and also a part of multiliteracy – it is both the target and vehicle of learning. It is crucial that every pupil in basic education has chances to develop their ICT skills, which are systematically used in every subject and grade as well as in other school work. This is linked to the familiarization with different applications and the ways to use them, in addition to learning to notice their meaning in everyday life, e.g. in interaction and as a means of impact. It is also discussed why ICT is needed in studying, work and in the society and how these skills have become a part of general working life expertise. Overall, a couple of other important aspects are considered being pupils' own activity, opportunities to use creativity as well as finding suitable working methods for oneself. In addition, while ICT offers means to make one's own thoughts and ideas visible in many different ways, it is also said to develop thinking and learning skills.

In upper secondary school, regarding learning environments and methods in general (LOPS 2015: 15, 16), students are guided to use digital learning environments, learning materials and tools in

acquiring and evaluating information that are presented in different forms, in addition to producing and sharing new information. Digitalization is seen to offer possibilities in communal learning and creating knowledge as well as using different learning and information environments. Students are also guided to operate in a networking and globalised world. The aim in the cross-curricular theme of technology and society (LOPS 2015: 39), in turn, is to deepen students' understanding of the interactivity between technological and societal development. It is stated in the section that with the help of technology, people build the world based on one's needs, as well as create and search for new solutions. Therefore useful perspectives for developing technology are listed being creativity, problem-solving, appropriateness, functionality as well as sustainable future.

The same section underlines that at the heart of the ICT development are changes in lifestyles, operational environments and the society (LOPS 2015: 39). In this sense, people's relationship to technology should be understood in regard to the extent and meaning of how technology influences lifestyles, societal changes and the environment. This is also linked to the notion that students are trained to make reasonable choices concerning technology both as a citizen and consumer. Issues of entrepreneurship, along with co-operation skills, are practised, which should also lead students to ponder the interaction between technology, economy and politics, as well as how technological alternatives might affect the development of jobs, contents of work and employment situation. The cross-curricular aspirations can be clearly seen in how students are taught to use knowledge obtained from different subjects when assessing various manifestations of technology and when thinking about the effects of technological innovations. More specifically, the same elements mentioned earlier can be found under different subjects' guidelines in a similar form. The following samples are selected from both educational levels to illustrate a general view on the matter.

For example, in the basic education of English for age groups 3-6, pupils are guided to take responsibility over one's own language studying and supported to practise language skills also by using ICT, as well as they are familiarized with the distribution of English on the internet. (POPS 2014: 220). In Ethics of age groups from 1 to 6, the digitalization of children's living environments is taken into consideration in the functional activities (POPS 2014: 140, 255). For the age groups 7-9 in the Finnish language and literature, the interpretation skills of different texts are strengthened by printed, digital and audio-visual media texts (POPS 2014: 291). With respect to the learning goals in Biology for the same age group, it is important to guide students to also use digital learning environments in acquiring, treating, interpreting as well as presenting biological information. (POPS 2014: 381). In Geography, similarly for the same age group, it is said that using games i.e. gamification in teaching would

increase the motivation of learners, in addition to an essential part of teaching being the use of digital learning environments and spatial information. (POPS 2014: 386).

Furthermore, the meaning of technology and digitalization in relation to interaction and well-being are the main topics in a couple of upper secondary English courses. Different future visions, especially from the perspectives of technology and digitalization, are also discussed as well as the status of the English language as an international language of science and technology. (LOPS 2015: 110, 111). In Mathematics, students are trained to use computer softwares as tools to learn and study mathematics in addition to problem-solving. (LOPS 2015: 129). In an advanced Arts course, one aim for students is to search media's connections to e.g. art and cultural heritage by deepening one's ICT and visual communication skills (LOPS 2015: 216).

Even though the aims and grounds of the new curricula are up-to-date and well-thought, not everybody seems to be completely satisfied, at least for the time being. In August 2017, *Opettaja* magazine (Tikkanen 2017b: 26-31) published results of a survey made for teachers of age groups 1-6 about how the new curriculum had worked in its first year. The survey cannot be considered as a fully comprehensive overview on the matter, because there were only 253 respondents and moreover, it was done on Facebook. What it can give is, nevertheless, perspectives from professionals in the field of aspects that could be taken into consideration in the future. Overall the results showed that almost half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the curriculum, a third was neutral and nearly a fifth was content or quite content. Most of the dissatisfaction was caused by the level of orientation in relation to the curriculum.

Many of the respondents thought that the new curriculum was worked well together in advance, but the support apparently reduced in the implementation stage. Orientation training was also felt not being offered enough, and when it was offered, the content was seen too abstract and repeating self-evident truths. The trainings, in turn, seemed to focus on evaluation and IT, whereas applying new ideas to one's own subject teaching was not practised. One significant observation from the responses was the fact that the new curriculum had increased teachers' working hours. A couple of reasons mentioned for this were e.g. the time spent on 'agonizing dysfunctional digital technology' or insufficiency of the collaborative planning time, which is directed to be used for the kind of co-operation and school development between teachers that is considered locally important and necessary. (Tikkanen 2017b: 26-31; KIKY, YS, Vesot 2017: 10, a shortened source headline).

The most significant reason for the increase in working hours was, nevertheless, reported being the number of evaluation conversations, along with their preparations and registrations. With the new

curriculum, there are more different kinds of evaluation, for example, peer evaluation, teacher's constant evaluation, formative evaluation, learning conversations and school year evaluation. While it is profitable to have many kinds of evaluation methods – the more versatile data, the more comprehensive overall assessment – the dissatisfaction of teachers was apparently related to the instructions on carrying out the evaluations. This statement, however, somewhat contradicts the comment regarding the orientation trainings, which were said to have focused on evaluation in addition to IT. As the type of discussed evaluation is not specified more profoundly, it is hard to have a comprehensive conclusion on the matter. Nonetheless, the article sums up that the evaluations have supposedly not been benefitting their original aim the best, and consequently the growth in working hours has been one factor in increasing teachers' mental fatigue and desperation. (Tikkanen 2017b: 26-31).

However, the heavier workload was reported not being only on the curriculum's account, but also on larger group sizes and reduced staff, which have been causes of educational retrenchments. On a positive note, the changes in the curriculum were also complimented, for example by how pupils now set their own gradual aims and evaluate how well they meet them. It was mentioned that when giving pupils freedom and responsibility, their motivation grows. Yet, there are two sides of a coin. It was reported that while some pupils seem to benefit from this kind of independent working method, some are apparently in danger of falling behind more than previously. A comment on this concerned the notion that digitalization and coding 'should always be increased', even when pupils could not properly read or write. Nevertheless, a couple of teachers also mentioned that the enlightenments on the curriculum's guiding principles have made their daily work more meaningful in addition to giving confidence in their work: they noticed that they had already followed some principles of the new curriculum even before the proper formalization. (Tikkanen 2017b: 26-31).

3 CHALLENGES AND PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE TEACHING

This chapter examines pedagogical approaches of multiliteracy, authenticity and task-based learning and teaching with the focus on how they are used in language teaching. The central focus is on their digital aspects.

3.1 Multiliteracy

In the Finnish educational context, the new curriculum of the basic education (POPS 2014: 22) states that regarding the transversal competences, multiliteracy means the skills to produce and interpret different kinds of texts, which also helps students to understand diverse means of cultural communications in addition to building their own identities. Multiliteracy is based on a wide interpretation of the concept of 'text', which means that knowledge is expressed via verbal, visual, auditory, numeric and kinaesthetic symbolic systems or with a combination of these aspects. With respect to the form, these texts can be interpreted and produced in e.g. written, spoken, printed, audio-visual or digital format.

As nowadays English is not considered as a special skill *per se* but as a basic requirement, the competence in multiliteracy is also on the way of becoming a basic skill. Over 20 years ago, a few scholars in the fields of language, teaching and literacy, known as the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 3-5), discussed what should be done in literacy pedagogy in a rapidly changing near future. They encapsulated the outcome of their discussions in one word, 'multiliteracies', which means 'many literacies'. The authors chose this word because, in their opinion, it expressed two important arguments about the emerging cultural, institutional and global order. These arguments on behalf of the term were that it engaged with the multiplicity of communications channels and media, as well as with the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity.

What is more, according to the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 5), the need for the notion of multiliteracies stemmed from the fact that what might be termed as 'mere literacy' centres only on language and usually in a singular national form of language. Multiliteracies, instead, place a focus on representational modes that are much broader than language alone, which also vary between different cultures and contexts as well as have specific cognitive, cultural and social effects.

For example, in an Aboriginal community's cultural context, the visual mode of representation can be considered as more powerful and closely related to language than only traditional sense of literacy would allow.

Drawing on the ideas of the New London Group, Provenzo, Goodwin, Lipsky and Sharpe (2011: xx) also chose the term 'multiliteracies' to reflect the diversity of literacy after pondering it between e.g. 'alternative literacies'. In addition, they have quite a similar definition which constitutes multiliteracy as the New London Group: while literacy is traditionally understood regarding mainly reading and writing, multiliteracies go beyond the traditional textual models and focus on other representations than only language. These different modes of representations vary with respect to culture and context, and they also have specific cognitive, cultural and social effects.

However, Provenzo et al. (2011: xxi) state that their meaning is not to downgrade reading and writing as significant parts of human communication and literacy: they rather believe that limiting literacy to only concern these two modes does not represent the reality of human experience. In their opinion, excluding multiliteracy from the notion of literacy would limit the ability to understand what human literacy is, because it manifests itself in daily social, political and cultural systems. Provenzo et al. conclude that the elements of multiliteracies are a complex phenomenon: they can be old or new, or they can vary significantly across the cultures. For example, symbols that convey emotions (emoticons) can be viewed as a continuum of an earlier form, hieroglyphics, in addition to the fact that while the number 666 refers to the 'Mark of the Beast' with a negative connotation in western culture, it implies the idea of good luck in Chinese culture.

In the educational context, the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 5-6) summed up two arguments that were centrally transforming the substance and pedagogy of literacy teaching. The first argument related to the increasing multiplicity and integration of significant modes of meaning-making, where textual modes were also linked to e.g. visual and auditory elements, which are especially important in mass media and multimedia still today. Because in this case written-linguistic modes of meaning are essential components of visual, audio and spatial patterns of meaning, people make meanings in ways that are increasingly multimodal. In other words, as new communications media were already reshaping the way language was used at the time, and also when technologies of meaning were changing rapidly, one set of standard skills that constituted the aims of literacy meaning was not enough even then.

The second argument, in turn, concerned the realities of local diversity and global connectedness. The New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 6) examined the matter especially from the

perspective of English and illustrated the case with examples that are arguably rather familiar to anyone who has worked with English or languages for the past ten to twenty years. The following points presented in a summarised way can be examined in further detail, for example, in Graddol's (2006) work *English Next*. Nonetheless, the New London Group suggested that as a result of increasing global elements in e.g. local communities and working life, English, a lingua mundi and a lingua franca, was also breaking into differentiated 'Englishes' that are marked by accent, national origin, subcultural or professional communities.

To illustrate the case, the New London Group (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 6) stated that migration, multiculturalism and global economic integration had made sure in their part that a knowledge of a single and standard version of English was not enough in this metaphorically reducing world. The globalization of communications and labour markets had also made dealing with linguistic and cultural differences more crucial than before, even at a local level. Consequently, effective citizenship and productive working life required already at that time using multiple languages and Englishes in addition to communication patterns that crossed cultural, community and national boundaries. Furthermore, subcultural diversity extended specialist registers and situational variations in language (e.g. technical or the ones relating to groupings of interest and affiliation).

Thus in addition to gradual changes in the nature of language learning, it was natural to expect the same in the pedagogy of literacy teaching. As the old pedagogies of a formal, written national language no longer held the highest prestige and utility, the New London Group's (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 6-7) multiliteracies view suggested a change of focus. They stated that in this globalising world it was, and still is, more necessary to have an open-ended and flexible, functional grammar that would help language learners to describe differences in languages, such as (sub-)cultural, regional, national, technical or context-specific, as well as the multimodal channels of meaning that are still important to communication. The scholars also noted that when addressing these issues, literacy educators and students should also see themselves as active participants in social change: they are active designers i.e. makers of social future as learners and students.

According to Provenzo et al. (2011: xxiv-xxv), multiliteracies are also relevant in the field of education in the sense that they represent means which can help learners to be culturally and politically empowered. Through these literacies, other perspectives can be introduced as well as have more means to express oneself and interpret the world around us. Multiliteracies can therefore enhance traditional literacy forms, because they provide a richer environment in which text and writing can be situated. In this way, authenticity of traditional reading and writing can be enhanced. Provenzo et al. illustrate the case by stating that when students use instant messaging with e.g. emoticons in textual

communication, it leads to a paradoxical situation that they become seemingly less literate in traditional models of literacy, while in fact they are building these traditional skills. In other words, they are reading and writing through the use of multiliteracies.

3.1.1 Multiliteracy in the Finnish educational context

In the educational context, it is evident that teachers have a great responsibility in being sensitive to these kinds of multiform literacies. As already mentioned about the newest curriculum of basic education in Finland (POPS 2014: 22), multiliteracy skills have a contributing role in understanding the variety of ways how cultural communication appears: pupils need these skills for being able to interpret the world around them and to perceive its cultural diversity. As multiliteracy means in further detail the skills to acquire, combine, shape, produce, present and evaluate knowledge in different forms, contexts and situations with different kinds of tools, it also supports the development of critical thinking and learning skills. However, these aspects are in vain unless they can be deliberatively trained. The curriculum namely states that pupils must have opportunities to practice their skills in traditional and multimedia environments that use technology multiple ways.

ICT skills are also another essential part of multiliteracy according to the curriculum of basic education (POPS 2014: 23), while they are both the aim and medium of learning. Therefore every age group of basic education systematically trains ICT skills in different subjects and in other school work. These skills include familiarization with different applications and purposes for using them, in addition to noticing their meaning in everyday life, in the interaction and as a means of impact. A noteworthy aspect stated in the curriculum is that it should be pondered together *why* ICT is needed in studying, working and in the society, as well as how these skills have become a part of general work requirements. A relevant emphasis in the curriculum is also placed on how ICT stands in relation to sustainable consumption and international interaction with its possibilities and risks in a global world.

Similar principles can also be seen in the upper secondary school curriculum (LOPS 2015: 34-35). It is stated in the curriculum that upper secondary school teaching generally aims at enhancing students' multiliteracy skills so that they can understand characteristic language in the fields of science and art, in addition to producing and interpreting different kinds of texts. In the same way, students also get

accustomed in evaluating trustworthiness of knowledge, which is admittedly important, for example, on the internet. However, while multiliteracy is present in the contents of every upper secondary school subject, it is also emphasized more specifically in one of the *wide-ranging cross-curricular themes* that are 'societally significant educational and schooling challenges', which also take stands on current values.

The cross-curricular theme of *Multiliteracy and Media* (LOPS 2015: 38-39) aims to deepen students' knowledge of multiliteracy and media. Their central position and significance are surveyed in relation to culture and personal growth as a human being. In the upper secondary curriculum, multiliteracy is also stated being the skills to interpret, produce and evaluate texts in different forms and contexts, which is understandable, because the two mentioned educational levels form a certain continuum in their contents. Moreover, this theme similarly supports the development of thinking and learning skills in addition to deepening critical literacy and language awareness.

