

**Teaching and learning methods during and after the
Covid-19 pandemic in higher education language teach-
ing: students' views**

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä - Abstract <p>Vuoden 2020 keväällä yliopistot ympäri Suomea ja maailmaa siirtyivät laajasti etäopetukseen Covid-19 pandemian aiheuttaman uhan vuoksi. Etäopetuksen myötä myös opettamisen ja oppimisen menetelmiä ja työkaluja tuli tarkastella uudelleen. Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena oli tarkastella aikaa pandemia-ajan etäopetuksen jälkeen ja selvittää, onko etäopetuksen metodeja otettu käyttöön lähiopetuksessa ja jos on, mitä nämä menetelmät ovat. Lisäksi tutkielmassa keskityttiin yliopiston kieltenopiskelijoiden kokemuksiin ja ajatuksiin metodien toimivuudesta niin etä- kuin lähiopetuksen tukena.</p> <p>Tutkimus suoritettiin kyselytutkimuksena, joka lähetettiin Jyväskylän yliopiston kielten ainejärjestöjen sähköpostilistoille. Kyselyyn vastasi 17 kieltenopiskelijaa. Tutkimuksen analyysi suoritettiin sisällönanalyysin keinoin käyttäen sekä laadullisia että määrällisiä tutkimusmenetelmiä.</p> <p>Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että jotkin etäopetusajan metodeista ovat jääneet käyttöön lähiopetukseen palaamisen jälkeen, suurimpana näistä videopalvelu Zoom. Lisäksi todettiin opiskelijoiden arvostavan lähi- ja etäopetuksen joustavaa yhdistämistä oppimismukavuuden ja -tuloksien parantamiseksi. Lisää tutkimusta pandemian aikaisen etäopetuksen pitkäaikaisista vaikutuksista todettiin tarvittavan.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

As COVID-19 spread through the world during the spring of 2020, the threat of a pandemic and the will to keep faculty and students safe during unprecedented times forced schools and universities all around the globe to quickly find new ways to continue education (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust and Bond 2020). Many of these institutions decided to cancel in-person classes and move to distance teaching and learning for the time being (Hodges et al. 2020). Thus, teachers and students were required to rapidly claim new ways for teaching and learning. While other schools were allowed to return to contact teaching later in 2020, most universities were to remain, mostly or entirely in distance teaching.

Distance teaching and learning is not a completely new phenomenon in higher education, as there has been a growing trend since the late 1990s of using digital teaching tools to enhance flexible and accessible teaching (Holmes and Gardner 2006). Before the pandemic however, most teaching was done through traditional in-person teaching, including for example face-to-face lectures, tutorials, and workshops (Stuart, O'Donnel, Scott, O'Donnell, Lund, Barber 2022: 408).

The motivation and learning results during and after the distance teaching and learning have been studied by many, including bachelor's theses and all the way to published theses and dissertations. What the present study aims to do, however, is to examine the methods of language teaching and learning in use after the distance learning period and, how the period of distance teaching and learning during Covid-19 pandemic has affected them. Furthermore, the present study considers the students' perceptions of the methods of language teaching and learning during and after the period of distance teaching and learning.

The following paper firstly examines and discusses the previous research on the field of distance teaching and learning and especially the period of Covid-19 pandemic induced distance teaching and learning. Secondly, it introduces the research aims and questions and data

collection and analysis methods. Thirdly, the results will be introduced and further discussed in relation to the previous research. And finally, there is a conclusion chapter.

2 DISTANCE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Foreign language learning happens usually in a small group and a classroom with a teacher physically present. However, as it is known, the Covid-19 pandemic forced nearly all teaching and learning all around the world into distance teaching and learning. Naturally, this morphed the way in which teaching and learning was conducted.

Several definitions of distance teaching and learning (for example Mehrortra, Hollister and McGahey 2001: 1, Moore 1973: 664 and Holmberg 1997: 9) heavily emphasize the physical distance of the teacher and learner as the basis for their definitions. However, Otto Peters, who is widely regarded as one of the world's foremost experts in the field of distance teaching and learning highlights the importance of division of labor and specialization in their definition of distance teaching and learning (Peters and Keegan 2003). Furthermore, Peters views distance teaching and learning as an industrialized form of teaching and learning, which makes the teaching of vast amounts of learners possible. Another significant similarity between most of the definitions is the use of technology as the mean of communication and teaching. This is highlighted by both Moore and Holmberg.

Even though currently the majority of distance teaching and learning is conducted through electronic means, distance teaching and learning can and has been conducted through letters, phone calls and other communication means at disposal (Sadeghi 2019: 81). As a matter of fact, distance teaching and learning has begun in the mid-1700s to compensate for the short supply of traditional education (Sadeghi 2019: 82).

A sort of compromise between distance teaching and traditional in-person teaching is hybrid teaching. The term hybrid is used by Arispe and Blake (2012: 450) to describe courses that frequently alternate between scheduled in-person meetings and online sessions. Additionally, Johnson (2012: 94) defines hybrid teaching as classes that do require some physical attendance, but in which some of the normally required physical attendance is replaced by work done online.

