

**FINNISH EFL TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES DURING THE  
EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING PERIOD IN SPRING  
2020**

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| Abstract<br><p>Keväällä 2020 COVID-19-tautia levittävä uusi koronavirus levisi Suomeen, johtaen laajamittaisiin poikkeusoloihin. Kouluopetus järjestettiin hetkellisesti etänä, jotta viruksen leviämistä saataisiin hidastettua. Tämän Pro gradu -tutkielman tarkoitus oli selvittää, minkälaisia asioita englannin opettajat Suomessa kokivat etäopetusjakson aikana. Selvitimme englannin opettajien käyttämiä etäopetusmetodeja, työssä esiin tulleita haasteita ja mahdollisuuksia sekä opettajien kokemusten vaikutusta heidän ajatuksiinsa opettamisesta ja opettajuudesta.</p> <p>Tutkimusaineisto kerättiin kesällä ja syksyllä 2020 video- ja sähköpostihaastattelujen muodossa. Haastatteluihin osallistui yhdeksän (N=9) englannin opettajaa peruskoulusta ja lukiosta. Analysoitava data koostui 84 sivusta litteroituja haastatteluja ja 21 sivusta sähköpostihaastatteluja. Aineisto analysoitiin kvalitatiivisesti aineistolähtöisen sisällönanalyysiin menetelmällä.</p> <p>Tulosten mukaan opettajat käyttivät paljon synkronoitua viestintää, esimerkiksi Google Meet-videopuheluita, tuntien järjestämiseen. Englannin tuntien sisältö ei juuri muuttunut, mutta työtapoja oli muokattava virtuaaliseen ympäristöön sopiviksi. Moni opettaja hyödynsi lähiopetuksesta tuttuja työtapoja soveltaen niitä uuteen tilanteeseen. Tulokset osoittavat, että kevään 2020 etäopetusjakso koettiin kokonaisuudessaan melko positiivisena, joskin myös haastavana. Opettajat kokivat työmäärän lisääntyneen sekä työn ja vapaa-ajan rajoittamisen hankalana. Eniten haasteita koettiin vuorovaikutuksen puutteessa, teknologisissa ongelmissa sekä arvioinnissa. Toisaalta opettajat kokivat etäopetusjakson edistäneen omia ja oppilaiden teknologisia taitoja, madaltaneen kynnystä sähköisten alustojen käyttöön kieltenopetuksessa sekä tuoneen esiin uusia työkaluja opetukseen. Positiivisista kokemuksista huolimatta osa opettajista toi selkeästi esiin, että he eivät haluaisi opettaa etänä pitkäaikaisesta. Kuitenkin opettajat löysivät myös itsestään uusia puolia etäopetuksen aikana, joten kokemus vaikutti mahdollisesti myös joidenkin opettajien kuvaan itsestään opettajina.</p> <p>Jatkossa olisi tärkeää kiinnittää huomiota teknisiin taitoihin ja virtuaalisiin ympäristöihin soveltuvaan pedagogiikkaan opettajakoulutuksessa. Jatkotutkimus voisi kohdistua yhdistämään eri tahojen, kuten opettajien, oppilaiden ja huoltajien kokemuksia etäopetuksesta. Tulevaisuudessa olisi olennaista myös kartoittaa laajasti valtakunnallisella tasolla kokemuksia etäopetuksesta poikkeusolojen aikana, jotta vastaavanlaisiin tilanteisiin osataan kehittää tehokkaita toimintamalleja.</p> |   |
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## APPENDICES

# 1 INTRODUCTION

In spring 2020, a newly discovered coronavirus outbreak began in Wuhan, China, spreading all over the world. This resulted in a global pandemic (see WHO, 2020; Kokkonen and Myöhänen 2020). Consequently, several emergency measures were taken to keep the virus from spreading uncontrollably, as governments all over the world made new policies and decisions to limit the movements and actions of people (see, for example, Hale et al. 2020). In Finland, one of the precautionary restrictions was temporarily closing schools and providing teaching through alternative methods (Yle News, 2020). All levels of education from primary school to higher education started obligatory remote teaching on March 18, 2020 at latest (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020a). In practice, this meant that teaching moved to a “distance format”, with classes held on electronic platforms and tasks provided (and handed in) either online or via printed study packs. The remote teaching period was originally scheduled to last for a month (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020a). However, the emergency remote teaching period of spring 2020 was eventually extended until May 5, 2020 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020b).

The initial sudden closure of schools and transition to online classes or independent studying in March 2020, placed a great amount of pressure on both teachers and students. Teachers had to re-plan and reorganize their lessons, come up with new material, find reliable ways of contacting students, and support the needs of each student, all the while ensuring that the goals set in national and local curricula are met. Students had to adjust to working from home, maintaining a functioning schedule and practicing increased self-control and time management.

Remote teaching has evoked a great amount of discussion and news articles. To illustrate, news sites in Finland have published articles on parent's opinions (Juvonen 2020), teacher experiences (Kosonen 2020) and students' struggles (Niemonen 2020). In addition, different organizations have already started to research this topic. Karvi (Finnish Education Evaluation Centre) recently published a report on students' and teachers' remote education experiences (Niemonen 2020). According to the report, students felt that they did not receive enough support and experienced loss of motivation. More than half of the teachers who participated in the research experienced difficulties in lesson planning and giving feedback as well as facilitating and sustaining interaction (Niemonen 2020). While keeping these challenges in mind, there have also been research with more positive results (see for example Pietikäinen, 2020) that have started discussions about the potential long-term changes and opportunities remote teaching could bring to education. What is more, some municipalities and other education organizers have also expressed a desire to potentially continue and broaden distance teaching under normal, non-emergency, circumstances as remote teaching has functioned satisfactorily (Pantsu 2020, Kosonen 2020). It is clear that distance education is a very current and important research topic.

In fact, there are indeed several projects examining remote teaching in Finland during the pandemic. To illustrate, around the same time we began conducting our study, in May 2020 the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere launched a research project examining how the emergency measures in spring 2020 affected schooling, teaching and well-being of school staff, students and parents (University of Helsinki & University of Tampere 2020; Ahtiainen et al. 2020). In addition, the University of Turku began conducting a study on remote teaching during the pandemic in April 2020, analyzing remote teaching and experiences of it from different points of view as well (University of Turku 2020). These studies by universities are large-scale and focus on remote teaching from multiple perspectives, but there are also recent small-scale studies, such as Jokela and Kesäjärvi-Lehtinen's (2020) MA thesis where they interviewed 3rd and 4th grade students on their experiences of remote teaching in spring 2020 and how it affected their motivation to study.

We want to contribute to this field of study, because as future educators, we also find the topic of distance teaching personally interesting. We want to examine this rather unique phenomenon of sudden shift to remote teaching and give new information on the Finnish context. We are English teacher students, so naturally we are most interested in English teaching perspective.

This will provide us with some insight into how distance language teaching and teacher training could be developed.

The present small-scale study focuses on teachers regarding the sudden change into remote teaching and the experiences it has produced. More specifically, in this study we will explore how the spring 2020 emergency remote education and transition to distant learning has affected English teacher's work, their thoughts and experiences, EFL teaching methods. We are also exploring the possible opportunities and challenges the teachers have encountered. We aimed to gather information about remote teaching experiences that will provide more details that can help understand how emergency remote teaching in spring 2020 was carried out in practice. As such, our research questions are as follows:

1. How were the English classes conducted during the emergency remote teaching period?
2. What are the possible challenges and opportunities that distance learning has brought up?
3. What kind of attitudes and experiences EFL teachers had of the emergency remote teaching period and how has it affected their thoughts on teaching?

This study complements the larger-scale studies, providing more in-depth descriptions of language teacher experiences during emergency remote teaching. This could aid planning and executing distance language teaching in the future, especially concerning EFL teaching. Our aim is that the present study will provide more insights into how language teaching adjusted (and can be adjusted) for distance learning and how teachers have experienced their work during this exceptional time. Teachers and policymakers can benefit from our study because our research on teachers' experiences and practices during the global pandemic can provide examples of areas of improvement or otherwise showcase how the hands-on language teaching work operates at a distance.

## **2 DISTANCE EDUCATION**

In this Chapter, we will explore different concepts and research relevant to distance teaching. Although distance education does not always take place online, this is the most common medium for it nowadays. Consequently, our background and theory focuses on online distance teaching and learning. First, we will begin by setting the context of this study. Second, we define distance education and introduce other relevant terminology and concepts. Third, we will discuss the development of distance education from its early stages to the current situation. Next, we will explore the information and communication technology (ICT) focus in distance education. Finally, we will explain the difference between online learning and emergency remote teaching, which is crucial to understanding the context in which this study took place.

Distance teaching has been gaining more and more attention as technology, and consequently also educational technology, continues developing (Salehi et al. 2015: 63). Developments and advancements in educational technology naturally leads to new demands and opportunities in education. The last 20 years has seen a growth in distance teaching studies as researchers have been trying to map out the developing field and create standards. Some reasons for the increasing amount of online teaching are, for example, the growing demand for education and its accessibility. For example, in Canada both the number of courses offered online and online enrolments in higher education have increased significantly over the last 5 years (Bates 2018: 11). Similarly, in 2014, 14% of all higher education students in the USA completed their courses exclusively online and another 14% took some of their courses online (Allen and Seaman 2016: 10).

In Finland, higher education seems to also take advantage of the option to offer online courses. Thus, distance education is not a brand-new phenomenon, at least in the higher education context. However, during the lockdown period of spring 2020, all levels of education had to provide distance teaching. What makes the current situation interesting is that in a normal situation, the Basic Education Act does not allow full-time distance education at a comprehensive level (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020c). According to the Finnish National Board for Education, teaching at a comprehensive level happens in a safe environment appointed by the school, and therefore Basic Education Act does not allow for distance education where students can choose the time and place to learn. However, due to the unprecedented coronavirus lockdown, temporary changes to the Basic Education Act (628/1998) and The Act on European Schooling Helsinki (1463/2007) were made in December 2020 to accommodate the current need for education to be carried out at a distance. The law, however, emphasizes that distance education is to be a temporary emergency measure and the decision to shift into distance education can only be made for one month at a time. This shows that education is considered an important value that should be available to individuals during all times. There is a clear objective to provide the best education possible even during a global pandemic.

The circumstances during which distance education was implemented in spring 2020 are unusual because distance education was an emergency measure to thwart the virus. However, it is still worthwhile to have a brief look at the Finnish National Core Curriculum, from here on NCC, in relation to distance education. The Finnish NCC could be seen to provide a possible basis for online distance education, as it supports the use of ICT and diverse learning environments. The NCC for both comprehensive (POPS 2014) and upper secondary school (LOPS 2015) mention the necessity for versatile learning environments and teaching methods to support learning. The NCC for Comprehensive School (POPS) recognizes learning as a multilayered process and because of this the learning community should be flexible (2014: 27). This notion of flexibility is important so that the NCC can fit all the different contexts in the Finnish education field. In addition to the learning process being flexible, the NCC (POPS 2014: 29) also states that learning ought to happen in diverse and adaptable environments and offer versatile pedagogical solutions. The National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary School (LOPS 2015: 15) explicitly mentions distance and hybrid education as means to further learner development. The offered online courses should consist of independent study with a

teacher's guidance and diverse use of online platforms and resources. ICT is also mentioned as a means to widen the learning environments outside of the school (LOPS 2015: 15) and the students should be encouraged to explore and use ICT to their advantage in both independent and collaborative ways (LOPS 2015: 14, 34). These notions in the NCCs are what enabled the sudden change to distance education in the spring 2020 without further needs to change the education laws to accommodate the sudden need for change.

However, we must take notice that some of the research and standards for distance education we cover may not directly translate to the context of our study. Many of the studies we reference focus on distance teaching in higher education. Distance education is often considered independent by nature, and responsibility often falls on the students, which could be why most of the courses, and so research, focus on online courses in higher education. In addition, we must also take into consideration that most of the studies discussed focus on courses and exercises that were purposefully designed to be executed online. In these contexts, teachers have had time to prepare for online teaching, whereas our study focuses on emergency online teaching where teachers were suddenly required to teach remotely regardless of their prior knowledge of distance education and ICT skills. The courses taught by the teachers who participated in our study were not originally designed to be delivered online and the distance teaching period was temporary.

## **2.1 Distance education definitions and concepts**

First, it is important to define what 'distance education' means and entails. Distance education is a way of providing education, for example, in cases when it is not possible to arrange traditional teaching that involves direct face-to-face contact between the educator and the learner, as Nummenmaa (2012: 20) discusses when she defines some main principles of distance education. Nummenmaa (2012) points out that another principle often associated with distance education is the aim of providing learners with the best education possible regardless of physical distance or learners' inability to attend classes. Additionally, Nummenmaa (2012) defines distance education as all education supported by ICT that takes place in situations where the teacher and learner are not physically present in the same location.

In a similar fashion to Nummenmaa, Holmberg (2005: 166) defines distance education as “a form of teaching and learning which is not under the supervision of teachers present with their students in lecture rooms or generally on the same premises”. Holmberg (2005) also suggests that distance education consists of two main parts: learning materials provided and “interaction between students and tutors” (as well as possible peer group interaction between students). Compared to the two definitions above, Visser’s (2012: 25) definition is more learner-focused: he defines distance education as “any set of purposefully devised procedures and resources to support people’s learning in ways that focus on the learners’ ability to choose when and where to engage in a particular instance of learning”. The definitions for distance education presented have a slight difference in the focus but they share similarities, as we will point out in the next paragraph.

Nummenmaa’s (2012) definitions of distance education share clear similarities with Holmberg’s (2005) definition, as both clearly focus on the absence of physical contact between educators and learners, although Nummenmaa also adds ICT to the definition. Visser (2012), on the other hand, focuses on learners’ ability to study more autonomously and without the usual constraints of time and space, and he also underlines the fact that distance education is purposeful and planned. Because of the notions of purposefully planned distance learning, Visser’s (2012) definition is furthest away from the contexts of the present study. Despite the differences, all the definitions imply the same notion of education taking place without the necessity of learners and educators physically or simultaneously inhabiting the same space. However, as Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 2) state, there is not one unified definition for distance education. Some similarities and elements (such as the aforementioned lack of physical contact between teachers and learners) are a given, but different definitions can emphasize different aspects of distance education, such as learner-autonomy or the use of ICT. According to Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 2), original definitions have focused more on the lack of physical contact between teachers, individual learners and learner-groups, while some newer definitions put emphasis on the interaction taking place via some type of communication device (see also Rice 2006; Moore & Thompson 1990).

There are various terms that are used interchangeably when discussing this type of education: besides distance education terms like distance learning, e-learning and web-based instruction are used (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012: 2). Besides the aforementioned, some terms also refer to the virtual environment of this type of education: terms like virtual learning, virtual

schools and virtual teaching are some examples (ibid.). Thus, it is clear that the definition of distance education is not unequivocal, but it is definitely distinguishable from traditional classroom instruction (or contact teaching) and self-study that takes place without any instruction or institution-based agency (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 2; Rice 2006: 426.) In the context of this study, we focus on distance teaching as education taking place in circumstances where teachers and students do not physically inhabit the same space and where the use of ICT is significant. We will be using the terms distance teaching and remote teaching to refer to this concept in the present study. Additionally, the context of this study is the emergency remote teaching, which will be distinguished from a more standard online distance teaching in Section 2.4. For now, we will examine a few more relevant terms and concepts related to distance education in general.

After establishing the different definitions and names used for distance education, we will introduce some relevant terminology and concepts. Some of these are closely related to language distance education in particular. First, we explain the term *Computer Assisted Language Learning* (CALL), which refers to the variety of technological tools and resources used to aid language learning (Blake 2008). Online learning is considered a subcategory for CALL (Compton 2009: 74). The tools and resources consist of different web-based and online activities, for example, blogs, web pages and online learning platforms. CALL also includes other multimedia tools, such as DVDs, and language learning computer programs. A good CALL program should follow the constructivist learning approach to draw from the language learners' previous knowledge and engage them in problem-solving (Blake 2008). Furthermore, as everything else in language education, CALL is also tied to a context and this context impacts the chosen technology and its use (Stockwell 2012: 2). Therefore, Blake (2008) suggests that teachers are responsible for selecting the best CALL learning material to fit their students, just like they already do with physical textbooks. This is already happening, as we can see from Son's (2014: 183) study on in-service language teachers, where the teachers were said to be already actively searching for new ways to acquire knowledge and skills for CALL. As the context of the present study is emergency distance language teaching where online environments were often employed, CALL is a relevant concept to take into consideration. Teachers giving distance language instruction had to consider which tools and resources to use in their teaching in meaningful ways that would support learners' construction of new knowledge.

The second relevant concept is *Computer Mediated Communication*, or CMC, which refers to the different ways people communicate through technological tools. In language learning, one concern is always how to facilitate communication, especially in the distance education contexts. To counter this, Blake (2008: 70) argues that “teachers can create the same opportunities for interactions within the context of computer-mediated communication (CMC), whether in real time (synchronous, SCMC) or deferred time (asynchronous, APMC).” Nowadays, there are multiple ways to communicate online with blogs, chats, wikis, social media and other tools and platforms. CMC tools offer language learners opportunities to solve communication problems together, and some aspects of CMC tools are said to enhance processing of information (Lin 2015: 262). In addition to CMC providing opportunities for enhanced learning by giving students opportunities to collaborate with peers and process information in depth, by employing CMC tasks, teachers can broaden language learning outside the classroom and so the students can use more time learning a language even though learning might be incidental (ibid.). According to some studies, CMC tasks seem to be more motivating to students (see Bueno-Alastuey 2011), and Blake (2011: 19) argues that CALL and CMC can be beneficial to modern language learning. The development of educational technology has enabled researchers and educators to strive for a more learner-centered approach in online settings (Blake 2011: 25). It is then interesting to examine whether or not teachers reported carefully considering their options related to CALL and CMC (i.e. various tools and resources) in their distance language lessons. In the context of this study, teachers might have not had the time to make multiple conscious adjustments in the unique situation, but it is still worthwhile to consider how CALL and CMC tools could be used in emergency remote language teaching.

Third, *blended learning* is a concept closely connected to CALL. In the CALL context, Leakey and Ranchoux (2006: 358) give the following definition to blended learning:

“the adaptation in a local context of previous CALL and non-CALL pedagogies into an integrated program of language teaching and learning drawing on different mixes of media and delivery to produce an optimum mix that addresses the unique needs and demands of that context.”

Similarly, Huang (2019: 190) also defines blended learning as an instruction mode that combines the best aspects of both face-to-face learning and online learning. According to Scida and Saury’s (2006: 518), the definition of hybrid learning (another name for blended learning)

is that traditional classroom instruction is supported by computer-based or online activities that could also be used instead of face-to-face learning. To these fairly similar definitions given to blended learning, Huang (2019) adds that blended learning can cover different levels of education and a variety of subject areas. Blended learning can be perceived to have multiple benefits to learning, and Scida and Saury (2006: 528) go as far as to say that in their attempt to research hybrid learning's impact on student and classroom performance, they achieved "the ideal teaching and learning scenario in language acquisition, guiding students to master form, structure, grammar, and vocabulary, while also being able to speak, read, and write with greater fluency". Consequently, in the light of the positive results gained from the implementation of a hybrid course, they suggest that more online activities should be incorporated into language learning courses to improve learning and the quality of classroom instruction. In the context of the present study, it would be fascinating to observe whether the distance teaching experience affected the teachers' attitudes toward blended learning solutions that could be implemented in the future.

Finally, *social presence* is often mentioned in the context of distance education, maybe partly due to the question, "How to establish social presence when members of the learning community are physically separated?". Mykota (2018: 2) defines social presence as the way learners interact with each other in an online learning environment (see also Garriet 2010, Cleveland-Innes et al. 2019). Gunawardena similarly (1995: 151) describes social presence as "the degree to which a person is perceived as a 'real person' in mediated communication". According to Mykota (2018), social presence means that there is a perception of real people behind the interactions taking place online, and this helps the learners interact more freely. Mykota divides this connection to others into themes, the first one being the feeling of communication with real people though CMC. Second theme is intimacy and immediacy, followed by the third theme: purposeful communication in a trusting environment. These aforementioned themes could be accomplished, for example, by a teacher showing themselves on a video call and through video or digital storytelling. Guwanawardena (1995: 151) adds that the communications medium's capacity to transmit nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions, direction of looking and dress, also have an effect on the experienced social presence. Creating a social presence is especially important when the learners do not know each other or the teacher beforehand, and, consequently, Meyer (2014: 12) says it may be less important in a situation where the students and teachers are already familiar with each other

from previous contact classes. According to Mykota (2018:2), it is important to examine “the relationship between social presence and online learning”, as it is about individuals creating interpersonal relationships, communicating and presenting themselves online. This is clearly relevant in the context of distance education that takes place online or at least utilizes some online platforms. One could argue that teachers and students alike ought to build some sort of social presence in order for the learning community to thrive and function efficiently.

## **2.2 History and current situation**

Distance education has become more and more accessible and relevant during recent decades. It is, however, by no means a brand-new phenomenon of the 21st century. Distance education has been practiced in the past as well, long before the emergence of various advanced technologies and the internet. Distance education has been systematically practiced at least since the mid-nineteenth century via letters, documents, and later, audio recordings and broadcasts (Moore & Thompson 1990: 9–11; Holmberg 2005: 167; Palvia et al. 2018: 233; Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 3). According to Moore and Thompson (1990: 9), correspondence education, the first form of distance education, was invented to provide education to individuals unable to physically attend classes, and later it was also used to gain access to teachers of certain subjects that were not available near the learners. It is also interesting to note that the first international organization relating to distance education, the International Council for Correspondence Education (ICCE), was established already in 1938 (Moore & Thompson 1990: 10).

So, distance education has begun to develop as an area of educational interest even before the establishment of the vast technological advancements and the spread of the World Wide Web, which affect our educational theories and practices now. As can be inferred from the history of distance education, it does not necessarily need to take place via online or through virtual media, although nowadays it mostly does, and some researchers, like Nummenmaa (2012), emphasize the use of ICT in their definitions of distance education. It is also clear from the related or interchangeable terms like e-learning, online learning and web-based instruction, that distance education today is closely associated with technology and the internet. Regardless, non-electronic interactive communication (such as communicating via letters) is also a valid form

of distance education when it is used to connect educators and learners in order to provide and partake in education at a distance (Rice 2006: 426).

As mentioned before, today distance education is undeniably often linked with technology, electronic communications, and the internet. Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 3) suggest that “a new era” of distance education was caused by the development of ICT and data networks. With the development of these two, new distance communication opportunities were established, and previous interaction practices became easier (ibid.). Distance education can be achieved through various methods such as video or audio conferencing, online applications, chats, email and other forms of computer mediated communication (Rice 2006: 426; Nummenmaa 2012: 25–26). Instruction in distance education can take place synchronously, “in real time” (such as via video connection) or asynchronously “with students working at different times” (for example, via email) (Rice 2006: 426; see also Nummenmaa 2012: 20). Teaching can also take place completely at a distance or be a part of a more traditional education setting in blended learning (Nummenmaa 2012: 20). As technology advances, so do the opportunities and possibilities of accomplishing distance education (Nummenmaa 2012: 2). Naturally, as distance education is being researched more and more, the research affects distance learning courses, which in turn again affect research (LaPointe & Linder-VanBerschot 2012: 8), and so the field keeps constantly changing and adjusting.

Like throughout its history, today, distance education is utilized for various reasons. Distance education can offer solutions for multiple different educational issues. To illustrate, LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot (2012: 6) have pointed out that in many countries, distance education can be the only way to access education. More specific examples, provided by Nummenmaa (2012: 21) and Rice (2006: 427–428) among others, include a situation where a school may have such a low number of students studying a certain subject that connecting a teacher at a distance may be more cost-effective than hiring a teacher of that subject at the school. Additionally, in some countries, distance education may offer an affordable way to increase the quality of education or ensure educational equality in remote areas. This can be done by employing specialized teachers who may live across the country or even in another country or state to provide instruction at a distance. In some of these circumstances, students also often attend a more traditional classroom and only some of the instruction is at a distance. In these circumstances, there is most likely at least some guidance and support available locally (at the school or somewhere else physically accessible) (Nummenmaa 2012: 21; Rice 2006: 427–428).

These reasons for employing distance education can be defined to be educator-focused or administration-centered.

Other possible reasons for utilizing distance education can be learner-focused. Individual students may not be able to or want to attend traditional education. For instance, students may also live in rather remote areas with difficulties in reaching educational institutions. Moreover, a student may be hospitalized or otherwise unable to attend classes due to health restrictions. There can also be some temporary reasons for needing distance education, such as a holiday trip or a sports competition (Nummenmaa 2012: 21; Rice 2006: 427–428). As Nummenmaa (2012: 21) points out, these situations where students are far away or not physically attending a class can be pedagogically and administratively challenging, as local guidance and real-time meetings are harder to establish compared to a situation where the teacher is the one operating at a distance. In the present context, distance education was employed because of multiple reasons, such as to guarantee the delivery of education despite the temporary closure of schools, and to allow students to attend lessons while being quarantined at home. Moreover, remote teaching was implemented to ensure the health and safety of educators and students, as well as their families.

Currently, higher education uses distance teaching more and more, as it can allow institutions to increase student numbers without the need to accommodate these students physically (Croft et al. 2010: 29). In addition, Palvia et al. (2018: 235) claim that online education, which can be viewed as distance education taking place online, has also been on the rise due to economic changes and shifts in college enrollments, especially in the USA. Moreover, Palvia et al. (2018: 238) also conclude that continuing education and life-long learning, which is realized by supplementally training employees in work-related issues, is increasingly taking place online and, thus, at a distance. Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 3) also agree with Croft et al. (2010) and Palvia et al. (2018), stating that most distance education takes place in adult education, higher education and workforce education. Clearly, different reasons can increase the demand and use of online distance education.

Although distance education is utilized most often in adult education, it is also increasingly used in comprehensive and secondary schools, especially in remote areas (Nummenmaa 2012: 2). Furthermore, as Rice (2006: 425) claims, distance education aimed at younger students is increasing. Still, as distance education is less utilized in comprehensive and secondary schools,

it is substantially less researched in these circumstances compared to adult distance education (Rice 2006: 430; Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 3). During the emergency remote teaching period in spring 2020, all school levels from comprehensive to higher education had to shift to distance education, which was completely unprecedented in Finland. This has opened up new opportunities and demands for examining how not only higher education distance education, but also comprehensive and secondary school distance education operates in practice.

Despite the growing interest and constant developments in distance education, the distance education research field currently has some issues that should be taken into consideration. LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot (2012: 14) criticize the field of distance education for neglecting to carry out meaningful research that would be beneficial for the future development of distance education, especially in international settings. LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot (2012) call for both practice-driven and theory-driven research. On one hand, keeping practical implementations in mind when conducting practice driven research can help educators in their actual everyday needs regarding distance education. On the other hand, a theory-driven approach ensures that findings and developments are properly established and maintained (LaPointe & Linder-VanBerschot 2012: 14). This is an important point to make in any field of research that develops fast and is constantly changing.

A potential issue that distance education research must consider, is to keep the research up to date with the fast developments of technology. Technology and potential distance education tools are always developing and so the research needs to adjust and inquire accordingly. However, as a fast-developing field, distance education offers great opportunities to be innovative. Visser (2012: 27) argues on this topic that distance education research should aim to bring forth new innovations for learning and teaching. According to Visser (2012), distance education research is an opportunity to establish new ideas and advance learning comprehensively, but enough time and effort is needed to make actual advancements.

Another issue of the field is that currently, the opportunities of developing and executing distance education are not the same everywhere. A considerable amount of distance education research comes from higher education context and a great deal of it is based on the USA (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 6). Concerning this, LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot (2012: 9) point out that distance education is “being developed according to Western standards” so it is also worth noting that there are some concerns about the lack of notion of smaller languages

and cultures within the field of distance education and its development. LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot (2012: 10) also present another question and problem in the distance education field: CMC is often used in distance education to accomplish interaction between educators, learners and learner-groups, but the chances different areas and countries have for accessing and establishing stable connections are unequal. Likewise, Visser (2012: 26) highlights the importance of keeping regional and global differences in mind when researching and developing distance education. As Visser (2012) claims, “There is a major difference between a developing country and an industrialized nation. One solution to a problem does not work in all contexts.” Distance education can also take place across country borders, in an international setting, and, naturally, this produces new challenges. Students in different countries have different levels of internet availability and stability, in addition to the challenges caused by time zones.

All the issues discussed above are important to keep in mind when examining the field of distance education and conducting research. Distance education is a wide and complex topic and field of research, as it can take place on multiple education levels, in various different settings, in a local or global context, and due to several different reasons. While our research focuses on emergency distance education within one country, there are still possible issues, such as differences in internet connection and socioeconomic backgrounds of the students, which affect the distance education. In other words, even within the same country, distance education resources and possibilities are not necessarily equal. More challenges and opportunities of distance education, specifically regarding language learning, are discussed in Sections 3.2. and 3.3. For now, we will proceed to examine the utilization of ICT in distance education.

### **2.3 ICT focus in distance education**

In this Section, we explore the use of ICT in distance education. In most forms of education, educational technology has become increasingly significant due to continuous development and evolution of technology and internet availability (Salehi et al. 2015: 63; Palvia et al. 2018: 233). Today in particular, the utilization of ICT and virtual learning environments (VLEs) are closely linked with distance education. As discussed earlier, not all distance education is technology-based, but a great deal of it is. According to Salehi et al. (2015: 63), the use of

technology enables educators to potentially make instruction “easier and more effective for learners”, when used appropriately. Salehi et al. (2015) also point out that the use of ICT can aid learners in attaining necessary 21<sup>st</sup> century skills that are crucial in our everyday lives today – whether we are at school, work or home. This is also in line with the transversal competence mentioned in the Finnish NCC (POPS 2014: 23), especially with the goal (L5) of ICT competence. Cowie and Sakui (2015: 272) point out that teachers and students can also benefit from the use of ICT in assessment, as it enables almost immediate feedback, and educators can quickly make adjustments to tasks and activities.

ICT is a viable resource for teaching and learning, as it offers opportunities for authentic learning and takes learners’ needs into consideration (POPS 2014: 219). The possibilities that ICT offers for teaching are many, and one of the most notable for language learning in particular is the possibility to actively engage and interact with the world. ICT is often mentioned as a part of the diverse set of tools and resources used for learning in the Finnish NCCs. However, in the Finnish NCCs, the use of ICT most likely refers to online platforms used as a part of classroom instruction and teaching. Regardless, online environments are a good opportunity to incorporate versatile learning methods and distance learning. They also enable cooperation beyond just the classroom, which fits well with the NCCs’ goals for education. While distance education in the context of our study was involuntary and sudden, it also offers a good chance to enhance diverse ways of teaching and learning that the NCCs call for on multiple occasions (POPS 2014, LOPS 2015).

VLEs offer various and diverse platforms and support multiple pedagogical approaches. New developments in technology also have the potential to inspire, innovate and change e-learning as Salehi et al. (2015: 63) discuss. Likewise, Palvia et al. (2018: 233) point out that new frameworks, models and methods are constantly being developed, as online education is changing rapidly, and this learning environment is very dynamic. Indeed, for example, Salehi et al. (2015: 64) advocate for technology and the internet being implemented for online learning more efficiently and in an up-to-date manner. One could argue that this same notion also affects distance education, as concepts such as e-learning and online learning are so closely linked to distance education. In other words, developments and issues in online learning and the utilization of ICT are likely to also influence distance education as distance education can often take place in VLEs or at least utilize some online platforms, tools and pedagogies.

As the possibilities with ICT and distance learning are many, consequently, various factors need to be considered when designing and developing online education and distance education that utilizes e-learning. Although technology is an important part of distance education, some researchers, like Theofanos and Redish (2003: 51), have pointed out that it is not the technology itself that should be the basis of e-learning design but rather, there should be more focus on understanding the users of technology and how they actually utilize the tools. Furthermore, Carlson and Everett (2000: 4–8) argue that because the learning experience is different between face-to-face and distance education, teachers may have to adapt their old materials to fit them to the new delivery method and suggest they take advantage of technology while doing this. In other words, specific learning environments should be considered in designing teaching and learning, as each learning environment offers particular advantages and resources.

In the case of online learning and distance education, technology usage and its pedagogically meaningful utilization need to be carefully considered when planning instruction. Simply copying face-to-face instruction and moving it to a different platform will not necessarily produce quality learning, as then the uniqueness of each learning environment has not been taken into account. As Salehi et al. (2015: 67) point out, “The design of E-learning content is not a simple process; as the content should be carefully planned, designed and evaluated in order to ensure efficient and simple use.” Holmberg (2005: 168) adds that clear and detailed definitions to learning goals are needed, and states that they could prove useful in distance teaching. However, in the context of our study, this might have been difficult to achieve due to the sudden and unplanned change to distance teaching. Indeed, even in a more standard online teaching context, Garrison et al. (2010: 31) admit that it is a common challenge to successfully integrate pedagogy and new technologies in innovative ways.

Regardless, ICT and e-learning are an important part of distance education. In addition to gaining subject knowledge, Salehi et al. (2015: 63) argue that using ICT as a part of the educational process may help the learners to understand IT better. The learners can be empowered with IT awareness and skills that can be transferred from the school environment into other aspects of life and be useful in today’s knowledge economy (Salehi et al 2015: 63). This notion agrees well with the transversal competences mentioned in the Finnish NCCs and the educational goal of giving the students the necessary skills and tools needed in further education and life (LOPS 2015: 12). Teachers may likewise be empowered as they deepen their understanding of ICT when utilizing it in distance education. During remote teaching in spring

2020, teachers may have been able to develop their ICT skills and aid students in gaining those skills as well.

## **2.4 Online learning vs. emergency remote teaching**

The context of the current study is distance education as a sort of emergency measure during a global pandemic. As Oskoz and Smith (2020: ii) declare, “The COVID-19 situation has indeed been an emergency situation also in an academic sense and in schools”. Distance education in such an unprecedented situation differs from normal distance education: distance education taking place during a pandemic had to be established quickly and without extensive planning. Classes that were not planned and organized as online learning had to be moved online or otherwise transformed into materials that could be taught at a distance.

Hodges et al. (2020) declare that there is a clear difference between “well-planned online learning experiences” and online teaching “offered in response to a crisis or disaster”. Likewise, Oskoz and Smith (2020: iii) emphasize that the COVID-19 circumstances were not how we would typically make the shift to virtual learning environments and online teaching and thus, it should not be thought of as the same. Both Oskoz and Smith (2020: iii) and Hodges et al. (2020) aim to establish a difference between *online teaching* and *teaching online*. Online teaching/learning “includes careful instructional design and planning, using a systematic model for design and development” (Hodges et al. 2020), while teaching online means that face-to-face classes are moved online to be taught at a distance (Oskoz & Smith 2020: iii). In trying to clarify this terminological difference even further, Oskoz and Smith (2020: iii) report on a suggestion to establish a term such as “crisis teaching”, while Hodges et al. (2020) propose the term *emergency remote teaching*. These attempts to find a specific term for the unprecedented situation in distance education highlight the importance of understanding how suddenly the shift to virtual learning environments had to take place during the coronavirus crisis.

Hodges et al. (2020) point out that it would be problematic to draw comparisons between face-to-face teaching and emergency online education. This point is supported by the notion that Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 8) have made about the problematic nature of comparing distance education and classroom instruction under normal circumstances, as there are so many diverse ways of executing both versions of instruction. So, if comparing face-to-face

instruction and (online) distance education is problematic in a more conventional situation, one would indeed assume that it is also problematic in an unusual crisis situation. Hodges et al. (2020) point out that distance education implementations and approaches differ between institutions, so, again, making comparisons would be challenging and problematic.

As stated, Hodges et al. (2020) propose the term *emergency remote teaching* (ERT) to be used when discussing online distance education taking place during the COVID-19 crisis. According to Hodges et al., this term has recently emerged in the academic community to be used by researchers and educators “to draw a clear contrast with what many of us know as high-quality online education”. Here, one can see the clear desire to distinguish online instruction and distance education from the more standardized online teaching. Hodges et al. (2020) claim that online learning is often thought as “being lower quality than face-to-face learning, despite research showing otherwise” and express concern that online teaching in an emergency situation could result in this perception getting stronger. According to Hodges et al. (2020), because the shift to emergency remote teaching was sudden and modifications had to be made in an unprecedented speed, educators are not taking “full advantage of the affordances and possibilities of the online format”. Research shows that online teaching is effective when it has been carefully planned and designed with purposeful design tools and models (see Branch & Dousay 2015) and as Hodges et al. (2020) claim, online distance education during the coronavirus pandemic has usually not been carefully planned due to rapid shifts to virtual learning spaces. Hence, researchers, especially those who specialize in online learning and/or distance education, might want to draw the distinction between normal online teaching and remote emergency teaching.