As generally the aspects presented in curricula can be somewhat abstract and general from time to time, Luukka (2013) approaches the topics from a layperson's view in the Finnish basic education context. Discussing the connection between ICT and multiliteracy, she states that ICT skills cannot be thought as a separate technical skill. Instead, they should rather be seen as offering a new kind of an environment where people work with the help of texts and language. With respect to multiliteracy, she notes that in addition to its meaning of interpretation and production of different texts, it means skills to work with texts in different situations and for different purposes.

Luukka (2013) continues that the Finnish version of the term multiliteracy, *monilukutaito* (it could be unofficially translated as 'multiform reading skills' to illustrate the aspects this word encompasses in the Finnish language), may not be the best term to describe this transversal competence, because 'reading skills' mainly brings to mind only the other side of the coin, which is reading and interpreting texts. According to her, the production aspect is often neglected when first thinking about the Finnish word, even though its core idea is to examine interpretation and production as different elements of the same skill. In addition to this, the 'skills' part (*taito*) should not be perceived only as an individual and cognitive skill, which is readily transferred from situation to another as it is, or something that can be learnt comprehensively during school years. Instead, it is more about readiness to use practices that are connected with contextual and culture-specific ways of operating with different types of texts. Luukka points out that these practices are communal by nature, to which are also socialized when functioning in a community. For example, literacy should not be viewed as a single and common skill, because people have many kinds of literacies for different purposes and situations. Growing

multiliterate lasts for a whole lifetime, and improvements in this skill manifest themselves in how people can produce and interpret increasingly more texts with appropriate ways.

In this light, Luukka (2013) states that it is understandable that the term *monilukutaito* raises feelings of vagueness. Thus, there have been advocates for extending the meaning of the term 'multi' towards four different aspects: modality, mediality, contextuality and culturality. With respect to *multimodality*, it means that a multiliterate person can work appropriately with texts that use different forms of expressions. When 'text' is given a wide interpretation, these forms can be e.g. road signs, maps, music videos or mathematical proofs in addition to a textual form such as a novel. In this case, the form or the size do not matter, because the most important element of the text is how it creates meanings. According to Luukka, multimodality brings out the fact that there are many different forms of expression to convey meanings via texts. Language is one of them, but not the only one. Therefore a multiliterate person can interpret language, symbols, numbers, graphic representations of data, pictures, moving picture and texts that use voice as well as to independently produce meanings with the help of them.

In a traditional view, the word 'media' is understood in terms of the mass media. However, Luukka (2013) points out that *multimediality* is interpreted more widely as a device, with which texts are produced, and as an environment, in which they are situated. Thus, it is noteworthy via which media the texts have been produced or in what kind of environments they are used when producing and interpreting texts. Consequently, a multiliterate is able to use different media, understand how they function and can take these two into account when interpreting and producing texts. For example, mediums set some preconditions: a printed school textbook cannot have voice or moving pictures and usually its texts are read from left to right, from top to bottom in a linear way, whereas online texts provide more alternatives for both the producers and readers.

With respect to the *multicontextuality*, Luukka (2013) states that a multiliterate person understands the effect of context in relation to reading and writing practices, and is also able choose an appropriate way of working in them. By this is meant that these practices can vary greatly in different situations and purposes. For example, searching information in the brainstorming stage demands different kinds of practices than producing a text, in which different viewpoints are compared and analysed based on a background material. These practices differ from each other because they have different goals, as it is the case with reading and writing for school work and during free time. *Multiculturality*, in turn, covers culture in a wide perspective. In this case, culture is not only understood in the sense of national or linguistic aspects, but also in terms of different fields of knowledge i.e. school subjects. This simply means that each field has their own culturally shaped customs to produce and interpret texts,

for example, the ways how language is used in describing matters or defining concepts in Physics class differ fundamentally from those in History class. These differences are something that a multiliterate is able to take into account in reading and writing texts.

Harmanen (2013) approaches the elements of multiliteracy from the viewpoint of language awareness (*kielitietoisuus*) which is gradually becoming the norm in the educational context. Language awareness can be seen as having many different layers and it cannot be separated from school work, but with respect to this thesis, the most relevant description for the term is in Harmanen's (2013: 1) summary on the matter. She states that at a deeper level in education, language awareness is not only grammatical correctness, but rather a wider consciousness and knowledge of that every subject has its own ways of using language and presenting subject-specific matters. In this sense, it is possible to recognize each subject's characteristic discourses and practices when their ways of using language can be examined in relation to one another.

Language awareness is needed according to Harmanen (2013: 1), because even though pupils would perceive the characteristics of different subjects, their skills are not flexibly or creatively transferrable between the subjects or contexts. Harmanen illustrates the case with a simple example from school context: while teachers in e.g. Geography and History wonder why their pupils do not know how to write with complete sentences or country names with capital letters, teachers in the native language (i.e. Finnish) may have much more positive views on the same pupils' orthography skills. In the former classes, the pupils had shortly argued that they are not in a Finnish class, which indicates that there would apparently be no need for correct spelling beside the subject-specific knowledge, whereas in the latter case the pupils invest in grammaticality, because it inherently belongs to the subject's contents. In this way, they are used to showing their skills in the standard language. This is at the centre of the need for language awareness – to make these connections between subjects visible for both teachers and pupils.

It is evident that the aspects mentioned above are parallel to what Luukka (2013) pointed out in her article of multiliteracy. Indeed, language awareness and multiliteracy go neatly hand in hand. As Harmanen (2013: 1-2) states, a common slogan in the Finnish educational context has been 'every teacher is a language teacher', meaning that all teachers pass on language practices alongside their subject contents. However, according to her the slogan should be updated as 'every teacher is the teacher of one's own subject specific language and genres – or a teacher of multiliteracy'. By this she means that a language aware teacher is conscious about different fields of knowledge having their own characteristic ways of using language in addition to presenting and creating reality. The more aware teachers are about their own subjects' linguistic representations, the easier it is for them to

instruct their pupils to study. In other words, Harmanen explains that teachers in a way teach pupils to 'read carefully' subject related texts by helping their pupils to notice how things are presented in texts. At the same time, they learn how to produce texts that relate to the contents of a subject.

In the light of Luukka and Harmanens' articles, it is easy to agree with them especially in that raising consciousness of multicontextuality and multiculturality would enhance the overall understanding of students both linguistically and in a subject-specific way. In other words, raising language awareness would not only help to learn languages more easily but also other subjects, as the language awareness assists to understand the principles of a subject more comprehensively. However, Luukka (2013) states that although the educational system is not completely responsible for raising pupils and students multiliterate – they also learn these skills independently during their free time – it is undeniable that they still need concrete help in interpreting and producing texts. Not everybody has a chance to familiarize themselves with multiform and versatile texts outside school contexts, and even though they did, familiarization may remain insufficient if the learners do not have enough skills to process them on their own.

Ropo, Sormunen and Heinström (2015: 9) have also a view on the matter: the reasons why the world may seem more complicated during the internet and globalization era can arguably lie in the aspects of accessibility. When everything is available, reachable and approachable, a new set of readiness is needed to understand and approach the world as an entity. They state that although information is more accessible than ever before, it is not significantly any easier to e.g. have a general understanding on matters or understand basic theories than it was before the Information Society. The rapid increase in the amount of information itself as well as contradictory information, in addition to perceiving personal approaches or problem-solving, are still challenging for growing youngsters. Thus, the writers conclude that the aims and contents of education must be redefined in the Information Society: particularly central are the skills to find and evaluate the relevance, ethicality and validity of information.

3.2 Authenticity

This section explores the aspects of authenticity especially in the educational context, such as views presented for its overall definition or for an authentic context. Authenticity is also discussed in relation to teaching materials and e-learning.

Mishan (2005: 10-19) discusses the definition of authenticity from the viewpoint of language teaching context. She states that there has not been a clear consensus about the matter: the debate has a divisive nature and the arguments surrounding it are inconclusive. The notion of authentic language or interaction is not, therefore, straightforward and it is challenging to define what e.g. authentic language is in teaching materials or in classroom interaction.

However, in a pursuit of a definition, Mishan (2005: 11-15, xiii) has divided the discussion into two sub-categories: **authenticity of texts** and **authenticity of language use**. She defines the term *text*, in turn, as 'paper-based or electronic (audio or visual) data which can be graphic, audio or print form and include video, DVD, television, computer-generated or recorded data'. For the authenticity of texts, the definitions seem to have emphasized the communicativeness. The viewpoints, however, may have altered from each other almost completely, which relates to the indecision around the definitions. For example, on one hand authentic texts in foreign language classroom have been defined to have a primary intent of communicating meaning, whether it be native speakers conveying meaning to other native speakers, or on another hand a text has been deemed not being authentic if it is written for pedagogical purposes.

With respect to the authenticity of language use, Mishan (2005: 15-16) states that authenticity has not been considered as a property of materials or lesson plans only, but it has also been regarded as a goal that teachers and students should strive for. In this regard, it is more important what is done with the text rather than had it occurred in a real environment. This has led, according to Mishan, associating authenticity more with the notion of tasks and less with the used texts, because it was not guaranteed that using authentic materials would make the tasks authentic – it matters more what students do with them. In other words, it is learners' interactions within the task that count. In a similar sense, the viewpoints on contexts have shifted to include pedagogical environments also as authentic. On behalf of the shift, Mishan describes it has been argued that classrooms have their own naturalness of a reality as well as that the learners create their own authenticity there in the same way as everywhere else.

What is more, Mishan (2005: ix, 1) writes that the union of authenticity-centred approach deploying the pedagogical model of task-based learning (which is discussed in section 3.3) is successful in the sense that both of them derive from the 'real world'. In this way, the notion of task in pedagogy broadens its repertoire to encompass personal, divergent as well as more practical tasks. Furthermore, both task-based learning and authenticity approach have roots in the Communicative Language Learning (CLT): while CLT emphasized communication over form, it also rejected previous strict structural approaches to language learning and gave space to authentic texts, which had been created for genuine communicative purposes.

Van Compernolle and McGregor (2016), in turn, define that 'authentic language entails patterns of language and meaning that are recognizable within and across communities of speakers and that are appropriated as one's own'. They continue that this perspective recognizes language users having ownership over their language and the linguistic choices they make, but at the same time, any speaker's linguistic practices can only be meaningful to the extent that they are interpretable by one's interlocutors. Language users therefore have agency, but it is socioculturally mediated and in this way it is also constrained by historical, contextual and material circumstances, including what counts as a recognizable (or acceptable, appropriate, correct etc.) pattern of language.

As van Compernolle and McGregor (2016) further express, this perspective on authenticity poses challenges for language learning and teaching scholarship as well as practice. They state that although contextually sensitive language use in authentic contexts has been emphasized in communicative language teaching approaches since the 1970's, language learning materials still tend to follow a structural syllabus. This means, according to them, that if communicative tasks are included in teaching, grammatical forms and their perceived correct sequencing typically determine the content of such materials. With this they argue that we have arrived at a 'scaled-down universalism'. In this sense, the notion of what constitutes real language in communicative language teaching approaches, and who speaks this real authentic language, would have been simplified and flattened as of an idealized version of the L2, a version that would often ignore geographic, social and stylistic variation in communicative practices.

Nevertheless, the debate on the context seems to be one of the most problematic and recurring issue in terms of authenticity. Mishan (2005: 13-14) explains that at one point, authentic texts were defined as texts that were used by native speakers in culturally authentic contexts. Some adherents of this view namely saw that if the texts were altered in some way, for example by changing its presentation or layout, it meant 'de-authentication' of the text. From teachers' perspective, it is understandable that they have to make assumptions on each teaching groups' skills and possibly adjust the used

material to meet the level of students on average. In this sense, it could be argued that if a slight alteration of the source text would mean de-authentication, not even the digital matriculation examination of English would meet its requirements of 'increasing authenticity' (YTL, Vieraiden kielten ja toisen kotimaisen kielen sähköinen koe n.d.: 1), because the source material from actual websites and newspapers can also be edited in the reading comprehension part (Sorvali 2017). Thus, a very strict view on authentic texts may not be the most fruitful starting point for learning.

Mishan (2005: x-xi) also discusses that the authenticity 'explosion' may partially be a consequence of the symbiotic relationship of sociological and pedagogical movements. The former is in relation to the revolution of Information and Communications Technology, which has granted an access to versatile authentic texts in many world languages. The latter, in turn, is in relation to the shift away from the teacher-oriented style towards self-direction in learning, which transfers the responsibility of learning more to the learner. Treating the same theme, van Compernolle and McGregor (2016) explain that the notion on authenticity has, indeed, been a central construct in the field of applied linguistics and second language research since the early 1980's. In a broad sense, they state that discussions of authenticity have normally centred how language use aligns with native speakers' lexicogrammatical conventions, in addition to sociolinguistic and pragmatic practices of the language that learners are studying. This, according to them, is in contrast to perceived 'less-than-authentic representation of the language in pedagogical materials and classroom discourse'.

Van Compernolle and McGregor (2016) also conclude that authenticity is not some kind of a state which can be achieved once and for all, but rather it is a non-telic process (see Bucholtz 2003), which is achieved between people from moment to moment. As a consequence, van Compernolle and McGregor state that authentic speakers would not exist as such, but they are authenticated by themselves and by others in their communicative practices: speakers collaboratively manage talk-in-interaction, and therefore interpret and make judgements about their interlocutors' utterances. Speakers' interpretations and judgements necessarily inform their own language choices in interaction. In this way, individuals orient to particular sets of features (i.e. recognizable patterns of language and meaning) that are representatives of particular identities when aligning with, or rejecting, particular ways of being.

All in all, Mishan (2005: 18-19) created the following set of 'criteria for authenticity'. In this way, authenticity is a factor of e.g. the:

- Provenance and authorship of the text
- Original communicative and socio-cultural purpose of the text

- Original context (e.g. its source and socio-cultural context) of the text
- Learning activity (engendered by the text)

3.2.1 Authenticity in relation to materials and e-learning

According to Mishan (2005: 21, 44-45), the rationale for using authentic materials in language learning can be summarized to one single point: it enhances language acquisition. Nevertheless, one of her pedagogical arguments of using authentic texts in language learning is encapsulated as "the 3 c's" which are **culture**, **currency and challenge**. Simply put, *culture* in authentic texts integrates and represents possible cultures of speakers of the target language. By this Mishan means that all linguistic products of a culture (e.g. newspaper headlines or food labels) represent that culture within which they are produced, and that is why separating culture from a language or the other way round is hard if not impossible. Moreover, neglecting cultural elements or even neutralizing them would mean presenting only a partial picture of the language, which can inhibit language learning, because it does not offer material for creating schemata of the target language culture. In other words, one language does not mean one culture in the context of English as with other global languages.

With respect to *currency*, Mishan (2005: 44-45) means topicality that authentic texts can offer in both subject matter and language, which is harder for English Language Teaching (ELT) coursebooks as genre, because of their limitations of a medium. *Challenge*, in turn, refers to the element of difficulty related to authentic texts that is often seen as an obstacle. However, Mishan suggests that difficulty could be rather considered as an advantage: while challenge can act as a positive motivator in learning, difficulty may not be a factor of a used text *per se* but instead relating to the task set. In other words, as suitable authentic texts are nowadays easier to find for all levels of proficiency, difficulty has more to do with assignments and instructions.