2.1 Teaching methods in distance teaching and learning

The following chapter discusses the teaching methods used in distance teaching and learning during the widespread distance teaching and learning caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. This will be done based on previous research. Finally, the chapter will discuss the teaching methods both in international setting and the Finnish frame of reference.

Suitable and original methods of teaching are crucial in maintaining the motivation and therefore learning performance of students, especially in distance teaching and learning (Consilz 2020: 310). The relationship between motivation and learning performance has been researched by many (for example Paas, Tuovinen, Merrienboer and Darabi 2005 and Partovi and Razavi 2019). Research has shown that generally, better motivation makes for better learning performance, and it is safe to assume this is true in distance teaching and learning as well.

The biggest motivation for recent widespread distance teaching and learning has been the Covid-19 pandemic. As the pandemic spread, school staff and teachers were faced with many decisions, one of them being whether to make courses asynchronous, meaning self-study or synchronous, with different means of real-time communication through technology (Stuart et al. 2022: 408). Stuart et al. (2022: 418-420). studied university students and the effect of asynchronous and synchronous teaching had on their grade point average, connectedness to their university and satisfaction with their academic success They found that the students who were both more connected to their university as well as studying mostly or more through synchronous teaching, had better grade point averages, than the students who studied through asynchronous teaching. However, the students who studied through asynchronous teaching and were not as connected to their university, were found to be more satisfied with their academic success during the distance teaching and learning period. Thus, they suggest that both synchronous and asynchronous modes of teaching are important for different purposes. This is supported by the findings of Tartavulea, Albu, Albu, Dieaconescu and Petre (2020: 926) who

found that synchronous and asynchronous interaction and assessment methods were in use simultaneously during the period of distance teaching and learning.

However, Tartavulea et al. (2020: 920) found the mix of synchronous and asynchronous teaching methods to be passive in delivery and reducing interaction between students and teachers. Furthermore, the effectiveness of distance teaching and learning is perceived as lower than in contact teaching and learning. The respondents of Tartavulea et al.'s (2020: 927) research expected most of the online teaching methods that came in to use because of Covid-19 to remain in use after the return to contact teaching and learning. What is interesting about Tartavulea's research is that it was conducted during the first year of the pandemic and the present study will examine the current situation after the return to contact teaching and learning.

A study conducted by Chung, Subramaniam and Dass (2020) examined the online learning readiness among university students in Malaysia in the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. The research furthermore examined the demographic factors and their role in the readiness for online learning. Chung et al. (2020: 48) made use of the definition of Hung, Chou, Chen & Own (2010) to define readiness; they define readiness through five dimensions: self-directed learning, learner control, computer & internet efficacy, online communication self-efficacy and motivation for learning. Moreover, the research by Chung et al. (2020: 47) researched the students' preferred mode of online learning and the students' challenges with online learning. For the research, data was collected from 399 university students in two different online courses. The main finding was that the students were generally ready for online learning, but females were found to be more ready than their male counterparts. Furthermore, degree students were found to be more ready than diploma students. Simultaneously, female and degree students were also found to be more satisfied with the online learning than male and diploma students. However, more than half of the respondents would have chosen contact teaching and learning instead of distance teaching and learning, if given the choice. This resulted in the conclusion, that universities should provide further training to staff to improve their distance teaching and learning skills (Chung et al 2020: 46). Similar results were found by Tartavulea et al. (2020:

929) who emphasize the institutional support in relation to effectiveness of distance teaching and learning.

As Covid-19 was a threat that most institutions had not prepared for in advance, the abrupt shift to distance teaching and learning was at large met with a series of short-term adjustments that were not sustainable for long-term (Naidu 2022: 349). Some institutions however were more familiar with hybrid teaching and learning than others, and according to Naidu (2022: 349) those institutions were better equipped to continue teaching and learning even from the start of the pandemic when most others were still figuring out how things work. Iivari, Sharma and Ventä-Olkkonen (2020: 2) use Finnish city Oulu as an example of this, naming Oulu as a fore-runner in learning technology usage. According to them, the success is based on the sufficient amount of equipment per pupil and the systematic usage of technology in teaching before the pandemic induced distance teaching and learning period. Because the pupils of Oulu had been using technology and the online learning environments in their everyday lives, the transformation to distance teaching and learning was fairly smooth (Iivari et al. 2020: 2).

As in contact teaching and learning, the teachers in Finland had plenty of freedom to choose the ways in which they wish to conduct the distance teaching and learning. Some teachers tried to keep the school days structurally similar to contact teaching and learning while others went for something different. Iivari et al. (2020: 2) describe a Finnish fifth-grade teacher duo who after a few weeks of trying to keep up with traditionally structured school days, decided to work as a team to make school days more digestible for both the teachers and the students. The pair held 2-4 live lessons consisting of approximately 20 minutes teaching sessions, 40-50 minutes of independent work and a debrief at the end of the independent working time (Iivari et al 2020: 2). This made the workload more manageable and attention span of the pupils longer.