Hodges et al. (2020) aim to define emergency remote teaching more specifically with some details. According to them, ERT “is a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternative delivery mode due to crisis circumstances”. ERT also takes place completely remotely as normal face-to-face instruction or blended or hybrid courses are temporarily moved to be taught at a distance. Teaching will return to its original form after the situation that caused emergency measures has subsided (ibid.). Furthermore, according to Hodges et al. (2020), the main goal in ERT is to temporarily provide a reliable source of education during a crisis in an efficient and easily arrangeable way.

However, ERT is still an opportunity to reflect upon, advance, and develop education. Educators have had to make sudden changes and modifications to their instruction and classroom activities, but they have still had to make careful considerations, keeping in mind their own strength and well-being. Hodges et al. (2020) also comment that ERT is “a way of thinking about delivery modes, methods, and media”, adding that this is particularly important as educators consider “rapidly changing needs and limitations in resources”. Indeed, because resources can be limited, ERT has potentially challenged educators to get creative and inspired them to develop their instruction in ways that they had not previously considered.

These definitions are very relevant to the present study. As the context of the current study indeed focuses on the temporary distance education that took place in Finland in spring 2020 as an emergency measure, the term emergency remote teaching is appropriate and will be used in the context of this study, in particular when discussing our findings. So, although in our theoretical background we mostly discuss more standardized versions of distance education, online learning and the like, in our analysis and discussions we will also keep in mind the distinguished term of ERT.

As this context of emergency remote teaching is rather unique, particularly under the circumstances of a worldwide pandemic, there has not been much published research yet. There is undoubtedly a vast amount of new research being conducted at the same time as the present study, but for now we briefly discuss the (preliminary) findings of some studies that focus on the same, or similar context as this study. The studies launched by the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere (2020; Ahtiainen et al. 2020), as well as the University of Turku (2020) have so far reported on some initial findings on spring 2020 remote teaching experiences from multiple points of view. Meanwhile, a study in University of Jyväskylä has focused on school staff experiences and their views on student well-being during covid-19 (University of Jyväskylä 2020). The preliminary results of these recent research projects show that the remote teaching period has been experienced by individuals in different ways, schools have had different practices (which could affect education equality), and teachers have faced challenges while also developing their skills (University of Helsinki & University of Tampere 2020; Ahtiainen et al. 2020; University of Jyväskylä 2020; University of Turku 2020). In addition, some parents and students faced significant pressure and stress, while some students felt that learning from home suited them well (University of Helsinki and University of Tampere 2020; University of Jyväskylä 2020; University of Turku 2020).

As the present study focuses on teachers' experiences, we are especially interested in other similar studies. Reports show that schools and teachers were challenged in multiple ways, as there was an increased need for the development of both pedagogical and digital skills. The ERT period affected teachers in multiple ways and according to Ahtiainen et al. (2020: 17), most teachers found that internet connections, software and teaching materials worked well during the ERT period. However, there were some challenges regarding students' devices and connections. On a more positive note, most of the teachers in Ahtiainen et al. (2020) reported that their own digital competence developed at least a little. Still, a clear majority of the teachers felt that their workload was significantly larger during the ERT period. In Ahtiainen et al.'s study (2020), about a third of the participating teachers said that they had worked more with other teachers, while a third said there was less collaboration and the last third reported that the amount of collaboration stayed the same. As these studies were conducted in the same context as the present study, we will compare the findings with our own in Chapter 5 *Findings and analysis*.

### **3 DISTANCE LANGUAGE TEACHING**

In this Chapter, we will examine distance education in the language learning and teaching context. We will begin by giving a brief overview of distance language education. Next, in Section 3.1, we will move on to discuss distance teaching methods and design. From there, we will move on to exploring the challenges (Section 3.2), followed by opportunities and benefits (Section 3.3), that distance education brings forth. In the final part of this Chapter (Section 3.4.), we will discuss language teachers in distance teaching. All the following sections will be discussed from the point of view of distance language education.

As already discussed in Section 2.2, distance education is not unique to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is true in language teaching as well. Distance language teaching methods have been practiced for the last 200 years, as there have been correspondence courses and audio recordings that have been utilized in teaching multiple different languages such as English, French, German, Italian, Russian and Spanish (Holmberg 2005: 166). Ergo, teaching languages at a distance is not by any means a new phenomenon. It has, however, changed and evolved, particularly with the implementation of digital technologies and online platforms. Although educational technology is increasingly used as an integral part of language lessons on all school levels, language education delivered completely through a distance medium is still used mostly in higher education. Salehi et al. (2015: 64), however, note that online education is not limited to higher education, but it is simply “the convergence of the web and learning on all levels, whether it is elementary school, college, or business”. This integration of online platforms and

language education was rather unavoidable during the lockdown period of 2020, and this has possibly further advanced the development of distance language education.

The field of distance education is constantly developing, and the new available ICT resources have increased the demand for collaborative means for distance language education (Compton 2009: 73). As Teemant et al. (2005: 1676) put it simply, “learning is social”. It is widely recognized that learning is not only an individual process but happens in collaboration with peers (POPS 2014, Chang and Windeatt 2016), and this is especially important in language learning where the learners are essentially learning to communicate with others using a foreign language. In addition, the comprehensive school NCC (POPS 2014: 221) and upper secondary school NCC (LOPS 2015: 20) explicitly mention that learning ought to happen cooperating in pairs and groups using versatile learning environments. Teemant et al. (2005: 1676) add to this by characterizing learning as “internalization and automatization of social activities. Teemant et al. (2005: 1676) continue by arguing that learning happens when an individual develops their knowledge and negotiates meanings in collaboration with others.

Collaboration is not only beneficial for learning in the present, but it also prepares the students to work collaboratively in the future (Chang and Windeatt 2016: 1283–1284). Students’ willingness and skills to work and learn together are essential to the learning process (POPS 2014: 17) and thus, it is important to maintain this aspect also in distance language education. Consequently, we were interested to see how the teachers of the present study overcame the physical distance to facilitate collaborative language learning. As language learning is inherently social, it is important to take interaction into consideration when planning and delivering distance education, as we will see from the following sections.

### **3.1 Conducting distance language education**

#### **3.1.1 Distance language education design**

Although, as discussed in Section 2.4, the context of the present study is emergency remote teaching, which was employed quickly without much time to plan and design teaching specifically for a distance environment, it is still worthwhile to consider what *designing* distance language education entails. Naturally, in order to execute emergency remote language teaching, teachers had to make at least some adjustments and create new plans. In this Section,

we discuss aspects that need to be considered when designing and planning distance language education.

Similar to conventional face-to-face teaching, distance education also has multiple factors that make up for the quality and quantity of the learning and teaching (Palvia et al. 2018: 234). The listed factors described by the authors are divided into global, country, institutional, curriculum/program and microlevel (such as student, professor, course, and technology interactions) factors. Each of these factors have subcategories such as law, income divide, administration, education level and motivation, to name a few. Education is always situated in a context and each of these aforementioned factors impact whether, and how, distance education is conducted. The factors also affect designing education in that they define which resources are available for use. In the diverse field of educational technology, there are multiple factors affecting the quality and quantity of online education (Palvia et al. 2018: 234). In other words, multiple aspects that affect the success of online education, and one factor alone will not necessarily define whether it is effective. A crucial point concerning online and distance education in all forms is that there is no single correct and most efficient way of doing things.

As an example of factors that affect the design and implementation of distance education, we point out that Finnish comprehensive schools cannot operate on full-time distance education (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020c), which restricts its use in lower levels of education. In the topic of young learners, it is also important to note that the teachers have responsibility for ensuring that learners' activities are completed (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012: 13). The younger the learner, the more responsibility the teacher has in ensuring learner activities are actually carried out because young learners cannot be expected to have similar self-directedness as students in higher education (*ibid.*). As distance education puts a great deal of emphasis on learner responsibility and autonomy (Andrade 2017), this element of distance education needs to be carefully planned and addressed. Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 13) emphasize that distance education in comprehensive and secondary schools must be designed in a way that allows the teacher to properly guide and control pupils' learning as efficiently as teachers in contact teaching can.

While distance learning and conventional classroom learning are often separated, they are not necessarily completely different from each other: both follow the same guidelines and have the same goals set for education, although the medium may differ. Brunet (2011: 35) agrees with

this notion, saying that the way learners process content in an online medium does not differ from how they do it face-to-face. Rather than a new way to learn that requires new methods to teach, distance education is just a new way to deliver content (ibid.). As such, many suggestions, approaches and tips are still shared by both contact and distance teaching mediums (Sull 2011: 80). Some have suggested that distance education and face-to-face education should be combined as blended or hybrid education to get the best of both worlds (Palvia et al. 2018: 239). This would allow for a balance between the use of technology and human interaction in online education and could lessen harmful effects of distance education, such as addiction to mobile gadgets and social media (Palvia et al, 2018: 239).

Online courses are nowadays considered equal to classroom teaching in diversity and variety, so there is no one correct way to do it (Blake 2011: 20). This can make comparisons between the two challenging when the topic is learning efficiency. There are multiple choices for different mediums of instruction and each of them have their own advantages and disadvantages that need to be considered (Gunawardena and McIsaac 2004: 365). An important point is to use a variety of mediums in teaching to compensate for the possible limitations (ibid.). As such, distance learning is worth considering as an option whenever it is difficult to provide traditional contact education or contact education would be lower in quality (for example, if there were not any qualified educators available) (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 8). In fact, according to Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012: 9), various researchers put emphasis on the notion that differences found in comparing contact and distance education may not exist because of the form of providing education but rather exist due to different pedagogical approaches and education quality. Similarly, Rice (2006: 440) claims that distance education research has shown “that the effectiveness of distance education appears to have more to do with who is teaching, who is learning, and how that learning is accomplished, and less to do with the medium”. Indeed, it seems that the factors affecting the effectiveness of education are mostly the same, whether one is designing regular classroom teaching or distance education.

However, regardless of the similarities, Holmberg (2005: 167), mentions that contact teaching and distance teaching may emphasize different language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing) and learning priorities. Naturally, it might be the case that distance education lends itself better to teaching certain language skills over others. Still, one might argue that especially in the case of comprehensive school and upper secondary school, which follow the NCCs, the goals and aims of language education need to remain the same even during distance teaching.

However, as the ERT period of spring 2020 was temporary, teachers might have knowingly decided to briefly put emphasis on certain language skills that were easier to teach and assess through distance.

While some see distance education as a simple and easy way to conduct a course, facilitating an excellent online course may easily take more effort than a conventional classroom course (Brunet 2011: 40). Croft et al. (2010: 28) say that distance learning is often delivered by offering the course materials online and using e-resources, like email and social networks, as a support. Yet, Carlson and Everet (2000: 4) emphasize that one cannot just take existing material meant for contact teaching and use them in a web-based environment, but the material needs more purposeful planning for the specific context. They argue that the material should always be adapted to take advantage of the resources, in this case technology, available. Salehi et al. (2015:67) add that designing content for e-learning is not easy as the course needs to be as carefully planned, designed and evaluated as conventional teaching to ensure proper and efficient use. Careful planning allows for collaboration that supports achievement of the learning outcomes set for the course (Andrade 2017: 1).

Similar to classroom teaching, it is important to connect the content in distance education to real life (Li 2013: 220). This reality-based education could be connecting the exercises, discussion and other material and content to work life, for example (Sull and Peckham 2019: 81). Ehrman and Milman (2011: 76) suggest motivating students by differentiating the exercises to match their interests. Motivating different learners and working with their real-life needs is one way to motivate students to meet learning goals (ibid.). Authentic contexts in online learning may motivate the learner when they see its real-life benefits, and this makes the exercises more than just grades and assignments to be completed (Sull and Peckham 2019: 81). As Li (2013: 220) points out, technology can provide increased access to various tools concerning information gathering and presenting information that both students and teachers can utilize. Utilizing online materials creates opportunities to receive meaningful input through watching news in English, listening to radio or podcasts and music. Using communication platforms also provides opportunities to examine and take part in authentic online communication in English.

Indeed, communication and interaction need to be carefully planned in distance language education. Brunei (2011: 35) argues that because of the lack of face-to-face interaction that

classroom teaching provides, the interaction in distance education needs to be more purposeful and designed in comparison. When designing courses that will be conducted via an online medium, it is important to plan exercises to facilitate interaction, as it can easily be lacking due to the distance form of learning (Andrade 2017: 1). When doing this, it is also important to consider that interaction is not only between student-student but can also be student-teacher and student-content (Abrami et al. 2011: 95). Course designers need to consider how to make a student interact with other students, the teacher and content to establish active learning (Milman 2019: 85–86). Student-teacher and student-student interaction helps the student to focus on the completion of a task and lessen procrastination (Brunet 2011: 37). Additionally, student-teacher interaction is important so that the teacher can guide the students to meet the learning goals as well as for the critical view of the material (Andrade 2017: 5).

Research has proved that student interaction is one of the key factors in achieving learner satisfaction in an online course (Brunet 2011: 36). It is important to remember that collaborative learning is not just “mindless free-for-all”, but interaction needs to be coordinated and cohesive (Garrison et al. 2001: 24). In addition to careful planning, the need for socialization depends on the learning goals and the curriculum (Compton 2009: 80–81). Compton (2009) argues that some learners may benefit more from independent work and interaction between themselves and the content rather than with their peers. Moreover, working independently on a computer or with other technology can be more comfortable and less anxiety-inducing to some students (Li 2013: 220). Because of this, the teacher should focus on the specific needs of the group. Croft et al (2010: 47) adds that to meet these individual learners' needs, students should have the option to not take part in discussions if they so prefer.

Distance education offers great opportunities for inclusivity and differentiation. To create a teaching strategy that caters to all the students in distance education, getting to know them is essential (Sull and Peckham 2019:81). Knowing students' backgrounds makes it easier to include everyone and make them feel part of the learning community. Knowing potential differences in backgrounds also helps designing the course to meet the students' needs. These differences can be addressed by designing exercises to fit everyone and by using differentiated instructions (Ehrman and Milman 2011: 76) as well as the many tools available that support scaffolding (Abrami et al. 2011: 95). To illustrate, asynchronous writing tasks might work well in a classroom where there are wide gaps between individual students' skill levels (Ehrman and Milman 2011: 76). In comparison, synchronous online discussions may be difficult for ESL

and EFL learners because they may need time to process the input and produce their answers. However, Bueno-Alastuey (2011: 419) argues that because synchronous communication is more similar to real-life interaction than asynchronous communication, it should be “pursued in the aim to develop learners’ speaking and interactional skills, the goal of most foreign language learners.” Naturally, there is no one-size-fits-all solution to learning activities, but technology and other requirements should always be reflected upon the specific needs and objectives of the group (Colpaert 2006: 494). When designing and deciding which online learning activities and which programs to use, teachers should be “analyzing learning situations, setting their goals, defining their language method, reflecting on the requirements, and designing solutions” (Colpaert 2006: 494). In other words, teachers need to become content designers themselves.

We have discussed the aforementioned aspects of distance language education design because through reading and familiarizing ourselves with the field, they have proved to be important to the field and its practical implementation. The organization of content and interaction seem to be especially important and so we hope the teachers participating in the present study also report on these two in their answers. In the context of the current study, there was limited time for designing distance education under the emergency circumstances it was implemented for. Naturally, this has likely affected teachers’ ability to carefully plan and design all aspects of distance language teaching to be as effective as possible. One needs to keep this in mind when examining the contents and findings of this study. Next, we will discuss common teaching methods for conducting distance education.

### **3.1.2 Distance language teaching methods**

As we have discussed above, distance education is not as simple as publishing content meant for face-to-face teaching online. Teachers need to be conscious of their teaching methods and make appropriate adjustments that fit the form of distance education. Concerning distance language teaching that takes place online, it is naturally important to consider how to best meet the needs of language learners and how to utilize technology with different language learning theories in mind. Distance teaching often utilizes technology and various online platforms, and it is worthwhile to consider the theoretical and pedagogical implications the use of technology has on language learning. The focus of this Chapter is on distance and online teaching methods

that could support interaction and collaboration in particular, due to the social constructivist nature of language education in general.

As Nummenmaa (2011: 4) presents, there are multiple different versions of utilizing distance education. She goes on to define four different uses in her nationwide research on distance education in Finland. The four different uses defined by Nummenmaa (2012) are 1) giving out information, 2) interacting, 3) supplying materials, and 4) providing teacher-led instruction. It is important to discuss the different tools and methods available and commonly used in distance education that researchers have presented the field with. Regardless of the infinite possibilities that technology has to offer, Nummenmaa (2012: 26) concludes in her studies that teachers in distance education mostly use tools and platforms with which they were previously familiar and comfortable. However, it could be argued that teachers should not grow complacent with only familiar methods and forgo the critical assessment of their function and purpose. Teachers ought to consider language learning theories and how the use of technology can be utilized best to meet the needs and goals of language learners (Li 2013). In fact, Sull (2011: 81) argues that the best online teachers are those who are always on search for new ways to improve their teaching. Therefore, teachers need training to combine new technologies and pedagogics so that they can design new strategies and methods to deliver online teaching successfully (Rehn et 2016: 12).

There are multiple approaches to English language teaching when it comes to integrating the technology in teaching. Li (2013: 218) indicates four practices that work best when working with English language learners (ELLs) and technology. These best practices are 1) increasing comprehensive input, 2) encouraging social collaboration, 3) relating learning to the real world, and 4) providing supportive learning environments. According to Li (2013), these are the main practices to consider when integrating technology into teaching ELLs. In addition, teachers need to find new ways of utilizing technology to language teaching in ways that enhance students' learning. While Li (2013) focuses on English as a second language (ESL) and the context is immigrant students learning English in American schools, there are still some worthwhile points made here that can be considered in EFL classrooms and distance teaching. For instance, Li's (2013) idea of comprehensive input as strategies for increasing students' understanding include providing relevant contexts, connecting learning to prior knowledge and using visual aids or other ways of concretizing themes and language taught follows the

constructivist learning theory which covers other contexts of distance teaching as well, not only the ESL.

As Li (2013) claims, the use of technology can increase comprehensible input and aid in incorporating these strategies in order to provide learners with clear demonstration and examples. Technology provides an opportunity to use multimedia and multimodal tools on various platforms, utilizing videos, sound, animation, pictures and the like to enhance learning in meaningful ways (Dukes 2005, cited in Li 2013: 219). In other words, the use of technology gives teachers the ability to show and demonstrate matters not necessarily available in real-life classroom or school settings. In the context of distance education and the present study, it would be interesting to examine if the participating teachers have considered the advantages of the technology-heavy nature of distance language education in their teaching.

Although distance education is often considered rather independent, it is important to note that language learning is interactive in nature. Interaction is a vital part of successful learning in general as well, and this also affects the selection of distance teaching methods. Lehtinen and Nummenmaa (2012:9) argue that interaction has a significant effect on the success of distance teaching. More specific to distance language education, Andrade (2017: 7) states that regardless of physical distance between the students, as is often typical of distance (language) education, students should interact with each other as it provides them with input and output needed for language acquisition. Similarly, Li (2013: 219) emphasizes that teachers ought to encourage interaction and collaboration between students, and possibly people outside the classroom because utilizing technology in (distance) language teaching can provide new opportunities for this practice. The results of Lehtinen and Nummenmaa's (2012) study show that distance education methods and arrangements that included efficient interaction from teachers were more successful than merely delivering materials. Research has shown that the most effective distance teaching methods combine many forms of interaction (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012).

To enable communication and collaboration, a trustful community is needed, and it is the teacher's responsibility to create it through careful planning. According to Li (2013: 220), providing supportive learning environments is an important part of supporting English language learners. Student-teacher interaction is especially important in the beginning of the course to establish trust with the instructor (Brunet 2011:36). This is quite crucial in cases

where the teacher and students only meet online, and never get to know each other in person. Sull (2019: 36) suggests that trust could be facilitated by having the students introduce themselves in the first week of the course and the teacher taking notes on the content the students produce to get to know them better. This could help the teacher to meet the students' needs and build an encouraging learning community within the class. Supportive learning environments are open, decrease anxiety, and allow the students to make mistakes (Li 2013: 220), which is essential for efficient language learning. Relating this to the context of utilizing technology in distance language education teaching methods, it is just as important to consider how supportive the learning environment is, even when the teaching and learning is taking place online through a distance instead of contact lessons in a classroom.

A good learning community is also the basis for social presence, which is an important concept for online interaction. An important factor for social presence is ensuring privacy and trust within the learning community (Mykota 2018: 13). Another crucial aspect is making sure that the set learning goals, exercises and selected methods of assessment work together. Mykota (2018: 18) suggests that one way to establish social presence is to make the students feel welcome. This could be done, for example, by a common orientation or audio/video messages in the beginning of the course (ibid). Mykota (2018) adds that the teacher needs to be actively involved from the beginning, to make an effort to meet the different needs of the students and ensure student engagement from the start of the course.

After establishing social presence, it is important to maintain it. To sustain social presence, Mykota (2018) describes actions that enhance communication, increase intimacy and promote engagement within the learning community. For discussion forums, Mykota (2018) states that it is important to give the students examples of the wanted model and structure as well as assign roles. Relevant feedback to assignments and synchronous meetings is also considered important in sustaining social presence. Synchronous videoconferencing helps the students to picture the teacher as a real person, which is vital for social presence and allows for non-verbal feedback that is lacking in written form of communication (Mykota 2018: 18). In emergency remote teaching, this aspect of online education and communication could have been established in the aforementioned ways, although due to the suddenness of the shift to distance education, teachers might have faced more challenges compared to a situation where the teaching is designed to take place online.

Technology offers multiple opportunities to engage language learners and get them to interact together. New technologies enable asynchronous and synchronous interaction as well as let the students produce content by themselves. Technological advances have given us many ways to interact online. Student interaction is often divided into synchronous (video calls, chats) and asynchronous (discussion boards, email) (Abrami et al. 2011: 86). In Nummenmaa's (2011: 5) study, the students mostly used learning platforms to communicate, followed by chats and video conferencing platforms. These mediums are not only limited to student-student interaction but also apply to teacher-student interaction (Abrami et al. 2011: 86). However, offering opportunities to interact does not necessarily mean the students took advantage of it (Abrami et al. 2011: 87).

One popular way of conducting distance education is through synchronous videoconferencing. In her study, Nummenmaa (2012: 25) reports high use of videoconferencing tools in distance education. Synchronous videoconferencing can enable teachers to utilize a rather multimodal learning environment in language teaching (Hampel & Stickler 2012: 120) and build social presence (Mykota 2018). However, video conferencing as an interaction tool is not to be taken for granted as there is still need for "concrete strategies and clear guidance on how to teach effectively and connect with their students in a course delivered synchronously by videoconference" (Rehn et al, 2016: 1). The problem with video conferencing is that many teachers feel that it is difficult to establish and maintain interaction among students as well as between teacher and students in this form of communication (ibid.). Some research found out that teachers tend to speak more during synchronous video conferences compared to contact teaching (Rehn et al. 2016; Hampel and Stickler 2012). Therefore, Hampel and Stickler (2012) suggest that students could be quite dependent on the teacher in online language lessons and that this is one potential reason for their passiveness. In contrast, Lenkaitis' (2020: 498) study, found out that videoconferencing was considered widely beneficial because students were able to engage in collaborative knowledge building and spontaneous conversation through it. In other words, Lenkaitis's study, in comparison, suggests that videoconferencing had a positive effect on interaction and student engagement. These differences could indicate that the effectiveness and quality of interaction in distance language lessons is not based on the method of video conferencing itself, but rather how it is utilized and how individuals within the learning community use it.

The use of web cameras during video conferencing is a well-researched topic in the field of distance education. In Kozar's (2015: 804) study most participants reported that the purpose of web cameras was to reduce social distance and build rapport within the learning community. Furthermore, Delevelotte et al.'s (2010: 307) study reported that web cameras are important in video conferences because they convey nonverbal cues, such as facial expressions and gestures, which have important empathetic and interactional functions. These nonverbal cues were used to guide the discussion, and, for example, looking into the web camera seemed to create empathy in peers. Seeing each other was considered an important factor for creating a positive working relationship between the participating students and teachers and, therefore, helped collaboration (Kozar 2015). Teachers, in particular, used web cameras in the beginning of an online course to establish a positive image of themselves (ibid.). The participants reported that seeing who one studies with and getting to familiarize with them at the beginning of the course were important but became less so after this rapport was achieved. However, using a web camera during a video conference was reported to be tiring by the teachers because it required being visible and in one place for many hours a day (Kozar 2015: 804). Despite the reported positive effects web cameras had on social factors in online teaching, not many mentioned organizational, pedagogical or communicative aspects (ibid.). Consequently, it would be interesting to see if the teachers participating in the present study found any pedagogical or communicational implications for the use of web cameras.

While video conferencing and such methods support spoken interaction and collaboration, written forms of collaboration are also often mentioned in distance education research (Rehn et al. 2016; Andrade 2017; Hampel and Stickler 2012; Carlson and Everett 2000). As examples of collaborative content production language learners can actively participate in, Chang and Windeatt (2016: 1273) list writing exercises, private messaging, problems solving tasks and discussion forums. Andrade (2017: 7) also discusses the use of collaborative discussion boards that allow the student to be engaged but also share the responsibility for learning. In the ideal scenario, discussion boards can help the students to think further and reflect on their learning in ways students could not do alone. All these interactive learning methods allow for the teacher and students to collaborate with each other and be connected to the content in a versatile way (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012: 13). Diverse interaction and rich methods in distance learning help both the students and teachers reflect on their own actions better than using only one way could (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012: 13).

As another example of written collaborative learning tools, Reis (2010: 10) studied the use of wikis in a language learning context. Wikis allow for collaborative work where information can be added, modified and deleted. Wikis can be beneficial to language learners, as they have multiple uses, however, Reis (2010) argues that the best advantage of wikis is their collaborative nature. In Reis' research, the students wrote a glossary of relevant terms and wrote a story together. The completion of the exercises required everyone to work together. When students work for a common goal, they do not compete and the need to contribute to the group experienced by the students is beneficial to learning. Most of the participating students felt that the collaboration went well, and an even bigger percentage felt that using wikis had enhanced their language skills, enabling them to apply the learned skills to real life. These aforementioned written collaboration tools could be one way to introduce interaction to the online class as a necessary and meaningful part of the exercises.

However, there seem to be some issues with activating the students to use the offered collaboration opportunities. One teacher participant in the study by Rehn et al. (2016: 11) reported giving students opportunities to interact during the video lecture through a live chat tool, but the students did not take advantage of this (ibid.). The decision to use the chat was left to the students. In other words, the teacher did not prompt the students to use the chat and this could be the reason for the lack of use. This same problem of students not taking advantage of the opportunities to interact that were given to them is apparent in discussion boards (Andrade 2017). In addition, in a study by Hampel and Stickler (2012: 122) the use of live chat during a video conference was rather teacher-dominant. Andrade (2017: 4) points out in her study that for the discussion boards to be useful, they need to be part of the learning tasks as well as assessed and prompted by the teacher. This, we argue, could be applied to the use of live chats and other forms of written interaction as well. Indeed, Carlson and Everett (2000: 8) do point out that chat room utilization can need a little encouragement from the teacher in order to be efficient. For instance, giving students extra credit for using the chat tool could be one way of encouraging interactivity. The teachers, however, need to be careful about the fine line between forcing and promoting the use of chats and discussion boards because then the interaction may become less authentic and students' autonomy may be hindered.

Students active participation is important for successful online learning (Reis 2010: 9). In this topic, Milman (2019: 86) composed a list describing how active learning can be achieved in an online education context. This list consists of multiple items with concrete examples divided

into three categories of interaction: student-content, student-student and student-teacher. *Active learning with content* could be achieved by having the students answer questions after watching a video, problem-solving tasks, giving feedback when necessary and having the students comment on what they have learned as well as engage in simulations. *Active learning with peers*, according to Milman (2019: 89), is achieved by designing assignments and tasks that require student collaboration in order to complete them. Students ought to be prompted to engage in online discussions with their peers, and they could be encouraged to form smaller study groups to learn together and help each other. Student-student interaction can be encouraged in online learning also by requiring students to brainstorm ideas together and asking them to give each other feedback. *Active learning with instructors*, according to Milman (2019: 89), can be achieved by having the instructor engage in discussions with the students online, having synchronous web-conferences to check the students' process and answer questions, or, for example, having a Q&A session with the students about the questions the students may have regarding the content.

In addition to interactional and communicational tools, the internet offers multiple platforms to use in distance language learning. One of the most popular distance learning platforms in the Finnish context is Moodle (Nummenmaa 2012: 25), which enables easy distribution of content. In addition, over half of the participating teachers in Nummenmaa's study reported using media platforms such as YouTube. In addition, blogs, wikis, community platforms and Google platforms were mentioned a few times. For subject teachers, mainly in the upper secondary school level, learning platforms such as Moodle, Fronter and Opit were most commonly used to deliver teaching remotely. In contrast, classroom teachers reported using synchronous videoconferencing and exercises through learning platforms and email. Teachers of younger levels of education using more video conferencing could be attributed to the need to supervise the students learning more closely. As we have noted previously in Section 3.1.1, comprehensive school teachers have more responsibility over their students' learning, and video conferencing could be the best tool for supervising students and providing them with the instruction they need.

In this Section, we have discussed and given examples of some of the ways to prompt interaction and active learning in the distance language education context in a meaningful way. As can be seen, the methods and tools are not completely unfamiliar to many. Distance language education does not require teachers to disregard all they know and love to invent

everything anew. Rather, one just needs to modify the content and methods to meet the needs and requirements of the students and the new context. After exploring some methods that could be employed in distance language learning and their benefits for learning, we will move on to discuss the possible challenges that may emerge.

### **3.2 Challenges**

In this Section, we will examine some of the possible challenges that distance language education can pose. Challenges range from technology-related issues and flaws in designing education to difficulties in interaction. While online and distance education can be great at their best, allowing for flexibility, meaningful activities, and copious amounts of material meant for language learning (Pino 2008: 70), the use of technology itself is not enough to guarantee successful language learning (Al-Furaydi 2013: 110). Effective use of technology requires both cooperation from all parties involved in the education process and teaching educators how to best use the available resources (Al-Furaydi 2013: 110). Online and distance learning bring new challenges, and teachers need to carefully plan the learning experience, subject, materials used, and assessment based on the desired outcomes (Salehi et al 2015: 64). Below, we will discuss some potential challenges to online distance language education may bring about.

Since ICT is a big part of today's distance language education, some challenges in distance education are unavoidably linked with technology. As Kern and Malinowski (2016: 197) argue, while technology removes some boundaries and constraints from language learning, it can also be the cause for new limitations. For instance, while video conferencing (and other forms of distance teaching) overcomes geographical boundaries and limited budgets or, in the case of ERT, the temporary lockdown of schools, they also at the same time create other constraints to learning, such as possible connection problems and lack of non-verbal communication (Kern & Malinowski 2016: 199–200). In addition, there are also student reports on issues with software and devices, as well as lack of skills to use the aforementioned (Croft 2010: 32). In other words, technology opens up new possibilities for overcoming constraints, but it is also not without its challenges. When technology is utilized, these challenges are present in distance language education as well.

Another ICT-related challenge for distance language education may come from online testing. While conducting exams online may be beneficial, as it often provides instant feedback and therefore lessens the teachers' burden, one must also be aware of the possible challenges this might bring. All students have individual differences in their computer skills and experiences of using technology, and aspects such as accidental click and typing speed may affect students' test scores (Pino 2008: 68). The teacher may also need to consider possible technical difficulties like server failure and incompatible browsers during exams (ibid.). When it comes to online testing, we see the difficulty in guaranteeing that no foul play will be practiced during the tests as a potential challenge. These challenges could also be applied to online distance learning in general. While some of the challenges may have to be solved as they come, such as bad internet connection, teaching students the computer skills necessary for online testing and distance education in general is a must for the education to be successful. Thus, it is important that necessary ICT skills are taught in school to the students and teachers so that they do not fall behind in the fast-developing world of education. One could argue that the ERT period in spring 2020 was an opportunity to not only test but also develop ICT skills of teachers and students alike.

When teaching remotely, teachers have found it difficult to supervise students' activities during lessons (Guichon 2010: 176–177). Interacting at a distance and not being in the same space with their students may often leave teachers wondering if the students are actually using the allotted time as they are supposed to. According to the results of Guichon's (2010) study on language learning through video conferences, limited access to students' real activities leaves the teacher with uncertainty of whether everything is alright at the other end of the screen. The teachers wondered 1) if the students are doing what is expected of them, 2) if they see the images the teacher is trying to share, and 3) if they read the text chat. Having additional worries during teaching hinders the teachers' work so Guichon (2010) suggests a few ways to counter them. These are 1) providing the teacher with awareness of students' activities by employing a webcam, and 2) having teachers use a similar interface with the students so that they are able to experience and see the same things as their students. Web camera utilization was already discussed earlier in the distance teaching methods Section 3.1.2, however, Guichon's (2010) study provides us with another reason as to why they are useful to distance learning.

There are multiple potential challenges related to interaction in distance learning. In a study comparing distance education and blended teaching, Rehn et al. (2016: 10) found that many

students reported the public nature of video conferences as a presence hindering factor. The students who followed the lessons through video were intimidated by the idea of speaking out loud because their images would be projected into the classroom for their face-to-face peers and were therefore happy to listen and work independently. While Rehn et al. (2016) studied a situation where only some of the students were connected to others at a distance, we suggest that this study could also have some implications to a situation where everyone is at a distance. In a video call, often the one speaking is projected to other interlocutors' screens and this could intimidate some students and hinder their willingness to speak out loud. Thus, the effect of being projected onto the screens of one's peers and teacher could have a similar effect as being projected into the classroom for others to see. This is something that teachers might need to consider when teaching at a distance via video conferencing.

In her study about the national state of distance education in Finland, Nummenmaa (2011:5) noticed that student interaction was lacking in distance teaching. Reasons for this could be many, but Nummenmaa (2012: 31–32) describes slow communication as one of them. This is caused by the slow response in messaging between students and teachers. There may also be a lack of familiarity between the students and the teacher (Nummenmaa 2011), as well as a lack of nonverbal communication that is not as easily interpreted despite synchronous video connection (Nummenmaa 2012: 32). This lack of nonverbal cues can have a negative effect on the establishment of a personal relationship between the members of an online learning community. Furthermore, in distance education, the teacher may also have less opportunities to establish a reciprocal contact with the students (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012: 10).

As Chang and Windeatt (2016: 1283) warn, learning online without face-to-face contact with the teachers or peers can have an isolating effect. Consequently, it is imperative for the teachers to plan the course to encourage collaboration, both privately and on a public forum. Croft et al. (2010: 27) also address the isolation effect felt by the students and tutors due to the teaching happening in an environment where the students are physically separated from each other. This isolation may cause less opportunities for the students to receive input from their peers compared to face-to-face lessons (Croft et al. 2010: 33). They state that isolation may happen in different dimensions: time, space, social, intellectual/experience, profession, ICT knowledge, sensory, cultural and subject. The isolation may occur when a student feels a gap between themselves and others due to their different experiences. There is an apparent need for the instructors and tutors to be made aware of the need for human input and contact for the online

medium practices to be “humanized” (Croft et al. 2010: 52). This could be done, for example, by making student and staff profiles available, gathering materials from users, faster response times in messaging and forming online communities. Interaction makes the learning experience richer and adds a constructivist perspective to learning, which may often be overlooked in distance education (Croft et al. 2010: 27).

Croft et al. (2010) studied university students and the challenges they report facing in an online course setting. In the answers the students gave, six themes became apparent. One theme is 1) isolation and connectivity. The physical separation and lack of contact with peers was experienced as a negative factor affecting learning. However, some students did not feel this to be a problem since they expected it from the beginning knowing the course was conducted through an online medium. Some students felt that 2) maintaining contact with the tutor was difficult and many felt that more contact with the tutor would have enhanced their learning experience. However, the students reported wide differences in their experiences of tutor contact, and this may be due to differences in needs. The students also mentioned issues with communication and response time. 3) Interaction with fellow students and colleagues was experienced as extremely limited. The students, however, seemed to have different expectations and needs regarding this. Other themes in online course challenges were 4) motivation and self-discipline, 5) material and delivery; and 6) student expectations. These are issues that teachers giving online and distance education ought to be aware of, and they should be kept in mind when planning and developing education.