Mitchell (2009: 32-33) also argues aspects of this perspective, in which the use of authentic materials in foreign language classrooms had often been viewed as challenging. He notes that the difficulty in materials produced by native speakers of the language has related to the used lexis and structures. The materials might have been far beyond learners' level or, on the other hand, the subject matter could have referred to something that the learners had not encountered or had only little knowledge about. In the past, it is understandable that the lack of access in contemporary material had limited the supply significantly. Now in the internet era such a problem seems history, as he states: there is a

vast availability of original and authentic texts, audio and video files to offer instant contact and stimulus to language learners. Drawing on these ideas, it could be suggested that the challenge is now in selecting appropriate material rather than finding it.

In this light, Mitchell (2009: 33, 59) also discusses that the focus should be shifted: authentic materials do not transform foreign language class rooms on their own, because in addition to the appropriate choice of material, it is also as crucial *how* the material is being used. The pressures of time may often steer teachers to use the criteria of the exam system in assessment, as Mitchell notes, in which it is vital to prove the comprehension (in reading and listening) very precisely. While this admittedly has had, and still has, its place in language learning, it is not the whole truth anymore. Mitchell points out that it is also as important to develop learners' confidence when they face unpredictable challenges in authenticity and their awareness of the cultures where the language in question is the main means of communication and use. With respect to this, the writer addresses relevant questions on authenticity: how to become a successful reader and listener regardless of the source material? How to scan a text most efficiently and extract specific information? And how to develop personal language from authentic source material rather than from the teacher? It could be suggested that these questions are also useful to keep in mind when students are familiarised with the principles of the digital matriculation examination of English and other languages.

Herrington, Reeves and Oliver (2010: 14) discuss authenticity from the perspective of e-learning. Even though they examine the topic mainly from the viewpoint of higher education, arguably the elements are applicable to lower levels of education as well. They suggest that learning can be authentic without using any e-elements, however, it is nowadays almost a rule rather than an exception that 'authentic learning endeavours' in higher education use computers and the internet. Thus they state that authentic learning at its best includes computer-based and participatory tools. Furthermore, technologies that are associated with e-learning match together neatly, according to them, with blended and fully online courses.

However, Herrington, Reeves and Oliver (2010: 18-19) note that providing suitable examples from real-world situations to illustrate the concept or issue being taught is not enough when designing e-learning courses with authentic contexts. By this they mean that the context should be 'all-embracing' and providing the purpose and motivation for learning in addition to an explorable learning environment that is also sustained and complex. They also observe that the framework of authentic learning should include i.a. the following elements: authentic tasks and authentic contexts that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real life, multiple roles and perspectives as well as collaborative construction of knowledge. In this sense, Herrington, Reeves and Oliver present a couple of points that

a teacher should consider before beginning to plan for an authentic context. These include e.g. pondering what knowledge, skills and attitudes students will ideally have after completing the course in addition to where and how students would apply that knowledge in real life, as well as what context might be possible and appropriate in an e-learning course so that students would get the most of it.

As a conclusion, Mishan (2005: 18-19) states that it is ICT, above all, which has raised the profile of authenticity. With the access to the technology, learners can be connected to an electronic 'real life' context with a tap of a keyboard. However, she also notes that the internet context in relation to authenticity is peculiar in the sense that in there, the role of the user is a bit different: in addition to reading or assimilating to a text, the user also creates it by collecting and sifting the information from various Web links.

3.3 Principles of Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning

In this section, the principles of Task-Based Language Teaching and Learning will be discussed.

According to Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223), Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) is an educational approach, in which the core unit of planning and instruction in language teaching is the use of tasks. Willis (1996: 1), a strong proponent and pioneer of Task-Based Language Learning (TBL), summarised that TBL 'combines the best insights from communicative language learning with an organised focus on language form', in which the aim of a task is to create an actual purpose for language use and a natural context to study it. Drawing on the work of Willis, this view is also supported by Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223), because some of TBLT's principles have visibly stemmed from the communicative language movement from the 1980's; for example, the similarities can be seen in that it is essential for language learning activities to involve *real communication* and in which language is the medium for carrying out *meaningful tasks* that promote learning. Furthermore, another important aspect for the learning process is the language that learners find meaningful.

For applying these above-mentioned principles in the past, Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223) state that the tasks were suggested being useful vehicles. After a couple of early initiatives within a communicative framework during 1970's and 1980's, task-based learning received further support among those researchers who were interested in developing pedagogical applications in the field of second

language acquisition (SLA) theory. The SLA research has indeed focused on the strategies and cognitive processes employed by second language learners, which also led to a suggestion of reassessing the role of formal grammar instructions in language teaching. From this perspective, Richards and Rodgers present a common argument that there has been no evidence in the grammar-focused teaching activities, found in many classrooms, reflecting the cognitive processes employed in naturalistic learning situations outside classroom. They support this by presenting another common view, in which engaging learners in task work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities. This, in turn, would ultimately provide better opportunities for language learning to take place.

In this light, it is easy to agree with Richards and Rodgers (2001: 223-224) that it is as important to immerse students with comprehensible input as it is to encourage them in tasks that require negotiation of meaning as well as to engage in naturalistic and meaningful communication. More comprehensibly, the key assumptions of task-based instruction (Feez, 1996, cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 224) are summarized as:

- The focus in on process rather than product.

- Basic elements are purposeful activities and tasks that emphasize communication and meaning.

- Learners learn language by interacting communicatively and purposefully while engaged in the activities and tasks.

- Activities and tasks can be either:
  those that learners might need to achieve in real life;
  those that have a pedagogical purpose specific to the classroom.

- Activities and tasks of a task-based syllabus are sequenced according to difficulty.

- The difficulty of a task depends on a range of factors including the previous experience of the learner, the complexity of the task, the language required to undertake the task, and the degree of support available.

As Richards and Rodgers (2001: 224) have pointed out, the notion of task is a central unit of planning and teaching in TBLT. They note that although definitions of a task may vary, there is a reasonable understanding that a task is an activity or a goal which is carried out through language use, such as in finding a solution to a puzzle, reading a map and giving directions, making a telephone call, writing a letter, reading a set of instructions or assembling a toy. In other words, Skehan (1996b: 20, cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 224) has defined that tasks are activities which have 'meaning as their

primary focus'. In this sense he has noted that when tasks generally bear resemblance to real-life language use, success in them is evaluated in terms of achievement of an outcome. Thus, there is a fairly strong view of communicative language teaching in task-based instruction.

Another definition of a communicative task offered by Nunan (1989: 10, cited in Richards and Rodgers 2001: 224), has a focus on being a classroom work, which involves learners to comprehend, manipulate, produce or interact in the target language, while at the same time their attention is primarily centred on the meaning rather than on the form. In addition, the tasks should also have 'a sense of completeness', i.e. being able to stand alone as a communicative act. As can be observed, different definitions on the task are in line with each other, but they somewhat extend its aspects.

With respect to the context, Willis (1996: 1) states comprehensively that TBL can be applied in any target language, whether it be second (SL) or foreign language (FL). Shehadeh and Coombe (2012: XI), in turn, shed some more light on the context, in which TBLT can appear. They observe that the theoretical framework underpinning the rationale behind task-based language teaching has emphasized second language and foreign language learning having a lot in common. For example, both emphasize social interaction embedded in holistic, goal-directed activities in addition to the importance of comprehensible and varying input, speaking opportunities, feedback and focus on form. On this level, the similarities are visible.

The situation may not be, however, as straightforward as could seem in the case of SL and FL *teaching* through tasks: Shehadeh and Coombe (2012: XI-XII) continue that there are a couple of quintessential perspectives of how SL and FL teaching might differ. As discussed in the previous chapter, foreign language teachers may have had harder times introducing relevant authentic material and pointing out usefulness of tasks, which would also have motivated their learners to use target language both inside the classroom and in the outside world. Nevertheless, this has not been the only challenge: as language is usually taught as a subject in an FL class, it may have resulted in a view which emphasizes language being rather the object of study than a useful means of functional communication. Unfortunately according to Shehadeh and Coombe, this view is still held by both teachers and students, which may further result in FL teachers' sticking to the use of traditional, grammar-based methods.

In the modern Finnish educational context, English is mostly taught as a foreign language. Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 16-21) state that English has a relevantly long history as a subject in Finland beginning from the early 20th century, and its meaning has gradually grown in the Finnish society. Reasons for this growth are, for example, modernization of the society, internationalization, global

changes in commerce and business life, effective language training as well as new communication channels and forums offered by ICT. Anglo-American popular culture (tv and movies with subtitles) has also been one significant factor. For these reasons, the state of English in language training has been strong, and Finnish people generally have a good command of it.

Although Finland is a bilingual country (Finnish and Swedish), Leppänen and Nikula (2008: 20-21) note that it is still relevantly homogenic a country. By this they mean that there has not been a need for the development of a mutual lingua franca in Finland, as it is the case e.g. in the multilingual and -cultural communities of India, because people have been able to manage with only one language in every life area. So instead of developing a characteristic variety, like Indian English, the amount and meaning of English has gradually increased in different contexts in the Finnish society, such as in working life or academic world. The change in the state of English is, therefore, one feature of the Finnish society becoming inherently more multilingual instead of e.g. a sudden growth in English-speaking immigrants.

3.3.1 TBL(T) in the language classroom

Willis (1996: 23-24) writes that for a course designer or a teacher, one important job is to 'select topics and tasks that will motivate learners, engage their attention, present a suitable degree of intellectual and linguistic challenge and promote their language development as efficiently as possible'. Most probably every language teacher can agree with this, but what does it have to do specifically with task-based language learning? According to Willis, it is the aspect of goal-orientation, as was already mentioned in the previous section. In other words, TBL is a motivating procedure in the classroom, because tasks have an outcome and when they are achieved, learners are using language in a meaningful way. The emphasis of tasks is, therefore, in understanding and conveying meanings to complete them successfully.

To illustrate the case, Willis (1996: 24) gives a simple example. An activity that lacks the outcome aspect could be showing students a picture, of which they have to write four sentences and tell them to their partner. According to her, this would only be a practice of language form without a communicative aspect, whereas with a small shift of focus, the task could be improved: after a short amount

of time, the picture should be concealed and the students should write four true as well as two false sentences of the picture. Of these six sentences read aloud, the challenge is in remembering which of them are true. In this way Willis argues that the students must first focus on the meaning and only then on the best ways to express the meanings linguistically. In other words, learners are free to choose any language forms they want to convey the meaning for fulfilling the task goals, which is one important feature of TBL.

At this stage it is also important that the teacher does not dictate or control the chosen language forms. Willis namely argues (1996: 24; 135) that words and phrases acquired previously yet unused would often come to mind when needed. What is more, she states that learners will find another way to say what they want if the need to communicate is strongly felt, even though they would not remember or have learnt a suitable form to convey. An elementary level example of this could be a learner's production in a past tense such as 'I go yesterday', in which the meaning is conveyed although the form is not grammatically correct. Thus, the TBL cycle leads learners from fluency to accuracy.

Despite the suggested advantages of task-based language learning and teaching, there have been some challenges related to it. As already slightly touched upon, Shehadeh (2012: 7) further discusses several points why many language teachers may struggle with this approach in EFL contexts. According to him, these which include e.g. doubts concerning the nature of tasks or effectiveness of TBLT itself are mostly due to not having enough knowledge on the matter. As a result, teachers see TBLT incompatible with their own experience of language learning and hence inapplicable to their teaching contexts. Teachers might also have traditional notions of what constitutes language learning: Shehadeh refers to studies which have found that many teachers feel secure and in control with the familiar teacher-fronted and teacher-centred instruction. The shifts in teaching styles were regarded as uncomfortable, because teachers felt it would reduce their authority.

What is more, teachers are not the only ones who may have been hindering the execution of TBLT. Shehadeh (2012: 7) namely notes that also students often express views and beliefs about the effectiveness of TBLT, which reflect the viewpoints of their teachers and parents have about education. In these settings, many students have apparently a preference for traditional methods over TBLT in e.g. independent work instead of group work or promoting accuracy before fluency. However, the reluctance can also have cultural aspects. As Shehadeh points out, a study conducted in Japan showed that many students did not want to take risks or make mistakes in English to save face. This understandably weakens the value of interactive and productive tasks that are necessary for language development.

Even though there might be cultural differences in the willingness of taking risks, Willis (1996: 24-25) also notes that learners need to feel safe in general for being able to experiment with the language in question for TBLT to succeed. Thus, it is the teacher who must be able to explain that it is better risk getting something wrong than to say nothing. Learners need to see errors in a positive way by treating them as a normal part of learning – it is more probable to learn by making mistakes than remaining silent in fear of getting something wrong. As Willis concludes, language is a vehicle for attaining task goals and the emphasis is on meaning and communication rather than in the production of correct language forms. Nevertheless, Willis' points about errors could be advisable to remember in every aspect of learning, not only in the task-based approach or languages, but in all school work regardless of subject.

Some interesting points have also been presented about TBLT in relation to the common language teaching paradigm of presentation - practice - produce (PPP). The PPP paradigm, in short, means that 'the item to be taught' is introduced at the presentation stage and it is trained in e.g. drills or scales at the practice stage and finally the place for free practice is at the production stage (Johnson 2008: 273-274). Willis (1996: 134-135) argues that in PPP the language is tightly controlled, as the paradigm begins with a small sample of language and the focus is on a particular form. This results in the emphasis of getting the new form correct. Other disadvantages according to Willis are e.g. learners managing to complete a task successfully without using the target form at the production stage or learners may 'overuse' the target form, which leads to unnatural conversations. She also states that PPP derives from a behaviourist view of learning that relies on repetition helping to 'automate' responses i.e. practice makes perfect, which has now been largely discredited.

Hamilton (2009: 155) presents a teacher's opposite view on the matter. The interviewed teacher had a general interest towards TBL, but she also had concerns over its merits. She was worried about those learners who did not have as 'well-developed monitor' to consciously notice the language they are using, and in this way their abilities to self-correct errors. Another worry concerned the fact that if students were only encouraged to produce without any correction afterwards or during the task, they do not necessarily improve and their mistakes could fossilize.

On an exterior level, these might seem like reasonable points, but according to Willis (1996: 40) this is not the case. The framework of TBL consists namely of three phases called **pre-task**, **task cycle** and **language focus.** In short, the *pre-task phase* activates topic-related words and phrases by introducing the topic and the task, whereas the *task cycle* offers learners the chance to freely use the language they already know for carrying out the task. After this, students can improve their language

under teacher's guidance while they plan reports of the task. Feedback by the teacher is given at crucial points, which are at the planning stage and after the report.

The last phase in the framework, *language focus*, enables a closer look at some of the specific features that can naturally occur during the task cycle. Willis (1996: 40) shows that by this point, learners have already worked with the language and processed it for meaning, and in this way they are ready to concentrate on these specific language forms that carry those meanings. In conclusion, it could be suggested that when the TBL framework is used in an appropriate way, the concerns about monitoring the language use or fossilization of mistakes presented by the teacher in Hamilton's (2009: 155) interview should not cause troubles.

4 FRAMEWORK OF THE MATERIAL PACKAGE

This chapter presents the framework for the material package: aims, background and target groups in addition to the organization of the whole package.

4.1 Aims and background for the material package

The material package offers exercises that are available in the digital form also following the guidelines of the National Core Curricula of Basic Education and for Upper Secondary Schools (POPS 2014; LOPS 2015). By the term 'digital' is meant devices such as computer, tablet and smartphone (Palaiologou 2016b: 305, cited in Arnott 2017: 10) as well as applications that are either already accessible in the devices or on a website and the ones that might need downloading. However, the digital form was not chosen just because digitalization would be an absolute value itself. The main idea of the whole package is to introduce meaningful assignments which can enhance the use of digitally available applications in authentic and task-based way. Most of the exercises are designed so that their execution should as simple as possible i.e. they do not involve high technology resources.