2.2 The impact of distance teaching and learning on in-class teaching and learning before and after Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic forced nearly all of schools and universities into distance teaching and learning. Even though as previously discussed, distance teaching and learning especially in higher education is not a new phenomenon, the period of widespread distance teaching and learning shook the learning patterns of students (Consilz 2020: 318). In their paper, Consilz (2020: 308) calls attention to the importance of acknowledging the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on the learning processes of the students, even after the pandemic and the distance teaching and learning period is over. Moreover, Consilz found there to be a lack of infrastructure to support the learning by getting peer and staff support. The research was done in the middle of first pandemic wave, and thus presents important information about the initial views and perceptions of students. Furthermore, Consilz's study focuses on university students, and because of that, is of special interest for the present study.

Distance teaching and learning has affected traditional in-person teaching and learning in many ways even before the period of pandemic induced distance teaching and learning (Mehrotra, Hollister and McGahey 2001: 9). These effects include for example the incorporation of websites, e-mail, and chatrooms into traditional in-person teaching (Mehrotra et al. 2001: 9). As technology improves and makes distance teaching and learning easier with more innovative ways of teaching, it simultaneously affects the in-person teaching and learning methods (Sadeghi 2019: 1).

Because the widespread switch to distance teaching and learning in the spring of 2020 was such an abrupt one and the teaching and learning was designed to be held in person, the expectations for the teaching and learning had to be lowered (Gacs, Goertler and Spasova 2020: 382). Furthermore, in the beginning of the distance teaching and learning period, the change to remote teaching was seen as a short-term solution that would not go on for long. Because of this, distance teaching and learning was utilized as means to continue education with any means necessary (Gacs et al. 2020: 383). According to Gacs et al. (2020: 383) the lowering of

standards and expectations must be done in these key areas of teaching and learning: security in exams, assessment, copyright issues, accessibility of teaching and the usage of technology. The effects of the return to contact teaching and learning on the lowered expectations is an interesting point of discussion that will be further discussed in the present study.

As can be seen above, the period of distance teaching and learning caused by the Covid-19 pandemic has been and still is researched extensively. There is research done on the motivation and learning results of students, the infrastructural support for teachers and students and much more, but more research is needed. The acknowledgement of the long-term effects of Covid-19 pandemic on all aspects and levels of teaching and learning is important in order to support the teachers, staff and students to the best of our abilities. As we as a society are heading out of the pandemic caused by Covid-19 it is important to research the effects of it and that is what the present study aims to do.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Aim and research questions

The main aim of the present study is to examine the effects of distance teaching and learning during the Covid-19 pandemic on the methods of language teaching and learning. The focus is to investigate the methods of teaching and learning and furthermore, university students' views on them, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic in Finnish universities' departments of language. Furthermore, the present study aims to research the possible methods still in use from the distance teaching and learning period during the pandemic and the reasons for some methods of teaching to remain in use after returning to contact teaching and furthermore the views and opinions of students on the matter.

The research questions are

1. What teaching methods were in use during the widespread period of distance teaching and learning?
2. After the period of distance teaching and learning, have teachers returned to the original methods of in-class teaching that were in use before the pandemic or have some methods remained in use? Why?
3. What are the students' views on the effects of the period of distance teaching and learning on the methods of in-class teaching and learning?

3.2 Data collection

The data collection method for the present study is an online questionnaire conducted via Webropol. A questionnaire, or a survey is a data collection method used for collecting data on for example societal phenomena and furthermore people's attitudes, views, and agencies

(Vehkalahti 2014: 11). Therefore, they work especially well to transfer perceptions and views of certain phenomena. Surveys allow the examination of thoughts and feelings on a larger scale (Denscombe 2010: 156). Because of this, they offer easy and cheap ways to conduct a research. Furthermore, a questionnaire is relatively easy to send and spread among the right target group, making it a rather effortless way to collect information, opinions, and other data. A questionnaire is a suitable method of data collection for the present study, as it offers a possibility to discuss the experiences of vast amounts of people. Furthermore, a questionnaire offers more possibilities to reach research subjects than an interview where the researcher would need to be present.

As with all research, there are ethical, theoretical, and practical issues to think about while conducting a questionnaire. Questionnaires are usually conducted via closed questions, to make the analysis of the answers easier. Thus, the research subject might be led into answering the questions in a certain way. When making the research questions, this needs to be taken into careful consideration. Furthermore, in a questionnaire the respondents are not able to easily and quickly reach the researcher to ask for clarification. Because of this, the questions must be easy to understand, and the questionnaire piloted through people of the same target group the questionnaire will be spread to (Davies & Mosdell 2006: 110). Piloting aims to find out if the questionnaire's wording, presentation and instructions are clear and work in the way the researcher intended them to work (Davies & Mosdell 2006: 108-109).

The survey was answered by 17 foreign language students. The participants were reached in the spring of 2023 through email lists of University of Jyväskylä. The email requesting research subjects was sent to five separate lists of student unions of foreign language students (German, Russian, Swedish, French and English). The survey questions were available in Finnish and English, and the respondents could freely decide between those languages. Before sending out the survey, it was piloted utilizing two foreign language students to see if the questionnaire is fit for the purpose and target group. The questionnaire consisted of 3 demographic questions, which gave relevant information of the participants' background, 10 open-ended questions, 3 closed questions with two options and finally 2 closed questions with a Likert scale of 1-5.

Additionally, there was an opportunity to leave feedback or any additional information regarding the questionnaire at the end of it. The questionnaire can be seen as an appendix at the end of the thesis.