As an answer to the reported challenges, Croft et al. (2010: 47–51) made a few suggestions. To overcome isolation, Croft et al. (2010) suggest setting up expectations in the beginning of the course, focusing on the quality of communication and offering opportunities to get to know peers and instructors. For difficulties in contacting the tutors, e-mentoring and peer assisted learning were named as potential solutions. To increase interaction between peers, more CMC resources should be employed as a part of the course. These, however, should be supervised by a tutor to ensure the quality of the communication and its relevance to the task. As not knowing their peers seemed to be a hindering factor, Croft et al. (2010) suggest making student profiles available to help students familiarize with each other. In addition to these more specific suggestions, mapping locations of the participating students and developing the quality of the course were also suggested to smoothen the delivery of distance education. Croft et al. (2010) tried these aforementioned suggestions in the latter part of the study and found them to be

effective in increasing the quality of the online course. Now, we will move on discussing the strengths and opportunities of distance education.

### **3.3 Strengths and opportunities**

After discussing the potential drawbacks of distance education, it is only fair that we also give attention to the strengths and opportunities that distance language education has to offer. We have already mentioned some strengths and benefits earlier in the Section 3.1.2 *Distance language teaching methods*. When discussing teaching methods, we mentioned some of the perceived strengths and opportunities, but there are some more to consider.

Distance education can be perceived to have multiple strengths, and it can provide the education field with new opportunities. For instance, teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 28) study mentioned flexibility and not being reliant on time and space as some of the advantages of distance education. Another positive aspect of distance education is the diversity and enrichment it brings to education (ibid.). Some also view distance education as an opportunity to add some variation to teaching and to diversify education, as Nummenmaa (2012) reported. Diversity and flexibility of web-based instruction is also mentioned by Pino (2008: 66) and Croft et al. (2010: 31). In addition to flexibility of instruction, Pino (2008) adds that online resources are great, as the instructor can efficiently share and use existing materials, and as the students can access these materials at any given time. In other words, online learning environments enable flexibility of sharing and accessing diverse learning materials. What is more, online resources are also often an English medium and this provides students with good opportunities to learn the language.

Many learning platforms also allow for fast and direct feedback that helps the students correct their mistakes before acquiring wrong patterns (Pino 2008: 67). Consequently, distance language education has the potential to provide new opportunities for more individualized feedback and instruction, along with the aforementioned authentic materials and activities, as the utilization of ICT can have a positive effect on this (Bueno-Alastuey and López Pérez 2014: 524; Means et al. 2010). For instance, the use of ICT in distance language education can provide teachers with more efficient and quicker opportunities in formative and diagnostic assessment. In distance education, teachers could potentially test students quicker and analyze

the results with the help of technology, thus leading to faster appropriate adjustments to instruction when needed.

Distance education could make it easier to match the students' needs and interests through the wide range of material available (Pino 2008: 67). Virtual learning environments can be motivating and exciting for language learners if social media or other popular online environments are implemented in distance language education taking place online. Blake (2011: 30) argues that seeing as today's young people enjoy engaging in social networking, they might like connecting with the target culture through social media. This could have a positive impact on their learning and open new channels of language use outside of the classroom. This shift in language use makes the students into life-long learners (*ibid.*), which also agrees well with the Finnish NCCs' (POPS 2014) long term goal of life-long learning.

Distance education allows the students to practice their language skills in private and give their input when they want to (Pino 2008:66). This is likely to lessen the stress and anxiety caused by performing in front of people that might negatively affect learning (*ibid.*). Furthermore, Arnaldo (2007: 66) argues that in the privacy of their homes, students do not feel pressure about making mistakes and that they can take the time they need completing their assignments (see also Li 2013). While there is a great deal of concern toward the social dynamics and aspects of online learning and distance education, there can also be some benefits. Properly planned online interactions may allow reluctant and shy learners to participate more than in the conventional classroom, because these learners may feel more at ease communicating and collaborating online and at a distance (Bonk 2009: 207-208).

However, in the context of this study we must remember that examining the aforementioned strengths of distance education in ERT is not completely comparable to a more standard, carefully planned distance teaching. Thus, the strengths and opportunities found in the context of ERT might be divergent when compared to those found in the more general distance education research. As this type of emergency situation has not been perceived and examined before, we have had to rely on perspectives and evidence from the context of standard distance education. Still, it is quite possible and likely that teachers have observed and experienced some opportunities and strengths that are similar to those discussed in this Section during the ERT period.

### **3.4 Language teachers in remote teaching**

In this Section, we will discuss previous research regarding language teachers' attitudes towards distance language education and their ICT skills along with other possible requirements teachers may need to successfully teach languages at a distance and online.

#### **3.4.1 Teachers' attitudes towards ICT and distance education**

As we see it, teachers are significant facilitators and operators in online teaching and distance education as their thoughts, attitudes, interests and concerns affect the learning and teaching significantly. Research shows that teachers have several concerns and sceptic attitudes regarding distance education, online learning and the use of ICT. Rakes and Dunn (2015) report on some concerns K–12 (levels in the American school system: kindergarten to level 12, in other words comprehensive to secondary education) teachers have about teaching online. A common concern is that since distance education differs from classroom teaching, it will be ineffective. Teachers in Rakes and Dunn's (2015: 235) study did not value online teaching and were not personally interested in teaching online. Rakes and Dunn (2015: 237) suggest that the teachers in their study took the differences in face-to-face and online education to mean that online learning is inferior in comparison. This may mean that for some, there is a more general negative perception surrounding the effectiveness of virtual learning (*ibid.*). Similarly, Blake (2008: 102) argues that many language teachers question the efficiency of distance language instruction, especially in the case of oral skills development. Another factor hindering teachers from taking on hybrid or online teaching seems to be the fear of being replaced and having to replace their old methods with new and unfamiliar ones (*ibid.*).

Teacher's resistance to using ICT is often associated with the lack of understanding of its benefits, the support from the administration or government, as well as teachers' own skills, preferences and personality (Al-Furaydi 2013: 111). Furthermore, teachers may find the lack of training discouraging regarding the utilization of e-learning (Al-Furaydi 2013: 118). Concerning these issues, Rakes and Dunn (2015: 237) highlight the importance of training and guiding teachers in online teaching and addressing the general perceptions that educators may have toward online education. One could suggest that in order to change the negative attitudes surrounding the use of ICT and distance education, it is imperative to provide ICT and distance education training to not only in-service teachers, but also include more of

this training into teacher training programs. In the context of our study, it is interesting to see if teachers have similar attitudes to those in previous research.

Another common concern is the lack of interaction in online education and distance education. Al-Furaydi (2013: 118) reported that EFL teachers felt that e-learning decreases the interaction between teachers and students. Similarly, Nummenmaa (2012: 24) reported that some of the comprehensive and secondary school teachers that participated in her study felt that distance instruction and e-learning were not equivalent to face-to-face instruction as it was thought that distance and online interactions were more restrictive. Some teachers also doubted the suitability of e-learning and distance learning especially with younger learners due to the perceived restrictive nature of online interaction. In particular, promoting student-student interaction was found to be the most challenging by Nummenmaa's (2012: 29) participants, along with motivating students, promoting meaningful teacher-student interaction and activating students. In a rather similar fashion, Rehn et al. (2018: 425) reported that social aspects were the biggest issue in carrying out successful online teaching. In Rehn et al. (ibid.), participants felt that building and maintaining relationships within the learning community, advancing presence online and supporting student-student interactions was especially challenging. Rakes and Dunn (2015: 236–237) report on similar concerns as other researchers: motivating students, addressing individual differences and the lack of face-to-face interaction and connection were mentioned as some of the major concerns by the participants. It is clearly important to examine how teachers experienced interaction during the emergency remote teaching. One could assume that it is likely teachers have had similar concerns in the context of our study as well.

Time management can also be seen as an issue in online teaching, as reported by, for example, Al-Furaydi (2013: 118) and Rakes and Dunn (2015: 236). Concerning this issue, Huang (2019: 200) claims that in order to achieve effective results in their online instruction, teachers have to “devote extra time and efforts”. Similarly, teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 24) study felt that distance teaching would result in extra work and so it could also take up more of their time. In other words, teachers can feel that teaching at a distance is more time consuming and demanding. This, in addition to teachers not appreciating or knowing about the benefits of distance education, may make it so that teachers do not deem it worth it to put their time and effort into distance education.

Teachers are also concerned about technology and their own technological skills (Nummenmaa 2012: 24; Rakes & Dunn 2015: 237). Teachers can often feel like they lack the necessary skills to give successful online and distance instruction. To illustrate, in Rakes and Dunn's (2015: 237) study, teachers felt that they would need more training to gain the needed skills for providing efficient online instruction. In addition, the teachers were also concerned about learners' lack of access to needed technology. Although the teachers in her study were concerned about their own skills, Nummenmaa (2012: 26) reported that they mostly had a positive attitude towards utilizing technology and different ICT applications in education. Still, reported common technical issues experienced by teachers were related to equipment, internet connections, software and applications (Nummenmaa 2012: 29).

Assessment can be another major concern to some teachers. In Rakes and Dunn's (2015: 237) study, teachers were not confident in their skills and abilities to properly assess learners in the virtual learning environment. However, in Nummenmaa's (2012: 29) study, assessment was not the most problematic area compared to other issues mentioned above. It is important to note in the context of the current study that as the distance education circumstances during spring 2020 were rather exceptional, the assessment of learning might have required different approaches. For example, teachers might have had limited resources and energy. Moreover, the distance teaching period was, in the end, rather short, so one cannot expect that distance language learning assessment techniques, tools and areas were volitionally developed or expanded. However, it is interesting to examine how assessment was executed, particularly if some teachers taught students that they had never met face-to-face during the distance teaching period. As Cowie and Sakui (2015: 272) note, in the context of higher education in particular, an increasing number of teachers do use online environments to teach students with whom they had never had face-to-face interactions. In the context of the current study, this was the case with some upper secondary school teachers. Still, as emergency remote teaching took place towards the end of the school year in spring 2020, teachers presumably had had the chance to gain data and knowledge of their students' language skills and abilities before the lockdown, and so, they were not completely reliant on the observations and data gained during emergency distance education.

However, studies also demonstrate positive teacher reactions towards technology, online learning and distance learning. Torres-Velazquez (2006: 15) reports that teachers in their study considered technology a valuable tool for language development. In addition, EFL teachers in

Al-Furaydi's (2013: 114) study viewed technology as a potential motivator to learn. Yet, despite positive attitudes toward technology usage in language teaching, Al-Furaydi (2013) also reported that teachers still preferred traditional teaching to e-learning. Furthermore, teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 22) study agreed most on the notion that distance education advances their technological and pedagogical skills and adds some variety to their work. While teachers in Al-Furaydi's (2013: 118) study were concerned about leaving students to their own devices, teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 22, 28) study also found this possibility a positive change to offer students more free and flexible learning environments. Furthermore, teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 22) study thought that distance education was beneficial in networking and collaboration with other teachers and institutions.

Nummenmaa (2012: 23) found that many of the teachers participating in her study had a positive attitude towards distance education, but also thought that it would be challenging in practice. Nummenmaa (2012: 22) also found that teachers who had actually taught at a distance had a more positive attitude toward distance education. This could indicate that teachers could often have negative preconceptions about distance education but once they actually teach at a distance, they might find it beneficial or meaningful. It is interesting to see whether the teachers in the present study also report changes in attitudes towards distance education after they have actual experience of it.

Nummenmaa (2012: 27) also inquired about teachers' opinions on important factors related to successful distance education. Interaction and communication were clear highlights in this regard. The teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012) study thought that interaction between a teacher and a student is the most important factor in ensuring successful distance education. Interaction between students was also perceived important, but not as important as teacher-student interaction. Motivating students, giving feedback, as well as engaging and guiding students were also perceived as very important factors of successful distance learning. The teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012) study thought that, at its best, distance education consists of successful and meaningful interaction that also allows students and teachers alike to construct knowledge together. Social presence was highly emphasized by the teachers (*ibid.*). They also thought that distance teaching has the best potential to succeed when it allows teachers to motivate their students by implementing diverse teaching methods and also allows teachers to give personal, individualized feedback as well as support and guidance to learners (Nummenmaa 2012: 28). An interesting point made in Nummenmaa's (2012: 27) research is that the factors that teachers

found important in successful distance education may not be very different from the factors considered important in classroom teaching. However, as Nummenmaa points out, these factors may be realized differently or perceived as more challenging in distance education. Next, we will focus on teachers' ICT skills and other skills necessary for teaching language at a distance.

### **3.4.2 Teachers' ICT skills and other skills relevant to successful distance education**

Teachers' ICT skills are crucial for successful distance education and online instruction. However, teachers' skills vary, as does access to training and skill development. Some teachers may feel unprepared to utilize technology in their teaching (Torres-Velazquez 2006: 2). As technology and its utilization in education is constantly changing, teachers may also feel uncomfortable using new technologies in their teaching (Torres-Velazquez 2006: 6). Especially older teachers can feel the need to catch up and update their skills (ibid.). Regardless of this feeling of insecurity, Torres-Velazquez (2006) positively notes that some teachers are utilizing technology in innovative and creative ways.

However, it is important to note that, as Torres-Velazquez (2006: 10) comments, knowing how to use technology does not automatically mean that a teacher is able to integrate it into their classroom successfully. Hampel and Stickler (2005: 311–312) argue that language teachers need more than just technical skills to successfully teach languages online. Similarly, Rehn et al. (2018: 420) suggest that successful video conference teaching requires that teachers are competent in a variety of "technical, pedagogical and interpersonal skills". This means that successful distance teaching (via video calls in the study by Rehn et al. 2018) requires teachers to have the necessary technical skills to realize teaching but also to be able to, for example, communicate at a distance, form meaningful relationships within the learning community, develop their social presence, and design courses effectively. Similar key factors are found in Murphy et al. (2011: 403–404), where the authors list several important skills, attributes and knowledge factors that teachers and students in their study felt were required of a successful distance language teacher. According to Murphy et al.'s (2011) findings, online (and distance) language teachers need to be knowledgeable about distance learning and the materials they teach, and have skills in group management, interpersonal support, organization and IT skills, as well as be experts in their subject matter, to name a few examples. An important aspect of teacher skills and behaviour in this study was also that teachers ought to have empathy with

their students' experiences in online learning (Murphy et al. 2011: 409). The same notion affects distance language teachers as well, as they also teach language online.

Moreover, Hampel and Stickler (2005: 311–312) state that language teachers in particular need a different set of skills when compared to other online teachers and their peers in face-to-face education. According to them, “the asynchronicity of the communication in written conferencing and the lack of non-verbal cues in audio-conferencing” are examples of the few challenges significant to online language teachers specifically. All teachers can benefit from learning about online language teaching, as they might need these skills at some point (Compton 2009: 93). The current situation with COVID-19 highlighted this issue as all teachers, language teachers included, were required to provide distance education, which most often takes place online. Distance education is more than just the technological knowledge, as Compton (2009: 95) illustrates:

“Online language teachers need to acquire skills beyond technological competence in order to teach effectively in this online environment. While some skills such as technical and software specific skills are easy to learn, other skills, such as facilitating online socialising and community building, can be more challenging. Nonetheless, these skills are essential in order to promote social cohesion that is necessary for meaningful communicative interaction.”

Building presence in an online learning environment was an important skill for teachers that Rehn et al. (2016: 8) studied. The study shows that teachers' experience and confidence seemed to have an effect on their ability to build presence, however, we need to take into account that some of the teachers in this study taught both face-to-face and distance classes. The teachers who taught only remote classes were reported to have the highest presence scores. This could be due to them “regularly engaging their students with questions, checks for understanding, and informal conversation” (ibid.). Teachers who got the best presence scores utilized strategies that made the students feel comfortable and involved, for example speaking directly to the camera, using humour and calling the students by their names.

Compton (2009: 75) points out that a skilled face-to-face teaching does not automatically translate to skilled distance teaching. Hampel and Stickler (2005) propose that teachers acquire online teaching skills in seven levels from basic ICT competence to the highest level of competence, their own style. According to them, teachers need to master the lower levels before they can advance to the upper levels. They argue that teachers' creativity would be wasted if

the teachers did not know how to use technology or how to facilitate online socialization (Hampel and Stickler 2005: 316). Compton (2009: 80), however, disagrees with this pyramid model, as he thinks that learning different skills can happen simultaneously rather than at specific stages. Simultaneously developing different online teaching skills may be the more natural way of acquiring skills (ibid.). Moreover, Compton (2009) criticizes that the Hampel and Stickler's (2005) pyramid model of ICT skill acquisition does not indicate at which skill level a teacher would be ready to teach online classes. For these reasons, Compton proposes his own framework for online language teaching skills where the skill levels (novice, proficient, expert) work as a continuum. Compton's (2009: 81) 3 major areas of online language teaching: technology, pedagogy and evaluation. First, teachers need to be able to have the necessary ICT skills. Second, teachers also need to have the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate online language learning in a meaningful way. Finally, it is also necessary for teachers to have enough skills and knowledge to assess the effectiveness of their online teaching practices. In the current context, the teachers were not originally hired to be online teachers and the sudden situation did not allow for selectivity, so having the necessary skills and knowledge to deliver language teaching online was not a prerequisite to teach online during the ERT. It will be interesting to see whether the ERT experience in 2020 will affect the importance of ICT skills in future teacher hiring practices.

Teacher training is one key area to addressing any challenges and opportunities language teachers encounter in their work. It is clear that technology can be beneficial to language education, but teachers need to be skillful in properly utilizing the tools technology provides for teaching English (Torres-Velazquez 2006: 4). Language learners will not benefit from technology if it is not utilized adequately (ibid.). Torres-Velazquez (2006: 2) claims that very few TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) programs offer training on how to utilize emerging technologies in EFL instruction. In addition to this, technical skills training might not be adequate and might fail to properly respond to teachers' needs. On one hand, Rehn et al. (2018: 420) report that teachers in their study felt that they had not received enough training and preparation for teaching online and wished for more specific training. On the other hand, according to Compton (2009: 73–74), language teacher training does provide trainees with technical and software skills training, but more attention needs to be paid to other skills as well. The amount of focus on ICT skills in teacher education varies a lot depending on the country, university, and the time when the teacher education was given. Yet, it remains

that technology's importance and use will only increase in the future, so, teacher education programs need to acknowledge this and provide training accordingly.

Of course, technological skills are essential to online language teaching. However, people might focus on them entirely (or at least think of them as paramount) when it is also necessary to focus on the pedagogical side of things in order to provide quality teaching, as has been apparent in discussing the relevant research in this Section. The holistic nature of teacher skills is apparent not only in general, but also in online and distance teaching: both technology skills and pedagogical thinking are needed (Compton 2009: 83–85; Rehn et al. 2016: 12). Without training and proper resources, teachers are left to figure things out by trial-and-error and are likely to take a lot of time in refining their methods (Rehn et al. 2016). Despite the challenges, based on the research on teacher perceptions, distance language education has a hopeful future. Proper training and resources are essential to developing distance language education further and engaging teachers and students alike.

## **4 PRESENT STUDY**

In this Chapter, we will discuss the aims and methodology of the present study. First, we will present the aims and research questions of the study and provide some reasons for choosing these particular questions. Second, we move on to data and methods, explaining our data collection in detail. Third, we will introduce our participants. Next, we will discuss our chosen methodology and method of analysis for the present study. We will justify our chosen methods by citing relevant literature and discussing our procedures in detail. Finally, we will discuss the ethics of the present study.

### **4.1 Aims and research questions**

Our aim was to research how English teachers experienced the emergency remote teaching period and how this sudden change to distance teaching may have affected their chosen teaching methods. In other words, we were interested in how teachers' views and work have been affected and what kind of methods have been applied to teaching English during school lockdowns. We were interested in the possible challenges and opportunities teachers encountered during this tumultuous period. We hoped the data we collected would provide some insights into how teaching methods have been (and could be) adjusted for distance learning and what (possibly new) aspects of teacher work have been essential to consider.

Research questions are as follows:

1. *How were the English classes conducted during the emergency remote teaching period?*

The first question addresses the concrete teaching methods the participating teachers employed during the emergency remote teaching period. We wanted to know what the teachers did and how. For example, we were interested in whether they adapted old methods or employed new ones that they had never employed before the obligatory shift to remote teaching.

2. *What are the possible challenges and opportunities that distance learning has brought up?*

Second, we wanted to identify the possible challenges or opportunities the teachers may have encountered during the emergency remote teaching period. This question aims to find out whether the teachers thought that new possibilities or challenges for teaching and learning emerged during this time period. In addition, we were also interested in the possible implications these challenges and opportunities could have for future use.

3. *What kind of attitudes and experiences EFL teachers had of the emergency remote teaching period and how has it affected their thoughts on teaching?*

Finally, the third question relates to the teachers' experience of the emergency remote teaching period and how it may have affected their beliefs and attitudes towards their profession. All of these research questions have the potential to bring out new information about emergency remote teaching as the teachers interviewed had a chance to discuss the reality of distance teaching during a global pandemic and provide answers to these questions.

## **4.2 Data and methods**

The present study is a qualitative study. The data was collected via five (5) video call and three (3) email interviews from May 2020 to November 2020. After transcribing the recorded interviews and familiarizing ourselves with the data, we began analyzing the data using qualitative content analysis as the method of analysis. In the following sections, we will first introduce our data collection process and our participants, and then discuss our chosen interview method, which is semi-structured interview. We will then describe and justify our

transcription process and finally discuss the chosen method of analysis that is qualitative content analysis.

#### **4.2.1 Data collection**

We began collecting data in spring 2020 by contacting teachers and inquiring them about their interest and willingness to participate in the present study. We searched online for schools from primary school to upper secondary school to find potential participants and sent interview invitations via email. We chose to approach teachers from schools we had previous contact with or that had a simple research permission procedure. This was because we aimed to complete the data collection as quickly as possible while the experiences on emergency remote teaching of spring 2020 were still fresh in teachers' minds. Over 50 teachers were contacted, but we received only 13 replies, one of which was negative. One reason for the low number of participants could be the timing and the circumstances: most teachers were, at the time, probably quite busy with distance teaching and preparations associated with the end of the academic year. However, we needed to move rather quickly in conducting the interviews, as the emergency remote teaching was fresh in teachers' minds in spring and summer 2020.

After sending out emails asking for cooperation and receiving positive answers, we continued with research permissions. We applied for permissions to conduct our research by contacting the municipalities, schools and principals depending on the particular procedures each municipality and school had. We made a contact list for our potential participants from different schools and municipalities, adding relevant information about permissions and persons in charge. This allowed us to keep track of our contacts and proceedings, as well as mark confirmed permissions and participants down.

We piloted the interview before conducting the actual interviews. In the pilot interview, we interviewed a lower secondary and primary school language teacher and then made some adjustments to the interview questions and order. The data was collected in spring and summer 2020, excluding two interviews, which were concluded in November 2020 due to personal schedules. The data was collected through online interviews due to the government strongly advising everyone to keep from unnecessary contacts with many people, as well as the researchers and interviewees residing in different locations at the time of conducting the interviews. The interviews were conducted via video call (Google Meet) and email, depending on the wishes of the participants and convenience. We originally aimed to conduct all

interviews via a video call but ultimately decided to provide the option for a written interview via email as some participants actively wished for this due to personal reasons and time constraints. Before the interviews, participants were sent all relevant documents via email. These documents included the consent form (see Appendix 4), information about the study and the privacy document.

In interviews conducted via a video call, the interviews were recorded with a recorder provided by the University of Jyväskylä. Each participant was notified when the recording started. At the beginning of each interview, the participant's consent was confirmed, but most of them also signed a consent form allowing us to process and use the collected data. These interviews followed a semi-structured format.

Interviews conducted via email included all the necessary documents as well as the interview questions. We gave questions themed headlines to make the email interview as clear as possible (in the video call interviews these themes were also stated to the participants). As consent could not be confirmed via oral agreement, all the participants answering via email signed and returned the consent form.

#### **4.2.2 Participants**

We selected teacher experiences as the focus of our study quite early on. Consequently, we started to look for potential participants from different levels of education online and through our own connections. This is a case study of nine (9) participants. As our chosen methods are interviews and data driven qualitative content analysis, the number of participants is not the most important aspect as our study does not aim for statistically significant conclusions (Alasuutari and Alasuutari, 2012; Dufva, 2011, Tuomi and Sarajärvi: 2018).

Five (5) interviews were conducted via videoconferencing platform Google Meets and four (4) were email interviews in written format. In contrast to the other participants who answered the interview during summer 2020, two of the participants answered via email interview in November 2020 due to scheduling issues and long research permission process. Consequently, their memories of the distance teaching period may not be as fresh as the other participants' who gave their answers closer to the relevant time period. Table 1 lists information about the participants. The table describes the participating teachers' pseudonyms, the years of language

teaching experience they had prior to the ERT period, what education level they taught during the period, and the method of data collection for each teacher.

|        | Teaching experience | What level they taught during the distance teaching period | Data collection method |
|--------|---------------------|--|------------------------|
| Maria  | 30 years            | Lower and upper secondary school                           | via video call         |
| Helmi  | 27 years            | Upper secondary school                                     | via video call         |
| Anja   | 35 years            | Upper secondary school                                     | via video call         |
| Hilla  | 25.5 years          | Upper secondary school                                     | via video call         |
| Annika | 17 years            | Upper secondary school                                     | via video call         |
| Salla  | 24 years            | Lower and upper secondary school                           | Email                  |
| Minna  | 13 years            | Lower secondary school                                     | Email                  |
| Mauno  | 10 years            | Lower secondary school                                     | Email                  |
| Laura  | 4 years             | Primary school   | Email                  |

Table 1. Chart of the participants' information: the given pseudonym, years of experience, level they taught during the emergency remote teaching period and the data collection method.

As one can see from Table 1, we have one (1) teacher from primary school (grades 1–6), three (3) teachers from lower secondary school (grades 7–9) and five (5) teachers from the upper secondary school (grades 10–12). One of the upper secondary school teachers also taught a few weeks of a secondary school English course during the distance teaching period and one lower secondary school teacher taught one course for upper secondary school first years. We aimed to interview teachers from different levels of education so we could potentially compare and contrast the results of the interviews, especially regarding teaching methods, if any significant differences were found. However, as most of our participants taught upper secondary school students, comparing the experiences was not meaningful because we did not have enough evidence from all stages of education.

The participants are teachers from both big and small cities. It is important to note that one of the researchers knows three of the teachers previously. Some of the participants were Rekola's former teachers or colleagues. While this made finding the participants and getting them to cooperate with us easier, we need to take into consideration the possible effect the familiarity between the interviewee and interviewer might have on the interview situation and the interviewees' willingness to share their experiences.

The participants were given pseudonyms to respect their privacy. As Dufva (2011: 141) writes, for the sake of clarity, it is good to give the participants pseudonyms. Indeed, it may be more pleasant to read about the experiences of Maria, rather than Teacher #1.

### **4.2.3 Semi structured interview**

Interviews are used to study a particular phenomenon but at the same time they are used to allow participants to use their own voices to describe the phenomenon (Dufva 2011: 131). Dufva also points out another approach to interviews, which highlights the aim to find out individuals' experiences, opinions, attitudes and valuations. Similarly, Saldaña (2011: 32) states that interviews allow participants to talk about their opinions, experiences and so forth in their own words. Moreover, Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 35) emphasize that interviews allow participants to express themselves as freely as possible and participants are able to be an active part of the meaning-making process of the research.

We chose to interview our participants because we wanted to hear about their experiences and opinions on the exceptional emergency remote teaching situation that was very new and unplanned all over the world. Interviewing the teachers gave us an opportunity to ask more questions based on their answers and ask them to elaborate or give details. Many researchers (Dufva 2011: 136; Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 34; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 63) also point out this flexibility of interviewing as a research method: the interviewer can repeat questions, clarify terms, and have a discussion with the interviewee, while the interviewee can elaborate, clarify, and refer to what was said before as well as point out issues the researcher has not originally included in the interview questions. As mentioned above, we felt that by choosing an interview as our data collection method we would have the chance to gain more information and insight and to be able to ask for elaborations and clarifications. Furthermore, Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015) point out that interview is a good choice for researching topics that are less known as the researchers would not be fully able to anticipate the direction the research will take. As our topic and context is emergency remote teaching in an unprecedented global pandemic situation, we had quite little knowledge to aid us in predicting the interview contents and what kind of answers we would end up with. Thus, this is another reason interviews are a reasonable method of gathering data.

We chose semi-structured interviews as our interview method. In a semi-structured interview, some aspects of the interview are predetermined but it is a more flexible method than a fully

structured interview. For instance, the point of view and interview questions are predetermined but the word choices, order of questions and answers are not. In the present study, the questions were the same for every interviewee and their forms were mostly the same, as is the case in some semi-structured interviews (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015: 47–48.).

We came up with a set of questions based on our research questions and what we wished to know. The questions were tested in a pilot interview with a teacher friend from whom we asked feedback after the interview. The questions were formed so that they could also be used in collecting data in a written form via email and so they include more specific questions as well as elaboration and cues. Interview questions can be found in Appendix 1 (video call interview), Appendix 2 (email interview) and Appendix 3 (email interview in English).

Dufva (2011: 136) proposes that when conducting an interview, the researcher may have a few main questions, under which several sub-questions may be placed. This is to make sure that the interview flows easily, and the researcher is prepared to react and expand the answers if necessary. We also followed this format as we saw it reasonable. We decided on a few broader themes under which we formed our questions. We aimed to form clear and reasonable questions that would allow the participants to answer in detail and in a focused manner because, as Saldaña (2011: 36–37) points out, close-ended questions require only short answers while inducing too many questions into one utterance can be overwhelming to participants and either/or questions might limit available answers and restrict genuine responses.

The first theme of our interview questions was *general information*. We asked a few questions about the participants' background in teaching and tried to create an open atmosphere that allows the participants to speak comfortably. The second theme was *distance teaching methods*. Here we wished to hear about the concrete teaching methods the teachers used in distance education. We also wanted to hear about possible differences between different school levels and how, for example, cooperative and communicative learning approaches were taken into consideration. In the third theme, *innovation*, we wanted the participants to recall any new experiences they had or any new ideas they got during their time teaching remotely in spring 2020. This includes possible collaboration with other schools or teachers and new tools and methods. We also asked the participants to reflect on their new ideas and their adaptability in the future. The fourth theme, *challenges*, addressed the possible challenges the participating teachers faced while teaching English remotely. While we were interested in the emergent

challenges, we also wanted the participants to think about how these challenges could be solved in the future. The fifth theme, *collaboration and community*, allowed the participants to recall their experience of collaborating with others as well as their school's resources and preparedness for this sudden change. The sixth theme was the *teacher's own general experience* of the distance teaching period. As the name suggests, this question aimed to address the participants' experience, in other words, how they felt about suddenly teaching English remotely. Was it inspiring, tiring or perhaps challenging? Finally, the last theme, *being a teacher and experience about teaching*, concerned two things: the participants' experience of themselves as a language teacher after distance teaching and possible changes they may have had in their image of teaching as a profession.

It is important to note that in research interviews, one must not knowingly try to influence the participants and their replies but at the same time, now it is also increasingly frequently acknowledged that interview is also just another form of interaction (Dufva 2011: 133; Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2015: 41). Indeed, the researcher who conducted the video call interviews in the present study felt that the interview sessions were genuine interactive discussions. The interviewer occasionally commented or discussed the interviewee's answers or matters relevant to them. This was done to make the situation more dialogical and the interviewer thought that this could allow the participants to feel more comfortable to give more detailed answers and really reflect on their experiences. As Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 103) point out, an interviewer's active listening skills can play a crucial role in conducting the interviews. However, it is important to point out here that in the present study the interviewer did not knowingly aim to influence the participants and the answers they gave, something that, as mentioned above, Dufva (2011: 133) warns against. Acknowledging this interactional nature of interviews, it can be noted that interviewing and analyzing interviews is strongly based on the subjective interpretation made by the researcher (Dufva 2011: 134). Next, we will describe our transcription process after which we discuss our analysis method.

#### **4.2.4 Transcription**

We transcribed five (5) interviews that were conducted via video calls and recorded with a recorder provided by the university. As the rest of the interviews, four (4) of them, were conducted via email in written form, we did not need to transcribe them. We transferred the recorded interviews to our computers and first listened through them and made some notes on

certain themes that we could immediately note. After this, we began the actual transcribing by meticulously listening to the recordings, slowing them down and transcribing appropriately. For this process, we used the Express Scribe Transcription program which conveniently allowed us to lower the speed and rewind less than a second at a time. Altogether we had 256,41 minutes of recorded interviews, 84 pages of transcribed data, and 21 pages of written interview via email.

As Ruusuvuori et al. (2010: 13–14) state, the precision and details of transcribing are based on the research interest and what is analyzed in the data. When transcribing, one can choose and limit oneself only to the parts relevant to the research problem or research questions. However, decisions to omit something from the transcription must be justifiable and logically followed throughout the transcribing process (Ruusuvuori et al. 2010: 14). Ruusuvuori (2010: 425) notes that if one is interested in the subject matter (in other words, the content) of the interviews, it is not necessary to carry out a very detailed transcription. Saldaña (2011: 45) also points out that informal or broken speech (such as “uhs”) and “inherent strings of speech” are not necessary to transcribe when a detailed, verbatim transcription is not needed for analysis. As we were indeed interested in *what* the participants had to say about the subject matter (distance teaching English in spring 2020) and not *how* they said it (as would be the case in, for example, conversation analysis), we chose to omit filler words and irrelevant discussion (for example, casual discussion between the interviewer and interviewee after the interview that was still recorded). We included the interviewer’s utterances when relevant, for example, in the case of additional questions, comments or discussion about what the interviewee had just said. We did not need to transcribe the “uhs” and “ums”, as Saldaña (2011: 45) puts, nor did we need to pay very detailed attention to overlapping speech, length of pauses and the like in our transcription. This is because our analysis focused only on the content of the participants’ answers. Table 2 below describes the transcribing conventions that were used in transcribing the data.

| Symbols         | Meaning  |
|-----------------|--|
| e.g. ((laughs)) | Indicator of action                                      |
| —               | Abruptly cut sentence or word                            |
| ...             | A longer break in speech                                 |
| [ ]             | Added context or word(s)                                 |
| --              | Irrelevant data was omitted between to relevant passages |

Table 2. The table describes the transcription conventions used in transcribing the data.

From Table 2 one can see that, while not detailed, we did use some indicators common for transcribing. We took transcribing conventions described in Jenks (2011) and Bailey (2008) and adapted them to fit our own purposes. We included some indicators of amusement or frustration in our transcriptions, as we felt that they were relevant to analyzing the content of the answers. However, it needs to be noted that we could not indicate unvoiced actions, such as physical movements, because our data was voice recordings. In addition, we marked cut off sentences as they commonly happen in spoken language. We also indicated longer breaks in speech and added missing context when necessary to make the data more comprehensible. Additionally, we marked omission of irrelevant data. We also added some punctuation to the transcribed data because the sentences tended to be very long, which hindered understating.

Ruusuvuori (2010: 427) emphasizes that oral interview transcribed into written form is already an interpretation of the original situation. According to her, a transcribed version can never include all the information available in the original interview situation or recording. However, it is justifiable to analyze the transcribed data in qualitative interview analysis, as it would be quite difficult or even impossible to perceive the entirety of the data just by listening to recordings (*ibid.*). When transcribing, the researcher chooses what information is relevant to the study and necessary to include in order to make the content understandable for analysis (Ruusuvuori 2010: 427–428). Furthermore, Nikander (2010: 433) asserts that a transcription is always imperfect as it is based on the observations and choices made by the researcher. So, the transcription is inevitably dependent on the researchers' or transcribers' interpretations.

Our recorded video call interviews were all in Finnish, as that was the first language of all the interviewees and the interviewer. Out of the four (4) email interviews, one (1) was in English while the rest were in Finnish. As most of our transcriptions and written data from emails are in Finnish, we provided English translation to the data examples presented in Chapter 5 of the present study. According to Nikander (2010: 432), transcribing and translating the research material are essential parts of qualitative analysis, not simply mechanical processes separated from the analysis phase. As the researcher transcribes (and translates) their data, they also get familiar with the data at the same time, coming up with initial themes and codes as well as beginning to make preinterpretations (Nikander 2010: 435). Thus, naturally, we also began to interpret and make preliminary theming around our data as we listened to the recordings,

transcribed the data and familiarized ourselves with the email interview data. Next, we will discuss our method of analysis in more depth.