The digital form was chosen as the main element of the package for a couple of reasons. The first is related to the key project in knowledge and education of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä's Government, as one of its objectives is to make Finland a top country of modern and inspiring learning with respect to digital learning (Osaaminen ja koulutus n.d.). The second reason, in turn, concerned the Finnish Matriculation Examination, which is gradually digitalized. As the new exam format enables a wider-ranging use of source materials, such as advertisements, announcements or websites together with the possibility of using sound, pictures and videos, it is useful for students to familiarize themselves with many different kinds of digital applications and layouts. (YTL, Ylioppilastutkinto digitalisoituu asteittain n.d.; von Zansen 2014a, 2014b).

The exercises are mainly based on the principles of a few pedagogical approaches, which are multiliteracy, authenticity and task-based learning and teaching. Multiliteracy refers to the ability of producing and interpreting different kinds of texts, which also helps to understand diverse means of cultural communication. In this approach, 'text' is understood in its wide sense, as an expression of knowledge via verbal, visual, auditory, numeric and kinaesthetic symbolic systems or with a combination of these aspects. In this sense, these texts can be interpreted and produced in e.g. written,

spoken, printed, audio-visual or digital format. (POPS 2014: 22). This understanding for the term text is the starting point throughout the material package.

Authenticity and task-based learning, in turn, share aspects of goal-orientation. In this package, authenticity is seen being the goal that teachers and students should strive for, and in this sense it is more important what is done with a text than where it has occurred. This regard, therefore, leads associating authenticity more with the notion of *tasks* and less with the used texts. Task-based learning, in turn, is understood as a motivating procedure in the classroom, because tasks have an outcome and when they are achieved, learners are using language in a meaningful way. The emphasis of tasks is in understanding and conveying meanings to complete them successfully. Consequently, the union of authenticity-centred approach and TBL in pedagogy broadens the notion of task being personal, divergent and more practical. (Mishan 2005: 15-16, ix; Willis 1996: 24).

4.2 Target groups

The exercises of the material package are mainly aimed for students in upper secondary school (aged between 16-19 years on average). In their original form, they are the most suitable for A1 and A2 English language students who have begun their studies approximately around the third or fifth grade of basic education (Kielivalinnat vuosiluokilla 1–6 n.d.). The tasks require a general understanding of the language as well as occasionally specific vocabulary, in which case they are not readily suitable for B1-3 language students who have started their studies during seventh to eighth grade or in upper secondary school. (Kielivalinnat vuosiluokilla 7–9 n.d.; Kielivalinnat lukiossa n.d.).

Nevertheless, the teacher has to decide which tasks suit each situation the best and adjust them according to the group's level, because many exercises demand skills that upper secondary students already have or are currently practising. These are, for example, independent information searching and its organization, finding main points from authentic sources as well as producing text and speech for authentic situations in a foreign language. The tasks also need self-direction skills and openness to creativity, because some of them might somewhat differ from the exercises that students are mainly used to.

4.3 Organization of the material package

The material package is divided into three large themes: **(Youth) Culture**, **Travelling and Intercultural Communication** as well as **Work, News and (Formal) Writing**. Following the guidelines of the National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools, these themes have been selected from two current book series for upper secondary schools, *Open Road* (Otava Publishing Company Ltd) and *On Track* (Sanoma Pro Ltd). All the themes can be found in both series but sometimes from different courses, which means that they do not necessarily follow the original numerical order of the courses. In addition, a couple of them have been conjoined to serve the purpose of this package more relevantly.

All the sections have different kinds of tasks to be used in class. Some of them can be completed in a short amount of time, some of them need a larger time frame as it is the case with a couple of projects. The exercises mostly have a clear correlation to their theme, such as a job-interview simulation, but some of them are in a sense universal so that they can be applied to a different topic if wanted, as it is the case with creating memes for voicing opinions. This selectability and application possibilities are significant features of the package, as the tasks can be chosen to any possible lesson and grade without too much restrictions. Moreover, there are no specific time limits or assessment scales designed for the exercises, because the execution depends on e.g. each group's skills and size. Thus, time limits can be adjusted to suit individual groups and personal teaching styles, small group sizes can be changed as well as an evaluation aspect added, for example, to speaking exercises if need be. In this sense, most of the tasks could be considered as templates or sources of inspiration how to organise one's teaching if a straightforward usage of the exercises does not feel comfortable.

With respect to the organization of individual tasks, each exercise has a brief introduction to its main principles and an overview on how to organise them in practice. These can be found under the subheading of *description*. The assignments are formulated under the subheadings of *task*, which can also be recognized from their layout in the form of boxes. Some tasks have more than just one part, in which case there are also more boxes per assignment: they can be completed consecutively or choose e.g. just one or two parts. The points listed under subheadings called *teacher points*, in turn, specify some aspects of the tasks that the teacher should take into consideration when planning lessons or alternatively they give suggestions of how to alter the exercises to suit different situations better.

Overall, the underlying idea of the package is to introduce meaningful digitally available assignments, which teachers could easily include in their own teaching when practising skills altogether for the

matriculation exam of English as well as for the time after the upper secondary studies. The tasks are designed so that students would familiarize themselves with new kinds of digital forms in addition to extending the use of applications which students may already know beforehand outside the educational context. This is also directed to lower the barriers between formal and informal learning. Furthermore, the exercises are also meant to give freedom for students in choosing topics of their individual interests and in creating their own productions within the tasks. In this way, it is more probable that students find the exercises personally meaningful, because they are highly involved in setting directions within a task framework.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The idea for this material package was inspired by the digitalization of the Finnish Matriculation Examination and the digital leap objective in Prime Minister's Government programme. As the new exam format enables a wider use of source materials and different layouts, it is reasonable to practise for it with versatile materials during the whole upper secondary school. Even though digitalization is a current phenomenon also in other contexts, the digital form for the tasks was not chosen just because it would be an absolute value. Instead, the underlying idea was to introduce meaningful digitally available assignments, which teachers could easily include in their own teaching when practising skills altogether for the matriculation exam of English as well as for the time after the upper secondary studies. The exercises are designed so that there would be some new digital forms to be learnt as well as extension in the use of applications that can be familiar to students outside the educational context. This is also directed to lower the barriers of formal and informal learning.

The material package is divided into three large theme entities, related with a few upper secondary school course contents. The tasks are designed so that they are largely usable regardless of the prevailing course. By this is meant that most tasks are suitable for every course, because the topic is universal or can easily be changed. However, some may have a stronger correlation to one of the main themes, in which case the alteration is not as straightforward. Some tasks may also have more than one part, and there are no time limits or assessment scales in the exercises. What is more, students also have a strong role in deciding how they are going to complete tasks, because the exercises leave room for optional choices and their creativity. The alteration possibilities are, therefore, great. Depending on the group, the tasks can be completed in a short amount of time or reserve more time to delve deeper into the topic, small group sizes are possible to alter or only one exercise can be chosen from the tasks which have many parts. An evaluation aspect is also easy to add e.g. to speaking exercises, if wanted.

The strength of the material package is, therefore, that the tasks are fairly general and easy to modify according to the needs of students. The tasks are easy to execute in class, because the exercises work as templates, of which the topic can readily be changed to suit many courses and most of them do not need e.g. registering. In this way, it is easy for the teacher to adjust the tasks to suit their own teaching styles the best. The exercises also give freedom for students in choosing topics of their personal interest and in creating their own productions within the tasks. As students are highly involved in setting directions within a task framework, it could be suggested being more probable that they find the exercises personally meaningful.

One weakness of the package could be that a couple of tasks need a Google account or downloading an application to the smartphone. These tasks were, nevertheless, included in the material package, because nowadays owning a Google account is quite common and because the app which needs downloading may already be familiar to students from their free time. It is also free of charge for those parts that are needed in the exercise. Another challenge could be that some tasks may seem demanding at first if students do not have much experience on e.g. searching information independently. However, upper secondary studies, if ever, are a great place to start practising these skills.

In the future, the material package could be improved by including more themes and different applications. For example, a couple of possible thematic entities can be identity, family and free time or technology and the society. Ideas for task contents, in turn, could be subliminal advertising, analysing the language use found in collaborative posts in blogs or vlogs or recording responses to a storytelling dialogue made by the teacher. Moreover, after completing tasks from this material package in practice, the instructions of the assignments could be specified, if needed, and add suggestions for a time frame or create assessment criteria for some exercises.

On the whole, this material package aims to offer meaningful digitally available assignments, which can be used as they already are or easily altered to suit personal teaching styles better. The boundaries of formal and informal learning are also reduced by combining familiar applications and task contents, while students are activated by letting them choose and create contents within the task frameworks. The most important aspect of this material package is, nevertheless, that is has a strong basis in preparing for the matriculation examination of English as well as for the language use after the upper secondary school. As English is already a certain basic skill, the more comfortable one is with it, the easier it is to manage in different kinds of situations in life.

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APPENDIX: The Material

Mind map, MindMup –

Material package of digitally available applications

for language teachers

Table of Contents

Introduction

Welcome to explore the material package of digitally available exercises for upper secondary schools!

This package aims to give ideas of how to add meaningful digital exercises so that they can inspire language learning in authentic and task-based way. Authenticity and task-based learning are central elements in the package, because they share aspects of goal-orientation. This means that in a broad sense of text (knowledge is expressed via verbal, visual, auditory, numeric and kinaesthetic symbolic systems or with a combination of these), it is more important what is *done* with a text than where it has occurred. The emphasis of tasks is in understanding and conveying meanings to complete them successfully. Multiliteracy is another central aspect in the package. It refers to the ability of producing and interpreting different kinds of texts, which also helps to understand diverse means of cultural communication.

There are three large themes in the package: **(Youth) Culture, Travelling and Intercultural Communication** as well as **Work, News and (Formal) Writing.** The themes have been selected from two current upper secondary book series*, Open Road* (Otava Publishing Company Ltd) and *On Track* (Sanoma Pro Ltd). All the themes can be found in both series, but sometimes from different courses. The exercises can have a specific correlation to the theme, such as in a job interview simulation, or they can relate to elements that are generally considered being part of them, for example in (Youth) Culture, you can create a meme regardless of the topic. With respect to the digital form, some tasks need different kinds of applications, even downloading, and for some only basic devices are needed, such as a phone's recorder or a computer's internet browser. However, you may have to familiarize yourself a bit with the applications if have not used them before. The exercises are also somewhat universal by nature, which means that they can be chosen quite freely between different courses and grades.

The material package is structured so that each exercise has a **title**, an overall **description** of the contents, formulated **task assignments** ready to be given to students as well as **points for the teacher** to take into account when instructing students. You find these under individual headlines in each exercise and the tasks can also be recognized from their layout in the form of boxes. Please note also that some tasks may have more than just one part, in which case there are more boxes per assignment. All the pictures with no source mentioned are from Pixabay, a site to download free pictures, icons from Microsoft Office Word or screenshots from my own creations, such as of a Padlet wall.

There are also no specific time limits or assessment scales for the exercises, because these things depend so much on e.g. the teaching group's size and students' previous knowledge on topics. Therefore you can adjust the time limits by yourself and add an evaluation aspect if needed. Other changes are also possible to make – students don't necessarily have to do all parts of an exercise, if there are more than one, you can include warm-up exercises or have different source texts and links etc. The ones presented in this package are only suggestions that you can use if they suit your teaching style.

All in all, I hope you find these exercises useful and your students learn a bunch of new stuff!

(Youth) Culture
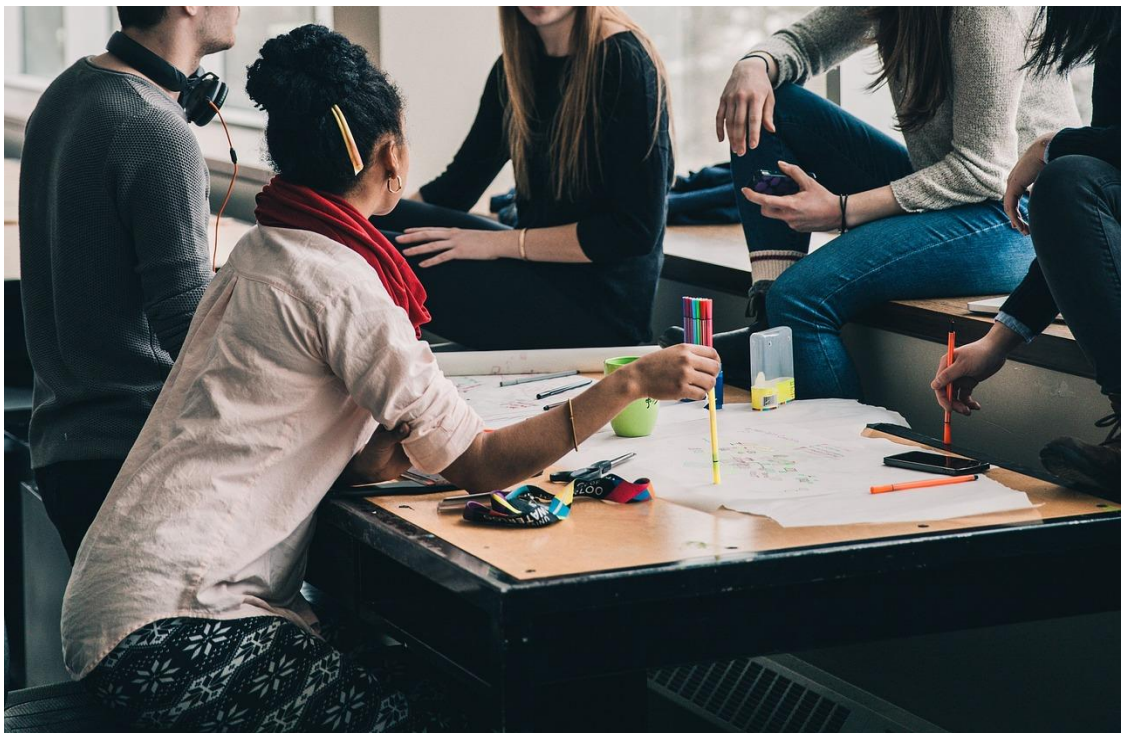
Meme time

A meme is "a cultural item in the form of an image, video, phrase, etc., that is spread via the Internet and often altered in a creative or humorous way".

DESCRIPTION

Students create memes with which they voice opinions or viewpoints on a topic under consideration. The exercise requires multiliteracy skills and imagination to condense perspectives into a few words as well as combining it with a suitable picture.

Teacher can show an example meme about the angle of how the task should be done, because with this kind of an exercise, there is a risk that memes may not reflect the wanted ends i.e. students get off the subject.

Bill is on the internet.

Bill sees something that offends him.

Bill moves on.

Bill is smart.