The participants were informed in writing of the purpose of the study both in the email and in the beginning of the questionnaire. In the beginning of the survey the purpose of the study, instructions and requirements for participating in the study and the ethical information were further clarified. Additionally, they were informed that the questionnaire is completely anonymous and as not identifiable information is not gathered, the participants cannot be identified. The participants were required to confirm their informed consent before continuing to answer the survey.

3.3 Methods of analysis

The data analysis method for the present thesis is content analysis, used as both qualitative and quantitative method of research. Qualitative methods of research are usually based on the participation and inclusion of the participants (Eskola and Suoranta 1998). Furthermore, qualitative methods of analysis are usually data-based, which results in a need for narrowing down the data (Eskola and Suoranta 1998). Quantitative analysis, as qualitative one, is based on the collected data (Tähtinen, Laakkonen and Broberg 2020: 11). Additionally, the basis for quantitative methods of research is the examination of an empirical phenomenon with quantifiable qualifiers (Tähtinen et al. 2020: 24). Quantitative research is especially interested in the connections and variables between different groups and factors, the mechanisms involving them or just generally the occurrence of different phenomena (Tähtinen et al 2020: 11).

Content analysis is defined as the analysis of written, heard, and seen content (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 91). With this definition, content analysis can be seen to be done via quantitative methods also. Content analysis is heavily based on the decision of the researcher, on what is important in the content (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 92). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi

(2009: 92), it is important to take a strictly defined phenomenon and thoroughly research it based on the content.

After the data was collected, the quotes from the responses were arranged under the research questions. After that they were further arranged into bigger themes, of which the analysis was done and the subheadings of chapter 4 were formed. The quotes were numbered and the quotes in Finnish were translated into English. After the analysis was done, the themes were discussed further with the help of previous research and other sources.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter goes over the analysis of the questionnaire responses. The analysis is divided into three categories aiming to answer the research questions. Content analysis was done on the quotes from the respondents' answers and these quotes are used as examples in this chapter. The quotes are direct quotes from the survey answers, and they have been translated by the researcher. If the direct quote is already in English – as some respondents answered in English – the quote has not been translated.

4.1 Distance teaching methods

In the questionnaire, the participants were asked about the methods that were used to organize teaching during the widespread period of distance teaching and learning. The respondents' answers were arranged under three main themes using content analysis; familiar methods utilized in a new way, changed interaction between teachers and students and increased independent work. The three themes are introduced below and discussed further. Additionally, the applications and websites used in distance teaching and learning are discussed.

4.1.1 Familiar methods utilized in a new way

Several respondents expressed that in their opinion, the teaching methods remained mostly the same after the change to distance teaching and learning, they were simply utilized in a different way to make them work in distance teaching. The biggest difference according to these respondents was utilizing the video conference application Zoom in the teaching.

Example 1 ”Koen, että oman oppiaineeni opetus pysyi lähes samanlaisena, vaikka opetus oli etänä.”

”I feel that the teaching in my own subject stayed almost the same, even though the teaching was remote”

Example 2 ”- suurimmalta osalta opetus ei muuttunu, vaan se vaan heitettiin etään. Ainut suuri ero oli, että opetus tapahtui zoomin kautta.”

”- for the most part teaching did not change, it was merely thrown into distance teaching. The only big difference was that the teaching happened through Zoom.”

The implementation of new tools and methods to execute similar teaching as before the shift to distance teaching and learning was seen as unsuccessful.

Example 3 ”Mielestäni uusilla työkaluilla pyrittiin ainakin aluksi lähinnä vain toteuttamaan luennot täysin samalla tavalla kuin ennenkin, mutta vain etänä, mikä ei kuitenkaan oikein onnistunut.”

”In my opinion, at least in the beginning, the new tools were used to just try to carry out lectures completely the same way as earlier, just remotely, which wasn’t successful.“

The somewhat unsuccessful implementation of familiar methods into the emergency distance teaching and learning was the result of a short-term solution to utilize any means necessary to continue the education during unprecedented times (Gacs et al. 2020: 383). Because the use of any means necessary was not designed to last as long as the Covid-19 pandemic and the resulted distance teaching and learning period did, the teaching methods evolved as teachers, staff and students gained more experience with distance teaching and learning. Simply moving traditional in-class teaching into distance teaching and learning was not seen as sustainable.

4.1.2 Changed interaction between teachers and students

Especially at the start of the pandemic and the distance teaching and learning period some courses became entirely independent courses, where there was no interaction with other students. This decreased and changed the interaction between not only teachers and students but among students themselves.

Example 4 ”- jotkin kurssit (esim. ranskalaisen kulttuurin kurssi) muuttuivat täysin itsenäisiksi Moodle-kursseiksi, eikä muita opiskelijoita tavannut kertaakaan”

”- some courses (for example French culture course) shifted into completely independent Moodle courses, and you did not meet other students once”

Example 5 ”Luentotallenteet, etäluennot, videoesitelmä”

”Lecture recordings, remote lectures, video presentations”

Small-group learning was utilized to increase the students' possibilities to interact with each other. This included conversations in randomized small groups during individual lectures and more permanent small groups throughout the course.