#### **4.2.5 Method of analysis**

Based on the data we have collected and the nature of the knowledge we wish to gain, we selected qualitative content analysis as our method of analysis. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 78) point out that it is the most common method for qualitative analysis. It is common in qualitative analysis that the methods of research become clearer as the research advances and the researcher needs to be open to possible changes (Kiviniemi 2018). This kind of adjustability and flexibility is one of the corner stones of qualitative research.

In data driven content analysis, which is what we chose to do, we searched for meaning in the data by asking it questions based on the research problem and aims of the study (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 85-87). In qualitative content analysis, it is important to consider that the analysis is always the researcher's personal interpretation of the presented data (Dufva 2011: 142) and as such rather subjective. In addition to the analysis being subjective, the researcher's personal goals and interests also affect the data collection (Kiviniemi 2018). Of course, we need to present evidence to justify our interpretations, but it is important to note that the analysis itself is not the absolute truth but reflects the researcher's ideas and aims (*ibid.*). As Saldaña (2011: 93) states, researchers draw conclusions based on evidence and use clues to surmise "which is the most likely".

Although qualitative content analysis is subjective, the analysis and any drawn conclusions need to be supported by evidence. This is to give the research validity. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018: 109–111) state that qualitative research is an open field, but the researchers are held responsible to comply with good scientific and sound ethical practices. Rather than weaknesses, the subjectivity and openness of the method can be considered a natural element of the research process (Kiviniemi 2018). However, it is important to report the research process and justify one's decisions on the paper (*ibid.*). In addition to reporting the research process, Saldaña (2011: 135-136) adds citing relevant work, specifying the analytic methods and researcher honesty and integrity as means to give validity to one's qualitative research. These are all important so that one's research can hold ground in the eyes of the research field and can be considered truthful.

Alasuutari and Alasuutari (2012) divide qualitative analysis into two stages: *simplification* of the observations and *mystery solving*. By simplification of the observations, they mean that the researchers should have a specific point of view through which they should look at the data. For the present study, the point of view was to look at what the teachers said about their experiences during the emergency remote teaching period. We began by reading and familiarizing ourselves with the data. We read through the data multiple times, making notes and underlining things. According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2015: 143), it is beneficial to go through the data multiple times in order to familiarize oneself with it properly.

After familiarizing ourselves with the data, as Dufva (2011: 139) suggests, we discarded any irrelevant data. This is called simplification of the data (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 92). We had previously, during the transcription process, added theme titles to the transcribed data (general, teaching methods, innovation etc.) to make it easier to follow and find relevant information. We looked at the data one section at a time to find emerging themes and categories (Saldaña, 2011; Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2018; Kiviniemi: 2018). Categorization, or clustering (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 92), means organizing and ordering the collected data to find common themes and meanings (Saldaña 2011: 91). Dufva (2011: 139) mentions these commonalities could be themes, classes, types, emergencies, and absences within the data and they are used to group and organize the data. Forming categories is the most critical part of the analysis because the divide of the data into each category is based on the researchers' own interpretation (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 85). We had printed the data and used colored highlighters to mark similar themes for clarity. After finding commonalities in the data, we started to form themed groups to organize it.

It is important to pay attention to the interrelationships between the categories and we tried to look for relationships, for example, cause and effect, in the data. Saldana (2011: 92) divides these interrelationships into *interaction* and *interplay*. Interaction refers to how the different categories may affect each other, operate synchronously, or have a "domino effect to them". Interplay, instead, refers to the structure of the categories; the hierarchies, orders and taxonomies that may exist between these categories. However, one should not focus only on finding themes but also note what is said about each theme (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 79). Overall, this phase is about processing the data according to various contexts which enables comparison between different emergent themes.

After processing the data into categories and themes, we started *solving mysteries*. By mystery solving Alasuutari and Alasuutari (2012) mean the interpretation phase, where the researcher should use the observations to create meaningful interpretations of the phenomenon. We looked at our processed data, the categories we created, and the relationship between the categories to form conclusions. To support our interpretations, we used relevant literature and research as reference. Whereas in the analysis phase we organized the data into different meaningful entities, in the synthetic phase we took these separate entities, put them together and tried to form a holistic picture of the phenomenon, as literature (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2018: 85; Kiviniemi 2018) suggest we do. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2018) explain that in this part the meaningful knowledge is processed into theoretical concepts and conclusions. In addition to supporting our conclusions with literature, we also gave relevant examples from the data. Because our interviews were mostly, excluding one, conducted in Finnish rather than in the language of the study, English, we first cited the examples in the original language and then translated them into English (Dufva 2011: 142). We did not always make literal translations but focused more on conveying the meaning. Dufva (2011) writes that the examples should not be randomly picked but carefully considered and the selection should support the ongoing theme of the research.

### **4.3 Ethics of this study**

When conducting research, it is important to follow certain ethical procedures that give the research legibility but also allows for anonymity and safety for the participants. As part of the scientific community of the University of Jyväskylä, we followed the ethical principles set by the institution (see University of Jyväskylä, 2012). We also followed the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity's (2019) guidelines for research with human participants.

When we sent out the initial invite to teachers about participating in our study, we attached a data privacy and information about this study documents to the email. This was so the teachers were informed about our study as well as their responsibilities and rights as participants before giving their agreement. The data privacy document explained in detail what kind of information was collected from them and how it was used. It also detailed how the information was stored, for how long, and who had access to it. The information about this study document gave a brief,

but detailed, description of our research's aims and content. The participants were also reminded about the study's contents before they answered the interview questions.

The consent was given voluntarily, and the participants were made aware that they could renounce their participation at any given time without a need for explanation. Before progressing into the interviews, we asked the participants to sign a consent form where they gave their explicit permission to use the interviews for the present study. Some of the teachers who participated in an interview via video call gave a spoken consent that we recorded in the beginning of the interview.

We asked a limited amount of information about our participants. We carefully considered what kind of information we needed, what was relevant for our study, and did not ask for unnecessary details about the participants' backgrounds. Some of the information the teachers gave us ended up being irrelevant, so we did not include them in the study. The teachers were given pseudonyms to hide their identity and we deleted all the information that they could be recognized from. This included any proper nouns, such as place names or colleagues' names, from the data.

The data was stored on both researchers' computers and their university accounts' cloud services for ease of access. Only the two researchers had access to the data, recordings, and transcriptions at any given time. As stated in the data privacy document that was sent to the participants, the data will be destroyed after the research is complete.

## 5 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this Chapter, we will present and discuss the findings of our research. We will report the main themes and sub-themes that arose from the analysis of the data. As discussed in Section 4.2.2, we interviewed nine (9) teachers from different school levels to ask about their experiences during the emergency remote teaching (ERT) period. These experiences include both the practical aspect of conducting English lessons and the teachers' own personal experiences of distance teaching. The purpose of this Chapter is to answer the research questions presented in Section 4.1 *Aims and research questions*.

Based on the findings of the present study, we can conclude that most of the teachers interviewed in this study delivered English classes according to the schedule via videoconferencing (i.e., online meetings). The findings also show that EFL teachers faced difficulties and challenges with the use of technology, lack of communication, uncertainty, potential cheating cases and use of time. However, they were able to find some new opportunities and benefits during emergency remote teaching, although the lack of energy affected their ability and motivation to fully explore the opportunities the distance mode had to offer. Yet, the teachers did their best and were able to adjust their methods to the new delivery format. This, however, seemed to increase their workload significantly. Despite what seemed to be a positive experience to many of the participants in retrospect, most of the teachers interviewed in this study clearly prefer teaching English in the convenient classroom setting.

We will discuss the aforementioned findings in more detail in four sections that follow our research questions. First, in Section 5.1, we present the findings and discuss the first research

question, which is *How were the English classes conducted during the emergency remote teaching period?* Second, Section 5.2 answers and analyzes the first half of the second question: *What are the possible challenges and benefits that distance learning has brought up as perceived by the teachers?* In other words, we will discuss the challenges teachers faced. Third, in Section 5.3, we answer the second half of research question two, discussing the potential opportunities and benefits of distance education as perceived by the teachers. Finally, Section 5.4 focuses on the third research question: *What kind of attitudes and experiences EFL teachers had of the emergency remote teaching period and how has it affected their thoughts on teaching?*

## **5.1 The organization of English teaching during the emergency remote teaching period**

In this Section, we discuss and analyze how the English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Finland conducted their classes during the emergency remote teaching period. In other words, this Section will answer research question number one: *How were the English classes conducted during the emergency remote teaching period?* As mentioned in Chapter 1, *Introduction*, the government enforced an emergency lockdown that caused all education, with some exceptions, to be delivered remotely. All levels of education from primary school to higher education were required to shift into remote teaching on March 18, 2020 and the period was scheduled to last for a month (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020a). However, the emergency remote teaching period was extended until May 14, 2020 (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2020b), and became a month longer than originally intended. This shift into remote education was quite sudden and significantly affected how the teaching was conducted. We interviewed teachers from different school levels from primary school to upper secondary school to collect data on their methods of teaching during the lockdown period. We begin by discussing the concrete methods the teachers employed to deliver English classes (Section 5.1.1). We then move to introducing the content of the remotely delivered English classes (Section 5.1.2) followed by how the teachers assessed the students' performance (Section 5.1.3).

### 5.1.1 The delivery of English classes

The delivery of education is what seemed to experience the most radical change of all. How and when the lessons were held seemed to differ from teacher to teacher, but everyone seemed to have found a way that suited their purposes and teaching style. Table 3 briefly describes the teachers' lesson delivery practices during the ERT period.

|        | Meetings  | Platform        | Practices  |
|--------|---|-----------------|--|
| Maria  | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     | Teachers present the whole time<br>Students could come and go  |
| Helmi  | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     | 30 min. in the beginning of each class   |
| Anja   | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     | 30min. in the beginning of each class<br>Teacher led   |
| Hilla  | Voluntary for students<br>Few meetings<br>Asynchronous                                | Google Meet     | Meetings offered remedial instruction  |
| Annika | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Microsoft Teams | Teacher started the class and divided the students into small groups<br>Concluding remarks at the end of the class |
| Salla  | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     | Students had to sign in and out of the meet  |
| Minna  | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     | Teacher had a meet room to teach pronunciation   |
| Mauno  | Classes according to schedule<br>Synchronous  | Google Meet     |  |
| Laura  | Meetings at least once a week per group<br>Mostly asynchronous, sometimes synchronous | Microsoft Teams |  |

Table 3. A brief overview of how the English lessons were delivered during the ERT period.

As we can see from Table 3, all participating teachers had some online meetings with students over the remote teaching period. Over half of our participating teachers explicitly reported on having had synchronous online classes on the same schedule as before the ERT period. The most popular platform among the teachers was Google Meet, but two teachers reported using Microsoft Teams. Many teachers reported that they had not used Google Meet prior to the ERT

period. We assume that the teachers most likely chose to use Google Meet due to prior experience with Google Classroom.

Most of the teachers had synchronous video conferencing meetings for every lesson. Anja (example 1–2) and Helmi (example 3) realized quite soon after the ERT period started that having meetings was beneficial to both them and the students, which prompted them to have meetings every class in the second period. In contrast, some teachers started having meetings immediately after the first week’s confusion had cleared a bit (example 4).

(1) Ja sitten mulla on ollu täs jälkimmäisessä jaksossa, ku tää [etäopetus] meni kahden jakson ajalle, niin jälkimmäisessä jaksossa joka kerta niinku puol tuntii tällasta Google Miittiä opettajan johdolla. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*During this last period, because this [remote teaching] was stretched to cover two periods, in the last period I had 30 minutes of Google Meets every class, led by the teacher. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(2) Enhän mä olis välttämättä alkanu joka kerta mitään miittejä pitäänkään, jos ois huomannu et kaikki toimii ja kaikki ovat kovin innokkaita opiskelemaan ja tekemään kaiken ja muuta. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I might not have started having Meets every class if I had noticed that everything was working well and the students were enthusiastic to learn and do all [the assignments]. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(3) Et aluks mä en pitäny ollenkaan miittejä. Mut sitte ku tää viimeinen jakso alko ni mä oon pitäny joka tunti Miitin. Siis joka ainoa tunti. Ja se on kestäny noin 30 minuuttia yleensä. Ne yritti vähä keplotella siinä et onks joka kerta ja mä sanoin että on. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*At first, I didn’t have any Meets. But then when this last period started, I had a Meet every class. Every single class. And it lasts about 30 minutes usually. They [students] tried to wangle out of it asking “do we have a meeting every time” and I said yes. (Helmi, upper secondary school).*

(4) Me ollaan kyl joka tunti ehkä sen ensimmäisen viikon alun jälkeen joka viikko ollu joka miitissä koko ajan jotakin, mutta ei esim. Sillai et siellä Miitissä on oltava koko ajan. Tai mä oon ollut siinä Miitissä koko ajan, mut oppilaiden ei oo ollu pakko olla siinä koko ajan. Ja sit [oon] halunnu et ne tulee takasin esim. Keskellä tuntii miittiin ja sit siellä lopputunnissa. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*We have, maybe after the first week, had something in the Meets every week but not like you have to be in the Meet the whole time. Or I have been in the Meet the whole time, but students don’t have to be. And then I wanted them to return to the Meet, for example in the middle of the class, and at the end of the class. (Maria lower and upper secondary school)*

Milman (2019) defines video conferencing as one factor for establishing active learning with the instructor and in the present study it seems to be an important medium for teachers-student interaction. In the quantitative study about the remote teaching period of spring 2020 by Ahtiainen et al. (2020), the results show that most teachers contacted the students via a video call weekly or more frequently. Our findings seem to be in line with this, as most of our

participants reported having synchronous video call meetings, although the qualitative nature of our data is not directly comparable to Ahtiainen et al.'s (2020) large-scale study. Our findings are also in line with Nummenmaa (2012), who also noted that the use of video conferencing is common in Finnish distance education. The use of synchronous video call meetings has significant advantages according to some research. It is evident from the examples 1-3 that the teachers also saw the benefit of synchronous online meetings and naturally increased them in their teaching. As Mykota (2018:18) has indicated, setting up synchronous online meetings within the learning community can be crucial in establishing and maintaining social presence. Naturally, if the students and teachers are able to see each other at least sometimes, they form a stronger connection and are more likely to perceive each other as real people behind the screens. Furthermore, using video calls in distance teaching can enrich the language learning environment (Hampel & Stickler 2012).

The decision to have synchronous online meetings was not always up to the teachers' own discretion. Whereas most teachers were given autonomy to deliver English classes as they wished, Annika (example 5), mentioned that the decision to hold online classes came from the school's principal. The teachers who had their English classes according to the schedule provided by the school thought that it gave structure and routine to their otherwise long days (examples 5-7). The teachers noticed that having regular classes to keep up with routines was an important factor in helping them cope and persevere during the challenging period. The teachers also saw that this was not particular to only teachers, but they also got positive feedback from the students on how the classes helped them organize their time and manage their work.

(5) Ja vaikka me vähän kritisoiitiin sitä meidän koulun johdon päätöstä siitä että kaikki oppitunnit pidetään lukujärjestyksen mukaisesti niin kyl se oli ihan hyvä ratkaisu. Siinä pysy itellä sellanen kunnollinen päivärytmi ja niinku touchi niihin opiskelijoihin. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*And even though we criticized our school board's decision to deliver the classes according to the schedule it was a good decision. It helped giving structure to the day and staying in touch with the students. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(6) Erityisesti pienimmät oppilaat hyötyivät eniten Teams tunneista, joten 3.lk niitä oli enemmän. (Laura, primary school)

*Especially the smaller students benefited from the Teams classes so the third graders had more meetings. (Laura, primary school)*

(7) Mun mielestä se [Google Meettien pitäminen] antaa sitte rytmiä. Ja sitte että ne edes näkee mun kasvot nyt on kuitenkin suurin osa jo niinkun varmaan leimautunu et toi on se

[enkun ope] ni sitte mieleen painuu et nyt piti sitä enkkuu lukee ku toi on tossa toi [Helmi].  
(Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I think having Google Meets established rhythm. And then so that they even see my face, now most of them have probably already imprinted on me so they know that's [the english teacher] so they know they're supposed to learn English now that [Helmi] is there. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

Laura (example 6), a primary school teacher, said that the younger the children, the more they needed the support of the Meets. Certainly, the younger the learner, the more responsibility the teacher has over the students' activities (Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012). Distance education in the lower stages of education needs to be carried out in a way that allows the teacher to support the students' learning process as efficiently as in contact teaching (ibid.). Annika (example 5) and Helmi (example 7), upper secondary school teachers, also noted the structure and routine the Google Meet video conferences helped establish. In addition, Helmi believed that having Meets helped the students focus on the task and learn English better when it is given its own time and space in their day. It could be that having synchronous meetings was a significant factor in the students' and teachers' time management. In addition, one could suggest that assigning a certain time period during which the students were to work on their tasks with the teacher's guidance likely helped ensure that the assignments got completed. Furthermore, being able to see each other at least from time to time can have a significant effect on social presence, as mentioned before (Mykota 2018:18). Annika (example 5) and Helmi's (example 7) experiences could indicate that synchronous online meetings were important not only in aiding time management, but also in maintaining social presence. Being able to perceive the teacher as a real person behind the screen could have potentially helped students focus more and interact more effectively within the learning community (Mykota 2018).

However, some teachers chose to not have online meetings for every lesson during the ERT period. In our data there was one teacher who did not have regular synchronous online meetings. As we can see from example 8, Hilla seldomly had meetings with the students. She explained that the wish to not have meetings came from the students themselves, so she resorted to offering meetings as a form of remedial instruction and answering questions if the students had any. Another teacher, Laura, seemed to also have fewer synchronous meetings compared to others. Laura (example 9) reported having meetings at least once a week and otherwise giving the students detailed instructions through the student portal Wilma.

(8) Miiitejä oli tosi vähän koska niitä ei toivottu. Mä en sillon heti aluks niitä saanu otettua käyttöön koska siin oli yo:t korjattavana ni en käyttäny. Ja mulla meni siin Google

Classroomin kanssa, ku seki oli mulle uus, aikaa niin sit mä kysyin et halutaanko Miiitei ni ni mulla oli ni vastas lähemmäs kuuskyt (60) ni kakstoista (12) halus. Niin mä annoin sit—mulla oli miiitejä tämmösinä vapaaehtosena. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*We had few meets because [the students] did not want them. At first, I couldn't start using them because I had the matriculation examinations [going on] so I didn't use them. And Google Classroom was new to me so it took time so I asked the students do they want meets, and I had about 60 [students] and 12 said yes. So, I had them as voluntary. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(9) Oppilaat saivat oppituntien ohjeet joko kirjallisena Wilma viestinä tai osallistuivat etätuntiin. (Laura, primary school)

*The students received the instructions through either in written form via Wilma or participated in the meetings. (Laura, primary school)*

Hilla and Laura, who did not compensate every class with an online meeting, gave the instructions for each lesson via Google Classroom or Wilma. It seems that they gave the students what one could call “exercise packages”, which gave detailed instructions on what to cover and which tasks to complete in place of regular lessons. This is something that most teachers did daily or several times a day during the ERT period, according to Ahtiainen et al. (2020). In our study, the teachers who did have online meetings also sent their students exercises or task outlines, but in addition to these, some instruction and guidance was given via a video call. Meanwhile, in Hilla’s (example 8) case in particular, students were mainly given written instructions and guidance, with some voluntary online meetings that students could attend if they wanted.

To conclude, most teachers delivered their online lessons via synchronous video call meetings according to the previously agreed schedule, whether by their own choice or the schools’. Having online meetings for every class created a routine that was welcome during the challenging time period when past time and work easily blended together. Whether or not the teachers held video conference lessons, they seemed to be content with their chosen method and some reported development in their practices and skills.

### **5.1.2 Contents of English classes**

The following Section describes the teachers’ practices during the online distance language teaching. Looking at the data, it is evident that the contents and some teaching methods were not too different from what the teachers were already using in regular classroom teaching. Still, the teachers did make some adjustments to their English classes, which will be discussed in more detail through examples in this Section. Table 4 describes the contents and methods as reported by the teachers interviewed for the present study.

|       | Meetings                       | Concrete methods and content   |
|-------|--------------------------------|--|
| Maria | According to the schedule      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed instructions</li> <li>- Interactional tasks</li> <li>- Students' own Meets</li> <li>- Pair work</li> <li>- Interaction with the environment</li> <li>- Google Forms</li> <li>- Cooking on own time and sending picture proof</li> <li>- Workbook exercises</li> <li>- Recorded debate</li> <li>- kinesthetics: dancing, moving</li> <li>- Grammar on Google Forms</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Differentiation</li> <li>- Teacher speaks more</li> <li>- Slides</li> </ul> |
| Helmi | According to the schedule      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed instructions</li> <li>- More homework</li> <li>- Homework checking by sharing screen</li> <li>- Giving pointers</li> <li>- Teacher speaks more</li> <li>- Publisher's PowerPoint slides</li> <li>- Pronouncing glossaries</li> <li>- Publisher's e-material</li> <li>- Writing CVs</li> <li>- Encourages interaction between students but does not supervise it</li> </ul>   |
| Anja  | According to the schedule      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Independent work</li> <li>- Instructed tasks</li> <li>- Individual interview with teacher</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Oral summary of a text</li> <li>- Opinion-based tasks</li> <li>- Translating sentences</li> <li>- Grammar</li> </ul>   |
| Hilla | Voluntary remedial instruction | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instructions the day before</li> <li>- Vocabulary tasks as extra (Google Docs)</li> <li>- Grammar</li> <li>- Find information online</li> <li>- Opinion-based tasks</li> <li>- Workbook exercises</li> <li>- Spoken exercises</li> <li>- Encourages interaction between students but does not supervise it</li> <li>- Answer questions -exercises</li> <li>- Podcasts</li> </ul>  |

|        |                           |   |
|--------|---------------------------|---|
|        |                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More written tasks</li> </ul>  |
| Annika | According to the schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Instructions for the day</li> <li>- Tasks done in groups</li> <li>- Gives pointers at the end of the lesson</li> <li>- Textbook</li> <li>- Publisher's e-material</li> <li>- Oral practice</li> <li>- Recorded video discussions</li> <li>- Independent work</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- CV and open letter</li> <li>- Interview</li> <li>- Grammar</li> </ul>  |
| Salla  | According to the schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed instructions</li> <li>- Short stories</li> <li>- poems</li> <li>- Videos</li> <li>- Music/art</li> <li>- Familiar methods of mixing extra to the standard material</li> <li>- Stretching legs outside (if trustworthy)</li> <li>- Interview</li> <li>- Personalized written assignments</li> <li>- Grammar integrated with comprehension and writing tasks</li> <li>- Creative tasks (digital)</li> </ul>   |
| Minna  | According to the schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed instructions</li> <li>- Listening chapters via Google Meets</li> <li>- Vocabulary</li> <li>- Workbook exercises</li> <li>- Teacher's material</li> <li>- Grammar</li> <li>- Pair work</li> <li>- Student-student chats and discussions</li> <li>- Pronunciation practice in a separate Meet-room</li> <li>- Kahoot</li> <li>- Google Forms</li> <li>- Essays</li> <li>- Socratic</li> <li>- English speaking guest</li> <li>- Oral exercises</li> </ul> |
| Mauno  | According to the schedule | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Emphasis on "easy-to-follow" classes and tasks</li> <li>- Spoken exercises with friends or family</li> <li>- Pronunciation teaching with small groups</li> <li>- Grammar/syntax</li> <li>- Assignments completed during the class</li> <li>- Workbook exercises</li> </ul>   |

|       |                                |   |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|
| Laura | At least once a week per group | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Detailed instructions</li> <li>- Picture proof of homework</li> <li>- Tasks submitted to Teams</li> <li>- Self-made teaching videos</li> <li>- Kahoot</li> </ul> |
|-------|--------------------------------|---|

Table 4. Teachers' methods and class content as reported by the teachers.

Table 4 summarizes how meetings (i.e., lessons) were organized and what concrete methods and content the teachers mentioned using in their teaching during the ERT period. Looking at the table, we can see that the four different uses of distance education (giving out information, interacting, distributing materials, and teacher-led instruction) defined by Nummenmaa (2012) are apparent in the data. As one can see, some teachers were more detailed in their descriptions than others. Thus, it is important to note that the table does not necessarily offer an exhaustive list of everything the participants did during the ERT period. However, the answers provide some insight into teaching methods and content in emergency remote EFL teaching.

Many of the teachers reported that much was the same as in the convenient classroom teaching, as we can see from the examples 10–13 below. Most of the teachers, for example, used platforms with which they were already familiar, and very few reported doing anything completely new. However, the teachers note that although the content is much the same as earlier, the means and ways to conduct and deliver the familiar content underwent a significant change to adjust to the new environments.

(10) I used a lot of short stories, poems, short movie clips, music and artwork to the assignments. I used my usual methods of mixing a lot of extra material into the standard material but where I would usually explain and show in the physical classroom, I made clear and simple instructions in writing. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

(11) Vaikee nyt hahmottaa et mitä kaikkee uutta, koska siin oli niin paljon tavallaan uutta verrattuna siihen lähiopetukseen. Tai siis niinku et piti soveltaa niitä lähiopetuksen juttuja siihen Teams-ympäristöön ja itsenäisiin juttuihin. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*It's difficult to grasp what was new because there were in a way so many new things compared to contact teaching. Or like I had to adapt [the content] from contact teaching to the Teams environment and independent work. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(12) Kyl niinku näis kaikissa työtavoissa mietin tavallaan sen toiminnan vähän uudella tavalla. Koska tota mä ajattelin et enhän mä voi pitää sellasta oppituntia ku mä pitäsin luokkatilassa, vaan et täytyy kaikki tavallaan soveltaa uudella lailla. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I did kind of rethink my workmethods and worked in a slightly new way. Because I thought that I couldn't possibly deliver a similar lesson as I would in a classroom but that I have to adapt everything in a new way. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(13) Mulla on tälläsiä lisätehtäviä paljon sanastotehtäviä muita ni toivottiin siihen aluks, koska me oltiin alotettu se jakso ihan normaalisti ni sit mä muutin sitä. Mä pistin ne Google Docsiin ja annoin ne vastauksineen sitte halukkaille tehtäviks. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I have a lot of these kinds of vocabulary extra tasks that the students wanted to have in the beginning because we had started the course in the normal way and then I changed it. I put the extra tasks on Google Docs and gave them with answers to those who wanted to do them. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

Many researchers point out that distance education content is not that different from regular classroom methods, but rather it is the medium that changes (see for example Brunei 2011). Many also say that the methods and content used in conventional classroom teaching cannot just be used as they are, but they require adjustment to fit the (often) online environment of remote teaching (Carlson and Everett 2000). Interestingly, without previous experience of or training for distance education, the participating teachers seemed to also notice this.

The content and structure of the remotely delivered English classes depended on how the teachers chose to deliver their classes. For those who held regular meetings, classes often started and ended together, with some independent or pair/group work in the middle. The meetings might also have check-ups in the middle, where the students had to return to the Meet to let the teacher know of their progress. Examples 14–16 illustrate how Minna, Helmi and Annika conducted their lessons.

(14) Tuntien pohjana käytin Google Classroomia, jonne latasin tunnin ohjeet ja materiaalit ennen oppituntia. Jokainen oppitunti alkoi Google Meetissä nimenhuudolla. Jokaisella tunnilla oli opetuksen lisäksi joku palautettava tehtävä, millä varmistin sen, että tunnin aikana muita asioita miettineetkin oppilaat jäivät tarvittaessa kiinni työskentelemättömyydestä. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*I used Google Classroom as a base for the classes, where I uploaded instructions and materials before the class. Every class started with taking attendance on Google Meet. In addition to teaching, every class had some kind assignment that needed to be submitted, with which I ensured that those students who were not paying attention would be caught. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

(15) Sen mitä mä oon sitten tehnyt on et mä aina alotan tunnin sillee et mä nään ja sit mä jaan mun näytön ja mä näytän sitä opettajan opasta eli sitten mä niinku meen läpi läksyjä, ja mä näytän yks kerrallaan ja selitän ja alleviivaan ja ympyröin ja painotan ja sanon että kirjota tähän tarppi kirjoita yo-koe. Ja kaikkee tämmöstä että. Se on tavallaan sama mitä mä teen tunnilla. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I begin each class by sharing my screen and showing the teacher's guide so I go through homework and show them one by one and explain and underline and circle and emphasize and say that write here tips, write matriculation examination. And all that. It's kind of the same as what I do in the classroom. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(16) Joka päivä, kun oli se tunti ni avattiin Teams-puhelu tai se kokous ja sitten esittelin päivän aiheet siinä yleises kokouksessa ja useimmiten sitten mä jaoin opiskelijat sinne kanaville eli pienryhmiin. Ja sillä tavalla se työskentely suju parhaiten. -- sit lopussa vielä yleinen kokous niinku nopeesti joku kokoova juttu siinä lopussa tai sitten mä laitoin vaan

viestillä sinne chättiin ehkä sinne pienryhmiin, että mitä tulee läksyksi tai mihin piti kiinnittää huomiota tai jotain tämmöstä ja sitten vaan että saatte poistua. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*We started every class with a Teams call or conference and then I introduced the day's topics in the meet everyone attended and usually I divided the students into small groups and their own channels. And that way worked the best. -- Then at the end we had another meet all together, I quickly summarized everything or then I sent a message about homework to the chat in the small group channels, or something like that and then just you may leave. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

For distance educators and researchers, it seems to be a common concern that the distance format can make it more likely for the teacher to lecture alone to silent listeners, in video conference meetings in particular (Rehn et al. 2016; Hampel and Stickler 2012). From Table 3 we can see that some teachers also noted that during the online lessons the teachers seemed to lecture more than compared to contact teaching. However, from the examples 14–16 above we can see how the teachers tried to activate the students by adding group and pair work while also trying to minimize their own lecturing. For instance, Annika's (example 16) method of requiring students to form smaller work groups is an example of an activity design that supports active learning with peers, as Milman (2019) has suggested. It is interesting, while maybe not surprising, to see that the structure of the online lessons often closely followed the structure of regular contact lessons. Here, too, we can see that delivering online lessons does not necessarily mean that everything will have to be changed in order for teachers to take up a new form of education.

Hilla chose not to have synchronous online meetings and compensated them with written instructions for each lesson that the students followed asynchronously. Although Hilla (example 17) did not have classes, the tasks were to be returned to her in a similar schedule as the lessons would have occurred. She uploaded instructions the day before class and the students would then have a few days to complete them and submit their assignments. Despite the lack of lessons, she organized the exercises as they would have been carried out in the classroom. As mentioned before, Laura (example 9), also reported that she gave some of the instructions through Wilma.

**(17)** *Mä oon laittanu sen tunnin tehtävät mä annoin aina joka tunniks edellisenä päivänä ne tehtävät. Ja sit mä olin laittanu tässä järjestyksessä kannattaa tehdä ja se oli viimeisenä sit se palautettava tehtävä. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

*I gave the assignments to students always in the evening previous to the class. And then I had put [the assignments] in the order they should do them in, and they needed to submit the last assignments. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

Regardless of whether the teacher had online meetings or not, submitted assignments seemed to be how they supervised the students' activities. Hilla structured her instructions similarly to the structure of regular contact lessons. With this, she seemed to try to create a familiar learning experience that would be easy to follow. As she had no regular meetings with the students, the returnable assignments were her way of supervising the students' actions. This is similar to what the teachers with online meetings did, however, they had more ways of supervising the students' actions in addition to collecting their assignments.

As we established in the beginning of this Section, the exercise types that the teachers used during the remote classes (see Table 3) were similar to what they had used in contact teaching. Many of the teachers mentioned the challenge of interactive exercises, but they developed a variety of solutions to overcome it. For instance, Annika put the students into small groups (see example 16) and encouraged them to talk in English and read everything out loud. Hilla (example 18) and Helmi (example 19) encouraged their students to work together but did not see the point in forcing them to do so. Rather, they ultimately left it up to the students. Maria (example 20) had the students create their own Meet rooms for pair and group work but decided to not supervise those groups.

**(18)** Mä kannustin [oppilaita tekemään keskenään yhteistyötä] ja osa nyt ku mä kyselyllä jotain ni osa sano et he on tehny yhdessä, mutta myös sitte tuli tätä et on ihanaa ku on saanu tehdä ihan omassa tahdissa rauhassa. Niin en sitten missään vaiheessa sanonu et tää täytyy tehdä et jos oli mulla esmes joku keskustelutehtävä kirjassa tai sellasta, ni laitoin tehtävän et eti jos sulla on joku jonka kans vois keskustella niin keskustele. Et ottakaa yhteyttä ja keskustelkaa, mut jos ei ole ketään niin voi sit vaikka mielessä ite vastaila tai lähettää mulle niitä. -- Yritti sillai et kaikille löytyis joku tapa tehdä se. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I encouraged [the students to work together] and I did a questionnaire, and some said they did but then some said it's nice that they progress at their own pace. So I didn't at any point say that they have to do it together, for example if I had a conversation exercise in the book or something like that, I told them that if you have someone you can have a conversation with then do it. Contact each other and discuss but if you don't then you can do it in your own mind or send them to me. -- I tried to make it so everyone would find a way that fit them. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

**(19)** Kauheesti mä oon niitä [opiskelijoita] niinku alusta asti, että ottakaa niinku joku Whatsapp-puhelu kaverin kanssa ja käykää näitä yhdessä, että ois järkevää mennä näin. Ja varmaan osa tekee niin. Suurin osa ei. Luulen vähän. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I have [encouraged the student] a lot from the beginning, to have a Whatsapp call with a friend and do these together, that it would make sense to do it like this. And I guess some of them do it together. Most don't. I think. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

**(20)** Teetätän aika paljon suullisia, niinku esimerkiksi pari- tai ryhmäkeskusteluharjoituksia niin tota nehän on tietysti lähiopetuksessa tehty sillai niitte kavereiden kanssa, jotka istuu siin ympärillä niinku vieressä. -- mut nyt ne on sit tehty sillee et ne on ottanu omia Google Miiittejä sitten niinku kesken tunnin. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*I do quite a lot of spoken, like pari or group discussion practices, so in contact teaching they of course do those with their friends who sit next to them. But now they do it so that they create their own Google Meets in the middle of the lesson. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

As mentioned in Section 3.4.1, interaction is often considered as an integral part of successful distance education, yet distance education is often criticized for the lack of it (Nummenmaa 2012; Lehtinen and Nummenmaa 2012). It seems that some of the participating teachers also felt this interaction was lacking, or at least that it was difficult to facilitate in the online setting. However, the teachers were also able to invent new ways to facilitate interaction amongst students that fit the online format. The teachers tried to encourage students to interact with each other while not forcing it on them. Li (2013) and Andrade (2017) argue that teachers need to encourage language students to interact with each other in distance education in order to ensure efficient language learning, and this is what the teachers in the present study did, while trying to not force it on them. The teachers offered the students possibilities to interact, but this did not mean that the students took advantage of the opportunities given to them, which is similar to what Abrami et al. (2011) concluded in their study.

However, some teachers struggled with teaching some areas of language, such as oral skills, in distance mode. Some teachers felt that certain areas of language got less attention and were harder to implement. Therefore, for the most part, teachers only focused on certain language areas, and reduced others, as was the case with oral skills in some cases. For instance, Anja (example 21) reduced student-student oral exercises and put her focus on a teacher-student oral task. In addition, Hilla (example 22) increased the number of written tasks in her teaching. Helmi (example 23) also noticed the lack of oral exercises and vowed to address oral skills again once they returned to contact teaching. Helmi (example 24) also aimed to compensate for the lack of student-student interaction with other language learning activities.