Be like Bill.
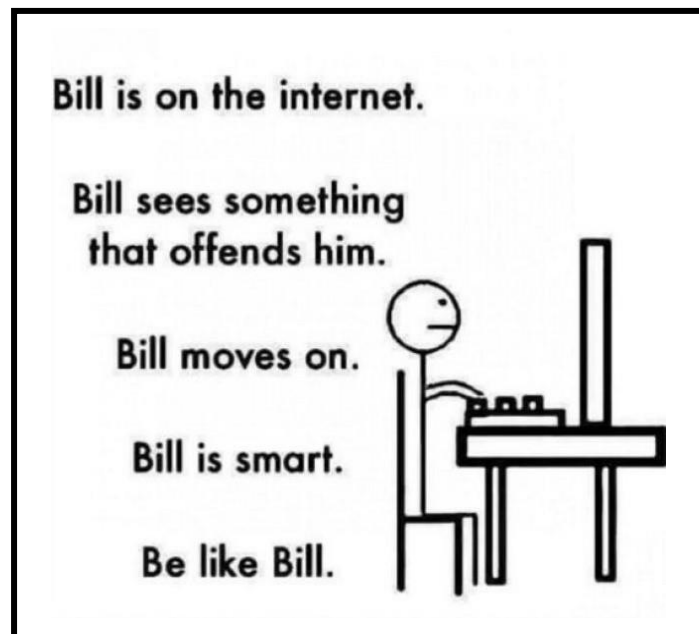
An example of how a meme should be done (Source)

TASK

- Go to https://imgflip.com/memegenerator.
- Choose a picture which you use as a template for voicing your opinion / viewpoint.
- Write your top / bottom texts and customize the meme to your taste.
- Download the finished meme to your device (you can do it privately without logging in).
- Share your meme on the Padlet wall.

TEACHER POINTS

- One site for creating memes is https://imgflip.com/memegenerator but if you or your students know a better web page, feel free to use it. This site requires downloading the picture on your device, however, you can do it privately so that it is usable primarily only for the exercise. Downloading is possible with computer, smartphone and tablet.

- Finished memes are collected to a Padlet wall made by the teacher in advance.
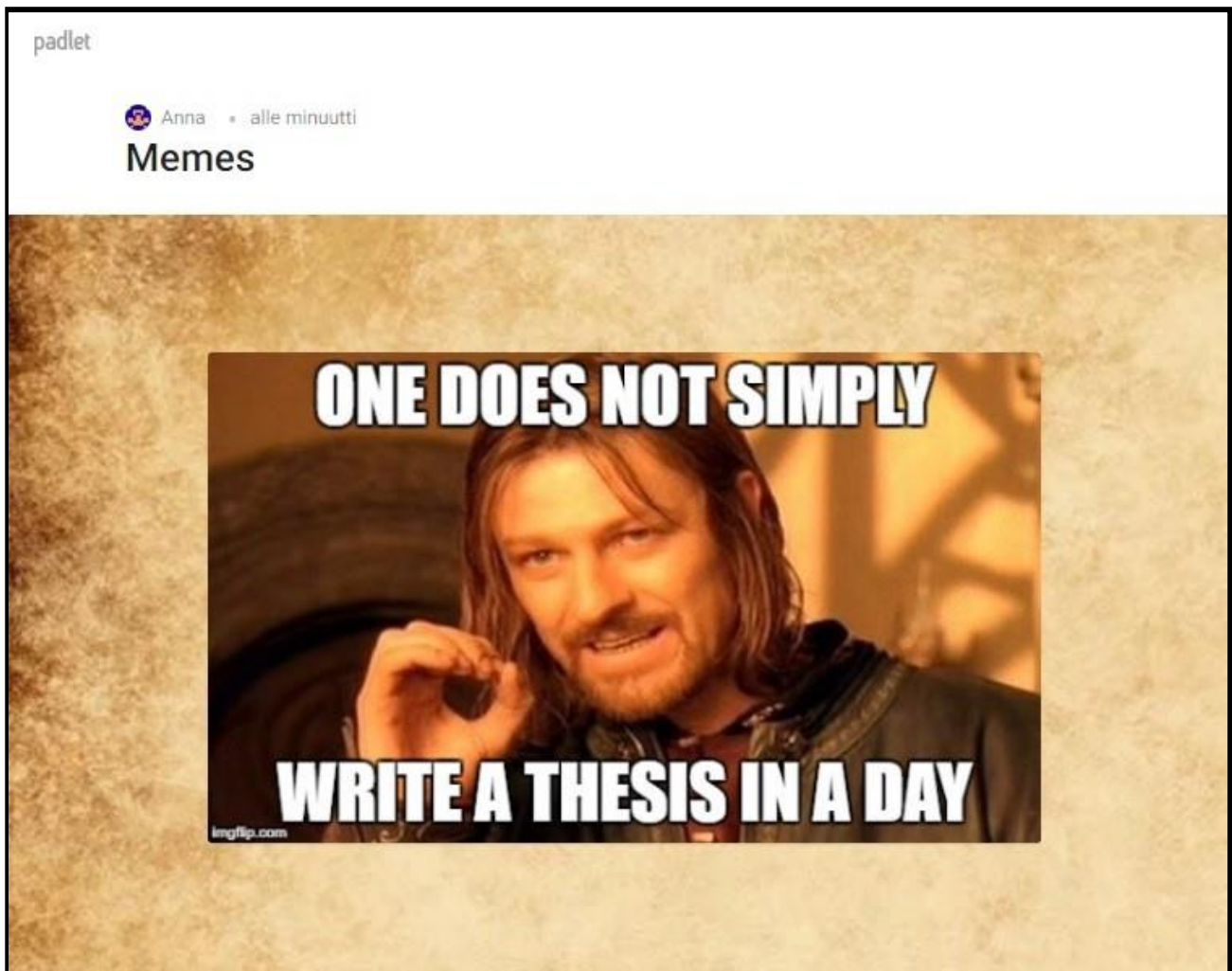
An example of a meme with digressed content (unless the topic is about writing a thesis)

Tweeting / Facebooking

Voicing opinions has moved more and more from sending letters to the editor to sharing them in some social networking site, such as in Twitter or Facebook. Even though the contents would be similar, the writing styles are usually different.

DESCRIPTION

Students write a tweet or a Facebook post with which they voice opinions or viewpoints on a topic under consideration. The posts are shared on a Padlet wall.

The exercise requires skills to condense perspectives into 140 (or nowadays 280) characters in a tweet, however, somewhat flexible word count could be useful, also in the Facebook updates. Nevertheless, the idea is to write succinct posts.

TASK

- Write a tweet or a Facebook post of the topic. What do you think about it? What could be done e.g. to change or improve things? Is there something that should be brought up to the discussion?
- You can use spoken language within reason, hashtags are also allowed. Remember that the maximum number of characters is 280 in tweets.

TEACHER POINTS

- You could provide some examples of actual tweets or Facebook posts that take stands on the issues which you are currently treating, or alternatively write a post by yourself to Padlet.

- Even though this exercise is somewhat informal, emphasize the fact that students have to stick to the point of voicing opinions and not go too far off the subject.

An example of an actual tweet for treating environmental issues (Twitter)
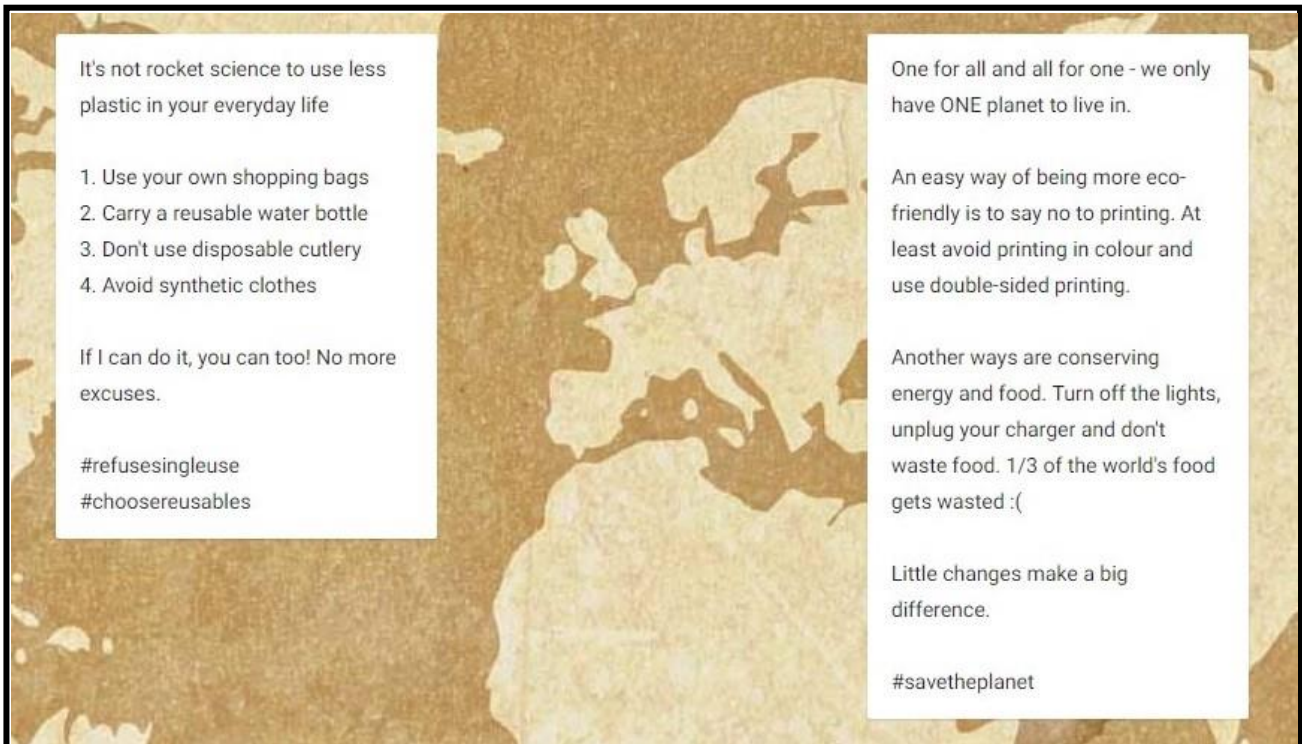
An example of made-up 'tweets' / 'Facebook posts' on a Padlet wall

The Lyric Bard

[The Lyrics Training](#) online application gives students a chance to practise English through music and lyrics. With the application they can improve their listening skills by filling in the gaps of lyrics in writing or multiple-choice modes.

DESCRIPTION

There are four play modes in the game: beginner, intermediate, advanced and expert, between which the words range from 50 to 500 of the maximum 500 words (yes, the expert mode requires to write or choose every word of the song).

TASK

- Go to https://lyricstraining.com/.

- Pick a song and choose your level (beginner – expert) and game mode (write / choice).

- Have a go at your song. If you want to challenge yourself, you can set a goal: for example in the beginner level, will you know all the 50 words or e.g. 37/50? Will you have 20 % or 80 % correct?

- When you are content with your scores, choose another song.

TEACHER POINTS

- You can play the Lyrics Training in a browser without registering, but it is also possible to download the app on Google Play or App Store.

Opinions on a Video

Nowadays video reviews are a popular form to explore opinions and perspectives on things that one finds interesting. The range of topics is vast, as it is the case with content creators.

DESCRIPTION

In this task, the students practise writing an argumentative text based on a video review. The exercise focuses especially on listening comprehension, forming arguments and presenting them in an organized way.

The main idea is that practising argumentative skills in English is a bit easier when the area is somewhat familiar, as it most probably is with popular films and video games, and the students may have formed some opinions on the topic beforehand. In short, students can choose e.g. a review about a movie they have already seen.

Because video reviews can be quite long, this task is more useful to do as a homework or at least finish at home.
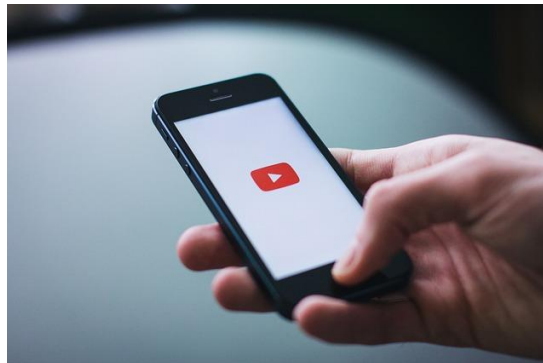
TASK

- Go to the YouTube channel of the Nostalgia Critic or the Completionist.

- Select a video and watch it, the length should around 5-30 minutes.

- Think what is your personal opinion about the video's topic: do you agree or disagree with the content creator? Why or why not? Give examples!

- Write an argumentative text about 220-300 words minimum and give a brief summary about the video in the beginning (not included in the overall word limit).

TEACHER POINTS

- Decide whether your students hand in the assignments via e-mail, printed / handwritten papers etc.

- To complete the exercise, it doesn't matter which site is chosen, as long as the video is a review. You can instruct the students to decide on the content creator by themselves, or you can limit the options to e.g. the Nostalgia Critic, who mainly reviews (nostalgic) movies and tv series, and the Completionist (a.k.a. That One Video Gamer), whose area of expertise is to complete video games 100 %.

- If every topic is completely unfamiliar to some students, you can instruct them to watch a random video review from a general perspective of how well the content creators succeed to make their argumentative points in reviews.

- The written assignment can be transformed into making an argumentative video or a recording. In this case students should write down a couple of points, which they want to bring up, and do a short recording in their own words.

Links to the example video review sites

Nostalgia Critic
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0AQIMR-tpolVRCh8SEK6V5Xi4mRJdFTL

The Completionist (a.k.a. That One Video Gamer)
https://www.youtube.com/user/ThatOneVideoGamer/videos

The Tube

A vlog is a video blog, where vloggers (video bloggers) record their thoughts, opinions, or experiences that they film and publish on the internet. Vlogs have grown their popularity among regular blogs.

DESCRIPTION

In groups, students choose together a vlogger's video, which they watch in English. At the same time, they take notes individually and then compare their points.

With this method the task doesn't differ much from any other regular exercise, however, instructing to write down a couple of false points makes it readily a task-based exercise: students have to actively process the whole video's contents, not just their own points, so that they can notice false points from the real ones. This should also be explained to the students before they start the task.

⏮ ◀◀ ▶ ⏸ ▶▶ ⏭
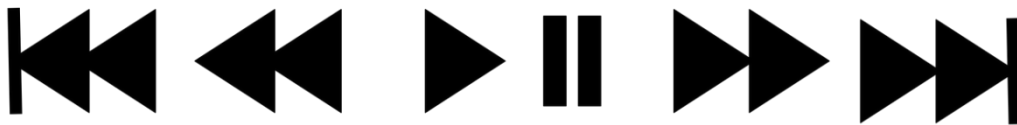
TASK

In groups of 3-4, choose an English-speaking vlogger's video that lasts around 5 minutes and watch it (the author doesn't have to be native). Write down 3-4 most important points from the video and come up with one plausible false point. Then discuss and compare your thoughts:

- Did you write down the same things? Why did you choose those particular points?

- In your opinion, why are they the most central points to the content?

Present false points as they were real during the whole length of the conversation and observe how attentive you group members were. If you spot a false point, say it aloud right away and move on in the discussion. If some false points are not detected, reveal them at the end of your whole conversation.
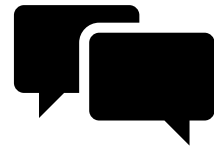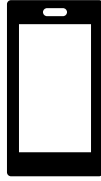
TEACHER POINTS

- Your students are probably quite handy with finding interesting vlogs, nevertheless, you might want to have an example video channel up on your sleeve. A good starting place could be **charlieissocool-like** https://www.youtube.com/user/charlieissocoollike by Charlie McDonnell, a British vlogger with a relatively clear pronunciation and a moderate speech rate.

- The task can, of course, be completed without presenting false points.

The Podcast

A podcast is "a digital audio or video file or recording, usually part of a themed series, that can be downloaded from a website to a media player or computer".