Example 6 "Etäopetuksessa hyödynnettiin enemmän pienryhmäytymistä luennon aikana sen helppouden vuoksi."

"Small-grouping was utilized more in distance teaching during lectures, because of how easy it is"

Example 7 "Zoom ympäristönä opettamiselle mahdollisti erilaisten ryhmätöiden tekemisen hyödyntäen breakoutroom-ominaisuutta, sekä muutti tapaa vuorovaikuttaa opettajan ja opiskelijoiden välillä."

"Zoom as an environment for teaching enabled doing different groupwork utilizing the breakoutroom feature, and changed the ways of interaction between teacher and students."

In addition to just decreasing, because of distance teaching, the interaction between teachers and students also slowed down. In contact teaching the interaction between a teacher and students is more immediate, as there is no need for raising a virtual hand or writing out questions or answers in a chat and waiting for the teacher to notice.

Example 8 "Suurin ero oli tietty kasvokkain opiskelusta siirtyminen etäversioihin: vieruskavereista randomeihin pienryhmiin zoom-huoneissa, vastaaminen opettajan esittämisiin kysymyksiin zoomin chatissa -"

"The biggest difference of course was moving from face-to-face studying to remote versions: from the students sitting next to you to random small-groups in Zoom rooms, answering teacher's questions in Zoom's chat -"

Example 9 "Eniten eroja huomasin espanjan movi-kursseilla, jossa opettaja pallotteli ennen pandemiaa oppilaiden kanssa paljon enemmän kuin etäluennoilla"

"The most differences I noticed in Spanish movi-courses, where before the pandemic the teacher used to ask questions and have conversation with the students a lot more than in remote lectures"

The decreased and slowed down interaction resulted in less opportunities to use the target language, which in turn might have resulted to weaker results in learning, less confidence in using the target language and more anxiety towards language use. The change in interaction during

and after the distance teaching period should be taken into account in future research and planning of teaching.

4.1.3 Increased independent work

After the pandemic started and the teaching moved to distance teaching and learning, more independent work was expected of students. As teaching in a physical classroom became impossible, and teachers and other staff members tried to come up with other ways to organize teaching, the independent options were seen more practical than teacher-led teaching. This required self-direction on an unprecedented scale. The respondents reported that during distance teaching and learning courses utilized for example pre-recorded lectures, home exams, student presentations recorded at home.

Example 10 ”Paljon enemmän itsenäistä työtä –”

”A lot more independent work –“

Example 11 ”itsenäisten tehtävien määrä lisääntyi”

”the amount of independent assignments increased”

Even though teaching on Zoom and other video conference application was offered, distance teaching and learning morphed even that. Students’ responsibility for participating in lectures and therefore for their own learning was increased. For others, this meant flexibility and opportunities to dictate the pace of one’s learning, whereas to others it meant loneliness, falling behind and not having the support needed to keep up with the teaching. In-class teaching offers low threshold possibilities for the students to ask for help and guidance.

4.1.4 Applications and websites used in distance teaching and learning

When asked about the applications or other tools that were utilized during distance teaching and learning, all 17 of the respondents mentioned Zoom. Additionally, Teams was mentioned four times and Google Meet once. This was a very expected result, as the University of

Jyväskylä offers a Zoom license to all of its teachers and students (University of Jyväskylä 2021).

Additionally, web pages where teachers are able to organize course assignments such as Moodle and Peda.net were mentioned frequently. Although these web pages have been in use before the widespread period of distance teaching and learning, they may have been seen as a more important part of the course organization, as the teacher was not able to communicate with students weekly in in-person situations. Some courses utilized discussion forums on their Moodle pages, where students could ask clarifying questions and other students or teachers could answer them there. This made it easier for the students to find information in one place and additionally helped the teacher, by not having to necessarily answer same questions again via email.

Finally, applications or tools used to get, organize, and distribute information quickly and efficiently were mentioned in the responses. Examples of these applications are Padlet, Flinga and Mentimeter. Padlet and Flinga are both examples of websites that are used for collecting information from students to teachers and sharing it with other students. Mentimeter is a website used for presentations and especially for promoting easy interaction between teachers and students.

4.2 The rationale for changed methods

All of the respondents say that at least some of the methods, applications or other tools acquired during the distance teaching and learning tools are still in use. Most of the participants mentioned Zoom as an example of these. According to the respondents Zoom is used for more flexible teaching during courses by utilizing hybrid teaching or for rare occasions where a teacher is unable to teach in class but not unable to teach all together - for example when they are caring for a sick child. Some teachers also offer a possibility for students to participate in

class through Zoom when they are not able to attend the class physically – be it for moving to a different city or being sick.

Example 12 ”Etä- ja hybridimahdollisuuksien käytössä säilyminen mahdollistaa joustavampaa opetusta”

”The remaining in use of remote- and hybrid opportunities provide for more flexible teaching”

Example 13 ”Ne helpottavat opetuksen saavutettavuutta: etäyhteys mahdollistaa kauempaa tulevien opiskelijoiden osallistumisen, vierailijaluennoitsijat, sekä osallistumisen opetukseen esimerkiksi sairastaessa.”

”They make the education more accessible: remote connection enables the attendance of students coming from further away, guest lecturers, and attending teaching when sick”

Example 14 “Might be because some students have moved to a new city.”