**(21)** Jos mä aattelen niinku työtapoja, niin sellast ryhmäkeskustelua opiskelijoitten kesken esimerkiks mä en alkanu tekeen et mä pistin sen suullisen tähän opettajan kanssa tehtävään keskusteluun. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*If I think about methods, then group discussions between the students, for example, I didn't start doing that, I made them do the spoken assessment exercise with the teacher. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(22)** Mulle jääny just semmone [tunne] et oli enemmän kirjallista opetusta just täs mun tyylin takia tietysti. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I was left with a [feeling] that I used more written tasks because of my teaching style. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(23) Enhän mä voi jatkaa tällä lailla, ku mä oon koko ajan hokenu vaan et sitte syyskuussa ja elokuussa taas puhutaan. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I can't continue this way when I've kept repeating that then in September and August we will speak again. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(24) Mä ajattelin et mä korvaan [opiskelijoiden yhdessä työskentelyn] sitten muilla elementeillä. Ku mä oon tämmönen kokenut opettaja, ni mä pystyn siten tavallaan, jos jostain muusta sitten ammentamaan sitä. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I thought that I'd compensate [student-student collaboration] with other elements. Because I'm an experienced teacher so I can kind of draw that from something else. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

These are examples of how teachers may emphasize certain language learning areas and prioritize learning differently in distance language education as mentioned by Holmberg (2005: 167). As we discussed in Section 3.1.1, while it is important to keep in mind that the NCC goals and aims for EFL ought to stay the same during remote teaching, the ERT period was temporary and, in the end, only lasted approximately two months. Thus, some teachers made the intentional decision to temporarily emphasize certain language skills more during this time due to accessibility and convenience. If distance teaching continued for longer periods of time, the teachers would have to develop sound ways to establish and facilitate interaction.

What was slightly different from the regular contact teaching, was that during the ERT period, most of the teachers had the students submit assignments, either at their own time or by the end of the online meeting. As discussed earlier, this was done partly to supervise that the students did what they were supposed to, and to check on their progress. Some teachers used Google Forms or book publishers' exercise materials, while others wanted picture proof of completed exercises.

(25) Niillä peruskoululaisilla mä oon käyttäny enemmän nyt siis semmosia pakkopalautettavia Google Formseja. -- Sellasta et ne on tehny normi työkirjatehtäviä ni et ota kuva siitä aukeamasta missä oot tehny ku oot tehny ne tehtävät ja lähetä se mulle. -- Ja lukiolaisille mä en oo käyttäny sitä sillai kontrollikeinona, vaan enemmän sellasena formatiivisena arviointikeinona. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*With the comprehensive school students, I've used more compulsory Google Forms tasks now. -- They've done normal workbook exercises like "take a picture of the pages you've completed and send it to me". -- And with the upper secondary school students I haven't used it as a control tool, but rather as a way of conducting formative assessment. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

(26) Et nytkin mä katoen ni oisko niillä ollu viistoista (15) kertaa niinku läksyjä ja osa on tehny kaiken, ni mähän pääsen näkemään nyt mitä ne tekee ja mä oon korjannu kaikille kaiken. -- Mua motivoi ihan hirveesti nyt ku mä nään mitä ne oikeesti tekee. -- Ja totta kai se on varmaan painavampaa se mun teksti, kun se on nimenomaan niitten ryhmään. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I think there were fifteen (15) times when they had homework, and some of them did all of it, so now I get to see what they are doing, and I've marked everything for everyone. -- It motivates me immensely now that I see what they are actually doing. -- And of course, my feedback is probably more effective since it's meant specifically for their group. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

While collecting assignments was a necessary method of supervision, it was also a way for the teachers to assess the students' progress. Reading through the submitted assignments gave the teachers the opportunity to correct the students' work. While it took time, it seems that correcting all the tasks helped the teachers to identify the students' problem areas. This allowed the teachers to correct the students' mistakes efficiently after they emerged in the assignments, which in the long run will, without a doubt, be useful. In addition, reading the students' work also seemed to motivate some of the teachers quite a bit.

Using online platforms to deliver materials and instruction was rather unavoidable during the ERT period. For instance, Google Classroom was familiar to many teachers but its function changed quite significantly. Where some teachers had previously used it as a way for the students to submit assignments, Classroom was now used for every class as a vital tool to distribute materials (examples 27 and 28). For some teachers, to whom Classroom was previously familiar, this was not an issue. For Helmi (example 29), learning to operate the new platforms was a potential source of stress and so, she continued with the platform with which she was comfortable, although she was aware that another platform might have different qualities, for example, better tools for interaction.

**(27)** Google Classroom kaikki välineet ni oon käyttäny Classroomia lähiopetuksessa aikasemminkin, mut mä oon yleensä käyttäny sitä vaan semmosena siirto-plätformina, et millä mä oon niinku jakanu oppilaille materiaalia ja millä ne on palauttanu mulle sit erilaisia töitä. Mut että nyt tuli sit enemmän tietysti tää Miitti mukaan. Sitte tuli, käytin Google Formseja aika paljon. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*I have used Google Classroom before but I usually used it as a kind of transfer platform with which I distributed material to the students and with which they submitted assignments to me. But now I started to use the Meet tool. And then, I used Google Forms quite a lot. (Maria, lower and lower secondary school)*

**(28)** Ett mä oon käyttäny sitä [Google Classroomia] aikasemmin -- mutt se ei ollu sillai systemaattisesti ja jatkuvasti. -- Classroom oli pieni apuneuvo aikasemmin nii nythä se oli se pääasiallinen väylä, missä kaikki tehtiin. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I have used that [Google Classroom] before -- but I didn't use it systematically and constantly. -- Before Classroom was just a minor tool but now it was the main platform where we did everything (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(29)** Se Teams olis ilmeisesti sellanen missä pystyis niitä ryhmiä jakamaan paremmin, mut mä en lähteny siihen Teamsiin ollenkaan. Mä ajattelin et mä en oo sähköisesti ollenkaan

nokkela. Mä ajattelin et jos mä nyt tän Meetsin hallisten ni mennään tällä. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*Teams is apparently a platform where you can distribute students into groups better, but I didn't start using Teams at all. I thought that I'm not electronically clever at all. I figured that if I can manage this Meet now, we're going to go with it. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

In remote learning and teaching, course materials are often delivered through different online platforms and other e-resources (Croft 2010: 28). Nummenmaa (2012) suggests that, in distance teaching, teachers tend to use resources they have experience with because they are familiar and comfortable with them. This suggestion is supported by our findings, as, for example, Maria, Helmi, Anja and Hilla had all previously used some Google applications and used this previous experience as the basis for their remote teaching. Helmi's (example 29) answer, in particular, indicates a desire to continue using familiar resources and platforms.

Li (2013) describes four practices that should be considered to successfully integrate English language learning and technology, and these practices could be observed in some of our findings. First, some of the teachers in our study seemed to *increase comprehensive input* by concretizing the language learning; they found more authentic content in English online, in the form of podcasts and videos, which has been identified as one advantage of utilizing ICT in distance education (see, for example, Pino 2008). Second, while the teachers considered *social collaboration* difficult to establish in the online environments, they did their best in facilitating interaction through various exercises and content. Third, teachers *related the lesson content to the real world*. For instance, Anja conducted imaginary job interviews at a distance, creating a realistic situation. In addition, teachers used authentic art, and, for example, prompted the students to go outside and create art from things they found around them. Finally, the teachers provided the students with a *supportive environment* to the best of their abilities by always being available to answer the students' questions, in private or in the group.

All in all, the teachers did not change much in the content of their classes. We have already established that distance education is not much different from contact teaching content-wise, so there is no harm in doing what one is familiar with as long as one considers the effect of the new delivery method and adjusts the content accordingly. Nummenmaa's (2012) suggestion that teachers utilize previously familiar tools in distance education is reflected in our findings. Some teachers explicitly reported that they employed a platform they were previously familiar with rather than using anything completely new and unfamiliar, although they were aware of new opportunities through, for example, online communities. Most of the participants did

mention using at least some new tools in their teaching, so there were also clear opportunities for learning new methods (more on this in Section 5.3) However, the desire to keep using familiar platforms is quite understandable (and probable) in the context of the present study, where the teachers did not have time or energy to extensively search for and implement new distance teaching resources, as we will discuss later in Section 5.4.2.

### 5.1.3 Assessment

In this Section, we focus on the assessment practices that the teachers employed during the ERT period. Challenges concerning assessment will be discussed more in Section 5.2.3. Assessment was a part of the remote teaching that prompted some adjustments to the methods. Almost all participating teachers mentioned, explicitly or implicitly, that they had the students do several tasks which were all counted towards the assessment. This could also include activity during the online lessons and careful completion of the given assignments. In addition, the teachers developed a variety of new solutions to organize the assessment. Annika (example 30) and Helmi (example 31) adjusted their ways of organizing vocabulary quizzes to fit the online environment and to avoid possible foul play from the students. With the possibility of foul play in mind, Hilla (example 32) completely disregarded reading comprehension from her exam. Hilla decided that the students could improve their grade once back in contact teaching with a reading comprehension, yet only one student out of her five groups chose to do so. To Hilla, this signified that the students were happy with their results and thought that they were just.

**(30)** Sanakokeita tein sillai, että laitoin— no siis siinä pienessä ryhmässä näitten kaksoistutkintolaisten kanssa, jossa on vaan 13 oppilasta, niin tai opiskelijaa ni pystyin laittaa jokaiselle oman kanavan. Ja sanoin, että “mee tekemään omalle kanavalle sitä koetta, laita kamera päälle ja jaa näyttö”. Ni sit mä näin mitä he tekee siinä ruudulla ja sit mä näin vielä heidän kasvonsa, tämmöstä valvontaa, mut ei sekään poissulje kuitenkaan esimerkiksi puhelimen käyttöä tai mitään muita materiaaleja. Sitte täs sen ison 32 oppilaan ryhmän kanssa ni niitä kanavia ei voi niin paljon tehdä et se ois ollu- se ei onnistunu, että sit mä vaan esimerkiksi sanakokeet ni, pistin tosi tiukan aikarajan sinne, että me meidän opettajien kesken pääteltiin, että jos se aikaraja on tosi pieni niin ne ei kerkee keskenään siinä hirveesti neuvottelee ja surffailee. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Word tests I carried out in a way that I put— Well in the small group with the Dual Degree [secondary level education] students, which has just 13 students, I could put everyone into their own channels. And I told them that “go on your own channel to take the test, turn your webcam on and share your screen”. So, I could see on the screen what they are doing and then I was also able to see their faces, so it enabled this kind of supervising, but it still doesn't exclude, for example, using one's phone or some other materials. I couldn't create so many channels with the big group consisting of 32 students that this would have worked with them, so I just carried out the word tests with a very strict time limit. We teachers had concluded*

*that if the time limit is very small, they won't have time to discuss with each other much or search the internet. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(31)** Mä oon pitäny nää viimesimmät sanakokeet niin, että mä oon selittäny sen termin. Englanniksi. -- Että mä selitänkin englanniksi ja sit heidän pitää laittaa siihen viereen se termi, koska sehän on ihan tyhmää se semmonen suomi-englanti. Etenkin etäaikanahan siinä ei oo mitään järkee. Nehän [opiskelijat] voi kattoo mistä vaan. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I've carried out the latest words test in a way that I've explained the term. In English. -- So I explain in English and then they have to write down the term next to it because it very dumb to do it as a Finnish-English translation. Especially during distance teaching it makes no sense. They [students] can check it anywhere. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

**(32)** Tää oli niinku ohje joltai siel aluks et jos laittaa luetun [ymmärtämisen] sinne kokeeseen, Otavan kokeeseen, ni sitä on tehty tolla Google Translatella. Kääntäjällä teksti sitte, ruotsista lähinnä, suomeks ja sitten on jääny kiinni siitä. Ni mä aattelin et okei, että jos mä laitan yleensä yo-luetun ni nehän löytyy ne vastaukset sieltä netistä. Et mä en laitakaan luettua vaan mä laitan et ne saa täydentää koetta luetulla sit ku mennään lähiopetukseen, tai pääsee kouluun. Nii— yks on niistä kaikista viidestä ryhmästä. Mul on yks opiskelija [joka] haluaa täydentää sillä. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I heard from someone that if you include reading comprehension in the exam, Otava exam, students have answered it using Google Translate. They have translated the text, mostly from Swedish, to Finnish and they have been caught. So, I thought that okay, if I include a reading comprehension from a matriculation examination as I usually do, then the answers can be found on the internet. So, I won't include a reading comprehension but rather I will allow them to complement the exam with a reading comprehension once we move back to contact teaching. So— one person out of all the five groups I have. I have one student that wants to complement with the reading comprehension. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

From the examples above, we can see that the teachers were aware of the possible challenges that assessment could bring forth in distance education. As an answer, they actively countered the challenges by developing new and innovative ways to organize and manage assessment. In other words, teachers had to actively adjust their assessment methods to fit both the online environment and distance delivery during the ERT period. Helmi (example 31), in particular, developed a great way to test students' vocabulary knowledge without worry over possible foul play. She also noted the potential future use for this type of vocabulary assessment herself.

The sudden change to delivering education remotely forced the teachers to also rethink the way they organized the final exam. The teachers were concerned with issues of equality and cheating as well as somewhat unfamiliar online exam platforms (see also Section 5.2.1). The examples 33–35 demonstrate the different solutions teachers found to the final exam, as well as some of the worries they had. The teachers persevered and discovered new ways to assess the students' skills in addition to adapting the old. Some teachers report using book publishers' online exams because the online exam provided by the publisher was somewhat easy to use and accessible. It also made the teachers' job easier and saved time, as the system corrected the exams on behalf of the teachers. Abitti, the system developed for the Finnish matriculation

examination, was also used. Although Abitti was considered a bit of a chore because the teachers had to make the exam and correct everything by themselves, the benefit of the system is that it disables internet use during the exam. Some teachers organized the exam through their chosen platform, Teams or Google Classroom.

(33) Mähän oon nyt pitäny kuusi etäkoetta. Et sen ensimmäisen mä pidin varmaan Classroom-kokeena. Joku työkaveri neuvo, että ajasta sinne tehtäviä. Ja niissä olisi se tietty minuutti aikaa tehdä ja sit joku opiskelija kommentoiki et se on aika stressaavaa. -- Sitte mä oon siirtyny tohon Otavan kokeisiin ihan tyystin. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I have now held six distance exams. The first one I held was probably a Classroom exam. A co-worked advised me to time the exercises there. And they had a certain number of minutes to complete the exercise and a student did comment that it's pretty stressful. -- I have completely shifted to using Otava exams. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(34) Sitten oli se ihan kauhee se päättökoe. -- Oikeestaan 32 opiskelijan ryhmä oli ainoon joka teki semmosen ison päättökokeen. -- Ja sitten taas kaksoistutkintolaiset niin ((naurahtaa)) [koulun nimi] päätti et he ei palaa ollenkaan lähiopetukseen. -- Niin nää kaksoistutkintolaiset teki päättökokeen täysin etänä, jollon mä tein semmosen kokeen, että mä arvioin sen kaikilta samalla lailla. Mut sitte tää iso ryhmä, mun kohdalla siitä kolmestakymmenestä kahdesta (32) oppilaasta tasan puolet tuli kouluun ja puolet teki etäkokeen. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Then the final exam was horrible. -- Actually the 32-student group was the only one that had a big final exam. -- And then again with the Dual Degree students [secondary level], well ((laughs)) [school name] decided that those students won't return to contact teaching at all. -- So Dual Degree students had the exam completely at a distance, when I made an exam that I would assess the same way from everyone. But then this big group, in my group from the 32 students exactly half of them came to school and the other half took a distance exam. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(35) Pidin sähköisen etäkokeen TEAMSin kautta, mistä infottiin myös vanhemmille ja pyydettiin valvomaan koe. (Laura, primary school)

*I held an electronic distance exam via Teams, parents were also informed of this and asked to supervise the exam. (Laura, primary school)*

The teachers in the present study took advantage of multiple online tools to assess the students' progress. Cowie and Sakui (2015) argue that these online assessment softwares could enhance assessment and make collecting data on the students' progress easier. This was also noted by some of the teachers, who reported that some online exams made their work easier by correcting the exercises on their behalf and giving immediate feedback. However, supervising online exams at a distance seemed to be a challenge (see more in Section 5.2.3), and the teachers needed to develop new practices to counter that, as we already discussed earlier in this Section. In primary school, for example, Laura reported (example 35) that the students took their exams at home under their parents' supervision. It would make sense for this to be a common occurrence in the primary level of education where much of the responsibility for children's learning belongs to the parents and teachers.

Some of the teachers opted not to have a final exam and decided to find other ways to assess the students' skills. From the data, we could see that continuous assessment (example 36–39) seemed to be the favored option to a final exam. In example 38, Mauno also mentions that in addition, he had assessment discussions with some of his students.

(36) Arviointi perustui koko vuoden suorituksiin, ja suuri osa vuoden kokeista oli onneksi jo pidetty lähiopetuksen aikana. Arvioin jokaisen oppitunnin osalta aktiivisuutta ja tehtävien palautusten laatua. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*The assessment was based on full-year performance and, thankfully, much of the year's exams had already been held during contact teaching. During each lesson, I evaluated activity and the quality of submitted tasks. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

(37) Täs kurssissa ei oo isoo loppukoetta, vaan tää arvioidaan niinkun jatkuvien pienten suoritusten avulla. Eli sen takia mä tarkistin joka kerta jotain sillai mistä annettiin pisteet. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*We don't have a big final exam on this course, the course is assessed through continuous small assignments. So that's why I checked something that was scored each time. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(38) Seurasin oppilaiden tehtäviä erittäin aktiivisesti. Etäjaksolla arvioin kaikilta oppilailta ainakin viisi eri tehtävää - osa pienempiä, osa hieman laajempia. Arvioin sekä kielioppi/rakennetehtäviä että omaa tuottamista (suullista ja kirjoittamista). Annoin palautetta, korjasin oppilaiden tuotoksia ja ainakin kaksi tehtävää arvioin myös numerolla. Osan oppilaista kanssa kävin arviointikeskustelun. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*I monitored students' tasks very actively. In the remote teaching period I evaluated at least five different tasks from each student - some smaller, some a bit bigger. I assessed both grammar exercises and students' own output (oral and written). I gave feedback, marked students' work and I also gave a numerical assessment to at least two tasks. I had an evaluation discussion with some of the students. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(39) Luckily, I had already been teaching most of the students and I had already graded a body of work, this made it easier to gauge if the students were doing the work themselves, I did interview the students but mostly the assignments were written ones where I chose topics that were personal to them so they had to hand in their own writing. I integrated the grammar into the comprehension and writing. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

In particular, the ERT period seemed to emphasize the importance of continuous assessment in the form of collecting assignments throughout the course. Teachers also seemed to favor assignments that included students' own thoughts. The teachers reported that they got to know the students better through personalized assignments and the chance of cheating was minimized. Continuous assessment could make for a viable option to counter the issue of cheating. Seeing continuous evidence of the students learning could make cheating, once it happens, more evident.

Regardless, assessment seemed to be something most of the teachers were at least somewhat worried about. Subsequently, some of the teachers compared the grades they had given the

students during the remote teaching period to the students' prior grades from regular classroom teaching to see if their grading was in line with it (example 45–46).

(40) Tulokset oli aika pitkälti sitä mitä oli ennenkin ollu, että ei ne [opiskelijat] kai kauheesti lunttaillu. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*The results were pretty much the same they had been before, so I suppose they [students] didn't cheat too much. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(41) Tulosten perusteella sit mä nyt katoin kokeen jälkeen, miten heidän entisiä edellisten numeronsa. Niin kyllä ne [opiskelijat] melkein pääsääntöisesti täsmälleen saman sai kurssinumeroks sitten ja ainoostaan siel alapäässä oli pientä nousua eli siinä on vähän varmaan käytetty sitte apuvälineitä. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*Based on the results I checked after the exam what their previous grades had been. In general, they [students] did get exactly the same grade for this course. Only the students with lower grades had a bit better grades, that is, they have probably used some aids. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

There seemed to be a need to confirm the reliability of their adjusted methods of assessment. These findings in the present study are in accordance with Rakes and Dunn's (2015: 237) study, where teachers were not confident in their skills and abilities to properly assess learners in the virtual learning environment. Examples 39 and 40 demonstrate that some teachers felt the need to, in a way, verify the grades that were given to their students after the ERT period. Although the teachers were worried, quite many of them reported that the grades the students received from the remote course were similar to their prior grades from conventional classroom teaching. This gave them the proof that the assessment had gone well and there was little foul play from the students.

All in all, we can see from the findings that the teachers enforced multiple different ways of assessment. The teachers adjusted their ways of holding exams or smaller tests and tried to minimize cheating, which was a common worry. Some opted out of holding one big final exam and focused on continuous assessment based on students' everyday work. In addition, as the ERT period took place at the end of a school year, some of the teachers in lower grade levels (primary and lower secondary) had already assessed a lot of students' work and progress prior to distance teaching. For this reason, some teachers felt that the assessment was not as hard as it could have been. We think that these developments in assessment methods have great implications for the discussion on whether or not one important final exam is necessary. We consider it worthwhile to explore continuous assessment more also in regular contact teaching. The roles and advantages of language learning assessment softwares could be reassessed by

educator planners and facilitators. In the next Chapter, we will move on to discussing the perceived challenges and opportunities of distance teaching.

## 5.2 The perceived challenges in distance language teaching

In this Section, the perceived challenges that the EFL teachers encountered during the emergency remote teaching period are presented, analyzed and discussed. This Chapter will give an answer to the first half of the second research question: *What are the possible challenges and opportunities that distance teaching has brought up as perceived by the teachers?* As distance teaching methods and practices had to be employed rather quickly in spring 2020, teachers most likely faced some challenges. We asked our participants to recall and describe any challenges they had during the emergency remote teaching period. We will present and discuss the reported challenges in three sections, organized by the main themes that emerged in the data. First, we will present and discuss challenges concerning interaction (Section 5.2.1). Second, we will examine challenges concerning technology. Finally, we will discuss challenges concerning language teaching practice. While some matters that could be considered challenges have already been mentioned in Section 5.1, in this Section, rather than describing what the teachers did, we focused on what the teachers found challenging. Consequently, there might be some repetitions, although the point of view is different.

Teachers perceived challenges in different areas during the emergency remote teaching of EFL. These challenges of remote teaching found in the data reflect those presented in theoretical background (Section 3.2), such as concerns over interaction, technical issues and supervision. However, while discussing the perceived challenges, we must remember that the challenges that our participants encountered may not be completely comparable to those of more standardized distance education. Challenges might have been heightened by the suddenness of the shift to emergency remote teaching and teachers' inexperience in the face of this unprecedented situation. A general overview of perceived challenges can be found below in Table 5.

|  |             |            |                   |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------------|
|  | Interaction | Technology | Teaching practice |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------------|

|        |  |  |   |
|--------|--|--|---|
| Maria  | Lack of contact<br>Little to no dialogue<br>Student-teacher interaction<br>Lack of social presence   |  | Uncertainty about students' activities & comprehension<br>Difficult to estimate how much time is needed for exercises<br>Time-consuming<br>Cheating |
| Helmi  | Supporting student-student interaction<br>Very little feedback<br>No dialogue<br>Passive students    | Accidentally sending exam questions too early<br>Typing errors<br>Timing issues                        | Time-consuming<br>Passive students<br>Cheating  |
| Anja   | Passive students<br>Lack of social presence<br>Unfamiliar students                                   | Teacher's own attitude<br>Reluctancy to spend so much time on computer<br>General technical challenges | Cheating<br>Time-consuming<br>Limiting work hours   |
| Hilla  | Lack of contact<br>Passive students<br>Unfamiliar<br>Lack of social presence                         | General technological challenges   | Uncertainty about students' activities & comprehension<br>Time-consuming<br>Supporting students<br>Cheating   |
| Annika | Lack of non-verbal communication and face-to-face cues<br>Unfamiliar students<br>Social presence     | Internet connection<br>Teacher muted by a student  | Supervising exams<br>Fair assessment<br>Cheating  |
| Salla  |  |  | Time-consuming<br>Fair distribution of materials  |
| Minna  | Lack of contact<br>Student-student interaction   | General technical difficulties<br>Lack of devices<br>Connection issues                                 | Concern about students' well-being<br>Time management<br>Limiting work hours  |
| Mauno  | Lack of interaction<br>Passive students<br>Lack of immediate feedback<br>Student-student interaction |  | Uncertainty about students' activities & comprehension<br>Skills and motivation differences highlighted   |
| Laura  | Passive students<br>Student-student interaction  | Lack of proper devices for students  | Uncertainty about students' activities & comprehension<br>Time-consuming<br>Lack of support   |

Table 5: Challenges of distance language teaching reported by the teachers.

Table 5 showcases all the challenges mentioned by each participant. Challenge areas are organized into three categories, which are 1) interaction, 2) technology and 3) teaching practice. If the participant did not mention any challenges in a certain area, the corresponding panel was left blank. We will discuss the challenges in more detail in the following sections.

### 5.2.1 Challenges concerning interaction

As we already discussed in Section 3.2, there are multiple challenges related to a lack of interaction in distance education. Most participants mentioned some difficulties with interaction specific to distance teaching. Some teachers found it difficult to reach the students or communicate with them at a distance. Since students and teachers did not meet in the classroom but interaction was reliant on different devices and internet connection, teachers faced challenges interacting with the students. As we can see from examples 42–44, teachers had trouble communicating and activating the students through videoconferencing. Hilla (example 44) mentions the lack of visual cues to aid communication when it seemed to be a common practice that the teachers were the only ones using web cameras.

(42) Joihinkin oppilaisiin oli vaikea saada yhteyttä. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*It was difficult to get a hold of some students (Minna, lower secondary school)*

(43) [Vuorovaikutus] iso haaste etäjäksolla. Oppilaan oli todella helppo olla vain hiljaa toisessa päässä etäyhteyttä. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*[Interaction] was a big challenge during the distance teaching period. It was very easy for the student to just be quiet on the other side of the connection (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(44) Onhan se [vuorovaikutus] nyt siinä eniten kärsii että luokassa näkee jo ilmeistä ja kaikesta (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*After all, it [interaction] is what suffers the most now, in the classroom one can already see from expressions and everything (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

The teachers in this study found the virtual environment of distance education to be restrictive and limiting in relation to interaction compared to face-to-face teaching. Interaction was clearly one of the biggest challenges, as is the case in many previous studies (see Nummenmaa 2012; Al-Furaydi 2013; Rehn et al. 2018). For instance, Nummenmaa (2012: 24) reported that some of the comprehensive and secondary school teachers that participated in her study felt that distance instruction and e-learning were not equivalent to face-to-face instruction as it was thought that distance and online interactions were more restrictive. Our participants reported

very similar experiences, and the lack of interaction was explicitly stated to be one of the biggest challenges, which is highlighted in examples 42 and 43 in particular.

Additionally, teachers reported that not receiving immediate or non-verbal feedback was challenging (example 45–47). Teachers felt that it was difficult to know whether students were following the lesson or understanding instructions. During contact lessons, teachers are indeed able to make observations and take notice of students' facial expressions and body language to, for example, deduce how their teaching is received. During distance lessons, perceiving what the students are doing, what they are thinking of the lesson and how they are doing in general was noticeably more challenging. Maria (example 47) thought that the chat tool in Google Meets would be a good opportunity for students to communicate, for example, their need for help during the video conference lessons. However, the students did not take advantage of this feature.

(45) Ei saanut käytännössä mitään välitöntä palautetta. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*There was no immediate feedback. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(46) Se palaute on niin onnettoman vähäistä. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*There is unfortunately very little feedback. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(47) Mulle on ollu jotenkin hirveen tärkeätä aina niinku siellä luokassa nähä oppilaitten naamasta se että missä mennään ja miten menee ja innostuuko ne jostain tehtävästä vai onks tää niinku niin tylsää vai mitä. Nyt ku sitä ei nää ja vaikka esimerkiks tässä Miitis on nyt toi chätti mahdollisuus ja mä ensin aattelin et sehän on helppo ku sen [oppilaan] ei tarvi sanoo sillai niinku ääneen et “ope hei mä en osaa tätä”. Mut musta tuntuu et ne kirjottaa tonne tai ainakin nää mun opiskelijat siihen chättiin vielä niinku jotenkin ujommin ku ne ois sitte ehkä luokassa kommentoineet tai sanoneet eli sitä sellasta vuorovaikutusta heiltä muhun päin ni sitä musta tuntuu et sitä on ihan hirveen vähä. -- Et niinku se että ei oikeen nää että miten jotkut tehtävät uppoaa. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*It's always been very important to me that in the classroom I can see from the students' expressions where they are at and how it is going and whether they get excited by some exercise or is it very boring or what. Now that one cannot see it and even though, for example, in Meet there is the chat option and I thought that that's easy since they [the student] don't have to say out loud that “teacher, I don't know how to do this”. But I feel like they are or at least my students are, even more shy about writing anything in the chat compared to what they would have commented or said in the classroom, so I feel like there is very little interaction from their side towards me. -- So, one doesn't really see how some exercises go down. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

Students's lack of chat tool utilization could be attributed to the lack of prompting from the teacher (Rehn et al. 2016). If the teacher included the chat as a part of the learning task, for example, it seems more likely that student would engage with it (Andrade 2017). Additionally, students might be more active if the chat rooms' usage or other participation was rewarded or monitored in a more systematic way (Carlson and Everett 2000). However, prompting or

encouraging the students to engage with the chat too in a non-task context, such as asking for help when they need it or giving explicit feedback to the teacher, might be more challenging, as this is more spontaneous and dependent on the student. The participants' experiences in the current study seem to focus on this more spontaneous and student-oriented chat communication and thus, explicitly prompting such interaction could be rather challenging indeed.

As discussed above, the lack of non-verbal interaction was identified as a hindering factor during distance language lessons. This can also be seen in examples 48–50. Maria (example 48) emphasized the challenge of not being able to see what her students are doing and feeling like she was not talking to real people. Anja (example 49) reports similar experiences, saying that since she did not see the students, she, at times, felt like she was talking to herself when giving lessons. Annika (example 50) found the lack of non-verbal interaction hindering communication at times.

**(48)** Kun ei todellakaan nää mitä siellä tapahtuu. -- se semmonen tietynlainen kontaktin puute. -- nyt musta ei tunnu niin oudolta, ku mä puhun sulle ku mä nään sun kasvot, mut jos on musta ruutu niin ku tunnilla on sillo ku on ne 30 opiskelijaa siellä ni sit on sellane et mä puhun täällä nyt johonki tälläseen mustaan aukkoon, mä en tiää yhtään et kuunteleeks kukaan. Ja sitku tietysti on nyt huomannu sen et aina välillä on niitä, jotka käy liittymässä siihen miittiin ja sit ne häipyy johonki. ((huokaus)) Et niinku sillai et et onks siellä ketään. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*Because you really don't see what's happening there. -- it's a kind of lack of contact. -- right now I don't feel so weird when I'm talking to you because I can see your face, but if the screen is black like it is with the 30 students during a lesson, then I feel like I'm here talking to some black hole, I don't know at all if anyone is listening to me. And then I've now noticed that sometimes there are students who join the Meet and then they disappear somewhere. ((sigh)) So I'm like, is there anyone there? (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

**(49)** Mä välillä sanoinkin, että must on idioottimaista Miiitissä puhua pelkille niille pompuloille mitä ruudussa näkyy, että mä en nää ketään et mä tässä yksinäni puhun. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I did occasionally say that I find it stupid to talk to just the round circles I can see in Meet, that I can't see anyone, that I'm just here talking by myself. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(50)** [Parin oppilaan kanssa] oli sitte vähän ehkä hankaluuksia sen niinku videopuheluiden kanssa. Että kun jotenkin niitä englannin puheharjotuksia, mun oli vaikee niinku saada selvää. Et mä olisin ehkä livetilanteessa kasvotusten, oisin ehkä paremmin pystynyt tulkitsemaan sitä heidän käyttämää kieltä ja näin. Ku eivät suostuneet kameraa käyttämään. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*I had some trouble [with a couple of students] with video calls. When they were doing speaking exercises, I had trouble making out what they were saying. Maybe in a face-to-face situation I would have been able to better interpret what they were trying to say. Since they weren't willing to use a web camera. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

This lack of non-verbal communication is strongly linked to the lack of web cameras and being unable to see other people's faces. In distance education, a web camera can be a great aid in

enhancing interaction (Delevelotte et al. 2010), reducing social distance and facilitating collaboration (Kozar 2015), but according to the participants of this study, the students seemed to be reluctant to open their camera and appeared as black screens with their name attached. Consequently, it is no wonder that social interaction was hindered during the distance lessons. During distance teaching, establishing interaction was considered more difficult, as the teachers and students did not inhabit the same space and they might not even be able to see each other's facial expressions if the web cameras were not turned on. In some scenarios, as can be seen from example 49, the audio mode and lack of visual cues obstructed comprehension that might have otherwise been achieved at a distance if all interlocutors had their web cameras on.

Furthermore, these experiences (examples 48–50) are clearly linked to the phenomenon of social presence, or lack thereof. Examples 48–50 demonstrate that the teachers did not always feel like they were communicating with real people in distance education, nor did they seem to reach the same level of connection with their students as they presumably would in contact teaching. As Kozar (2015) reported, the use of web cameras can reduce social distance significantly and strengthen the connection between individuals within the learning community. Since students did not seem to use web cameras very often, establishing and sustaining social presence in emergency remote teaching was undoubtedly rather challenging. This could also cause problems in establishing efficient collaboration among students and between the teacher and the students. However, according to Meyer (2014) social presence might not be as crucial if the teacher and students already know each other and have worked together in contact lessons. Thus, with some teachers who were already familiar with their students, the lack of web cameras and social presence might not have been as prominent a problem as with teachers getting to know completely new groups during emergency remote teaching.

Related to challenges in establishing connection within the learning community, some teachers felt that there was little to no dialogue between themselves and the students. It seems that during emergency remote teaching lessons, students were rather passive and did not initiate much contact. Helmi (example 51) and Maria (example 52) felt that it was especially challenging to receive much response from the students. Mauno, Laura and Hilla (examples 53–55) reported similar experiences, stating that students seemed to be more reluctant to ask questions or make comments during the distance teaching period compared to conventional classroom teaching.

(51) Se on tavallaan sama mitä mä teen tunnilla mutta siis tästähän puuttuu kokonaan se dialogi et kyllähän ne vähän jotain tonne chättiin ja ihan joku saattaa mikkiin jotain mut että

on ollu kyllä sillein tosi erilaista et niinku tämmöstä niin kuin luennointia enemmän. Dialogi puuttuu. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*In a way it's what I normally do during classes but in this situation we are completely missing the dialogue, I mean they [students] can say a little something in the chat or someone might say something aloud with the mic but this has been very different, more like giving lectures. The dialogue is missing. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(52) Et ainoo siis on ollut se et minkä mä oon kokenu ittelleni hankalana on ollut se et se vuorovaikutus on ollu hyvin puutteellista muhun päin. Et oppilailla on ollu keskenään sitä vuorovaikutusta ja totta kai mä oon jakanu niille suurta viisautta täältä ((naurahtaa)) mut et se että sieltä päin tulee hirveen vähän. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*The only thing I have found difficult is the lack of interaction towards me. Students had interaction between themselves and of course I have just shared my great wisdom from here ((laughs)) but they don't contact me a lot. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

(53) Liian harva oppilas pyytää etänä apua tai tarkennusta johonkin asiaan, mitä ei ole ymmärtänyt. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*Too few students ask for help remotely or for specifications to some things that they didn't understand. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(54) Kynnys kysyä opelta apua viestillä oli paljon suurempi kuin normaalissa opetuksessa kasvokkain. (Laura, primary school)

*The initiative to ask help from the teacher was a lot lower than in normal face-to-face teaching. (Laura, primary school)*

(55) Et kuinka vähän niitä kysymyksiä tuli verrattuna mitä tulee tunnilla. Ni se niinku huolestutti, että ne ei niinku— ett se kynnys kysyä jonkun laitteen kautta oli tosi korkea. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*How little they asked questions compared to [contact] classes. I was worried because the initiative to ask via some device was so low. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

This teacher experience appears to be in line with previous research, as, for example, in Nummenmaa (2011), it was reported that student interaction was not very substantial in distance education. There are several possible reasons for this and why teachers felt it was such a significant challenge. As Nummenmaa (2011) points out, one reason could be that the teacher and student are unfamiliar with each other, and again, the lack of non-verbal cues and social presence can hinder the interaction and lead to a decrease of personal relationships within the learning community. Our findings in this area support the notion that in distance education, teachers can have notably less opportunities to form and maintain a reciprocal relationship with their students (Lehtinen & Nummenmaa 2012). This lack of interaction between teachers and students has been reported on both in general and in the context of EFL distance teaching (Al-Furaydi 2013: 118). One reason for student passiveness in distance language lessons could also be their dependency on the teacher, especially relating to speaking the target language (Hampel and Stickler 2012). Moreover, the newness of the situation might affect students' willingness

and initiative to engage in online communication. In other words, students might feel especially shy about speaking in English unprompted during distance language lessons.