DESCRIPTION

This task has **three parts: familiarization, overviewing** and **production**. In the first part, students choose a podcast which they listen by themselves. They take notes and summarize the main content to their partner. They should also be instructed to keep in mind the way podcasts are presented, because in the second part, there is a discussion of general elements in podcasts for the whole group, led by the teacher.

The third part, instead, challenges the students to produce a podcast of their own. In this task, the students choose a chapter that has already been listened to from their English textbook and jot down its most central points. After that they record the points in their own words. This task trains especially presentation skills and summarising.
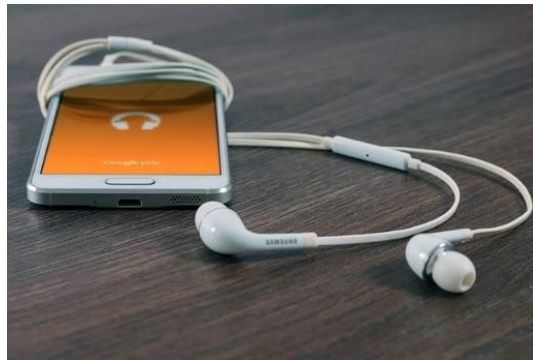
TASK, PART 1: Familiarization

Choose an audio podcast e.g. from the websites of BBC or NPR and take notes while listening. Try to find a relatively short one, approximately 5-15 minutes.

- What is the podcast about? What is the central topic, what issues are discussed in relation to it?

- What do the speakers want to convey? What kind of opinions / views do they bring out?

- While listening, keep also in mind the construction of a podcast: how the speakers start and finish the recording, how they talk during it etc.

You can also choose another station, as long as you listen to podcasts. Be prepared to summarize the content to your partner and discuss general elements with the whole class.

TASK, PART 2: Overviewing

Discussion of general elements in podcasts. These can be, for example

- Usually quite short (5-20 min, although there are also longer ones)

- Short presentations of the podcasters and the show as well as possible sponsors

- Focus usually on one central theme and relevant aspects per episode

- Podcasters either change opinions and views with each other and / or with guests who have specialized on the episodes' topics

- The speech is usually quite informal (depending on the show of course): there can be laughing, talking over one another etc.

- Information on the next podcast's date and dropping hints about its topic at the end of the recording

TASK, PART 3: Production

Choose one of the textbook's chapters we have listened to and try to make your own podcast.

Begin by jotting down the most important points from the text and transform them into a coherent speech **in your own words**. You do not need to write down complete sentences, bullet points are enough.

Record with a partner or by yourself.

Things to take into account when recording

- Keep in mind the general elements of podcasts (discussion) when recording. For example, present yourselves in the beginning of the recording and mention which chapter's issues you are dealing with.

- Don't just recite your points, give opinions and perspectives that your listeners should consider after listening!

- As the style of podcasts is rather informal, don't worry about your speech production too much. Communicativity is the key.

- The length should be around 1-2 minutes.

TEACHER POINTS

- Searching, listening, summarizing and making own podcasts take time. Therefore this task is better to do in a double lesson or as a small project.

- Another option is to give Part 1: Familiarization as a homework and continue parts 2 and 3 at school or e.g. listen collectively to one example podcast selected by the teacher.

- You can choose the depth of this task according to your needs. Is the focus just on the familiarization with the area of podcasts or do you want to have assessment data from an oral exercise? With the former, it is sufficient if you supervise the parts 1 and 3 and if needed, eventually receive student recordings. You can give brief feedback on the productions about the content and communicativity. However, if you decide on evaluating the productions, then emphasize that the main assessment criterion relies on communicativity.

Links to the example podcast sites

BBC Podcasts
http://www.bbc.co.uk/podcasts

NPR Podcasts
https://www.npr.org/podcasts/

Holidays & Celebrations

Popular and common festivities, such as Christmas, Mother and Father's Days and Valentine's Day are generally the same all around the world. Or are they? This is a task for students to find out about their special features and differences especially from the perspective of English-speaking countries.

DESCRIPTION

The students search information in pairs about a festivity, which they have chosen from the list, and summarize their points in a mind map with the application called MindMup. The groups present their findings in front of the class with the help of their mind maps and other notes.

There are two kinds of topics: finding information about the festivities with fixed dates (group 1) or compare the contents and/ or dates of the festivities between different countries (group 2).

A good starting place for searching information about the holidays is TimeAndDate.com, so students can be instructed to go there or depending on their source criticism skills, let them search without much limits.
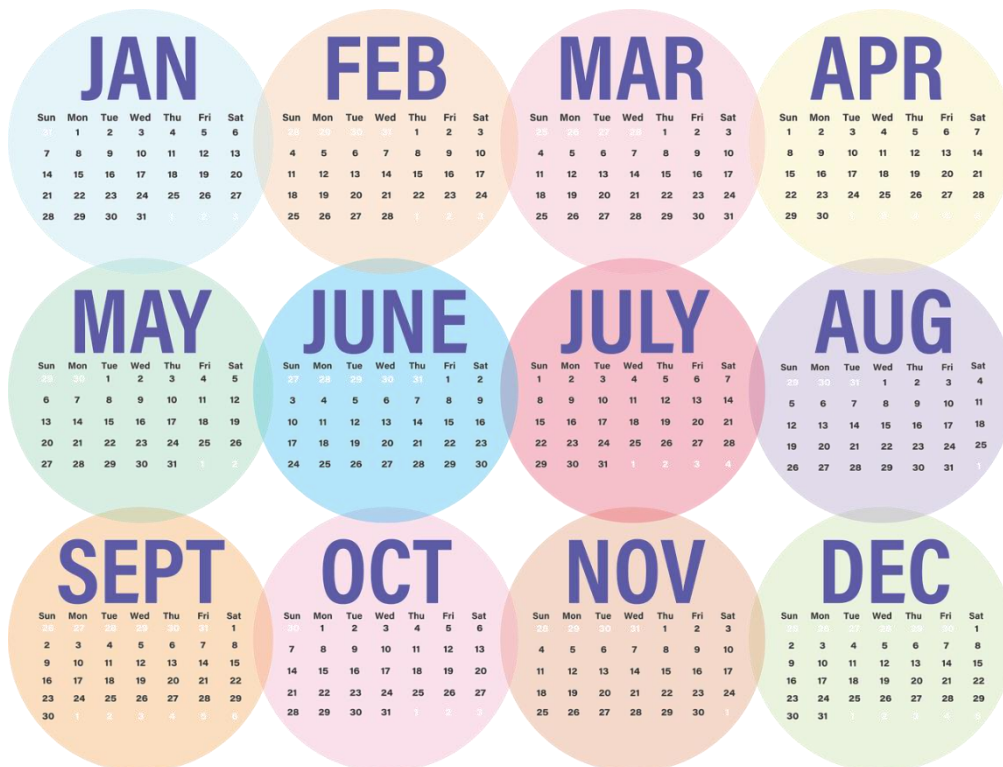
TASK

In pairs, search information about some main events celebrated especially in English-speaking countries.

Tell shortly about their **historical origins** and **how they are celebrated today** as well as **2-3 other special features** that you find relevant.

Collect your points to the mind map application MindMup https://www.mindmup.com/ and customize it to your taste.

As a group, choose **one** celebration from the following two topics:

- GROUP 1: Finding information about celebrations with fixed dates.

- GROUP 2: Finding information about celebrations that don't necessarily have fixed dates. In this case, compare the contents and/ or dates of the festivities between different countries!

Pick your topic from the following celebrations

GROUP 1

1. Australia Day 26th January
2. Valentine's Day 14th February
3. Saint Patrick's Day 17th March
4. Labour Day / International Worker's Day (May Day) 1st May
5. Queen's Birthday (UK) second Saturday of June
6. Canada Day 1st July
7. Independence Day (US) 4th July
8. Halloween 31st October
9. Guy Fawkes Day 5th November
10. Christmas Eve / Day 24th / 25th December
11. Boxing Day 26th December
12. New Year's Eve 31st December
13. New Year's Day 1st January

GROUP 2

COMPARE THE DATES AND CONTENTS OF

14. Mother's Day e.g. 2nd Sunday of May / Three weeks before Easter Sunday
15. Father's Day e.g. 3rd Sunday of June / 1st Sunday of September
16. Thanksgiving Day 4th Thursday of November in the US / 2nd Monday of October in Canada
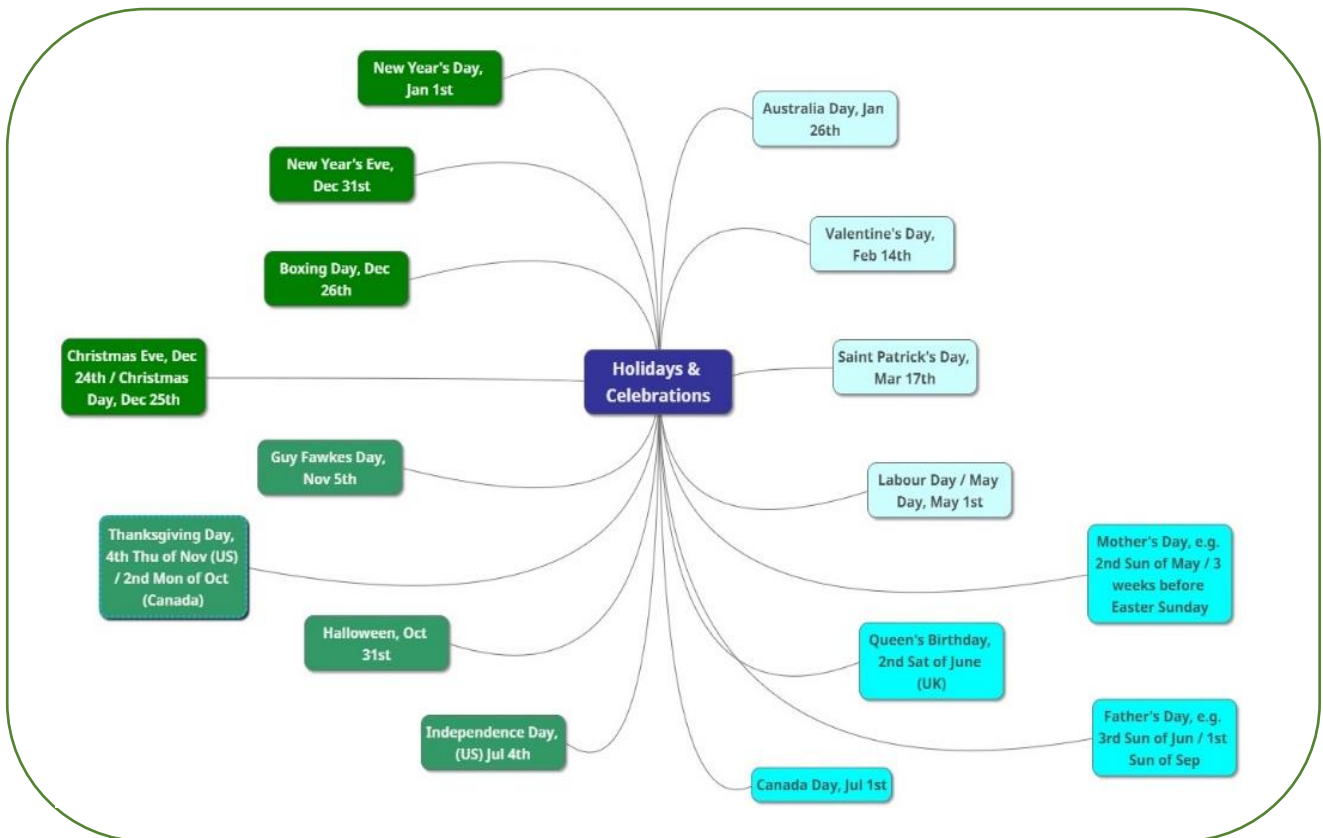
A screenshot from MindMup

TEACHER POINTS

- You don't have to register for MindMup, but in this case you need to take a screenshot to save your mind map.

- If your teaching group is small, the work can be done individually or have two topics per group. If there still are vacant dates, you can provide the info as the teacher or treat them as compensatory tasks for students that miss evaluation of some other exercises.

- The finished mind maps can be shared to other students digitally via a common platform used with the group.

- If wanted, you can add a participatory aspect for the presentation assignment, meaning that students should come up with a small exercise which they will assign for the rest of the group. For example, during Thanksgiving it is common for children to draw a turkey of their hand, in which they write what they are grateful for. The idea of making hand turkeys might just be random enough so that your students buy it, in which case the clipped turkeys can be attached to the classroom's wall. If the other festivities do not have a clear similar kind of artwork, it can be made up imaginatively or assign completely other tasks.
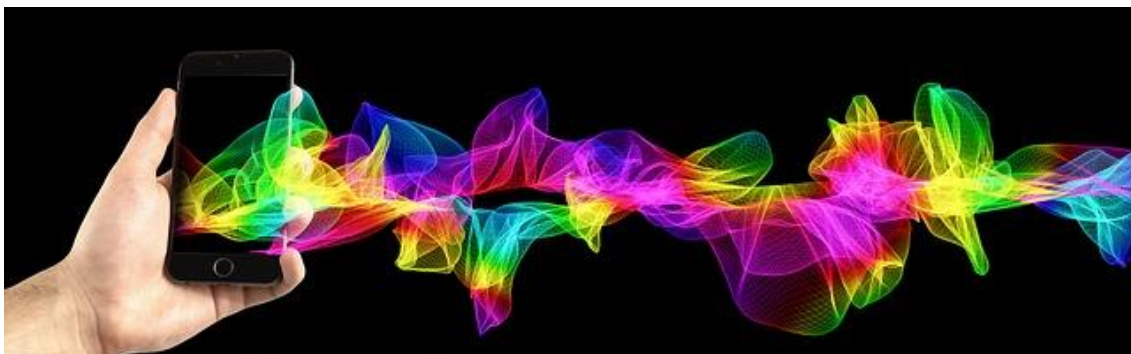
A Piece of Art
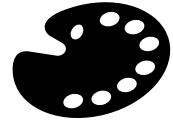
How to make a piece of art without any painting skills? Your answer is the application called *Prisma*.

DESCRIPTION

This task requires to download an app called Prisma to your smartphone (available for iPhones and Androids). Its main functions are free of charge and only these are used in this exercise. The app works so that you take a picture with the phone's camera (either from the photo library or straight via the application) and choose an artwork that suits the picture the best. Students do this, after which they do a writing exercise about one picture.

TASK, PART 1: Creating Artworks

- Download an app called Prisma (available for iPhones and Androids). Its main functions are free of charge and only these are used in this exercise.

- Take a picture of something that appeals to your artistic vision and create a work of art with the app.

- Come up with a title for your piece of art and share it on a Padlet wall. You don't need to include e.g. your own name or any other additional elements to Padlet.

TASK, PART 2: Writing an Art Review

Choose one picture from the Padlet wall and take a photo of it.

Write an art review of the picture you chose with the help of the following points:

- Describe the piece of art in general

- Think about what the artist may have wanted to convey with their artwork: can it be interpreted e.g. as a comment for climate change? Why do you think so? Argue!

- Analyse the use of colours, compositions, angles etc. Do they enhance the message of the work?

- Other aspects that you find relevant

TEACHER POINTS

- You can use this task to practise especially picture analysing skills, use of adjectives and writing styles.

- The core idea is to maintain and practise multimodal skills in a casual way, so the pictures can be quite imaginative.

- You can also instruct taking pictures already as a homework, so that you only create the artworks at school and start writing about them, or alternatively the writing assignment can be done at home.