Example 15 ”Zoom tarvittaessa. Lähinnä tilanteissa, joissa opettaja estynyt saapumaan paikalle mutta kykenee opettamaan. Tunti pidetään silloin etänä sen sijaan, että se peruttaisiin kokonaan.”

”Zoom when needed. Mostly in situations where the teacher is unable to arrive to the class but can teach. The class is then held remotely instead of cancelling it all together.”

Even though there are obvious positive sides to flexible hybrid teaching, the threats of it must be considered too. The possibility to teach and participate in teaching remotely, has the possibility to increase the length of sick leaves and even burn outs, when teachers and students feel the pressure to work even when sick. Furthermore, hybrid teaching requires more time and technical understanding from the teachers, than in-class contact teaching or plain distance teaching.

According to the respondents, home exams have remained in use to some extent for example exams conducted on Moodle and a possible reason for that is the dexterity of them. They are easy and quick to hold, review and give feedback on. Additionally, home exams are a part of making teaching more flexible.

Example 16 ”Moodle-tentissä osan kysymyksistä voi kone korjata automaattisesti.”

”In a Moodle exam some questions can be corrected automatically by the machine.”

Example 17 Applications and websites used for gathering information such as Flinga, Mentimeter and Padlet are still in use after returning to mostly in-person teaching. Respondents see them as good ways to gather thoughts and ideas quickly and to promote interaction easily.

Example 18 ”Esim padlet, menti meter ja muut vastaavat sivut, jolla voidaan kerätä monelta nopeasti tietoa”

”For example padlet, mentimeter and other pages like them, where it is possible to gather information quickly from many people”

Example 19 ”Tuo helppoa interaktiota ja helppo kerätä ajatuksia ja ideoita yhteen nopeasti.”

”It brings easy interaction and makes it easy to gather thoughts and ideas together quickly”

Some methods, applications, and tools did not remain in use because after the return to contact teaching and learning there was no perceived need for them anymore. The new methods, applications, and tools were introduced into teaching because of the distance teaching and learning that was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Later, as the possibility to return to the old familiar ways of teaching was offered, in many ways it was taken by the teachers, staff and students.

Example 20 ”Koska niille ei enää ole tarvetta.”

”Because there is no need for them anymore.”

Example 21 ”Kaikki eivät kuitenkaan edistäneet oppimista, niin ehkä siksi siirryimme suurimmilta osin takaisin lähiopetukseen.”

”Not all of them furthered learning however, so that’s maybe why we moved mostly back to contact teaching.”

Example 22 ”Vanhojen metodien tuttuus ja niiden koettu toimivuus.”

”The familiarity of the old methods and their perceived functionality.”

For example, courses held completely through Zoom lectures are a rarity in language teaching after the return to contact teaching and learning. This is attributed by the respondents to the possible negative effects they had on the students’ motivation and students’ difficulties to

concentrate in remote lectures. Additionally, the remotely held lectures were seen to have a negative effect on the interactional side of learning. Especially in language learning, the possibility to see the other person's reactions makes the interaction more humane and therefore more pleasant.

Example 23 ”- Zoom-luennot jäivät (onneksi) suurelta osin historiaan, mikä johtui varmaankin vuorovaikutuksellisuuden puutteesta, etäopetuksen negatiivisesta vaikutuksesta motivaatioon sekä opiskelijoiden vaikeuksista keskittyä kotona.”

”- Zoom lectures were left (thankfully) mostly in history, which was probably due to the lack of interaction, the negative effect of distance teaching on the motivation, and students' difficulties to concentrate at home.”

Example 24 ”Moni varmasti kokee varsinkin englannin kursseilla keskustelut helpommiksi, kun näkee vastapuolen reaktiot paremmin ja se tuntuu muutenkin inhimillisemmältä”

”Many people surely feel conversations especially in English courses to be easier, when they are able to see the reactions of the opponent better and it feels otherwise more humane”

As discussed earlier, during the period of distance teaching and learning exams held remotely through for example Moodle, grew in popularity as in-person exams were not a possibility. According to Gacs et al. (2020:380), in crisis-prompted remote teaching, quality expectations must be lowered also in controlling the possibilities to cheat in exams. Thus, according to the respondents, the amount of remotely held exams have decreased after the return to in-person teaching and this is seen to be because of the increased possibilities of cheating.

Example 25 ”Moodle-tentit ja muut etäatkaisut ovat varmaankin vähentyneet lunttausmahdollisuuksien vuoksi.”

“The amount of Moodle exams and other remote solutions have probably decreased because of the possibility to cheat.”

4.3 Student perceptions on new methods, applications and tools utilized in distance teaching versus in contact teaching

The respondents were asked to evaluate how well on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is extremely bad and 5 is extremely well, the newly acquired teaching methods were utilized in distance teaching and are utilized in contact teaching. The 17 students evaluated the distance teaching to deserve an average of 3.3 whereas in contact teaching the average was 3.5. The answers are individually presented in tables 1 and 2. The averages are similar, and the individual answers are distributed quite similarly. Although, the usage of the new methods in distance teaching deserved more of the lowest marks of 1s and 2s, with three in total than in contact teaching with one.