In relation to experiences mentioned above (examples 51–55), in Anja's (example 56) experience, student passiveness was especially linked to being timid in a big group. Some of the student passiveness could indeed be due to unwillingness to publicly engage within the learning community when one's name would be displayed on everyone's screens.

**(56)** Mut isossa ryhmässä tosiaan, hyvin vähän niinku halukkaita vastaajia mihinkään. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*But in a big group there indeed were not many [students] willing to answer anything. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

This is similar to Rehn et al.'s (2016:10) study where students were reluctant to speak out loud when their images would be projected into the classroom. As discussed in Section 3.2, the situation is potentially similar in a video call where the speaker's image (or at least name if webcam is not used) is projected onto other participants' screens. Being aware of the potential reasons behind the students' silence could help the teachers create new ways to establish communication and interaction in the future.

Some teachers (examples 57–59) found that the distance mode seemed to hinder student-student interaction. The students were often quiet and Minna (example 57), for example, did not consider group projects done remotely equal to projects done in the classroom. Mauno (example 58) and Laura (example 59) shared similar sentiments, stating that they felt that students were rather quiet and seldomly in contact with each other, at least in the language learning context.

**(57)** Oppilas-oppilas-suhde kärsi paljon, ei etänä tehty parityö vain oikein toimi kuten luokassa. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*Student-student relationship suffered a lot, remotely done pair work just doesn't work like in a classroom. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

**(58)** Myös oppilas-oppilas-tasolla ainakin tuntien aikana oli hyvin hiljaista. Pääosin jotain chattailiä Google Meetissä ennen tunnin varsinaista aloitusta. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*Also on the student-student level it has been very quiet at least during lessons. Mostly some chatting on Google Meets before the class has officially started. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

**(59)** Oppilaat olivat keskenään kuitenkin melko vähän yhteyksissä jos ollenkaan. (Laura, primary school)

*The students are quite seldomly communicating with each other, if ever. (Laura, primary school)*

While teachers considered student-teacher communication to be lacking, they also had difficulties in establishing or supporting efficient student-student interaction in remote language teaching. We can see this from the examples above. In previous research, promoting and supporting student-student communication has been found to be one of the most challenging aspects of distance teaching by teachers (Nummenmaa 2012; Rehn et al. 2018). Based on the data of the current study, many teachers mentioned the lack of student-student interaction and experienced at least some challenges concerning this. This is in line with Chang and Windeatt (2016), who warn that online learning without face-to-face contact could have an isolating effect, both on the students and the teachers. Consequently, it is important that distance teachers do their best in establishing and sustaining collaboration in distance learning. The teachers need to overcome the isolation created by the physical distance (Croft et al., 2010) and facilitate student-student interaction. While some of the teachers did find working solutions for student-student collaboration, many teachers considered it to be difficult, partly due to students' passiveness. As such, teachers do not only need to create opportunities to collaborate, but also encourage and push the students to actively work together.

Teachers reported that working with students they had not previously met was especially challenging during emergency remote teaching, as mentioned earlier. For example, Anja (example 60) felt that when she moved to distance teaching with student groups with which she was familiar, things went well, but when she started working with new groups of unfamiliar students, there were more challenges. This made her feel like distance teaching would work better if one got to meet the students and work together face-to-face first and only then move to work at a distance. Hilla (example 61) had also had new groups to teach during the emergency remote teaching period and felt that it was harder for her to get to know the new students in distance teaching. Annika (example 62) faced similar challenges, stating that not knowing the student beforehand was a problem for her and that it affected her ability to form efficient working groups.

**(60)** Siinä edellisessä jaksossa niin... meil oli kaks viikkoo luokkaopetusta ja sit tuli tää etä, niin siinä ku mää olin nähny ne kaikki ryhmät [joita opetin] niin se suju niinku tosi hyvin. Et se oli niinku oikeesti semmosta mun mielest tosi innostavaa ja mä koin että opiskelijat teki tosi hyvin töitä -- mut sit tässä jälkimmäisessä jaksossa ku mulla oli tosiaan se noin kuuskyt opiskelijaa, niitä ykkösiä, joita mä en oo koskaan tavannu, niin siinä sitte tuli näitä et oli kopioitu ja mielipiteitä ja muuta -- että ei se oo toiminu enää nii hyvin. Että siis siin on niinku jotenki se et nii— et ihmisiin pitäa saada niinkun, oikeesti kontakti, ja nähdä ne ja saada se

niinku käyntiin se työ. Sen jatkona se [kielten etäopetus] toimis, mutt että nyt oli selvästi vaikeuksia. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*In the previous period we had two weeks of contact teaching and then we moved to this distance teaching. When I had met all the groups [that I taught] it went very well. It really was, in my opinion, rather inspiring and I felt that the students worked really well -- But then in this second period I had about sixty students, first-years, who I had never met. With them I had these cheating issues and other issues -- so it hasn't worked as well anymore. So, there's like— One should first establish a proper contact with people and see them and get the work started. As a continuation of that it [distance language teaching] would work, but now there were clear difficulties. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(61) Siel muutama opiskelija otti niinku enemmän kontaktia mut heitä ku en ollu aikasemmin opettanu täs viimises jaksos ni mä en oppinu kauheesti tuntee kuitenkaan. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*There were a few students who made more contact, but since I had not taught them before this last period, I still didn't get to know them very much. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(62) No mulla henkilökohtaisesti ongelma alussa oli se, että mä en ollu koskaan tavannu näitä opiskelijoita. -- Niin tota, se oli ongelma et mä en ollu koskaan heitä tavannu ja sitten ku he ei käyttäny kameraa niillä tunneilla, ja tosiaan yhdessä ryhmässä oli 32 uutta ihmistä niin, semmoseen tilanteeseen en ollu koskaan joutunu aikasemmin, että en ees nää niitä kasvoja enkä oo koskaan ihmistä tavannu. Ja sitte kun mä jaoin niit pienryhmiin niin mulla ei ollu mitään hajua, että kuka pystyy työskentelemään kenen kanssa -- ni sit mä jaoin ne ryhmiin jotenkin ihan sattumanvaraisesti ja sanoin et kokeilkaa näitä ryhmiä ja näillä mennään niin. Siellä oli semmosia ryhmiä et ei mitään ei syttynyt ((naurahtaa)). Ja tota sit loppujen lopuks mä sanoin, että joo valitkaa ite ryhmänne ni se rupes sit menee vähän paremmin et kyllä ne niin fiksuja oli että ne sitte sai ne tehtyä mutta tää nyt oli mulla siis ongelma että jos mä oisin tuntenu ne entuudestaan ja nähny niiden kasvot ni se ois ollu eri juttu. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Well, my personal problem in the beginning was that I had never met these students. -- So, it was a problem that I had never met them and then when they didn't use web cameras during the lessons, and I had 32 new people in one group. I had never been in that kind of a situation before where I don't even see the face of a person I've never met before. And then when I put them into small groups, I had no idea who can work with who -- so then I randomly put them into the groups and said that try these groups, we'll go with these. There was no spark in some groups ((laughs)). And so, I finally told them to choose their own groups and then things started to work a bit better, they were so smart and made it work, but yeah, this was a problem for me. If I had known them previously and been able to see their faces, it would have been different. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

It is evident that the teachers experienced a lack of social presence while conducting their lessons online. Many things, such as unfamiliar students, a lack of interaction from the students and absence of non-verbal communication cues affected the teachers' image of the students as "real people" (and vice versa) and hindered the establishment of social presence. Creating social presence is especially important in the beginning of a distance language course when the members of the learning community are unfamiliar with each other (Meyer 2014), because in the distance mode, they do not share a physical space. Moreover, teachers need to know their students in order to deliver inclusive distance education (Sull and Peckham 2019). However, it seems that due to the hectic beginning of the distance teaching period, the teachers did not

necessarily have time to plan for the establishment of social presence and getting to know their students in an online context. Synchronous videoconferencing, which is something many of the participants did, is a good start for creating social presence, but the absence of web cameras seemed to have obstructed this partly for the lack of visual cues and students' inactivity. Establishing an online presence and maintaining relationships in online learning communities has been reported to be one of the interaction-related challenges when videoconferencing is a teaching tool (Rehn et al. 2018).

In summary, teachers reported major challenges in establishing and facilitating interaction during the ERT period. The students were not very active in contacting or communicating with the teachers and there seemed to be little interaction between the students themselves. In addition, creating social presence seemed to be difficult in the online contexts, especially with students the teachers were previously unacquainted with. Previous research also puts much focus on interaction in distance education, especially language education, and we can conclude that this is an area of language teaching and learning that requires careful consideration in distance format.

### **5.2.2 Challenges concerning technology**

Technological challenges included problems with internet connections, conducting exams and equipment. Teacher's own technical skills or attitude toward technology were also a potential challenge in this area. Some teachers were more specific when describing technical challenges, while others gave a more general statement.

Annika (example 63) mentioned internet connection troubles, and once a student accidentally muted her during a lesson. Meanwhile, Helmi (example 64) faced challenges when holding an exam in Google Classroom; the exam questions had accidentally been sent to her students in advance. Helmi later switched to a publisher's (Otava) e-exams but mentioned potential difficulties with student invitations and timing the exams, stating that Google Classroom had similar timing issues.

(63) No netti tökki välillä. Ei mulla mutta joillain opiskelijoilla. Ehkä niillä jotka asu siellä tosi kaukana. Että sitte ku se yhteys katkee niin sittei oikee mitään keino saada sitä kiinni mutta ne selvis aina ne tilanteet sit kyllä. Yhden ainoan kerra kävi niin et joku opiskelija hiljensi mut, painoi muttee, opettajan muttee ((naurahtaa)). Mä en ees tienny semmosta voi tehdä mutta niin kävi. Sit mä vaan sanoin et älkää tollasta tehkö, että ei sitä sitte enää tapahtunu. Mut oon kuullu, että yläkoulussa tää on ollu iha suuri villitys. Että hiljennetään opettaja, mut ei lukiossa siis semmosia. Semmosia oo. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Well, the internet connection kept cutting off at times. Not for me, but for some students. Maybe for those who lived very far away. So, when the connection is cut, there isn't really any way of getting back into contact, but those situations were always resolved. Only once there was a situation where some student muted me, pressed to mute the teacher ((laughs)). I didn't even know you can do that but that happened. Then I just said that don't do that and it didn't happen again. But I have heard that in lower secondary schools this has been a big fad. To mute the teachers, but that doesn't really happen in upper secondary school. (Annika, upper secondary school).*

**(64)** Ja sittenhän ku mä ajastin [kokeita] niin joku niistä oli livahtanu sillee niinku [opiskelijoille] että aloita ja mä korjasin sen mut se on menny niille jo sähköpostiin joku tehtävä ja tota yksi kolmestakymmenestäviidestä (35) ilmotti mulle. Hän oli laittanu puolenyön aikaan et hänelle on tullu sähköpostiin tämmösiä tehtäviä, että tiedänpö minä. No ei mitään mähän tein sitten vauhdilla uudet ja laitoin vaan Classroomin striimiin, että sähköpostiin pujahtaneet tehtävät eivät ole kokeessa vaan kokeessa on toiset tehtävät, että hirveen kiva, että yksi ilmotti. -- Nyt sitte mä oon siirtyny tohon Otavan kokeisiin ihan tyystin. Ja siinäkin se on ollu kantapään kautta opettelua, että se sähköpostikutsu pitää siis laittaa päivä etukäteen, että he [opiskelijat] ehtivät kaikki kattoo et saavatko ees sen kutsun ja [jos eivät saa] sit me ehitään lähettää toinen tai jopa kolmas kutsu. Ja sitten kollegalta kuulin et hän ajasti niitä Otavan kokeita ja ne ei lähteny käyntiin ollenkaan. [Google] Classroomissahan on vähän sama ongelma et ajastukset ei välttämättä lähde. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*And then when I was timing [the exams], some of them had slipped [to the students] so they could start. I did fix it but by then some exercises had already been sent to their emails and one of the 35 students let me know. They had messaged me around midnight saying that she had received these exercises in her email, did I know this? Well, no problem, I quickly made new ones and wrote a message in Classroom's stream telling the students that the exercises that had slipped to their emails would not be in the exams, rather there would be different exercises. So, it was very nice that one of them let me know. -- Now I've completely shifted to use the Otava exams. And there I've also been learning matter the hard way, the email invite has to be sent a day in advance so that they [the students] have time to check if they even receive the invite and [if they don't receive it] we then have time to send a second or even a third invite email. From a colleague I've heard that they had tried to time the Otava exams and it did not start at all. There is a similar problem in the [Google] Classroom, the exam timings do not necessarily start. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

These are challenges that are unique to online learning environments and thus, were possibly new, or possibly unexpected, to teachers conducting emergency remote teaching. In addition, preparing for these problems is difficult. As we discussed at the end of Section 2.2, the stability of internet connections can have regional differences and this can create potential problems regarding accessibility (see LaPointe and Linder-VanBerschot 2012; Visser 2012). In addition, the socioeconomic status of a family has an impact on their ability to pay for the internet connection, which consequently affects downloading material and streaming videos, for example. Annika's (example 63) experience indicates that some students had connection problems during distance teaching. Consequently, this can have a significant impact on education, as some students might be left behind and, for example, have trouble turning in assignments. As we can see, technological challenges can appear on multiple levels, individual and more general. Whether the problems emerge with the lack of technological skills or poor

internet connectivity, these are issues that can be difficult to prepare for in advance. Fortunately, some of the problems seemed to pass with time and as both experience and skills increased.

Minna (example 65) mentioned general technical challenges, lack of needed devices and connection issues when she reported what challenges she had faced during emergency remote teaching. Similarly, Laura (example 66) found it challenging that her school was not able to provide students with devices. This, obviously, created issues with providing education to everyone equally.

(65) -- Tekniset ongelmat, puuttuvat laitteet, huonot yhteydet kodeissa-- (Minna, lower secondary school)

-- *Technical problems, missing devices, bad [internet] connections at home-- (Minna, lower secondary school)*

(66) Laitteita ei myöskään pystynyt koululta antamaan oppilaiden käyttöön, mikä loi haasteita yhdenvertaiseen opetukseen. (Laura, primary school)

*The school could't distribute devices to students, which created challenges in providing equal teaching. (Laura, primary school)*

Again, there were clearly some regional and socioeconomic challenges concerning technology during the ERT period. Examples 65 and 66 illustrate teachers' concern over connection troubles and inequality in distance education. While technology gives solutions to many challenges in language learning and provides great opportunities to education, it can also cause new concerns (Kern and Malinowski 2016) that need to be addressed. For instance, lack of resources, such as devices, could be an obstacle to offering everyone the same quality of teaching. In fact, inequality in education seemed to become an apparent problem in Finland during the distance education period because not all schools had the same resources to provide their students and staff with necessary devices (Eskonen et al. 2020). However, this in itself is not a technical issue, but rather a resource-related and administrative issue, which is not something the teacher alone can solve or fully compensate.

Teachers clearly faced technological challenges during emergency remote teaching and found them hindering in conducting successful EFL lessons online. The problems related to technology were varied, ranging from unstable internet connections to a lack of technological skills. The educators and policy makers need to address these problems and develop solutions for the future to give everyone the same opportunities to receive quality education. Some possible solutions for technological and resource-related challenges could be reached by

focusing on providing more ICT training to teachers and ensuring equal access to devices necessary for learning.

### 5.2.3 Challenges concerning language teaching practice

The teachers faced various challenges in their language teaching practice. Common reported challenges concerned time management, uncertainty, supervision and assessment. One theme that clearly emerged from the data was the challenge of the use of time. Most (seven out of nine) teachers mentioned issues with time management when describing the challenges that they faced. Some teachers mentioned the time-consuming nature of language emergency remote teaching in their more general experiences (see Section 5.4.2). Preparing and conducting lessons took a lot of time according to the participating teachers. Salla (example 67) reported that her preparation work took a long time, as did checking in on students' work. Anja (example 68) felt that as a teacher, she had to be constantly available for her students, even late at night. Hilla (example 69) also felt that she was constantly at the computer and noted that in comparison to classroom work, she had more exercises to read through.

**(67)** TIME: my prep took hours each day/night and then following up that the kids had done the work in the Google Classroom took hours as well. I felt I was online day and night. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

**(68)** Kyl tää tavallaan niinkun laajensi sitä että ikään ku sun pitäis olla koko ajan siinä koneella, myös iltamyöhällä ku joku kysyy vielä jostain tehtävästä. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*This did sort of extend the time that you have to sort of constantly be at the computer, also late in the evening, if someone still had something to ask about a task. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(69)** Sit omassa työssä oli tietysti se aika, että en mä nyt muuta kauheesti tehnykään ku istuin koneen ääressä. Eli et se vei huomattavasti enemmän aikaa ku ois se tunnilla tietysti he tekevät ja puhuvat parin kanssa, nyt ne tuli mulle niit vastauksia ja mä lueskelen niitä sit. Nii siinähen meni todella paljon aikaa. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*Then with my own work there was the issue of time, I didn't do much else except sat at the computer. That is to say, it noticeably took more time compared to if we were in the classroom and they would work and talk in pairs, now they sent their answers to me and I read through them. That took a very long time. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

As can be deduced from the examples above, distance language lessons can take more time to prepare, compared to contact language lessons. This could be because, for example, the teacher is not experienced in online teaching. In addition, the teacher may end up with more exercises to give feedback on and correct, as teachers often seem to compensate for the lack of interactional exercises and classroom observation with assignments that students needed to

submit. Moreover, teachers may not have the same observational opportunities in distance language teaching as they have in the classroom (constantly seeing and hearing the students work) and so need to assign more written work in order to control students' learning. Our findings are similar to Ahtiainen et al.'s (2020) findings. In the study by Ahtiainen et al. (2020), most of the participating teachers felt that their workload was bigger or considerably bigger compared to regular classroom teaching. Other studies have also found that, according to teachers, distance teaching can take more time and effort (see Huang 2019, Nummenmaa 2012, Rehn et al. 2016). We will discuss more regarding the topic of time and effort experienced by teachers in Section 5.4.2.

Some teachers emphasized feeling uncertain during emergency remote teaching. This theme is closely linked to another theme, the theme of supervision. One challenge mentioned by our participating teachers was how to supervise the students and make sure they are doing what they are supposed to be doing. Most of our participating teachers were worried whether the students actually completed all the assigned work or listened to the teacher during the meetings. Hilla (example 70) noted the difference between her ability to supervise and manage students' activities in contact and distance teaching. She felt that the students were required to be more responsible for completing their work during distance learning. Mauno (example 71) said that the hardest matter for him in distance language teaching was not being able to see how the student receives the information at a distance. Like Hilla, Mauno also highlighted the fact that students need to be more independent and responsible for their work during distance learning. Mauno did not realize that many of his students had uncompleted work from the emergency remote teaching period until he checked students' work at the end of the school year. This further implicates that there were difficulties in supervising students' work at a distance. This challenge was also pointed out by Laura (example 72) who added that it was also very difficult to observe if the student even understood what they were meant to do in the first place.

(70) Mun mielestä yks suuri ongelma oli se, että mä en nyt käytännössä sitte tienny et kuinka paljon ne [opiskelijat] nyt siellä tekee. -- Ja tunnillahan mä olisin nyt kytänny että nyt sitten tehdään näitä ja siel ne [opiskelijat] ois joutunu tekee ni tossa [etäopetuksessa] se meni niinku sinne omalle vastuulle niillä opiskelijoilla paljon enemmän ku koulussa. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*In my opinion, one big problem was that now I basically didn't have any idea how much they [the students] are doing there. -- And in the classroom, I would have monitored that the exercises are done and there they [the students] would have had to work on the exercises, while there [in distance teaching] it was up to the students much more than at school. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(71) Hankalinta oli se, että et näe etäyhteyden päästä, miten oppilas ottaa tiedon vastaan. -- Yksi keskeinen juttu on saada oppilaat ymmärtämään oma kasvava vastuunsa mahdollisesti tulevien etäopiskelujaksojen aikana. Nyt tuntui, että monelle oppilaalle riitti se, että oli nettiyhteyden päässä tunnin alkaessa ”nimenhuudossa”, mutta lopputunnin teki jotain aivan muuta. Monella oppilaalla oli paljon tekemättömiä tehtäviä etäjakson aikana niin verkkotehtävissä kuin kirjassakin (kun tarkastin ne toukokuun lopulla). (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*The most difficult thing was that in distance connection you can't see how the student receives the information. -- One key thing is to get students to understand their own increasing responsibility during the possible future distance learning periods. Now it felt like many students were content to just show up at the beginning of a n online class, but for the rest of the lessons they did something else completely. Many students also had a great deal of uncompleted exercises during the distance period, both in online exercises as well as workbook exercises (when I checked these at the end of May). (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(72) Todella hankalaa oli seurata tai pysyä kartalla siitä ovatko kaikki oppilaat tehneet annetut tehtävät tai ylipäätään ymmärtäneet ohjeistuksen. -- Epävarmuus ja tietämättömyys siitä miten opinnot sujuu oli haastavinta, erityisen tuen oppilaat huolettivat tässä eniten. (Laura, primary school)

*It was very difficult to monitor or keep up to date about whether or not all the students have done the assigned exercises or understood the instructions in the first place. -- Uncertainty and lack of information about how their studies are going was the most difficult issue, students who need special support worried me the most. (Laura, primary school)*

From these examples we can conclude that supervision seemed to be something the teachers had to reconsider quite a lot to fit it to the distance mode. While having online meetings ensured that the students used the allotted time to study English, even this seemed to include some issues, such as students not completing their assigned tasks or just signing into the meeting and remaining inactive for the rest of the class. In previous studies, supervising students' work has also been identified as a notable challenge and a source of uncertainty by teachers (Guichon 2010: 176–177). In the present study, the participating teachers also faced challenges concerning supervising or keeping up to date with their students' work during emergency remote teaching. There was concern over whether or not students followed the lessons, understood instructions or worked on their assignments. Despite the worries of uncompleted tasks and students' activities, some teachers were able to develop new methods to supervise the students' progress. While with some teachers the completion of tasks was left up to the students themselves, others visited the students' group meetings, checked submitted assignments or received picture proof of completed tasks to supervise their progress. We could argue that Annika, who visited the students' work channels, and Maria, who frequently used platforms that allowed her to track the students' progress, took advantage of the new opportunities the best out of the teachers. Annika even reported that, for her, it was easier to track the students' activities in distance teaching than in the regular classroom (see Section 5.3). However, it is

difficult to draw such conclusions because we were not able to observe the methods in practice, and the teachers of this study described their methods in varying degrees of detail. Regardless, we can say that the teachers' attempts at developing new supervision methods demonstrate development in teaching practices and ability to adapt into new situations.

Assessment during emergency remote teaching seemed to be challenging mainly due to concern over students cheating or plagiarizing. Five out of the nine interviewees expressed concern over cheating. This concern is also related to the aforementioned challenges of uncertainty and supervision. From examples 73–77 we can see how teachers had perceived the possibilities of foul play. Anja (example 73) and Helmi (example 74) both mentioned the use of translating applications. Hilla (example 75) reported issues with plagiarism. Yet, because the teachers were physically separated from the students, as Hilla (example 76) says, there was no other choice except to trust that the students are honest. However, as Maria (example 77) pointed out, cheating is not unique to distance education, but rather, there is always the potential and possibility that some students cheat.

(73) Kyllä siellä mielenkiitosesti näky lauseissa esimerkiksi että oli Google kääntäjää ollu joillain apuna että niin oli kaikilla samanlaiset virheet siellä ((naurahdus)). -- Muutamathan jäi kiinni siitä, että ne oli jopa mielipidetekstin kopioinu toiselta, kaks tapausta tästä yhdeksästäkymmenestä (Anja, upper secondary school)

*When reading through their sentences, it was interesting to see that Google Translate had been used by some because they had such similar mistakes ((laughs)) -- A few students did get caught copying even an opinion piece from another person, there were two cases like that out of my ninety students. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

(74) Etenkin etäaikanaahan siinä [käännös-sanakokeissa] ei oo mitään järkee nehän voi kattoo mistä vaan. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*During the distance period in particular it doesn't make sense to hold translation tests because they [students] can look them [words] up anywhere. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(75) Näki et on palautettu semmonen [tehtävät] jonka toinen on korjattu jo toiselle (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*You could see that a student has submitted [a written assignment] that has already been corrected by someone else (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(76) Niin se [Otavan sähköinen koe] oli tarkotettu ihan ei miksikään etäkokeeks, et ne on tarkotettu luokas tehtäviks, mutta etäkokeena sitten käytettiin, että kylhän se luottamukseen piti pohjata. Multa kysykin siinä ekassa koeviikossa joku et mennäänkö nyt niinku luottopohjalta, mä [sanoin] sit et mennään että. Et niinku yritti sitä aikaa vähän kattoo ettei siin ois aikaa googlata kaikkee. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*That [Otava e-exam] was not meant to be a distance exam, they are meant to be done in the classroom, but they were used as distance exams and we did have to just base it on trust. During the first exam week, someone did ask me if we are just trusting them [the students] and I [said] that yes. And I tried to time the exercises so that one wouldn't have enough time to google everything. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(77) Ja sitten myös niinku se et Google Translate on tietysti aika paha et jos on vaikka joku käännöstehtävä ni varmaan aika montaa jotenkin kiehtoo se ajatus siitä että “mä siirrän tän tohon Google Translateen ni mä saan kopipeistattua vastauksen aika nopeesti” -- Siis onhan niitä. Niinku siis joo tilaisuus tekee varkaan, mut onhan niitä varkaita ollu ennekin. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*And then also Google Translate is quite bad of course, for example, if there is some kind of a translation exercise, it is probably quite alluring for many to think that “I’ll just put this into Google Translate and then I can just copy and paste the answer pretty quickly” -- That does happen. Yes, opportunity makes a thief but there have been thieves before. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

In example 77, Maria makes a good point: cheating is definitely not a unique challenge to distance education, but one might suggest that certain ways of cheating are even easier than in contact teaching. Moreover, as mentioned previously, teachers do not have the same opportunities to observe students more consistently and thus, might not be as likely to discover cheating. Students might even be quite aware of this and consider the risks of being caught to be lower than in the traditional classroom. Regardless of cheating being a universal challenge in all teaching, in distance education the possibility of deceit does bring its own challenges and lead to new challenges in teachers’ work, namely challenges in adequate assessment. It is evident that the significance of trust became a major component in distance lessons and exams.

Indeed, assessment has been identified as a significant concern for teachers in distance education. For instance, teachers might lack the confidence they normally have once the assessment environment shifts to distance education (Rakes and Dunn 2015). Our findings are also similar to Nummenmaa’s (2012) findings, although in her study assessment was not as major a concern as, for example, difficulties in interaction. Carlson and Everett (2000) acknowledge teachers’ concern over cheating in distance education, however, they suggest that if the distance course is well designed, cheating should not be an issue. They emphasize the roles of assignments based on critical thinking and collaboration in distance learning assessment. Some of the teachers of our study also seemed to realize the importance of the aforementioned designs in countering cheating, as they reported preferring to use ERT assignments that valued students’ own thoughts and opinions.

As with the other challenge-categories before, the difficulties related to teaching practices were diverse. In addition to finding time management difficult in the face of unprecedented times, the teachers also reported a sense of uncertainty related to students’ progress and activities. Consequently, the difficulties in supervising the students’ activities also brought on worries over foul play in exams and other assignments. Despite the challenges, the teachers persevered

and were able to adjust and develop their language teaching. After having closely examined the challenges the teachers reported, in the next Chapter we will examine the perceived opportunities and benefits EFL teachers identified in their experiences during the ERT period.

### 5.3 The perceived opportunities and benefits in distance language teaching

In addition to challenges, teachers also mentioned some perceived opportunities and benefits during emergency remote teaching. ERT gave teachers an opportunity to try new tools and platforms, create new teaching material, as well as adjust the exercises and tasks that they assigned their students. All teachers except one explicitly mentioned using new platforms and thus, we conclude, getting an opportunity to learn or try something new in their teaching practice. Teachers also adjusted their work methods and adapted old teaching methods to fit the new context. For instance, two teachers mentioned assigning noticeably more opinion-based tasks where students were required to write their personal opinions on given issues in English. Additionally, one teacher in particular highlighted that distance education made diagnostic and formative assessment and differentiation quicker and easier. Some teachers mentioned the peaceful work environment of distance teaching as a positive benefit of distance teaching. While ERT also evoked thoughts of new collaboration opportunities in some teachers, in practice there was no extensive new collaboration work. Table 6 summarizes the opportunities and benefits mentioned in the data for clarity.

|       | Opportunities or benefits mentioned by the teachers  |
|-------|--|
| Maria | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Screen sharing allows teacher to guide student<br>Students can have their own Meets during classes<br>Differentiation<br>Diagnostic and formative assessment quicker |
| Helmi | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Teacher is not interrupted during lessons<br>Peaceful work environment   |

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Anja   | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Assigning more video-based exercises<br>Video call interviews as oral tasks<br>Assigning more opinion-based tasks<br>Possibility of inviting a long-distance visitor |
| Hilla  | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Reading through more assignments, getting to know student more<br>Assigning more opinion-based tasks   |
| Annika | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Recording & saving video call conversations<br>Possibility of inviting a long-distance visitor   |
| Salla  | Creating new teaching materials<br>New opportunity to join and get tips on online teacher groups   |
| Minna  | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>English visitor via Google Meet  |
| Mauno  | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Breaking down exercises more   |
| Laura  | Opportunity to learn and use new platforms<br>Creating YouTube guidance videos<br>New opportunity to join and get tips on online teacher groups  |

Table 6. Opportunities and benefits of distance language teaching reported by the teachers.

Table 6 consists of all the perceived opportunities and benefits of distance teaching that they mentioned in their interview. As we can see from Table 6, we could derive from data that each teacher was able to find opportunities and benefits in this new situation. In particular, the teachers integrated more ICT into their teaching and perceived new opportunities for utilizing technology in meaningful ways.

Using new platforms or tools was a common experience among the teacher participants of this study. Some utilized familiar platforms but added completely new elements and tools to their teaching, while some familiarized themselves with a platform that they had not used previously at all. In other words, the remote teaching period gave teachers initiative to use technology and virtual learning environments in new ways and develop their teaching. In example 78, Anja

describes how she had to adjust her use of Google Classroom, a platform previously familiar to her, to be used in a more extensive way during emergency remote teaching. During the interview, she also said that she used Google Meet for the first time in her teaching, thus adding something new along with the adjusted implementation of a familiar virtual learning environment. Maria reported very similar experiences in her interview (see example 27 in Section 5.1.2), as did Hilla and Helmi. Similarly, Laura (example 79) stated that while Microsoft Teams was a familiar platform for her, hosting lessons via Teams was new to her. Laura also added self-made YouTube instructional videos to her teaching during emergency remote teaching. Minna (example 80) listed a multitude of platforms and tools that were completely new in her teaching. Minna used many tools provided by Google for the first time, hosted live lessons, used a new exam tool and organized a Q&A session with a native English speaker via Google Meet during emergency remote teaching.

**(78)** Kuitenkin jouduin muuttamaan niinku koko toiminnan, että Classroom oli pieni apuneuvo aikasemmin nii nythän se oli se pääasiallinen väylä, missä kaikki tehtiin. (Anja, upper secondary school)

However I had to change the whole way of doing things, Classroom was a small aid before and now it was the main channel where we did everything. (Anja, upper secondary school)

**(79)** TEAMS-oppituntien pitäminen oli uusi juttu vaikka alustana TEAMS olikin jo tuttu. Tein myös YouTube ohjaistuvideoita linkkien taakse mitä en ennen ollut tehnyt. (Laura, primary school)

*Hosting lessons on Teams was a new thing, although as a platform Teams was already familiar. I also created embedded instructional videos on YouTube, which I had not done before. (Laura, primary school)*

**(80)** Käytin ensimmäistä kertaa etäopetuksen aikana mm. seuraavia työtapoja: Google Classroom -alusta, Google Meet, Google Forms – lomakkeet (esim. kielioppiasioiden opetukseen tai kappaleen keskeisten sanontojen kontrolloimiseen), kirjoitelmien ohjaus livenä Google Classroomin ja Google Driven kautta, Socratic-koetyökalu, englantilaisen vieraan kyselytunti yhden luokan Google Meetissä. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*During distance teaching I used, among other things, the following methods for the first time: Google Classroom platform, Google Meet, Google Forms (for instance, to teach grammar or to monitor key vocabulary of a textbook chapter), guiding written assignments live via Google Classroom and Google Drive, Socratic exam tool, a Q&A session of an English visitor for one class on Google Meet. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

From the examples above, we can conclude that the emergency remote teaching period required teachers to use new tools and materials and develop their teaching to fit the unique situation. In other words, the new situation provided teachers with opportunities to learn new skills and try new ways of giving language instruction. Adjusting their teaching and tools could have an impact on their teaching in the future, as they got the opportunity to try different ways of delivering language lessons that they could potentially use in the future as well, including

contact teaching. One benefit of teachers getting to try new things during remote teaching is that this could enrich and diversify language teaching in the future as new technologies and tools get utilized and teachers get more comfortable with them. Enriching and diversifying all education has been listed as one of the main benefits of distance education in previous research (Croft et al. 2010; Nummenmaa 2012; Pino 2008), and this perspective in our data seems to support this view.

Regarding specific benefits, Maria (example 81) pointed out one feature that technology and distance education can bring to language instruction: screen sharing. Naturally, during video conference lessons, teachers often share their screens to students to show relevant information, instructions and images, but what Maria found especially advantageous was student-led screen sharing.

**(81)** Mä oon huomannu nytte -- et miten hirveen näppärää on ohjata sitä oppimista jos se oppija jakaa sen oman näyttönsä. Miiitissä sillai et meneeki niin että ei niin päin et minä jaan sitä omaa näyttöä ni mitä oon siis tehny paljon näillä tunneilla vaan et se onkin sit niin päin et sillo ku ollaan oltu tällein vaa kahestaan sillai et hän jakaa näyttönsä ja sit mä pystyn siinä samalla kun hän tekee [ohjaamaan oppijaa]. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*I've now noticed -- how very handy it is to guide learning if the learner shares their own screen. That it'd be done on Meet so that it's not I who shares their screen, which is what I've done during lessons, but rather, when I'm alone with a learner, they share their screen and then I can [guide the learner] as they work. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

Maria found that it was practical to have the learner share their screen to the teacher, who could then see exactly what the learner was doing and give quick feedback as exercises were being worked on. This could offer new ways of giving more specific feedback. Screen sharing could also be useful in private tutoring in particular. With large groups, screen sharing could be more challenging but could potentially work when students are doing group work in smaller video call rooms (only one member would be required to share the screen to peers and teacher). With larger groups, screen sharing would allow teachers to check in on each student more personally every once in a while. Additionally, Annika reported using screen sharing to supervise her students during a word test (see example 31, in Section 5.1.3), so screen sharing provides new opportunities to keep track of one's students' activities during tests and exams. However, again, this would be more challenging to use in big student groups.

Some teachers noticed how the distance format seemed to make using some materials easier compared to contact teaching. Maria (example 82), in particular, said that she realized the potential of videos and used a lot of time searching for suitable videos to use in her teaching.

She also noted that remote teaching gave her ample opportunities for differentiation. She, for example, selected a variety of videos and let the students choose the video they wanted to watch based on their skills and interests. Anja (example 83) also thought of videos when she thought about the benefits of the distance mode and used them more than she would in conventional classroom teaching. A few, like Annika (example 84), considered how distance teaching opened their eyes to new opportunities in international collaboration (such as inviting an English-speaking visitor to lessons).