- Decide whether each student should have a different piece of art to write about or can they have same pictures.

- If coming up with names for the pieces of art is unbearable for some, these can be called as 'untitled'.

- If some of your students don't want to download the app, you could provide a few artworks created in advance.
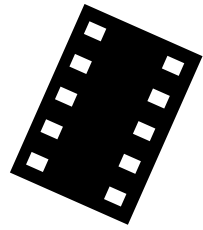
Travelling and Intercultural Communication
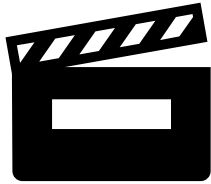
… And Action!

Cut! It's a wrap.

DESCRIPTION

Students film short presentation videos of your town's local sightseeing attractions. This task is not meant to be too serious, so in addition to proper attractions (statues, buildings etc.), the spot can be quite imaginative (a road sign) and can be located elsewhere in the universe than in our own actual world (the space, Hogwarts etc.). The focus is on the filming, not on the target. Therefore the facts about the attractions can be made up, as long as the form of the video is descriptive and informative.

TASK

Film a video, in which you present a sightseeing attraction of our town. The spot you choose can be imaginative, for example a Shell café or a road sign, and you also can make up its background information with a twinkle in your eye. The attraction doesn't necessarily have to be situated in this world, so you can also locate it to another realm. You can of course create a realistic video of an actual attraction.

Your video should contain at least the following "facts"

- What is the attraction (statue, building etc.) and what's its name? Describe the exterior features (building material, colours, shapes etc.).

- Where is it located? (In your home town, Hogwarts, the space?)

- Why is it built here? To commemorate something or what can you do there when you visit it?

- How old it is?

- Why is it an important sightseeing attraction?

You can formulate a manuscript but try to present the facts in your own words and not just read from the paper. It is not necessary for you to appear in the video as long as your voice is audible. The length should be approximately 1-2 minutes.

TEACHER POINTS

- This task may take time, so it is more useful to execute during a double lesson and/ or as a home-work. For the former, it can be done in a relatively short amount of time by limiting "the sightseeing area" to the near proximity of the school building or on the other hand reserve more time for the students to wander around in your town. The execution as a homework will be successful if you know that your students are initiatives on their own, even though the task requires to do a bit more than just traditional written exercises. Negotiate with the students if e.g. a week is enough to complete the homework.

- You can choose the depth of the assessment according to your needs. Do you focus on making and scripting the videos or would you like to gather data from an oral exercise? If you concentrate on the production, it is sufficient to give brief feedback generally on the content and communicativity. With the data gathering aspect, emphasize the communicativity criterion.

Itinerary: The Project

With the travelling theme, making a realistic itinerary for a trip fits like a glove.

DESCRIPTION

This task has three separate parts, which is why it is best to complete as a project during different lessons. The parts consist of getting to know facts about a chosen country (part 1), finding out what places or sightseeing attractions to visit (part 2) as well as making plans on where to sleep and eat (part 3).

Budgeting the whole trip is also an essential part of the project. At the end of the project, students present their findings and calculations on average to the rest of the group. The idea is to raise awareness in how much money different parts of travelling can take.

In addition to executing all the parts consecutively, the task can be altered so that the teacher chooses only one or two parts which the students will carry out. In this case, the instructions on assignments should be slightly changed to correspond your task goals.

TASK: Overall Assignment

This task is carried out as a project with three parts. The main idea is to plan a realistic itinerary for a five-day trip (including arrival and departure) in groups of 2-4. The finished plans are presented to the class in the form of e.g. PowerPoint or Prezi. Be comprehensive but succinct enough! Remember to mention your sources in the end of the slides.

TASK, PART 1: Familiarization and Initial Preparations

Familiarize yourselves with a country of your choice e.g. with the pages of the Lonely Planet https://www.lonelyplanet.com/ (there's a lot of good general information). You can also check out other sites for additional information.

Your first part of the project should contain the following points

- General information about the country (location, capital, population)
- How much their currency is in euros (if the country is not part of the Eurozone)
- The best time to go
- How much the air / railway tickets or voyage by boat cost with one company
- Paperwork: e.g. What kind of papers you have to fill in the customs, do you need a visa to enter the country etc.
- Do a specific budget on the overall travelling costs on an average (round-trip tickets)

TASK, PART 2: Itinerary in Action

Make an itinerary of the places and sightseeing attractions you would like to visit per day. On a five-day trip when the arrival and departure take most of the first and last day, it is more economic to centre the visits around the three remaining days. Your itinerary should include:

- The most interesting places and attractions for you (check out the Lonely Planet's sites or e.g. corresponding pages to Visit Finland). Are they free or do they cost something?
- What kind of transportation is needed when going to the attractions? Do you need to rent a car or buy tickets? N.B. If your country is very vast, be reasonable when choosing the places because of the time frame.
- Do a specific budget on the overall costs on an average.

TASK, PART 3: Sleeping and Eating

Find a couple of places to **A) sleep** and **B) eat** that suit you the best via Hotels.com, Booking.com, Trip Advisor etc. By this is meant that choose e.g. one place to accommodate and 1-2 restaurants according to your itinerary on a five-day trip.

A) Accommodation

How much are you willing to pay for accommodation? Do you have book two hotels for example if staying over in another city? Take these kind of points into account when choosing the accommodation and calculate the overall costs on an average.

→ Youth hostels are quite cheap, but you may have to share a room and e.g. shower with other travellers.

→ Some hotels seem relatively affordable but glancing over a map might reveal that they are located quite far from the city centre, in which case you have to think about the city's interior transportation a bit more.

→ Are you comfortable with solutions like AirBnB if they are legal in your country?

B) Eating

Are you prepared to pay for approximately two warm meals per day in addition to breakfast? Or do you have to book an accommodation where you can cook by yourselves (it might cost some extra)? What about small snacks between the meals: what could they be and where can you get them (name a grocery store)?

→ With these aspects, how much money does it approximately take to eat during your trip? Calculate the average sum of restaurant meals on an average.

→ You can also present options of what kind of food you would make by yourselves.

TEACHER POINTS

- The date of departure is not important in part 1, but you can advise your students to choose a date according to e.g. the individual best times to go presented by the Lonely Planet or instruct every group to have the same date.

- You can advise the students to go to a specific company's sites to search for e.g. flights or use a general booking site to get the best deal.

- All the parts can be done without budgeting.

- If you choose to execute e.g. only one of the three parts, for example part 3 about sleeping and eating, alter the instructions so that the students choose a country and a city, of which they search information about 1-2 places to sleep and eat. The findings are shared in a small group. The same is possible for part 2 itinerary in action: instruct the students to choose a country and a city, of which they search approximately 1-3 places to visit.

- The area can be limited to include only e.g. Europe or countries where English is spoken as one of the (official) languages if you think it serves the idea the best. However, it is not necessary. What you should decide is whether to limit each group having a different country or would it be fruitful to have comparative presentations of the same countries.

- If you want to evaluate the project, the assessment consists of three parts: research, teamwork and presentation.

Mapping the World

How about cross-curricular subjects in English and Geography as well as some general knowledge? Yes please!

DESCRIPTION

Sheppard Software and Seterra's sites offer different kinds of online geography games. With these students can study the English names for geographical matters such as country and capital names, provinces or states, mountain ranges as well as oceans, lakes and rivers. In addition to this, the students learn to place them on a map and study national flags. Both game sites have great possibilities to differentiate teaching regardless of their playing modes.

TASK

Go to http://www.sheppardsoftware.com/Geography.htm and choose the continent / area of your interest. Begin with the tutorial and advance accordingly. If you want to challenge yourself, set a goal which percentage you would like to reach.

If you want to study flags, go to https://online.seterra.com/en. If you want to challenge yourself, set a goal which percentage you would like to reach.

TEACHER POINTS

- Both game sites have similar elements, but they slightly differ with respect to the playing techniques. Even though Sheppard Software is mainly designed for native speakers of English, it has more gradual levels to study than Seterra, which has only four clear-cut modes to play: learn, pin, type and place the labels. However, Seterra's layout is more adult-like, which might be a relevant factor among teenagers, and it is the only one of these two sites where you can study the flags.

- It is possible to play Seterra with a smartphone, but small screens might cause troubles in tapping the places with a finger.

- There are differences in how well the games function with different browsers, e.g. Sheppard Software does not function properly with Mozilla Firefox.

Intercultural Communication and Stereotypes

The Finnish people speak extremely directly and the Romanians are all vampires? Can you validate your argument? Be prepared to broaden your horizons!

DESCRIPTION

This task tackles the issues concerning intercultural communication and national stereotypes. The main idea is to raise awareness in both of these topics and make students more aware in different situations.

Part 1 focuses on familiarizing oneself with aspects of intercultural communication by searching information from a video and websites. Part 2 complements the topic by taking a closer look at stereotypes in the form of videos and drawings.

TASK, PART 1: Intercultural Communication

- Read slide 6 of the slideshow.

- Read the three texts under the headings of *Intercultural Communication Skills*, *A Starting Point for Intercultural Communication* and *Knowledge for Intercultural Communication.*

- Watch the video about intercultural communication.

What did you already know and what was new? Discuss the thoughts raised by the texts and video with a partner, be prepared to share them for the whole group.

Questions to help the discussion (based on the background sources)

- **What is intercultural communication? What else does it also include?** (A: Effective communication between people of different cultural backgrounds. It also includes managing different thought patterns and non-verbal communication as well as understanding that different cultures have different customs, standards, etc.)

- **What is the idea behind the iceberg analogy**? (A: That only 10% of a culture is visible to everyone, e.g. architecture or the ways people dress and behave, in other words it's the external / conscious culture based on explicit knowledge. 90 % that remains underwater includes aspects which are invisible to the superficial glance, such as values, beliefs and thought patterns. These aspects influence our behaviour and represent our internal culture. They are subconscious, and people are not necessarily directly aware of them.)

- **Why do people resort to stereotypes?** (A: It is a way for the brain to simplify unknown factors and make the world surrounding us less complex.)

- **When do stereotypes become prejudices?** (A: When a group of people make negative assumptions of another group of people based on stereotypes without any real evidence.)

- **What kinds of culture clashes can happen?** (A: For example, people from Nordic countries are often said to speak more directly than e.g. native English speakers who are said to use more 'polite' language. In the UK, Scandinavians have reportedly caused offence to English people by failing to say 'please' and 'thank you' enough!)

TASK, PART 2: Cultural Diversity and Stereotypes

- Watch the videos about cultural diversity and stereotypes.

- Were you aware of the stereotypes that people told about their nationalities in the video(s)? Can they be regarded as positive or negative or even both? Discuss with a partner or in a small group.

- Draw a stereotype with a drawing app. You can choose the stereotype based on your own previous knowledge or select one from the video.

- Share your drawing on a Padlet wall. Be prepared to explain your thoughts on it: why you chose this stereotype, can it be considered as positive or negative, what do you personally think about it etc.

TEACHER POINTS

- It doesn't matter what kind of a drawing app students have, the simplest ones are suitable. Depending on their devices, for example *Paint* in computers is just fine or students can search with 'drawing app" from App Store or Google Play if they don't already have one downloaded.

- The drawings can also be brainstormed and drawn in a small group.

- Make sure that possible opinions on (negative) stereotypes are not strengthened: discuss the views in a constructive atmosphere.

- You can easily add a writing exercise after part 2: write about stereotypes that are associated with the Finns or a nationality of their own choice.
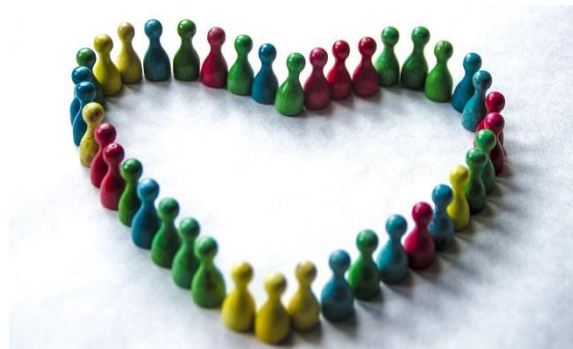
Links to the websites and videos in full length

Intercultural Communication Presentation (slideshow)
https://www.slideshare.net/DhanBharathi/intercultural-communication-presentation

Skills You Need: Intercultural Communication Skills (three texts)
https://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/intercultural-communication.html

Intercultural Communication
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SkBXaKfxl7Y

Cultural diversity
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUO59Emi3eo

Stereotypes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4MRZbWuUmkk

Work, News
and (Formal) Writing

Presenting: Me, Myself and I

Digitalization is gradually gaining the upper hand in working life and especially in job-hunting. By this it is not only meant online job advertisements or interviews that are held via e.g. Skype, but also filmed presentation videos that enable applicants to get an invitation to an actual interview. In this light it gives students a great advantage in the future if they have already practised filming this kind of a video at school.

DESCRIPTION

Students film a short presentation video of themselves for job-hunting. The idea is to practise doing a general video of only presenting oneself, because this exercise has a continuum to the following task *"Why would you be the most suitable applicant for this job?"*, which is more specifically meant for applying to a (certain) job. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to execute these tasks one after the other.

Additional elements, such as text, music or hyperlinks, don't have to be included in the videos, because the focus is on familiarizing to present oneself in a video. Raising awareness of why filming a video is useful in job-hunting is done in part 1.
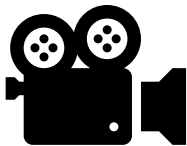

TASK, PART 1

Read the articles Tee oma mainosvideo työnhakuun (Yle) and Video tuo persoonan esiin työnhaussa (Jylkkäri) and discuss the general elements of a good presentation video first with a partner and then with the whole group.

When thinking about the elements, you can also resort to your knowledge in more traditional job-hunting process.

Questions to help the discussion (based on the articles in part 1)

- **Why should you use videos in job-hunting?** (A: Videos make possible to stand out from the crowd, they illustrate the applicant's personality and language skills better, they give more freedom in designing the form and content.)

- **How long should presentation videos be?** (A: Approximately 1-2 minutes.)

- **What kind of clothing, hair and makeup should you have in the video?** (A: Smart and slightly neutral.)

- **What kind of a place should you have for filming?** (A: Neutral, light and non-echoing.)

- **Where should you watch when filming?** (A: Straight to the device's camera, thinking that you are talking to a person.)

- **How should you act in the video?** (A: Be yourself and try to be relaxed.)

- **How should you talk in the video?** (A: Give succinct answers in your own words – don't read from the paper, but have a certain plan on what you are going to say.)

TASK, PART 2

- Film a short and somewhat casual presentation video of yourself for job-hunting. You can do the filming by yourself or ask a friend to film you. The video should last around 1-2 minutes.

- Plan your video's content before you start filming. If you have troubles in coming up with things to tell, resort to the list and videos on making a video resume. When filming, present the points in an order that is the most natural and relevant to you.

- Film as many times as you need. When you are content with the production, send it to the teacher.

<u>Things to tell about yourself in the video (based on the background sources)</u>

- Your name, age and where you are from.

- Where you are studying at the moment and what you would possibly like to do in the future (name a specific field / occupation or describe it to the extent that you can).

- What your strengths are (e.g. social skills or determination) and how they manifest themselves in your life, give short examples.

(- You can also name a couple of school subjects in which you are strong and if you can, explain what you have learnt from them and how it is applicable in working life.)

- Your (possible) work experience in general and what skills you have learnt from them (e.g. perseverance, strengthened your language skills and abilities to work under pressure), give short examples.