Table 1: How well do you think the new teaching methods were utilized in DISTANCE teaching and learning?

	1	2	3	4	5		Total	Average	Median
Extremely bad	1	2	6	7	1	Extremely well	17	3,3	3,0
	5.9 %	11.7 %	35.3 %	41.2 %	5.9 %				
Total	1	2	6	7	1		17	3.3	3.0

Table 2: How well do you think the new teaching methods are utilized in CONTACT teaching and learning?

	1	2	3	4	5		Total	Average	Median
Extremely bad	0	1	9	5	2	Extremely well	17	3,5	3,0
	0.0 %	5.9 %	52.9 %	29.4 %	11.8 %				
Total	0	1	9	5	2		17	3.5	3.0

When asked if the respondents think the methods acquired during distance teaching and learning could be utilized better in contact teaching and learning and if yes, how, the answers varied quite a lot. Out of the nine answers on this question, seven were yes and two were no. Most respondents that had responded yes, called for more hybrid options and flexibility. This is further discussed in chapter 4.3.1.

What is interesting to note, despite the quite good average score on the usage of these new methods, only one of the respondents told they learn better via the new methods acquired during the distance teaching and learning period. All 16 other respondents opted for the traditional contact teaching methods as their method through which they learn best. The positive comments might be due to the understanding of the difficulty in which teachers and staff were put with the switch to distance teaching and learning and all the new methods, applications, and tools they have had to acquire. In general, the respondents have a good understanding of the realities of teaching remotely and using those tools in contact teaching.

Example 26 ”En oikein keksi, että miten menetelmiä oltaisiin voitu käyttää paremmin tilanteeseen nähden.”

”I can’t really think of ways in which these methods could have been utilized better in this situation.”

Example 27 ”Aika 50/50, olisi varmaan joku voinut luovempikin olla, mutha ehkä yliopistotasolla riitti kaikki nämä.”

“Pretty much 50/50, probably there could have been something more creative, but maybe in universities these were enough”

Example 28 “I think they did the best they could. As a student I didn't get much out of Zoom teaching.”

The majority of respondents see the methods, applications, and tools as an opportunity to make learning more flexible and accessible to everyone. The option for remotely attending a course for example via hybrid teaching is brought up frequently and seen as a solution for many problems such as being sick, moving to a new city and scheduling everyday life. Furthermore, it

can be seen from the responses that the students appreciate versatile teaching and see versatility as a possibility to better the teaching and learning.

Although flexibility was seen as a positive side of distance teaching and learning, which was backed up by Tartavuela et al. (2020: 930), who concluded that the students' satisfaction towards distance teaching and learning was partly due to the increased possibilities of flexibility in time management, the respondents seem to not wish to switch back to totally remote teaching and learning but instead wish the new and old methods to be utilized seamlessly and with flexibility.

Example 29 "Ne on kivoja joiltain osin. Helpompi aikatauluttaa omaa arkea, kun joitain luentoja on mahdollisuus katsoa omalla ajalla."

"They are nice for some parts. It's easier to schedule own everyday life, when some lectures can be watched on my own time."

Example 30 "Mikäli ne mahdollistavat monimuotoisemman opetuksen, joka parantaisi opiskelijoiden oppimista, olen niiden puolella."

"If they enable more versatile teaching that would better the students' learning, I'm all for them."

Example 31 "Minusta esimerkiksi etäosallistumisen mahdollisuus on vain hyvä."

"In my opinion for example the opportunity to participate remotely is just a good thing."

Suitable and original methods of teaching have been named crucial in maintaining the students' motivation and learning performance by Consilz (2020: 310). This holds true in the responses of the present study too. The new methods, applications and tools are seen as a possibility to better teaching and learning but the respondents also emphasize the importance of using the right tools in the right time and place. Changing the teaching methods just because there are newer methods available is seen as unnecessary by the respondents if they are not suitable for the teaching or further learning effectively.

Example 32 "There is a time and a place for them. I don't see why they should be used if nobody feels like they are needed but they are very beneficial methods for certain situations and just plain opting out from using them in principle would be foolish."

Example 33 ”Tykkään siitä kun on mahdollisuus valita. Joillain kursseilla voi esimerkiksi valita lähi- tai etäopetustyylin. Koen, että joillain kursseilla haluan opiskella itsenäisesti etänä ja joinain paikanpäällä. Siksi mahdollisuus valita on kiva.”

”I like it when there’s a possibility to choose. In some courses you can for example choose a contact or distance teaching style. I feel that in some courses I want to study independently remotely and in some courses in a classroom. That’s why the possibility to choose is nice.”

Example 34 ”En vastusta opetusmetodien muuttamista, mutta niiden pitäisi tapahtua lähtökohtaisesti oppimisen parantamiseksi, eikä vain siksi, että halutaan hyödyntää useampia metodeja.”

”I’m not opposed to changing the teaching methods, but it needs to happen in principle to better learning and not just because people want to use newer methods.”

5 CONCLUSION

The objective of the present study was to investigate the effects of the widespread period of distance teaching and learning on the methods of higher education language teaching. The data was collected through an online questionnaire from 17 university foreign language major and minor students and analyzed with content analysis.