**(82)** Ja sit esimerkiks täähän on mahdollistanut vaikka jonkun videoiden jakamisen ni on ollu ihan älyttömän—. Mä oon käyttänyt varmaan kymmeniä tunteja ettimällä erilaisia videoita, “te voitte kattoo ton tai voitte kattoo tän” ((innostunut)) tai siis sillai et siellä on ollu paljon myös sellasia vaihtoehtosia, että kaikkien ei tarvii tehdä just sitä kaikkee samaa. Vaan et voi vähän valita et tää on selkeesti haastavampi, tää on vähän helpompi, mut samoi asioita tulee molemmissa. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*And then, for example, this has made sharing videos possible, it's been immensely—. I've been using hours and hours searching for different videos, like “you can watch that, or you can watch this” ((excited)) or I mean that there's been plenty of alternative material, not everyone has to do the same things. But one can pick and choose, like this is clearly more challenging, this is a bit easier, but the same matters are included in both. (Maria lower and upper secondary school)*

**(83)** Mä yritin miettiä et mitkä on ne hyödyt, että ku tää on nyt erilaista, että mitä mä voin käyttää enemmän niin mä käytin enemmän videomateriaalia. Mut sellasii lyhyitä videoita pääosin. Mä katoin et se [video] sopii aiheeseen tai tein siihen tehtäviä tai muuta, että sitähan on luokassa must hankala— Huonosti näkyy valkokankaalta ehkä joku video, ei saa kunnolla pimennetty ja sitten niinkun siin ei oo sitä omatahtisuutta. Että sitä [videomateriaalia] mä hyödynsin enemmän. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I tried to think about what are the benefits now that this is different, what can I use more and so I used more video material. But main short videos. I checked that it [the video] fits the topic or created exercises to go with it or something else, I think in the classroom it's difficult— It can be hard to see a video from the screen maybe, you can't get the classroom dark enough and it's not possible to go at your own pace. So, I utilized [video material] more. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(84)** Yhteistyömahdollisuudethan nyt todellakin lisäänty sillai että ei oo aikasemmin oikee osannu ees ajatella tämmösiä videokokouksia, että vois käyttää opetuksessa mutta joo kyllähän kielenopettaja niin, vois ottaa yhteyttä minne päin tahansa maailmaa ja puhua englantia jonkun kanssa siinä. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*The opportunities for collaboration definitely increased now, one hasn't really even thought about these kinds of video meeting that you could use in teaching, but yeah, language teacher could contact someone anywhere in the world, and the one could speak English with them like that (Annika, upper secondary school)*

It is interesting to see that the teachers tried to find beneficial materials and methods unique to distance education. The teachers seemed to find positive aspects to distance teaching and even considered future implications. Annika, for example, mentions the possibility of inviting an English-speaking guest to talk to the class through a video call. Li (2013) also noted the opportunities to spread learning outside the classroom, especially in the form of interaction

with the target language. In addition, while exploring new materials to use in the online context, Maria noted the opportunities for differentiation which is in line with earlier research (see, for example, Ehrman and Milmand 2011; Abrami et al. 2011). It is promising that the teachers wanted to get the most out of the opportunities that distance education presented them with, but it should be noted that all of these opportunities are not restricted to distance education and can be used as a part of regular contact teaching as well.

During the ERT period, the teachers also noticed the need for some concrete adjustments in their teaching or in assignments. For instance, Mauno (example 85) noted the importance of clear instructions while Hilla (example 86) noticed that when she assigned more opinion-based tasks, she had the opportunity to get to know her students a bit better. Anja (example 87) implemented an oral exercise during remote teaching. She simulated an online job interview session with each student and thought that this was very beneficial as students had the chance to practice something they may very well encounter in real life. Annika (example 88) found the use of Microsoft Teams platform beneficial during remote language teaching. Hilla (example 89) considered continuing more student-led teaching in the future.

**(85)** Nopeasti huomasin, että etäajaksolla on entistäkin tärkeämpää pitää tunnit ja tehtävät selkeinä. Tuntui, että oppilaiden oli tavallista vaikeampi jatkaa edellisellä tunnilla kesken jäänyttä tehtävää, joten pyrin siihen että tunnilla aloitettu tehtävä saadaan sen aikana myös valmiiksi. Toisin sanoen pilkoin tehtäviä pienemmiksi palasiksi - se on ehkä sellainen juttu, mihin pyrin jatkossa entistä enemmän myös lähiopetuksessa. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*I quickly noticed that during a remote period it is even more important to keep the lessons and exercises clear. It felt like it was harder than usual for the pupils to continue an exercise that had not been completed in the previous lessons, so I aimed for exercises that would also get completed in the lessons during which they were started. In other words, I broke the exercises down into smaller units - that's probably something that I'll try to do more in the future, also in contact teaching. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

**(86)** Kyl mä nyt erilaisia erityyppisiä tehtäviä teetin just sen takia esimerkiksi niinku et ne—tämmösiä mielipidekysymyksiä kauheesti mitä mä pistin sit kokeeseenki ku mä ajattelin et mielummin ku aine, ni se ois ehkä semmonen mitä yhä enemmän jollain kurssilla vois ottaa et sit tää ett mää niinkun juuri niitä oppilaita joita mä tunsin etukäteen ni opin kyllä paljon enemmän tuntee heidän ajatuksiaan ja muita. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I did assign different kinds of exercises now, because, for example, they— I used these kinds of opinion questions a lot and I put them on the exam as well, because I thought that I prefer them to essays. So that's maybe something that I could use even more in some course, through that I learned more about the students with whom I was previously familiar with. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

**(87)** Mä niinku sitte ajattelin että, kun kerran luokassa aina ne keskustelee keskenään, niin tarjotaan nyt kerrankin se mahdollisuus että siihen tulee niinkun sellanen aste virallisuutta. Esimerkiksi kutoskurssissa, koska siinähan on tämmönen työhaastatteluhomma. Niin, ne oli kirjottanu CV:n ja hakemuksen. Ja sit se mun viiden minuutin opiskelijan kanssa oleva sessio oli sellanen -- niitten piti niinkun esitellä itensä sen CV:n pohjalta ja sit mää tein jotain

kysymyksiä, että se oli kokonaan englanniksi. Ni mä aattelin että se on paljon parempi harjotella tällaista mihin ne oikeesti voi joutua. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*So, I kind of thought that since they always talk in the classroom so let's offer them the opportunity for some formality, for once. For example in the sixth course because they have this kind of job interview thing. So, they had written a CV and an application. And then the five-minute interview I had with the students was -- they had to introduce themselves based on the CV and then I asked some questions, so it was completely in English. So, I thought that it's a lot better to practise [a situation like this] where they may actually end up in the future. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(88)** Kyl mä semmostaki jopa mietin että nyt syksyllä kun taas alkaa sitten lähiopetus niin että jos mä vaikka kuitenkin jokaiselle ryhmälle tekisin ton Teams-tiimin. Tietynlaisia harjoituksia varten ku se on tosi tosi kätevä alusta sinne saa niinku muistikirjaa ja ja tota semmonen sisältökirjasto mihin mä kirjasin kaikki niinku kurssin aikataulut ja tehtävät ja kaikki tämmöset ni se se toimi tosi hyvin semmosena. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*I've also been thinking that now that contact teaching begins in the fall, I could continue using Teams with each course. For certain kinds of exercises because it's such a handy platform because you can create a notebook and material bank where I put the schedule of the course and assignments and all that so that worked really well. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(89)** Jos yrittäskin jotenki antaa tunnin alussa että nämä teette nyt. Ja tän tunni aikana ja mä vähän kierrän siellä eikä niinku rytmitä itte sitä niin tarkasti— niin ehkä sitä vois yrittää enemmän et ne oppis. Et hallitsee sitä et tässä ei nyt koko ajan oo joku kellon kanssa sanomas koska tehdään seuraavaa asiaa. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*If I tried to give [instructions] in the beginning of the lesson that now you do these. And then during lesson I go around there and wouldn't time the lesson so strictly— So maybe I could try that more so that they learn. So that they can manage even though there is no one with a clock telling them when to do the next thing. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

As it had been noted, the teachers were also able to develop their language teaching practices during the ERT period. They seemed to notice that their new practices were transferable to contact teaching as well and were planning to use some of the developed practices also in the future contact lessons. The teachers seeing the benefits of CMC and CALL through this ERT experience could have great implications for language teaching in Finland. In addition, it seems that distance education was a great opportunity for the teachers to realize more student-centered teaching practises, which we can see from example 88. This opportunity is also noted by Blake (2011), who argues that technology allows for a more learner-centered teaching approach in online settings. Indeed, providing the students with clear instructions and objectives for the lesson and then letting them proceed on their own could be a good method for some. However, one needs to take into account the needs of the students and consider the students' age, as we think this would work better with older students.

Distance language teaching also provided some opportunities and benefits relating to supervision and assessment. Annika (examples 90) found that using recordings of students'

group video calls was a beneficial and easy way for her to later check what students had done during lessons. Maria (example 91) highlighted multiple times how much quicker diagnostic and formative assessment was in distance language teaching.

**(90)** Sitä käytin aika paljon sitte että tota niillä kanavilla ne [Teams] tallensi niitä niitten videokeskusteluja ja sit mä kuuntelin myöhemmin et mitä siel on tapahtunu. (Annika, upper secondary school) -- Niissä pienryhmissä siellä kanavilla niin oppilaiden seuraaminen oli tosi helppoo. -- Se Teams toimi tosi hyvin siinä, että tota, itse asiassa paremmin ku luokkatilanteessa pystyin seuraamaan niitten pienryhmien toimintaa. Ku mä pystyny hiippailemaan sinne niitten kanaville ilman, että ne edes välttämättä huomaa sitä. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*It [Teams] recorded their video chats in their channels and I used that quite a lot, I listened later to hear what had happened -- Monitoring the students was very easy in their small groups in their channels -- Teams worked really well in that it was actually better for me to track in-group work compared to the classroom. Because I could slip into their discussion channels without them even necessarily noticing me. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(91)** Diagnosoinnin ja sellasen formatiivisen arvioinnin nopeus. Et miten nopeesti sieltä saa sen palutteen ku kattoo et tässä melkeen kaikki kämmää mut nää ne osaa. Ni se on musta ollu tosi niinku kätevää et aion ottaa sen myös tällein näin esimerkiksi Google Formeina käyttöön. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*The quickness of diagnostic and formative assessment. How fast you can receive feedback when you see that in this part almost everyone makes a mistake, but they know how to do this part. So that I think has been useful and I'm gonna continue to use it, for example, with these Google Forms. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

Annika's experience with video call recordings demonstrate how distance language teaching can provide new benefits and opportunities relating to supervision and assessment. Video call recordings most likely made the students' progress more evident and concrete to Annika and potentially allowed her to provide her students with more personal and specific feedback. As Bueno-Alastuey and López Pérez (2014) suggest, the utilization of ICT can provide new opportunities in giving more individualized feedback, and Annika's remote language teaching experience seems to be in line with this. In addition, Maria's experience seems to support the suggestion that ICT and distance education are beneficial when it comes to giving more focused instruction and feedback (see Rakes & Dunn 2015; Pino 2008; Nummenmaa 2012). Maria reported that providing necessary further instruction was more efficient as the teacher can quickly see what the students are having trouble with in distance education. This is due to the active use of tools such as Google Forms, which Maria used to check student progress. Requiring students to, for example, fill out a Google form about a specific grammar issue at the beginning of the lesson allowed Maria to then analyze the result and see how well the class has understood a specific grammar rule. Maria reported that she has used a similar method in contact teaching as well, but with the help of technology during remote language teaching, she

realized that she can do this quicker, which is something that has been noted as a benefit of the use of ICT in previous research (Cowie and Sakui (2015).

Regarding Maria's experience, Rakes and Dunn (2015) also note that the distance setting potentially allows the teachers to follow the students' participations and gather more data on it compared to contact teaching. This also provides ample opportunities for more efficient formative assessment and adequate adjustments to existing practices, as Maria's experience in our data demonstrates. Many online platforms also allow for fast and direct feedback that allows the teachers to correct students' mistakes once they emerge (Pino 2008), which is also what Maria mentioned. Maria noted that often, a student would continue using wrong verb agreements throughout upper secondary school, but now that she receives a lot of data on the students' progress, she can correct the mistakes more efficiently than in contact teaching. In this regard, submitted assignments were a great way for the teachers to give the students personalized and specific feedback on their learning. Individualized feedback (Nummenmaa 2012) and individualized instruction (Means et al. 2010) are, in fact, benefits of distance education.

One perceived benefit of distance language teaching was that at least some individuals had a more peaceful work environment at home. Furthermore, the pace seemed to be more up to each individual. As we can see from examples 92 and 93, the peaceful or more student-led pace of distance education was deemed to be beneficial to some students. In addition, some teachers also personally found the work environment to be less hectic. With students on the other end of the screen, no one interrupted the teacher and there was no disturbing background noise. Helmi (example 94) even attributed overcoming her exhaustion to the lack of disturbing factors. Annika (example 95) also mentioned that there was no need to address the students' misbehaviour, for example, using cellphones during the lessons. Of course, as both Helmi and Annika mention, students may not be concentrating and be using their cellphone at home anyway but the teacher is not aware of this and, therefore, does not need to intervene. Annika (example 96) expressed some worry over returning to the classroom and having to address the use of cell phones again.

(92) Et se mitä tässä nyt on ollu ollenkaan on se et oppilaiden ei oo tarvinnu odotella toisia. Ja tunnilla on aika paljon. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*One thing there was not was that the students didn't have to wait for each other. In contact teaching this happens a lot. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

(93) Osa [oppilaista] sano vielä et kehu juuri sitä ku on saanu oma— rauhassa omaan tahtiin tehdä kun tunnilla hitaat sanoo, että nolottaa jos häntä joudutaan odottaa ja sitten sanonut juu olen valmis vaikkei ookaan ja nopeet taas sanoo että he sai tehä paljon nopeemmin. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*Some [of the students] praised that they were able to do things at their own pace when in the class the slow ones say that they're embarrassed if others have to wait for them so they say they're ready even though they're not and the fast ones say that they could do things a lot faster [than in contact teaching]. (Hilla upper secondary school)*

(94) Se mun uupuminen meni ohi ku multahan puuttuu tästä kaikki häiritsevät tekijät. Ei oo sitä hälinää ja kaikkea kaiken maailman ihme viestintää mitä siellä työpaikallaki et pitäs aina miettiä. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*My exhaustion went away because there were no disturbing factors. No hustle and bustle and all kinds of random communication in the workplace that I'd have to think about. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

(95) Ihan hyvä kokemus. -- Ja ne keskitty paremmin ((naurahtaa)) ku siellä luokassa. -- Et mun ei tarvinnu, mä en voinu eikä mitään mahiksia puuttua siihen puhelimen käyttöön et sit vaan mä vedin sen oman juttuni. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Quite an okay experience. -- And they focused much better ((laughs)) than in the classroom. -- I didn't have to, I couldn't and didn't have any chance to intervene in their phone use, so I just did my own thing. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(96) Ehkä mä oon nyt jotenkin miettiny enemmän just sitä puhelinten käyttöä kun se tossa Teamsissä tai tossa etäopetuksessa, se oli kokonaan poissa se puhelinasia. Tai siis kyllä mä tiedostan sen et ne puhelimet oli siellä heillä ja he varmasti niitä käytti sen tunni aikana. Muttaku se ei häirinny mua ollenkaan ni mä jotenkin mä en tiedä miten mä nyt tätä asiaa mietin, että et ku mä meen sinne luokkatilanteeseen taas takasin ja siel on kaikilla ne puhelimet siinä ja ne on Tinderissä ja ne on Snäpchätissä ja ne kaikissa maailman sovelluksissa siinä, vaikka niiden pitäs keskittyä siihen luokkatilanteeseen niin, tää on semmonen mä en oikeen tiä miten mun pitäs nyt suhtautua siihen että. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Maybe I have somehow thought about cell phone usage [in class] now that in Teams or in distance teaching it was completely absent. Or I'm aware that the students have their phones and probably used them during class. But it didn't bother me at all so I don't know what I think about this matter when I go back to the classroom and then everyone has a cell phone there and they're on Tinder and in Snapchat and on all the other applications even though they're supposed to focus on the lesson, so I don't really know how I should approach this matter. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

As research (Arnaldo 2007; Compton 2009; Li 2013; Pino 2008;) has indicated, the remote teaching environment can be beneficial and fitting for some students. The home environment that is more private can be less stressful for some students. The same can be said about teachers. Some teachers might find working at home more peaceful, as they likely have more opportunities to make significant adjustments to their work environment. Some teachers of the present study considered the peaceful environment that allowed them to work without interruptions and disturbing background noises a benefit of the distance teaching. The teachers reported that, in their view, some students appreciated being able to work at their own pace, which is in line with Li's (2013) points. Some teachers reported that they also enjoyed working

at home on their own. The evident calmness of distance teaching also raised some concerns over returning to classrooms, where they would have to address behaviour and other issues more frequently again. Naturally, different individuals have different needs, and this also shows here, as some students and teachers enjoy working on their own, while some might miss the socialization and collaboration more.

Some teachers had already considered the future implication that distance teaching had had on their teaching. For instance, Laura (example 97) said that distance teaching made her more comfortable with using e-platforms, and she found that she and her students had learned some useful practical skills. Annika (example 98) found that it would be easier to utilize distance teaching in the future, especially in upper secondary schools, where students work on their computer a lot anyway. Salla (example 99) was carefully optimistic about the future, stating that a mix of both distance and contact teaching could be beneficial.

(97) [Voisiko mahdollisia uusia ideoita hyödyntää myös tulevaisuudessa lähiopetuksessa tai mikäli etäopetus jatkuu tai on muuten tarpeen?] Kyllä varmasti. Etäopetus madalsi kynnyistä käyttää enemmän sähköisiä alustoja ja esim. Sähköisen kokeen tekeminen on nyt hallussa mitä voisi lähiopetukseenkin soveltaa. Myös oppilaat saivat paljon lisätietoa ja taitoa TEAMSin käytöstä. (Laura, primary school)

*[Could the possible new ideas be used also in the future in contact teaching or if distance teaching continues or is otherwise necessary?] I believe so. Distance teaching lowered the threshold to use more technological platforms, and, for example, I now know how to do an e-exam and could use that in contact teaching as well. The students also got a lot more knowledge and skills from using TEAMS. (Laura, primary school)*

(98) Sitte semmosta tuolla kollegojen kanssa vähän ollaan pohdittu että, ja varmaan moni muukin on pohtinut, että et miksei tämmöstä etäopetusta vois niinku jatkossa käyttää tarvittaessa sillai vähä niinku matalammalla kynnyksellä. Erityisesti lukiossa koska lukiolle tää sopii tosi hyvin kun koneella tehdään muutenkin töitä, jokaisella lukiolaisella on se kone. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*And then we have thought with my colleagues, and probably so have many others, that why couldn't we use this kind of remote teaching in the future when needed, with lower threshold. Especially in upper secondary school because it fits upper secondary school because well because everyone uses a computer anyway, everyone has a computer. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(99) I think a balance of online and contact teaching could actually be good in the future. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

Almost half of the teachers mentioned some sort of balance between online and classroom teaching as a viable option in the future. It was suggested that teachers would have a lower threshold to use distance teaching in the future if the situation requires it. For instance, two of the teachers interestingly gave the same example of a teacher hurting their leg and having to take sick leave even though they would otherwise be able to teach. In situations like these,

distance teaching could work as a temporary solution to provide education. The students could, for example, still be in the classroom under the supervision of an adult yet would receive teaching through distance format. This relates to the flexibility feature that is often associated with distance education (Croft et al. 2010; Nummenmaa 2012; Pino 2008). The enrichment and flexibility distance teaching can provide for the education field seems to be one of its long-term core strengths, whether it is employed in emergency situations or in a more standardized manner.

To conclude, teachers' answers also indicated that, although sudden and unplanned, the emergency remote teaching period did provide some new opportunities to develop language teaching and distance language teaching. Many familiar tasks needed new delivery methods, and while online platforms and other resources have been available for a long time, this sudden and obligatory shift to emergency remote teaching forced the teachers to utilize these resources more. There was clearly an increased initiative to use more technology, leading to at least some increase in the teachers' technological skills. Some teachers found specific benefits in distance teaching and the increased use of ICT which they also considered to be potentially useful in the future, including in contact teaching. In other words, teachers were able to perceive new opportunities distance teaching, technology and virtual learning environments could bring to language education. This could lead to increased implementation of blended learning in language classrooms. There could be a new balance between online and contact teaching or course work, where some lessons are hosted online for flexibility and accessibility while some work (such as the more interactional tasks) is realized in contact teaching.

#### **5.4 Teachers' experience**

One of the objectives of this study was to find out what kind of an experience the temporary remote teaching period was for teachers. In this Section, we analyze and discuss our third research question: *What kind of attitudes and experiences EFL teachers had of the emergency remote teaching period and how has it affected their thoughts on teaching?* When analyzing the experiences that the participating teachers reported, we need to keep in mind the term "emergency remote teaching" and the suddenness of the shift into distance teaching, which both have, without a doubt, affected the teachers' experience. A few significant themes emerged from the answers. First, we analyze the teachers' overall experience of the emergency

remote teaching period (Section 5.4.1). Then we move onto experienced time and effort (Section 5.4.2) and finally, we discuss the experience of teaching EFL online at a distance (Section 5.4.3).

### 5.4.1 Overall experience

The sudden shift to distance teaching seemed to be a source of stress for many of the participating teachers. About half of the teachers reported some sort of confusion or “fog” that characterized the beginning of the distance teaching period. The teachers needed to quickly adapt their lesson plans with new material delivery methods to fit the distance format, which they deemed tiring. Annika (example 101) explained that she was frustrated in the beginning because as an experienced teacher, she was used to delivering lessons without much planning. The unfamiliarity of distance education, to both her and the students, forced her to start planning lessons by the minute, which affected her self-efficacy and caused her to be tired. Hilla (example 102) also thought that the beginning was very intense due to a great amount of work, such as developing new methods and correcting the matriculation examinations at the same time.

**(100)** Olihan toi siis siihen etäopetukseen siirtyminen sillai tosi yhtäkkiä ni se oli aika kuormittava juttu. Että jotenki aivot meni jumiin siinä tietyllä tavalla. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Well the shift to distance teaching was very sudden so it was quite burdening. My brain somehow tilted. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(101)** Alussa olin turhautunu, olin tosi väsyny koska mulla on niinku seitsemästoista (17.) vuosi opettajana. Mä oon tehny tätä niin pitkään ja mulla on siitä niin vankka ammattitaito että mä voin kävellä luokkaan ja pitää englannin oppitunnin ihan mistä tahansa aiheesta mille tahansa kurssille mistä tahansa kieliopista. Mä pystyn tekee sen suunnittelematta ihan tosta vaan. Mutta nyt kun tuli nää etätunnit, mun oli pakko suunnitella niinku tyyliin minuuttiaikataulu. Jokaselle tunnille, koska siin ei oo niinku varaa minkäänlaiseen semmoseen yhtäkkiseen inspiroitumiseen ja niinku spontaaniin juttuun. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*In the beginning I was frustrated; I was really tired because I had been a teacher for 17 years. I've done this for such a long time, and I have such a strong expertise that I can just walk into the classroom and deliver a lesson about any topic to any course about any grammar. I can do it without planning just like that. But now that the distance lessons came, I had to schedule by a minute almost. For every class, because there was no room for sudden inspiration and spontaneity. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(102)** Siit ekan jakson puolel— kolme neljäsosa, niinku ei ollu paljon muistikuviakaan, muuta ku se että mä vaan niinku istuin siellä— se oli iha hirveetä. Ja just se kumma tunnelma ja... Mut yllättävän hyvin se sitten kuitenkin meni. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*About the first distance teaching period, I can't even remember much, except that I just kinda sat there— It was horrible. And that weird atmosphere... But it went surprisingly well after all. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

We would argue that the beginning of the distance teaching period would have been easier if the teachers had had time to properly prepare for it. Now, the unpreparedness became evident in the struggles of the teachers and their exhaustion. In addition, there seemed to be confusion with the overall organization of ERT that the teachers needed to sort out. Decisions, such as whether to use frequent online meetings or task packages, were often left to teachers' own discretion, which caused them stress. Consequently, the beginning of the ERT period was described as confusing and exhausting by most of the teachers. Our findings seem to be in line with the research that the University of Jyväskylä reported on in December 2020 (University of Jyväskylä 2020). According to this research, school staff felt that the remote teaching period was difficult and increased their worries over students and teaching.

Regardless of the heavy feelings the teachers reported in the beginning of the emergency remote teaching period, for most teachers these feelings seemed to diminish somewhat as time passed and new routines were formed. Some teachers mentioned that they were sceptical and worried about taking on distance education in the beginning but that the experience was positive, after all, as we can see from examples 103 and 104. What is more, it seems that, in retrospect, the teachers were able to find positive aspects to ERT and some even reported growth in their practices and self-efficacy (see example 105).

**(103)** I was scared of going online but the experience was positive. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

**(104)** Musta tää meni paljon paljon paremmin ja paljon mukavampaa ku mä etukäteen ajattelin. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*I think this went a lot lot better and was a lot nicer than I had anticipated. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

**(105)** Etäopetusjakso oli näin jälkikäteen ajatellen erittäin positiivinen kokemus ja sain jopa lisää ammatillista itseluottamusta kokemuksesta. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*In retrospect, the distance teaching period was a very positive experience and I even gained more professional confidence from the experience. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

Other research examining experiences of the emergency remote teaching period of spring 2020 has also indicated that teaching at a distance did allow teachers to learn new skills and develop their teaching (University of Jyväskylä 2020). As can be seen from our findings, in particular example 105, some teachers even felt that they were able to gain a meaningful new experience that positively affected their confidence as a teacher.

Examples 106–108 demonstrate in more detail some of the positive remarks that the teachers made of the emergency remote teaching period. Anja thought that the distance format forced her to think outside the box which was motivating and refreshing. In addition, despite her initial apprehension towards technology, Maria found herself enjoying exploring the new possibilities that distance education afforded. Meanwhile, Laura (example 108) reported that she noticed that language could be taught in a meaningful way even at a distance.

**(106)** Tähän on ollu ihan hirveen virkistävää, koska kaikki on pitäny mieltii uudella lailla. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*This has actually been very refreshing because everything needs to be thought in a new way. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(107)** Ainoa tilanne siis mut on yllättäny se et mä oon pitäny itteeni ensinnäkin aika luddiittina et en nyt— en oo mikään tietokoneguru. -- Ni tota mä oon yllättyny siitä miten nopeesti sit kuitenkin tavallaan lopsahti tähän tämmöseen etäopetukseen ja rupes näkemään niinku semmosia, että mitä kaikkee kivaa tällä pystyy tekemään. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*The only thing that surprised me is that I've always considered myself a Luddite that I haven't now— I'm not a computer guru. -- So, I've been surprised by how quickly everything kind of fell into place into this kind of distance teaching and I started to see the nice things one could do with this. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

**(108)** On mahtava huomata, että etätunneistakin tuli mielekkäitä monelle oppilaalle ja osaa jopa harmitti kun tunti loppui niin nopeasti. (Laura, primary school)

*It has been amazing to see that distance lessons have also become meaningful to many students and some were even sad that the lessons ended so quickly. (Laura, primary school)*

Maria seems to be a good example of what Al-Furaydi (2013) meant when he said that teachers' negative preconceptions of ICT often derives from them not understanding its full potential. In general, being doubtful of how well language education can conform to distance learning format seemed to be common amongst the teachers, although many of them said their attitude changed after experiencing distance education in practice. Despite the initial worries, many teachers ended the experience on a positive note, whether it was stating “it went better than I expected” or finding distance teaching and learning meaningful. Laura’s remark about distance lessons being meaningful and suitable for some learners is echoed in other research (University of Jyväskylä 2020).

As we have established in the beginning of this Section, changing all their plans for English lessons and taking on unfamiliar delivery methods caused the teachers a lot of stress. Examples 109–111 indicate how the teachers found ways to cope and remain motivated amidst the challenging time period.

(109) Jotenki varmaan mua kaikista eniten autto juuri ne niitten opiskelijoiden kommentit. -  
- Se autto jotenki jaksaan et ku näki siel oli niitä motivoituneita myös. Niinku jotka sano et  
tää on ikävää, mutta meidän täytyy kun tää tilanne on tällainen— Jotenkin sellanen hirveen  
hyvä asenne sieltä mikä tuli. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*Somehow, I think the students' comments helped the most. -- Seeing motivated students  
somehow helped me continue. Like some said that this is unfortunate, but we have to because  
the situation is like— Somehow a really good attitude came across. (Hilla, upper secondary  
school)*

(110) Liikunta, perhe, lähikollegat [auttoivat jaksamaan]. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*Exercise, family and close colleagues [helped me persevere]. (Minna, lower secondary  
school)*

(111) Alussa ku se oli tosi rankkaa, niin autto ehkä jaksamaan ajatus siitä, että on kevät ja tää  
loppuu ihan kohta. Että vaikka niinku koronavirus ei katoaisikaan ni kesäloma tulee kuitenkin  
((naurahtaa)). Ja sit kollegoiden tuki ja niin myös niiden opiskelijoiden tuki siinä mielessä,  
että he oli kans siinä uudessa tilanteessa Ja— jos mä tein jotain mokia siellä tota Teamsissä,  
niinku teknisiä mokia, ni he autto mua. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Because the beginning was really tough, the idea of summer coming closer and this ending  
helped me. So even if the coronavirus wouldn't disappear at least the summer vacation is  
coming ((laughs)). And then support from colleagues and students in the sense that they were  
also in a new situation. And— If I made some kind of mistakes in Teams, like technical  
mistakes, they'd help me. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

The teachers found different things helpful, but the majority mentioned students' comments and support as an important factor for gaining strength and motivation. It seems that there was a sense of positive support between the teacher and the students, as they were all in a new and unfamiliar situation. Sometimes the teacher and student roles seemed to reverse, as the students helped the teachers with technical issues. In addition to the students, colleagues and supportive parents acted as a social safety net. Also, the idea of the approaching summer vacation seemed to be a relief.

All in all, the participating teachers experienced a lot of stress and reported multiple challenges in relation to distance language education (see Section 5.2). Regardless of the perceived drawbacks, teachers were able to overcome the majority of them and make plans for the future, in case a similar situation repeats. The teachers also developed practices for the distance teaching that they wanted to continue using once they returned to regular contact teaching. Rehn et al.'s (2016) research similarly notes that despite the apparent challenges teachers experienced while delivering language teaching through video conference, distance education seems to have a bright future ahead of it.

### 5.4.2 Time and effort

The challenge of time management was discussed in Section 5.2.3, however, in this Section we focus more on the teacher experience and how challenges with time affected their work. In other words, we look at teachers' experiences of time from another point of view. Devising new material and finding new ways to deliver content took time and effort. As Salla (example 112) points out, teachers need preparation time to produce quality language lessons, which the teachers in our research context were not given. Possibly because of long hours at the computer and the unfamiliarity of the online learning context, many teachers considered preparing for distance teaching being more time consuming than the face-to-face classroom lessons that they were used to (examples 112–114).

(112) I think teachers need to be given time to create meaningful and high-quality lessons. I found that prepping for an online lesson takes a lot more time than prepping for contact teaching. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

(113) [Kielenopetus etänä on tuntunut] haasteelliselta ja aikaa vievältä. Toki myös hyviä puolia on ollut, mutta paluu omaan luokkahuoneeseen on ollut helpotus. (Laura, primary school)

*[Distance language teaching] has felt challenging and time consuming. Of course, there have also been positive aspects but returning back to my own classroom has been a relief. (Laura, primary school)*

(114) Mut kyl [etäopetus] vaati paljon enemmän työtä. Kun lähiopetuksen järjestäminen. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*But distance teaching required a lot more effort. Than organizing contact teaching. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

Similar to our findings, other studies (see Huang 2019, Nummenmaa 2012, Rehn et al. 2016) have also noted that excellent distance education takes time and effort. To be able to achieve the best potential results, more using time and effort is needed (Huang 2019) as well as proper resources and training (Rehn et al. 2016). The teachers in our study were not prepared to deliver their courses online so suddenly, so the shift to emergency distance education undoubtedly resulted in extra work. Had the teachers had proper time to plan and prepare for the new mode of teaching, they would have most likely had less issues. In addition to unpreparedness, another reason for distance teaching being considered more time consuming and tiring could be the mental drain of the whole pandemic situation that affected the teachers' lives, for some more than the others. Furthermore, the new distance mode forced the teachers to search for new ways to deliver lessons and trek into unfamiliar areas, which took more time and effort than what the teachers were used to.

As mentioned, a common sentiment with the teachers was that delivering language lessons remotely took a lot of time and effort, especially in the beginning of the emergency remote teaching period, where everything seemed to be hectic and unsure, as demonstrated by examples 115–117. This caused the teachers to go into what Mauno called a “survival mode”, where they first tried to handle everything essential before trying to innovate anything with the new opportunities the distance delivery format brought forth. The teachers readily admitted that they did not have the time and energy to explore all the possibilities and resources that distance education had to offer.

(115) Mut enemmän sit sitä selviytymistä. Juuri sen kun aikaa meni hirveesti kaikkeen et kuhan taas tästäki päivästä selviän. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*But it's more just surviving. Because everything took so much time so I just tried to clear one day at a time. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(116) Ja sit toisaalta toi etäopetus oli kokonaisuudessaan sillai vähä kuormittavaa, että en mä ois jaksanukkaan kehittää mitään ihan uusia systeemiä. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*And then again distance teaching in general was a little burdening so I wouldn't even have had the energy to develop any completely new systems. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

(117) Kyl mä sit huomasin sen, että mä menin aika niinku sillai minimillä -- Jätin pois just tommoset isoimmat uusien— ihan uusien juttujen opettelut ja miettimiset. Että en viittiny kokeilla. -- Että ei voi sanoa, että mä oisin kaiken välttäny— mä ((nauraa)), mutta tota noin. Niinku sillä tavallaan minimillä mikä mun mielestä oli toimiva. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I realized I went with the minimum. -- I opted out of learning and thinking of something completely new. I just didn't bother to try. -- But I couldn't completely avoid— ((laughs)) But I kinda went with the minimum of what I thought worked. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

In line with the findings of the present study, the teachers in Nummenmaa's (2012: 24) research also thought that distance education takes more time and effort. Some aspects of the sentiment could be due to their preconceptions of distance teaching as something lesser than convenient classroom teaching and so, they would have to work harder to fill the gaps caused by distance delivery. In both Nummenmaa's (2012) research and the current study, teachers were not previously familiar with distance teaching and had their own prejudices about the mode of delivery fitting language education. The reference to “survival mode” indicates that the fact that emergency remote teaching was impossible to plan in advance resulted in struggles. We already discussed the challenge of time earlier in Section 5.2.3, but with these examples above, we want to show how the teachers' busyness in the beginning of the ERT period affected their motivation and energy to innovate new practices.

As time passed, the teachers began to see more possibilities with the new form of delivery. However, for some, the ideas were left to the planning stage. In another example, Annika (example 118) said that rather than inventing anything new, she took the chance to take respite once everything calmed down and she decided to make things easier for herself. This experience was also reported by the other teachers. Anja (example 119) thought about the future in a hopeful manner, suggesting that in the future, she might be interested in collaboration and developing more new methods for distance education.

**(118)** Sittenkään kun se alkoi sujua, että sitten sitä tavallaan oli vähä uupunu sillai, että rentoudun pikemminkin ku rupes suunnittelemaan mitään mahtavuuksia. (Annika, upper secondary school)

*Even when it started to go well I was so exhausted that rather than starting to plan for anything amazing, I started to relax. (Annika, upper secondary school)*

**(119)** Mutta toisaalta taas siihen kaiken käynnistämiseen meni niin paljon aikaa, että ei viel oikeestaan edenny [innovointiin tai yhteistyöhön] kun piti tehdä se perustyö ensin. Mut et nyt jos pitäs jatkaa niin sit mä luulen että tota ois taas kiinnostusta [yhteistyöhön] enemmän, ja energiaa enemmän. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*But then again getting started with everything took so much time that I didn't advance into [innovating] because I had to do the basic work first. But if I had to continue now then I think I would have more interest in [collaboration], and more energy. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

On a positive note, now that the teachers have planned new strategies for teach English remotely and gained experience in distance language teaching, they may fare better in terms of innovation, should distance teaching be relevant again. In fact, schools were prepared to employ distance education if necessary throughout the fall 2020 and spring 2021 (Finnish National Agency for Education 2020d; Finnish National Agency for Education 2021). We assume that distance language teaching was easier for teachers in the fall semester due to their prior experience in the spring 2020. This time, they were likely better prepared and already had an idea of what worked and what did not. Preparedness could result in less time used for work and so, maybe more innovation could happen.

In this Chapter, we discussed the time and effort that the teachers put into developing new materials and methods for their distance lessons. Many teachers reported that they did not have the time or energy to develop anything completely new, however, we found this to be rather subjective. In reality, the teachers developed new ways to deliver lessons, adjusted their content to fit the new distance format of teaching, and solved problems as they emerged. This, we conclude, is already quite a lot of innovation as well as time and effort used to deliver quality language education.