- Your hobbies, voluntary work etc. and what kind of skills you have strengthened or learnt from them.

<u>Examples to help planning a video resume</u>

- Video Resume – Example
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e05V9W3UHOY

- Videohakemuksen tekeminen | Duunitorin Työnhakuvinkit
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q4jTBpqOhlg

- Videotyöhakemus / Henri Hoskonen
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SaSm2Wssb7A

TEACHER POINTS

- It might be better for the students to decide themselves whether they want to film the videos alone or with a friend. Even though we live in the digital (native) era, these are quite personal things to talk about, so privacy might be a key ingredient in successful productions.

- Decide on whether the focus of the task is to only practise doing presentation videos, in which case it is not necessary to edit the videos afterwards, or if you want to challenge the students to also use video clip editing tools in adding e.g. text, music or hyperlinks. In this case, the task could be arranged so that the students plan and possibly start filming at school and finish the task by editing at home if they are familiar with these tools.

- Emphasize communicativity and general atmosphere of the video in assessment. Give feedback on these aspects.

"Why would you be the most suitable applicant for this job?"

The title can be a tricky question to respond if one is not prepared! This job interview simulation task is a continuum to the previous exercise *Presenting: Me, Myself and I*, but it is not necessary to execute them one after the other.

DESCRIPTION

In the simulation, students film their versions of a job interview. The idea is to practise doing a video application for job-hunting and also prepare for an actual interview either digitally or face-to-face. The students read a couple of related articles and search example questions that are usually asked in an interview. The results of the preparation part are discussed together with the whole group before filming the interviews.


TASK, PART 1: Preparation

- Read the articles Tällainen on hyvä videohakemus (Rekrytointi.com) and 7 yleisintä työhaastattelukysymystä ja miten niihin kannattaa vastata (Duunitori).

- Search information for other common questions presented in a job interview (the sites don't necessarily have to be in English). Write down approximately 5 questions and compare them with a partner. Be prepared to share your findings to the whole group.

- Keep also in mind the questions that are *not* allowed to be asked in an interview.

Examples of questions that can be asked in an interview

- How would you describe yourself shortly?

- Why are you applying for this job?

- How could you use your education and experience in this job?

- What are your strengths and weaknesses?

- What have you learnt from your previous occupations?

- What are your career plans in the short and long run?

- What motivates you?

- What are your biggest success and failure?

- How do you act under pressure?

- How would you describe a good manager / boss?

- What kind of challenges have you met and how did you manage them?

- Why should we choose you?

- How do your co-workers (or school mates) see you? /

Describe yourself with three adjectives.
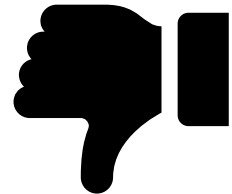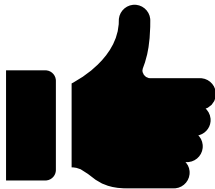
Examples of questions that are **not** allowed
to be asked in an interview

- Do you have children?

- Are you planning to have children?

- What is your political stance?

- What is your religious conviction?

- What is your sexual orientation?

- Do you belong to a trade union?

TASK, PART 2: Scripting and Filming

- In pairs, write a manuscript for a job interview with the help of the questions discussed earlier (all the questions don't have to be presented in the interview). By this is meant the order of questions and some kind of a plan for your personal answers.

- Film **two** videos in pairs, one is the interviewer and the other interviewee – change the parts so that both will be interviewed. Film a general video (meaning that you don't apply to a specific job) or if you already have e.g. a certain summer job in mind, you can try to practise answering questions for that place.

- Send the finished videos to the teacher.

TEACHER POINTS

- If your students have hard times to find common questions for job interviews, you can instruct them to go to the sites that are presented in the sources, of which the example questions have been gathered.

- Instruct your students to send their interviews to you if you want to check them, but it is not necessary.

Sources for the articles and example questions

Tällainen on hyvä videohakemus
https://rekrytointi.com/tyonhaku/tyohakemus/tallainen-hyva-videohakemus/

7 yleisintä työhaastattelukysymystä ja miten niihin kannattaa vastata
https://duunitori.fi/tyoelama/yleisimmat-tyohaastattelukysymykset/

30 hyödyllistä työhaastattelukysymystä:
https://duunitori.fi/tyoelama/tyohaastattelukysymykset/

Mitä työhaastattelussa saa kysyä
https://avointyopaikka.fi/asiaa-tyosta/mita-tyohaastattelussa-saa-kysya

Käytännön vinkkejä työhaastatteluun
https://www.monster.fi/uraneuvonta/artikkeli/kaytannon-vinkkeja-tyohaastatteluun

A Speed Contest with Words

Ready? Set – Go!

DESCRIPTION

This task is possible to do if there are more than one Smart board available in the classroom. The main idea is to have a playful speed contest with prefixes and suffixes after their grammatical formation and principles have been treated with the group.

TASK: Rules

Students are divided into two or three teams and they should line up within these teams. There are 2-3 minutes (depending on the group size) time to solve, one by one in teams, which prefix or suffix should be put to a list of word stems made by the teacher. Some words may have many right answers, and this includes having either a prefix or a suffix as one of the right answers. After the time limit has passed, the group with the most correct answers wins.

List of possible word stems	Right answers
1. GRADUATE	1. under-graduate
2. INVENT	2. invent-or
3. EGO	3. super-ego / ego-istic
4. KITCHEN	4. kitchen-ette
5. WOOD	5. wood-en
6. AGE	6. under-age / leak-age / shrink-age
7. FRIEND	7. friend-ly / friend-ship
8. RIVAL	8. arch-rival / rival-ry
9. LION	9. lion-ess
10. BUILD	10. re-build / build-er
11. PATIENCE	11. im-patience

TEACHER POINTS

- You can advise the students to go through the word stems in numerical order but skip the word if they are not sure about the right answer on their own turn.

- You can decide whether it is allowed to e.g. correct one (possible) wrong answer per a student's turn or is it only allowed after all the word stems have a suggestion for their answer if there's time. In practice this might be hard to control or oversee, so instead of sticking strongly to the rules, it is more important to emphasize having fun and learning.

I Got Some News

Sometimes news can be difficult to read in a foreign language, because the style is slightly different to what one might be used to. Therefore a great opportunity to improve reading news is to familiarize oneself with the production process – students can practise it by writing some news themselves.

DESCRIPTION

With the free online application of Newspaper generator https://newspaper.jaguarpaw.co.uk/, it is possible to create your own (spoof) newspaper articles that follow the form of an actual newspaper. The finished works are downloaded to devices as PDF files.

The format allows different kinds of tasks: a summary in one's own (formal) words of an article originally either in English or Finnish, making and spotting pieces of fake news or writing an article about e.g. an event that has been in the school. These exercises can be executed either separately or consecutively.

TASK ONE: Summary of an Article

- Choose a piece of news from a website or a paper version and summarise its contents, so keep the length in mind. You should have at least 5 points that you find the most relevant.

- Your source newspaper can be either in English or Finnish, but your text cannot be a copy-paste version or a direct translation of the original text.

- Go to https://newspaper.jaguarpaw.co.uk/. You can draft your text before you add it to the newspaper generator – remember the formal style and write in complete sentences!

- When you are ready, download the newspaper to your device.

,,
Valeuutisen määritelmä

Valeuutisen määritelmä on hyvin yksinkertainen: se on harhautustarkoituksessa tehty teksti (tai vaikkapa video), joka matkii ulkoisesti journalismia, mutta ei ole sitä.

Valeuutinen on olennaisilta osiltaan sepitettä. Se voi sekoittaa tosiasioita fiktioonsa, mutta se ei pohjimmiltaan välitä tosiasioista. Valeuutisen tekijän motiivina on yleensä raha, joskus huijaamisesta saatava tyydytys ja toisinaan myös poliittiset pyrkimykset.

[Source](#)

TASK TWO: Making a Piece of Fake News

- Read the article [Valheenpaljastaja: Mitä valeuutiset ovat ja mitä ne eivät ole](#) and recall the definition of fake news and its elements.

- Choose a piece of news from a website or a paper version and summarise its contents, so keep the length in mind. You should have at least 5 points that you find the most relevant.

- Add fictive elements to your text. Think about how these elements could sound plausible in your topic – minor changes from the truth may go through better.

- Go to [https://newspaper.jaguarpaw.co.uk/.](https://newspaper.jaguarpaw.co.uk/) You can draft your text before you add it to the newspaper generator – remember the formal style and write in complete sentences!

- When you are ready, download the newspaper to your device.

TASK THREE: Spotting Fake News

You can realise tasks 1-3 consecutively: after having created articles according to the contents of tasks one and two, students switch their articles in pairs and try to spot which article has fake elements in it and which is a pure summary of the original text.


TASK FOUR: A Piece of News about a School Event

- Write a (humorous) piece of news of e.g. a school event, either a passed or a forthcoming one.

- The topic can be chosen freely: if the matriculation exams are approaching, write about them and ask a couple of comments from your school mates about the feelings the exams raise or interview your friends about going to lunch: what their favourite school meals are and what kind of expert opinions do they have on today's serving.

- Go to https://newspaper.jaguarpaw.co.uk/. You can draft your text before you add it to the newspaper generator – remember the semi-formal style and write in complete sentences!

- When you are ready, download the newspaper to your device. Compare your articles with a friend.

TEACHER POINTS

- Because the students' texts probably don't fill the whole page in the newspaper generator, the application has other "pieces of news" ready to fill the blank space.

- All the tasks require basic knowledge in the elements of news, so make sure that they have been treated enough before giving these assignments.

- Tasks two and three also require basic knowledge in the elements of fake news, so make sure that they have been treated enough before giving these assignments. The article in task two is to recall these elements but if you have time, you can of course discuss them more thoroughly.
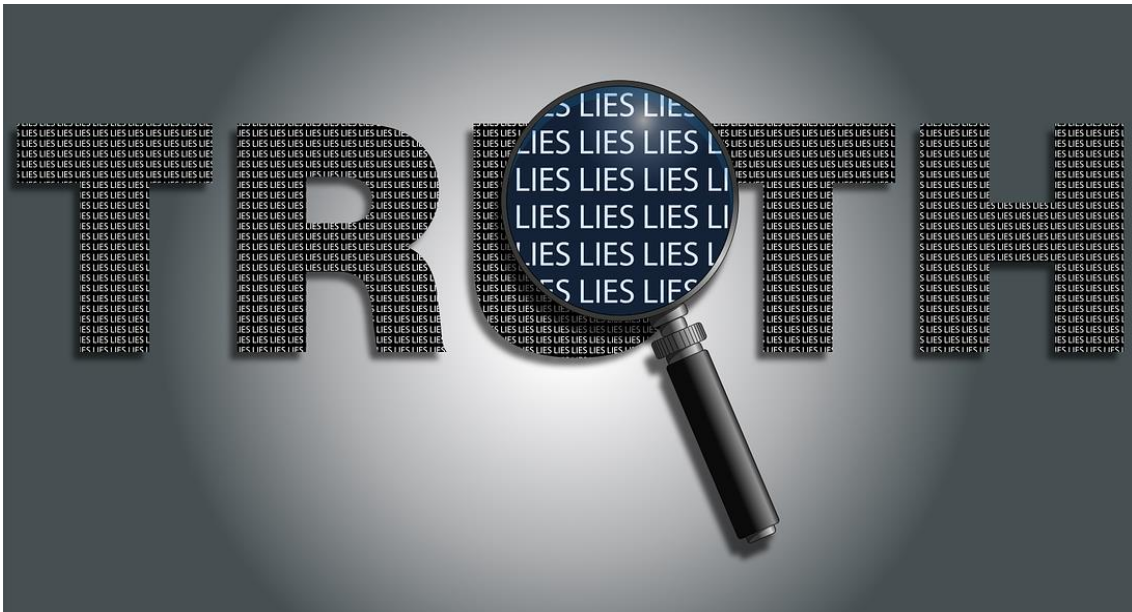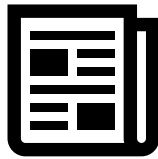
Idiotic or idiomatic language?

An idiom is a group of words in a fixed order that have a particular meaning, which is different from the meanings of each word on their own. In other words, the figurative meaning of an idiomatic phrase is different from its literal meaning. The English language is full of idiomatic expressions and therefore it is good to know what they mean!

DESCRIPTION

Students write short texts (poems, rap lyrics, tales etc.), in which they use as many idioms as possible. The task is not meant to be too serious, just to familiarize oneself with different idiomatic expressions.

The Book Creator https://bookcreator.com/ application is used to display the finished texts. It can be downloaded on the App Store and Google Play, or without downloading it requires logging in with a Google account (i.e. gmail) on tablets, laptops and desktops.


TASK

- Create a new book with Book Creator and customize it to your taste.

- Choose **two** of the following exercises which you will include in your book:

- A poem or rap/ song lyrics, in which you use as many idioms as possible
- A short tale, in which you use as many idioms as possible
- Definitions of approximately 7 idioms in your own words
- Finding Finnish equivalents of approximately 7 idioms

- Check out idioms from e.g. English idioms (EF) or Commonly used Idioms (Smart Words)

TEACHER POINTS

- The customizability of Book Creator is vast: you can type text with keyboard or draw with the mouse, you can change the page colours and add pictures etc.

- If you want to take a closer look at your students' creations, instruct them to save their books as PDFs (in the reading mode, press 'share menu' button and select 'print').

- You can also limit the number of idioms by making a list of your own according to the presented websites.

- The degree of difficulty can be raised by instructing to write an expository text with only a couple of suitable idioms.

- A couple of workable exercises for idioms: students create visual idioms with the help of emoticons or rebuses with pictures.
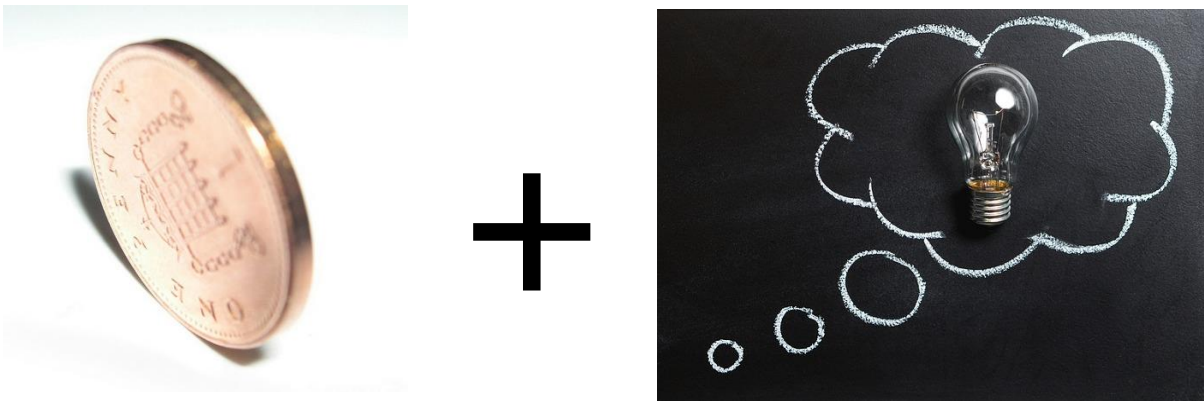
Do you know the answer to this idiom? (A penny for your thoughts)

The source links in full length

English idioms

https://www.ef.com/english-resources/english-idioms/

Commonly used Idioms

http://www.smart-words.org/quotes-sayings/idioms-meaning.html