The first aim of the research was to examine the methods that were in use during the period of distance teaching and learning caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. From the students' responses, three main themes were found: familiar methods utilized in a new way, changed interaction between teachers and students, and increased independent work. Additionally, applications and websites used in distance teaching and learning were identified. These included the video conference applications Zoom, Teams and Google Meets, web pages used to organize teaching materials such as Moodle and Peda.net, and applications or tools used to get, organize, and distribute information quickly and efficiently such as Padlet, Flinga and Mentimeter.

Secondly, the research aimed to investigate whether after the period of distance teaching and learning, any of the methods used during it, are still in use in in-class teaching and learning. Furthermore, the reasons behind them were discussed based on the students' experiences. Unanimous opinion of the respondents was that at least some of the methods, applications or other tools utilized in distance teaching and learning are still in use after returning to in-class teaching. Most prominent one being hybrid teaching, where in-class teaching is supplemented at least to some extent with distance teaching and learning, be it via simultaneous in-class and Zoom teaching or home exams. Not all methods, applications and tools remained in use however, and that is attributed by the respondents to the lack of need for them after the return to contact teaching on campus. For example, courses held entirely online are a rarity in language teaching, as they are seen to not promote sufficient learning.

Additionally, the third aim of the research was to examine and discuss the university students' views on the effects of the period of distance teaching and learning on the methods of in-class teaching and learning. The biggest themes in the responses were the appreciation of flexibility, that the hybrid teaching and other methods used during and after the distance teaching and learning offer and the use of suitable methods in the right place and time. The possibility to choose where, when, and how to participate in lectures was mentioned frequently. This was seen both as a positive side of the distance teaching and learning during the pandemic and a good thing that stayed in higher education after it. These findings were supported by previous research. When asked if the new methods should be used more in higher education, the respondents called for common sense; progress for the sake of progress, when it jeopardizes the quality of teaching, is not welcome.

For the most parts, previous research seems to be in line with the present study's findings. Because this research was executed with only 17 respondents from one university, to make the findings more universal, research would need to be done on a bigger scale. Furthermore, to make the research more reliable, the questionnaire should contain questions about the teaching methods that were in use before Covid-19 pandemic. More research into the effects of widespread distance teaching and learning period is needed, because as Consilz (2020: 308) points out, it is important to acknowledge the effects of Covid-19 pandemic, even after the pandemic and the distance teaching and learning period is over. Time will tell how big of an effect the period of distance teaching and learning will have on the methods of higher education language teaching

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1 Copy of the questionnaire

25% Completed (1 of 4)



A survey on the effects of Covid-19 pandemic on language teaching and learning methods in universities

I am Noora Hyvätti, a third-year English student from the University of Jyväskylä. I am conducting a bachelor thesis on the effects of the distance teaching and learning during Covid-19 on the methods of language teaching and learning.

Participation in the study requires that you have experience of studying one or more foreign languages in a Finnish university.

This is a single study, and you will not be contacted again later.

Participation in this research is voluntary. You can decline, interrupt or cancel your participation without a reason at any point of the research. This will have no negative consequences for you. Participants can and will not be connected to their answers.

You can participate in this study in English or Finnish. The questions take about 10 minutes to answer. You will not be rewarded for participation.

Consent for a scientific research, in which no personal information is handled:

I have understood that participation in the research is voluntary and I can interrupt my participation at any time by for example interrupting the answering of the survey. This will have no negative consequences.

I have received necessary information about the research and the handling of personal information gathered about me saying that no personal information will be gathered, including indirect identifiers.

For further information, contact:

Noora Hyvätti
noora.m.c.hyvatti@student.jyu.fi

1. I have read the above briefing and assure that I am above the age of 18 and consent the use of my answers in this research. *

Yes

Next

2. Which year are you in?

3. Have you studied languages in university before the Covid-19 pandemic?

- Yes
- No

4. What foreign languages are you studying or have studied in university?

5. When you think about teaching methods during the distance teaching and learning period in universities, which methods of teaching and learning were new?

6. Which applications or other tools were utilized during distance teaching and learning?

7. Are any of the new teaching methods, applications or other tools in use now, after the distance teaching and learning period?

Yes

No

8. If yes, which ones are still in use?

9. Why do you think some methods remained in use after returning to contact teaching and some didn't?

10. How well do you think the new teaching methods were utilized in DISTANCE teaching and learning?

Extremely bad 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely well

11. Justify your opinion if you wish

12. How well do you think the new teaching methods are utilized in CONTACT teaching and learning?

Extremely bad 1 2 3 4 5 Extremely well

13. Justify your opinion if you wish

14. How do you feel about the new teaching methods being utilized in the contact teaching in general?

15. Would you hope the teachers used the new methods more than they do now or less?

16. Did you acquire any new methods of learning during the distance teaching and learning period that you still use today?

Yes

No

17. If you answered yes, which?

18. Do you think you learn better via the new methods acquired during the distance teaching and learning period or the traditional contact teaching methods?

The new methods acquired during the distance teaching and learning period

The traditional contact teaching methods

19. Do you think the methods learned during distance teaching and learning could be utilized better in contact teaching and learning? If so, how?

20. If you have something to add, you can add it here