### 5.4.3 Thoughts of teaching as a profession and teacher role after distance teaching

We asked the teachers if they think that the emergency remote teaching period affected their thoughts on teaching and their image of themselves as teachers. The answer for the former question is divided. Some teachers said that they were surprised that distance teaching adapted to language teaching as well as it did, while many thought that distance teaching was not for them. Examples 120–122 show that the teachers do, in fact, think that distance language teaching can be of good quality, as long as they know how to employ proper tools and methods.

(120) Kielten opetus voidaan toteuttaa laadukkaasti myös etänä. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*Language teaching can be of good quality also through distance means. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(121) [Kieltenopetus etänä on tuntunut] yllättävän miellyttävältä. Lyhyenä ajanjaksona toimii OK. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*[Teaching language at a distance has felt] surprisingly pleasant. It works OK for a short period. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

(122) Jos multa olisi [ennen koronaa] kysytty että miten niinku onnistuuko opetus etänä niin mä oisin ollu varmaan hyvin skeptinen. Et siinä suhteessa mä oon huomannu et tää opettaminen on aika tällästä plastista. Se on vaa sitten siitä niinku välineitten ja keinojen valinnasta aika paljon kiinni. Aika paljo samoja asioita pystyy tekemään, vaikka ei ois siellä samassa tilassa. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*I was asked [before Corona] whether teaching remotely can be successful, I would probably have been very sceptical. In that sense I have realized that teaching is very flexible. It's more dependent on the selected tools and methods. Quite many of the same things can be done even when you're not physically in the same place. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

The emergency distance teaching period seemed to inspire the teachers into contemplating the nature of language teaching and finding new positive aspects. The findings seem to emphasize the flexibility and the dynamic nature of teaching of which the teachers became more aware. Consequently, this seemed to encourage the teachers to see the potential of CMC, if not distance education. However, Maria reasonably pointed out that much is dependent on the chosen tools and methods. Teachers who are unfamiliar with distance education and language learning technology need guidance to be able to select proper methods, and this is where schools and teacher training programs become important. Left to their own devices, without proper training and resources, teachers may take an unnecessarily long time to select proper methods (Rehn et al. 2016). Furthermore, teachers not only need the technological skills but also the pedagogical knowledge to use technology in an efficient way to facilitate learning (ibid.).

Despite the conclusion that language learning could, in fact, work in a full-time distance format, some teachers also pointed out that language learning did seem to lose some of its key aspects, namely interactional properties that are considered essential to language learning (example 123). Hilla (example 124) even goes as far as to say that she felt like she was teaching a correspondence course.

(123) Ni ehkä mä niinku silloin aikasemmin vielä aattelin vahvemmin et se on niin olennainen osa sit opetusta se kontakti ja siinä samassa tilassa oleminen ja se sellanen et sen takia opettaminen ei sovellu [etäyhteyksiin]. Nyt ku on ollu pakko kokeilla sitä tällein et joo kyllä se taipuu. Toki siitä jää jotain aspekteja pois. Mut sitte taas saattaa tulla jotain muita tilalle. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*Maybe earlier I thought even more strongly that contact and being in the same place and etc. are such essential parts of teaching and that's why teaching wouldn't fit the distance format. But now that it was obligatory to try, I think yes, it does in fact fit. Of course, some aspects are left out. But then other aspects might be added. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

(124) Mulle tuli sellanen tunne et mä nyt opetan tässä niinku kirjekurssia suurin piirtein vanhanaikaisesti. -- Mutta tuli sellanen tunne et tää ei oo nyt koko juttu. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*I kinda felt like I am now teaching a correspondence course in the old-fashioned way. -- But then I got the feeling that this isn't it. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

Distance teaching is often accused of lacking interaction (Nummenmaa 2011; Croft et al. 2010), but research has also shown that distance education is, when properly designed and delivered, in no way inferior to convenient classroom teaching (see, for example, Cavanaugh et al. 2004). However, research often refers to the more standardized and preplanned version of distance education and, as we have established, the context of this study was emergency remote teaching. So, we could argue that this “loss” of qualities that the participating teachers attribute to distance education happened because they were not well-prepared to teach language online and the shift was very sudden. Moreover, many teachers reported being too exhausted to research new methods and resources, as we discussed in Section 5.4.2. The teachers did the best they could in a difficult situation, but their experiences should not be taken to represent distance education in a normal situation.

Despite the overall positive experience distance language teaching was to the participants, many of them did not wish to continue doing it for long periods of time. Examples 125–128 illustrate the popular opinion among the teachers: almost half of the teachers explicitly mentioned that they would not like to become full-time distance language teachers, and if this were to become the new norm, they would even consider changing professions. It seems that

especially the loss of some interactional qualities made it difficult for the teachers to enjoy their work and find it meaningful.

(125) Jos tilanteesta tulisi pysyvämpi/toistuva, opettamisesta katoaisi minulle todella keskeisiä ulottuvuuksia ja joutuisin pohtimaan opettamisen mielekkyyttä ammattina. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*If the situation would become frequent, teaching would lose some key aspects to me and I would have to rethink the meaningfulness of teaching as a profession. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

(126) Opettajan työ on aina ollut haasteellista, mutta myös innostavaa jonka vuoksi viihdyn opena. Etäopettajaksi en kuitenkaan lopullisesti ryhtyisi. Opettajan työn parhainta on sosiaaliset kontaktit oppilaisiin ja omaan työyhteisöön, joka tekee työstä mielekäästä. (Laura, primary school)

*Teaching has always been a challenging profession but also invigorating, which is the reason I like being a teacher. However, I wouldn't become a fulltime distance teacher. The best things in teaching are the social contacts with students and the work community, which make the job meaningful. (Laura, primary school)*

(127) Ja sanoin jossain vaiheessa, että jos opettajuus ois tätä että mä istun koneen ääressä, ja menee ykstoista (11) tuntia päivässä, ni en olis opettaja. Niin ehkä pidän siitä vieläkin kuitenkin kiinni. (Hilla, upper secondary school)

*And I said at some point that if teaching would be like this that I sit in front of a computer and eleven hours pass then I wouldn't be a teacher. So maybe I'll stick with that. (Hilla, upper secondary school)*

(128) I need to figure out a balance between my workload and family life but as long as we don't go to digital extremes, I am in a profession I love. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

It is evident from the data that the teachers considered interaction important, and the lack of interaction was one of the major challenges of the ERT period (see Section 5.2.1). The teachers described interaction as an important part of their work, and it is, then, logical that teachers' reluctance to move to full-time distance teaching is most likely at least in part due to the difficulties in interaction. As can be seen from example 127, the fact that teachers had to spend a lot of time at their computers is also a factor that can turn some teachers away from distance teaching. It is understandable that if one practices a profession with a certain image of it and its qualities in mind, a sudden change to the job will cause displeasure and aversive reactions. If teachers value immediacy in interaction, it could be that no amount of innovative interaction in distance teaching could deter their preference of contact teaching.

From the teachers' answers to "has the distance teaching period changed your views of teaching as a profession", we can see what aspects of teaching were important to the teachers, because some qualities and properties seemed to be emphasized during the ERT period. Minna (example 129) and Salla talk about teachers' personalities and how there is no one type of personality

that fits a teacher. In addition, both Mauno (example 130) and Anja (example 131) note that the ERT period emphasized the teachers' role as irreplaceable supporters who easily adapt to new situations. Presence and interaction were also mentioned in the answer by some of the participants. For Salla (example 132) and Laura (example 126), it is the interaction with students and colleagues that makes teaching meaningful to them. This sentiment is echoed in the examples 133 and 134, where the teachers explain the importance of working in immediacy of their students. In Mauno's (example 134) case, this lack of immediate interaction made him feel like his work was less meaningful.

**(129)** Opettaminen ammattina on monipuolinen. Sain etäjakson aikana vahvistusta ajatuksilleni siitä, että yhdenlaista hyvää opettajaa esim. Persoonaltaan ei ole olemassa. Vanha ajatus opettajasta puhuvana päänä ei sovi enää nykymaailmaan, vaan opettajan on oltava enemmänkin oppilaita aktivoiva ohjaaja ja neuvonantaja. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*Teaching is very diverse as a profession. The distance teaching period strengthened my idea that there is no one right kind of teacher by personality, for example. The old concept of teacher as a talking head does not fit the modern world but teacher has to be more like a guide and advisor, who activates students. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

**(130)** Ajatukset [opettajuuden] suhteen ovat ristiriitaiset. Tilanne oli poikkeuksellinen eikä toivottavasti ainakaan vastaavassa mittakaavassa hetkeen toistu. Tilanteessa kuin tilanteessa opettajia tarvitaan ja opettajat pystyvät mukautumaan nopeasti uudenlaisiin tilanteisiin. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*My thoughts [on teaching] are conflicting. The situation was exceptional and hopefully does not repeat at the same scale any time soon. No matter the situation, teachers are needed, and teachers can adapt quickly into new situations. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

**(131)** Mä ajattelen siis että tähän [etäopetus] osottaa että opettaja on entistä tärkeämpi. Koska tota, siinä niinkun hirveen monet kaipaa sen, että niitä tönästään eteenpäin. (Anja, upper secondary school)

*I think that this [distance teaching] proves that a teacher is more important than ever. Because, in [distance teaching] many need to be pushed forward. (Anja, upper secondary school)*

**(132)** I am a teacher because I love working with teenagers - I love their energy, their creativity and their personalities. I prefer being face-to-face with them. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

**(133)** Mä oon ihan oikeesti siis tavallaan niinkun kansanpalvelija, että mä oon sellasessa työssä et mun pitää olla läsnä. (Helmi, upper secondary school)

*I'm actually kind of a servant of the people that I'm in a profession where I have to be present. (Helmi, upper secondary school)*

**(134)** Poden ylipäättään jonkinlaista ammatillista kriisiä, eikä etäopiskeluaika ainakaan helpottanut tilannetta. Työtä oli tavallista vaikeampi kokea merkityksellisenä. Vahvuuteni ovat mielestäni juuri oppilaan kohtaaminen ja ohjaaminen, mitä oli vaikeaa tehdä. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*Overall, I'm having some kind of a professional crisis and distance teaching didn't help. It was more difficult to find work meaningful than usual. I think my strengths are being there for the students and guiding them which was difficult to do. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

These remarks, while often positive, also seemed to underline the shortcomings of distance education, as perceived by the teachers. According to Nummenmaa (2012), the aspects of teaching that the teachers consider important in distance teaching do not differ significantly from those which they think are important in contact teaching. The difference is, however, in how successful distance education is in implementing these aspects of practise and how challenging the teachers experience them (ibid.). This notion made by Nummenmaa (2012) is very much in line with our findings. The teachers reported that distance education was lacking in interaction, and, consequently, the importance of interaction seemed to be emphasized in the answers. However, we can see some positive remarks too: the ERT period seemed to reassert the need for a teacher in the mind of some teachers. Many of the participants described a teacher who guides the students and supports them on the learning journey. While distance education seemed to have implications for more student-led teaching and learning in the future, a teacher is still needed to facilitate learning.

In addition to finding and strengthening the teachers' ideas of language teaching, the ERT experience also resulted in the teachers finding new aspects of themselves as educators. Almost all of the teachers reported that the emergency remote teaching helped them realize new qualities of themselves as teachers (example 135–137). Other examples, 138 and 139, highlight how the teachers made new realizations about their abilities, technology skills for example.

**(135)** Kuva itsestäni muuntautumiskykyisenä opettajana on kasvanut. -- Koen olevani pystyvämpi opettaja kuin ennen etäjaksoa. (Minna, lower secondary school)

*My image of myself as an adaptable teacher has grown. -- I feel like I'm more capable than I was before the distance teaching period. (Minna, lower secondary school)*

**(136)** [The distance teaching experience] showed that I am resilient and able to adapt, it showed that I can be successful in a world that I did not see myself being part of. (Salla, lower and upper secondary school)

**(137)** Olen kokenut olevani melko kekseliäs ja innovatiivinen etäopetuksen aikana ensimmäisien "shokkiviikkojen" jälkeen, mutta kokenut myös riittämättömyyttä. (Laura, primary school)

*I have thought myself to be quite inventive and innovative during distance teaching after the first "shock weeks" but I have also felt inadequate. (Laura, primary school)*

**(138)** Mut sit mä oon myös tykänny siit että on niinku oppinu itekkin et— tällein nyt kärjistetysti vois sanoa, että huomaa et vanha koirakin oppii vielä uusia temppuja ni se on ollu musta ihan sillai positiivista. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)

*But I've also liked that I also learned— like one could say, a bit provocatively, that an old dog can also learn new tricks and I think that has been positive. (Maria, lower and upper secondary school)*

**(139)** Kuva itsestäni opettajana vahvistui etäjakson aikana - tiedän mitkä ovat vahvuuteni ja niitä oli usein vaikea käyttää. Tilanne oli turhauttava. (Mauno, lower secondary school)

*My image of myself as a teacher was strengthened during the distance teaching period - I know my strengths and those were often difficult to use. The situation was frustrating. (Mauno, lower secondary school)*

The teachers' skill sets increased, and they seemed to learn a lot about teaching and the use of ICT even if they were already experienced teachers. This finding in the current study is similar to the result in the study by Ahtiainen et al. (2020), in which the majority of the teacher participants said that their digital competence increased. Likewise, Nummenmaa (2012) reports similar results, as the teachers in her study felt that their technological and pedagogical skills increased. In addition, most teachers in Ahtiainen et al. (2020) believed that the ERT period would affect how they will teach in the future. On one hand, in the current study, the distance teaching experience seemed to affect the teachers' self-efficacy in a positive way. The teachers found themselves to be more skilled and flexible than what they may have previously thought, and this is hopefully something they will take with them from the experience. On the other hand, some of the realizations had fewer positive implications for future distance teaching. While some of the experiences of ERT reinforced the teachers' own ideas of their strengths, those strengths seemed to not be supported in the distance format. For some teachers, distance education hindered spontaneity, and for others it affected their interaction with students. With more distance teaching experience, we could hope that the teachers will find solutions to counter these negative effects.

In conclusion, before the ERT period, the teachers did not necessarily see how language teaching could be adapted to distance education due to the importance of interaction in learning. In retrospect, the teachers did think that language education could be adapted to the distance delivery mode. While language teaching may lose some of its properties in the distance mode, it may gain other qualities and opportunities. In addition, the ERT period strengthened the teacher's self-efficacy in most cases. However, most of the teachers did not wish to become full-time distance language teachers. The interactional properties of language education, which often was a major component in the teachers' work satisfaction, was deemed lacking in distance education, which consequently made the teachers eager to return to their classrooms. However,

as our findings indicate, the return to contact teaching will likely be enriched by the new skills and opportunities teachers perceived and developed during the ERT period.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

In this Chapter, we first give conclusive and summarizing answers to the research questions. We discuss the most important findings and possible future implications of this study (Section 6.1). Second, we discuss the reliability of this study and its limitations (Section 6.2) and, finally, we will make suggestions for further research on the topic of distance education (Section 6.3).

### **6.1 Summary of the findings and future implications**

In this Section, we will discuss what we consider the most important and relevant findings from the present study. Because the findings were already analyzed, discussed and connected to earlier research in Chapter 5, we will now proceed to answer the research question in a conclusive manner and discuss future implications. To summarize, our aim was to study Finnish EFL teachers' experiences during the emergency remote teaching period of spring 2020. We were interested in the teaching methods teachers used in distance language teaching and the possible challenges and opportunities they observed. We were also interested in how the distance teaching period affected teachers' thoughts on teaching and themselves as teachers.

The first research question was as follows: How were the English classes conducted during the emergency remote teaching period? According to the findings, the teachers reported using similar content and material as they did in contact teaching. However, the delivery methods seemed to experience the most radical change. For instance, materials were distributed to the students via online platforms, such as Google Classroom. In addition, all of the teachers took advantage of video conferencing, although for different purposes. Most teachers had video

conference meetings for every lesson, while others did so more seldomly, or as a form of remedial instruction. For those who did not have obligatory online meetings for every lesson, instructions and exercise packages that the students completed asynchronously were given to students via online platforms.

A common practice during the ERT period was to adapt old methods to fit the new distance format. For instance, due to the nature of distance delivery, there was an increase in submission of assignments, video material and written tasks. For some teachers, there was a notable decrease in interactional exercises, as they felt that they were difficult to facilitate in the online environment. In addition, the teachers had to adjust, for example, their methods of assessment and supervision due to them not being in the same physical space as their students. Overall, while much of the content was the same as in contact teaching, the teachers had to adjust their practices quite a lot, while often also having to develop new practices to replace old ones that were dependent on immediacy and classroom setting.

The second research question was, what are the possible challenges and opportunities that distance learning has brought up? Our findings show that teachers faced various challenges and opportunities during the remote teaching period. Common challenges relate to lack of interaction, the use of technology, and language teaching practices in distance education. In particular, student passiveness, establishing social presence online, teachers' technological skills, equal technological resources, time management issues, and adequate assessment seem to be issues that need to be addressed in developing future distance language education. Some of the challenges and issues that became apparent during the ERT period could be solved through additional ICT skills and online pedagogy training for teachers, and by providing enough technological resources for all students.

Typical opportunities and benefits of distance EFL teaching are utilizing new technology, tools and platforms, finding new concrete adjustment to use in language teaching in general, being able to supervise students more effectively, and teachers being more open toward utilizing ICT in the classroom in the future. Our participants' answers indicate that despite the suddenness of the distance teaching circumstances in spring 2020, the teachers did find some new opportunities to develop their language teaching and ICT skills, as well as analyze the benefits of the remote delivery method. The teachers found some specific benefits to distance teaching, such as the possibility of recording video call sessions and utilizing screen sharing, as well as

new aspects of ICT they could use in regular classroom teaching as well. The teachers got more familiar with online platforms and tools, utilized multimedia material such as videos more, and found new ways of conducting formative assessment with the help of technology.

The third research question was, what kind of attitudes and experiences EFL teachers had of the emergency remote teaching period and how has it affected their thoughts on teaching? From the collected data, we can conclude that while tiring, the ERT period seemed to be an overall positive experience for most of the teachers. The teachers seemed to have a somewhat negative perspective of distance education prior to the ERT experience but reported that everything went rather well in retrospect. However, delivering education at a distance was considered to take more time and effort than contact teaching, which they were understandably more used to. Therefore, the teachers reported not having the energy for innovation. However, we think this is rather subjective, as the teachers actually did develop and adjust their teaching quite a lot. Despite having concluded that the ERT experience was positive, the teachers seemed to prefer contact teaching and some even explicitly stated that they would not want to teach language at a distance full-time. Regardless, through the experience the teachers were able to develop new qualities in themselves as teachers, and this, in general, increased their self-efficacy.

The findings of this study, while at a small scale, could be a significant help in developing distance education in Finland. Distance education has been a viable option to contact teaching even before the ERT period (Korhonen 2016) and the nationwide ERT experience in spring 2020 only served to make educators and policymakers to further consider its potential benefits (Kosonen 2020). To make future distance education, and potentially also blended learning, more efficient and easier on the teachers, we think it is worthwhile to explore the findings of the present study and the teacher reports.

It is possible that a similar phenomenon will happen again in the future or that something else will require the limitation of contact lessons. Thus, it is crucial that we explore how teaching has been affected and what could possibly be improved or adjusted in the future. Moreover, during this exceptional time new teaching methods or ways of applying already well-established methods may have appeared. Discovering these new innovations and possible challenges of teaching can help us develop language teaching even after the lockdown, during conventional school circumstances.

The findings of this study provide some implications for the future of EFL teaching and distance teaching in Finland. The study we have conducted shows that there are several matters to keep in mind when planning and organizing future distance language education. This study has provided answers that could help the future planning of EFL teaching through different learning environments employed in distance learning (such as virtual learning environments). We have been able to identify some specific challenge areas teachers have encountered in distance EFL teaching. Acknowledging and addressing these challenges in teacher training, as well as in-service training, can increase the quality of language education in Finland and ensure that teachers feel prepared to teach languages in online environments. Furthermore, training teachers to teach English in online settings, whether at a distance or as part of contact teaching, would be beneficial for the future. In addition, our findings indicate that more attention ought to be paid to online communication and social presence. This could be achieved, again, by addressing these matters in teacher training and making sure teachers not only have the necessary ICT skills to move their teaching to virtual environments, but also have the pedagogical and social skills that are necessary for successful distance teaching. What is more, teachers need to be able to integrate technology into teaching in a pedagogically sound way, as well as be able to assess the efficiency of the chosen technological resources.

The teachers interviewed for this study were also able to point out opportunities and benefits distance English teaching provided, and this indicates that there has already been some development during the rather short ERT period of spring 2020. This is a promising sign for both the future of EFL teaching and distance education. While addressing the challenges that emerged during the ERT period is important in the future, it is just as important to consider the opportunities and benefits the teachers identified. Our findings suggest that at least some teachers might now be more open to using technology in their practices in the future, also in contact teaching. In addition, some teachers may now have more tools at their disposal, as the ERT period required them to familiarize themselves with more technology. Like some of our participants, more teachers could utilize technology in their formative assessment, prioritize continuous assessment, and prioritize student-led learning pace in their EFL classrooms in the future.

In general, the teachers seemed to observe new opportunities in CALL and CMC, which many of them said that they will continue to take advantage of in contact teaching. It would seem that Finnish EFL teachers will be using more CALL and CMC in the future, thanks to the

emergency distance teaching period. While technology should not be used in teaching just for the sake of it, we think that technology has great benefits to offer to language education. The ERT experience gave the teachers the initiative to look for more technology-related resources and potentially further develop their skills in the future.

Teaching is a profession that is by nature constantly evolving. Therefore, teachers ought to be ready to constantly develop their teaching. The sudden and unprecedented emergency remote teaching period gave us a glimpse into what happens when language teachers have to adjust and develop their teaching to fit a unique context. The effectiveness with which the teachers were able to develop their practices and innovate new ways to organize education demonstrate the quality of the teachers we have in Finland.

## **6.2 Evaluation**

In this Section, we will evaluate the limitations and reliability of this study. First, it is important to note that as this is a small-scale study, we cannot make wide generalizations on Finnish EFL teachers' experiences of the ERT period based on our findings. Through participants' reports, we received an account of nine EFL teachers' remote language teaching practices and experiences.

Second, we would like to address the broadness of the research questions. The research topic is rather recent and topical, and so we wanted to create a general overview of the ERT experience. To achieve this, we concluded that reporting on the teaching practices, challenges, opportunities and teaching experience would be appropriate. Furthermore, to form a comprehensive portrayal of what happened during the ERT period, we decided to cover several themes in the interview. From the amount of focus the teachers paid to the different themes in the interviews, we could derive what topics the teachers considered important. In addition, as a graduation thesis with two authors, the research focus needs to be broader than if there was only one writer.

When it comes to relating the findings of the present study to the distance education field in general, we must be careful. While the teachers' practices and experiences followed what many researchers have noticed before, we must take into consideration the uniqueness of the ERT situation. In addition, normally distance education research pertains to courses that have been

planned to be delivered at a distance in the first place. The context of the present study differs significantly from this and consequently, the findings of the present study cannot be directly compared to the other studies conducted in the field. However, together with other recent research on the Finnish emergency remote teaching period (see Ahtiainen et al. 2020; Kesäjärvi-Lehtinen and Jokela 2020; University of Helsinki and University of Tampere 2020; University of Turku 2020), one could form a more comprehensive picture of what happened and how teachers and students experienced the ERT time period.

While rather useful, interviews as a data collection method also have some drawbacks. For instance, using interviews presents one with the problem of socially accepted answers (Hirsjärvi and Hurme 2015: 35). The interviewee may not answer the question truthfully, but rather answer with what they think is the truth. The interviewee could also opt to answer with what they think the interviewer wants to hear. Inconsistencies in the data may reveal some of the truth but as researchers who have not observed the actual remote teaching experience, it is difficult to know whether the teachers answered in a truthful manner or not. Therefore, we simply have to trust that the teachers were honest with their answers. If the data were collected through, for example, a survey with complete anonymity, there is a possibility that the participants would have been more critical in their reports. However, we decided to conduct interviews because this method allowed us the freedom to ask further questions and let the participants tell their full account without restrictions.

In general, we believe that we have conducted the present study in an ethical and responsible manner. We gathered and handled our data with care, and carried out the transcription process meticulously, while also keeping in mind the drawbacks of our methodology. In addition, we were able to receive detailed reports from the participant due to our data collection methods. Thus, we consider that we chose the correct methods to explore this topic. From our point of view, the participants appeared open and truthful in their answers, and, therefore, provided us with rather useful information. Of course, we cannot fully guarantee that the teachers reported their experiences exactly as they happened. In addition, we have reported on the research process in a detailed manner to the best of our abilities and written the research report following the academic guidelines and conventions as carefully as possible. Furthermore, we were able to make sound comparisons to previous research, which increases the reliability of our findings.

### **6.3 Suggestions for further research**

The topic of this study is rather current and new, as distance teaching in the context of a global pandemic has not been researched previously due to its unique nature. The emergency remote teaching period of spring 2020 and the subsequent ERT periods have resulted in distance teaching becoming a significant research topic of the 21st century. Thus, there are multiple opportunities for future research that we would like to suggest.

First, it would be beneficial to conduct a similar study on teachers' experiences and views of distance language teaching but complement the interviews with longitudinal observation data from the actual distance language lessons. This would not only result in even more detailed data, but also increase the opportunities to observe teachers' (and students') progress as they possibly become more comfortable and familiar with remote teaching and learning. In other words, the distance research field could benefit from more longitudinal research that is based on observation data as well as interviews of different facilitators and operators.

Second, it would undoubtedly be valuable to focus on multiple points of view. Student perspective ought to be also included in future research. Perhaps comparing students' experiences and attitudes toward distance language education to teachers' views would provide useful insights that could help develop distance teaching and learning from both points of view. In addition, parents' perspective is an important possible future research focus, in particular when discussing the emergency remote teaching provided to minors. All these different points of view could be compared to see how different operators experience the same phenomenon. Furthermore, acknowledging and researching the impact on regional differences and families' socioeconomic backgrounds could aid in ensuring equal distance education for everyone. More large-scale questionnaire research focusing on multiple points of view, such as the research conducted by the University of Helsinki and the University of Tampere (2020), as well as University of Turku (2020), would be rather beneficial. Questionnaires can reach more people, and through this type of research a more general overview of the experience could be achieved. This could be very beneficial for the future, as with the help of research new efficient methods of conducting (emergency) remote teaching could be developed.

Finally, comparing different school levels regarding experiences and practices could be useful. In addition, comparing the experiences of teachers of different languages, or other subjects,

could result in better understanding of what each school subject's specific challenges and opportunities in distance education are. Another comparative study could be conducted focusing on subject teachers' and classroom teachers' experiences of teaching EFL remotely, as in Finland some classroom teachers teach English to lower levels. This kind of study could demonstrate how teachers who have received different training have handled teaching English at a distance.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1 VIDEO CALL INTERVIEW NOTES AND QUESTIONS

- 1) Esittele tutkimus - lyhyt kertaus
  - a) Avoimet kysymykset, esitetään lisäkysymyksiä
  - b) Englannin kielen näkökulma mutta kokemukset muista kielistä tervetulleita
- 2) Mitä kuuluu? Miten yleisesti kevät mennyt tms. → lämmittely & taustatiedot
  - a) Kauanko olet opettanut?
  - b) Oma koulutustausta?
  - c) Mitä astetta/asteita opetat?
- 3) Mitä työtapoja olet nyt käyttänyt etäopetuksessa?
  - a) Uutta? Soveltanut vanhaa? Ongelmia?
  - b) Onko esimerkiksi kommunikatiivisuus tai yhdessäoppimisen yms. toteutunut etäopetuksessa?
  - c) Osaatko eritellä eri ikäryhmillä käyttämäsi menetit? (mikäli opetat eri tasoja)
- 4) Onko tullut jotain “ahaa-elämyksiä” tai uusia ideoita?
  - a) Uusia yhteistyömahdollisuuksia?
  - b) Online platforms ja muut työkalut/metodit
- 5) Onko uusi tilanne mahdollistanut asioita joita et ollut edes ajatellut?
- 6) Voisiko niitä hyödyntää myös tulevaisuudessa?
- 7) Mitä haasteita nousi esille?
  - a) Esim. miten huomioida yksittäiset oppijat/nuoret oppijat/oppimisvaikeudet
  - b) Toiminnallisuus ja communicative learning approach
- 8) Kenen kanssa olet tehnyt yhteistyötä, jos olet?
- 9) Miten koulusi oli mielestäsi valmistautunut tällaiseen?
  - a) Kuinka tehokkaasti saitte esimerkiksi lisäkoulutusta asiasta jne?
- 10) Oletko saanut jostain apua/neuvoja/vertaistukea?
  - a) Kollegat, facebook-ryhmät, kouluyhteisö...
- 11) Miltä kielenopetus on etänä kokonaisuudessaan tuntunut?
- 12) Miten tilanne on vaikuttanut kokemukseesi opettajuudesta ja opettamisesta?
  - a) Opettajan minäpystyvyys kuva
  - b) Mikä auttanut jatkamaan? jaksamaan?

- c) Miten mahdolliset onnistumisen kokemukset tai turhautumiset ovat vaikuttaneet kuvaasi itsestäsi opettajana?

## **APPENDIX 2 THE EMAIL INTERVIEW**

### Yleiset tiedot

- 1) Mikä on koulutustaustasi?
- 2) Kauanko olet opettanut?
- 3) Mitä astetta/asteita opetat?

### Työtavat etäopetuksessa

- 4) Mitä työtapoja olet käyttänyt etäopetuksessa? (Voit esimerkiksi aluksi kuvailla tyypillisiä etäopetuksessa pitämiäsi tunteja)
  - a) Sovelsitko jotenkin etäopetukseen lähiopetuksen työtapoja? Minkälaisia ja miten?
  - b) Otitko käyttöön uusia työtapoja etäopetuksen aikana? Minkälaisia?
  - c) Osaatko eritellä eri ikäryhmillä käyttämiäsi työtapoja, mikäli opetat eri asteita?
- 5) Miten olet kokenut vuorovaikutuksen toteutumisen (sekä opettaja-oppilas että oppilas-oppilas) etäopetuksen aikana?
- 6) Miten toteutit arviontia etäopetuksessa?

### Innovaatio

- 7) Syntyikö etäopetuksen englannin tuntien suunnittelussa sinulle uusia ideoita (tai tuliko jotain "ahaa"-elämyksiä)?
  - a) Teitkö yhteistyötä uusien tahojen kanssa tai uudella tavalla?
  - b) Käytitkö jotain uusia ohjelmia tai työkaluja opetuksessa?
  - c) Onko uusi tilanne mahdollistanut asioita joita et ollut edes ajatellut?
  - d) Voisiko mahdollisia uusia ideoita hyödyntää myös tulevaisuudessa lähiopetuksessa tai mikäli etäopetus jatkuu tai on muuten tarpeen?

### Haasteet

- 8) Mitä haasteita etäopetuksessa nousi esille?

- a) Mikä hankaloitti etäopetuksen toteuttamista?
- b) Mitä kenties olisi mielestäsi hyvä huomioida jatkossa mahdollisiin haasteisiin vastaamisessa?

### Yhteistyö ja yhteisö

- 9) Kenen kanssa olet tehnyt yhteistyötä, jos olet?
- 10) Miten koulusi oli mielestäsi valmistautunut etäopetukseen?
  - a) Kuinka tehokkaasti saitte esimerkiksi mahdollista lisäkoulutusta jne.?
- 11) Oletko saanut jostain apuja/neuvoja/vertaistukea? Jos olet, kertoisitko tarkemmin?

### Yleinen oma kokemus

- 12) Miltä kielenopetus etänä on sinusta kokonaisuudessaan tuntunut?

### Opettajuus ja kokemus opettamisesta

- 13) Miten etäopetukseen siirtyminen on vaikuttanut kokemukseesi itsestäsi opettajana?
  - a) Miten mahdolliset onnistumisen kokemukset tai turhautumiset ovat vaikuttaneet kuvaasi itsestäsi opettajana?
  - b) Mikä on auttanut jatkamaan ja jaksamaan?
- 14) Entä miten tilanne on vaikuttanut ajatuksiisi ja kokemukseesi opettamisesta ammattina?

## **APPENDIX 3 THE EMAIL INTERVIEW IN ENGLISH**

### General information

- 1) What is your education background?
- 2) How long have you been teaching?
- 3) What level(s) are you currently teaching?

### Work methods in distant teaching

- 4) What kind of methods have you used in distant teaching English? (For instance, you can describe a typical lesson you taught during school lockdown)
  - a) Did you adapt any methods from contact teaching to distant teaching? If yes, what kind of methods and how did you adapt them?

- b) Did you employ any new methods in your teaching during distance teaching? What kind of methods?
  - c) If you teach multiple grades, can you categorize distinct methods applied to different age groups?
- 5) What was your experience like regarding the interaction and communication as well as co-operation between yourself and your pupils, as well as between pupils and their peers? How did you find communicating with your students during distant teaching?
- 6) How was evaluation accomplished during distant teaching?

### Innovation

- 7) Did any new ideas emerge when you planned lessons for remote English lessons (did you get any Heureka! moments)?
- a) Did you collaborate with any new parties or in a new way with others?
  - b) Did you use new tools, platforms or programmes in teaching?
  - c) Has the new situation enabled things you had not previously even thought about?
  - d) Could any possible new ideas be utilized in the future, for example, in contact teaching or in the case that distant teaching will continue or if otherwise necessary?

### Challenges

- 8) What challenges have emerged from distant teaching of EFL?
- a) What complicated executing distant teaching?
  - b) Are there any possible aspects that should be noted and/or developed in the future regarding potential challenges for distant teaching?

### Collaboration and community

- 9) Who did you collaborate with (in planning and executing teaching), if you did?
- 10) In your opinion, how prepared was your school to execute distant teaching?
- a) For instance, were you given opportunities to participate in training regarding online platforms etc., or were you given materials from school if you required them?
- 11) Have you received any advice, help or peer support? If yes, please elaborate.

### General own experience

- 12) How have you found the distant teaching EFL?

## Being a teacher and experience about teaching

13) How has the experience of distant teaching affected how you see yourself as a teacher?

- a) How have the possible positive or negative experiences affected the way you see yourself as a teacher?
- b) What has helped you continue and persist?

14) How has the situation affected your thoughts and experiences about teaching as a profession?

## **APPENDIX 4 CONSENT FORM**



JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO

### **SUOSTUMUS TIETEELLISEEN TUTKIMUKSEEN**

Minua on pyydetty osallistumaan tutkimukseen Teachers' experiences in distance teaching of EFL in Finland: methods, challenges and opportunities.

Olen perehtynyt tutkimusta koskevaan tiedotteeseen ja saanut riittävästi tietoa tutkimuksesta sekä henkilötietojeni käsittelystä. Tutkimuksen sisältö on kerrottu minulle selkeästi ja olen saanut riittävän vastauksen kaikkiin tutkimusta koskeviin kysymyksiini. Selvitykset antoi Senni Rekola ja/tai Mona Siltanen. Minulla on ollut riittävästi aikaa harkita tutkimukseen osallistumista.

Ymmärrän, että tähän tutkimukseen osallistuminen on vapaaehtoista. Minulla on oikeus, milloin tahansa tutkimuksen aikana ja syytä ilmoittamatta keskeyttää tutkimukseen osallistuminen. Tutkimuksen keskeyttämisestä ei aiheudu minulle kielteisiä seuraamuksia.

Voin myös, milloin tahansa peruuttaa suostumukseni tutkimukseen ja suostumuksen peruuttamisesta ei aiheudu minulle kielteisiä seuraamuksia.

Allekirjoittamalla suostumuslomakkeen hyväksyn tietojeni käytön tiedotteessa kuvattuun tutkimukseen.

Kyllä

Allekirjoituksellani vahvistan, että osallistun tutkimukseen ja suostun vapaaehtoisesti tutkittavaksi sekä annan luvan edellä kerrottuihin asioihin.

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Allekirjoitus

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Päiväys

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Nimen selvennys

### **Suostumus vastaanotettu**

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Suostumuksen vastaanottajan allekirjoitus

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Nimen selvennys

Alkuperäinen allekirjoitettu suostumus jää tutkimuksen vastuullisen johtajan arkistoon ja kopio annetaan tutkittavalle. Suostumusta säilytetään tietoturvalisesti niin kauan kuin aineisto on tunnistellisessa muodossa. Jos aineisto anonymisoidaan tai hävitetään suostumusta ei tarvitse enää säilyttää.