THE EFFECT OF DISTANCE LEARNING ON HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH

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Abstract

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia miten etäopiskelu vaikuttaa lukioikäisten opiskelijoiden asenteisiin Englannin kielen opiskelua kohtaan. Kieliasenteita on tutkittu lingvistiikan sekä sosio-psykologian aloilla jo huomattavan kauan. Asenteiden on huomattu vaikuttavan hyvinkin paljon uuden kielen oppimiseen. COVID-19 pandemian levitessä Suomeen, myös etäopetusta ja sen vaikutusta oppimiseen alettiin tutkia enemmän. Tutkimusta kuitenkin puuttuu vielä etäopiskelun vaikutuksesta opiskelijoiden kieliasenteisiin, ja sen tutkimusaukon tämä tutkimus tähtää täyttämään.

Data kerättiin kyselylomakkeella, joka pohjautui Gardnerin ja Smythen sosiopedagogiikan malliin pohjautuvaan Attitude Motivation Test Battery -testiin. Kyselyyn vastasi 27 suomalaista lukio-opiskelijaa, jotka opiskelevat englantia toisena kielenä. Datasta kävi ilmi, että osallistujien asenteet olivat siirtyneet negatiivisempaan suuntaan etäopetuksessa. Jotkin osallistujat kuitenkin suosivat etäopetusta kontaktiopetuksen sijaan.

Osallistujien mukaan etäopetuksen huonona puolena on se, että kommunikaatio opettajan kanssa hankaloituu. Lisäksi; monet osallistujat olivat sitä mieltä, että opettaja ei näytä keskittyvän oppilaiden tarpeisiin, mikä lisää oppilaan yksinäisyyden ja näkymättömyyden tunnetta ruudun toisella puolella.

Keywords Attitudes, language attitudes, distance education, language learning

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APPENDICES

1   INTRODUCTION

As the research on education and language learning has gotten forward the realization that the students emotional reaction to the process has a big effect on the learning outcome. Theories on language learning have shifted from seeing language as plain input and output to understanding language learning as more of a complex process that depends greatly on a magnitude of factors all the way from the moment in the day to the surroundings at the time of studying. With this change the study on language attitudes has become more common.

As someone who is very interested in the students' experiences in the classroom I feel like it is important to study the kinds of attitudes students have towards studying languages. With aiming to have a better understanding of how students perceive the learning process and if there is anything I, as the teacher, can do to further help the students to have better attitudes towards the subject, it would be worth paying attention to.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that reached Finland in March 2020 many schools moved to organizing the teaching remotely online. It is reasonable to expect that this kind of a change in the learning context would have drastic effects on the students' experiences in the classroom. During the process of starting this thesis the COVID-19 pandemic was already affecting the society in Finland. I knew I wanted to study language attitudes but every research idea I had would have been colored by the existing situation. Therefore, I decided to include the situation into my research and study the way distance education affects the high school students' attitudes towards learning English.

Distance education has been used in a Finnish context before but it has more so been preferred at the university level and individual courses provided by private organizations. What the pandemic did was it forced many comprehensive schools and high schools to start utilizing the distance education methods that have been around in a more concrete way.

According to Allport (1935), attitudes are learned rather than something innate to the person. Therefore, it can be expected that the kind of a change in the studying setup can have massive effects to one's attitudes towards the learning process. This

study aims to provide information on how has the change from in-class teaching to online teaching affect the attitudes Finnish high school students have towards studying English as a second language.

The next two chapters will go over the theory background that supports this thesis. The central concepts will be defined and the way language attitudes manifest in the classroom will be explained. Later in chapter 2 Gardner & Smythe's socio-educational model will be presented as it does provide a central background for the study. Then we will move on to Gardner's Attitude and Motivation Test Battery. Chapter 3 will go over the history of distance education and explain the groundwork for the situation in Finland during the academic school year 2020-2021 and what kind of a teaching style was used in Finnish high school during that time.

In the chapter 4 the methodology for this thesis will be covered. The research question will be presented in that chapter. The data for the study was collected by using a questionnaire that was based on the AMTB. The questionnaire will be broken down in the chapter 4 along with explanation about the participants and the data collection process.

Chapter 5 will present the findings. The data will be presented in an order that was the most rational given the structure of the questionnaire. The analysis and the discussion over the findings will be presented later, in the chapter 6, with chapter 7 conlcuding the thesis.

2   LANGUAGE ATTITUDES

2.1   Defining attitude

The main area of focus in this thesis is the attitudes the students have towards learning languages, and more specifically English. Therefore, it is crucial to define the concept, as complex as it is. The notion of attitudes is an area of research that has been intensively researched in psychology and sociolinguistics. Multiple definitions have been given to the concept depending on the point of view it is being considered from. According to Thurstone (1931) attitudes are an "affect for or against a psychological object", whereas Allport (1954) defines them as "a learned disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way". Oppenheim (1982) has said that attitude is:

> a construct, an abstraction which cannot be directly apprehended. It is an inner component of mental life which expresses itself, directly or indirectly, through much more obvious processes as stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements or reactions, ideas and opinions, selective recall, anger or satisfaction or some other emotion and in various other aspects of behaviour. (p 39)

This means that attitudes can be seen as inner beliefs and opinions regarding a certain subject that effects one's behavior and actions, which is also the definition used in this thesis. Hogg & Vaughan (2014: 155) goes on to state that "without having attitudes, people would have difficulty in construing and reacting to events, in trying to make decisions and in making sense of their relationships with other people in everyday life".

Both in everyday language and the discussion within the research about the subject, attitudes are easily confused with such terms as 'motivation', 'belief', 'opinion', 'value', 'habit' and 'ideology'. I feel like it is important to, at this point, make the

distinction. While all of these terms have more or less something in common with the concept of attitude it is notable that this thesis will solely concentrate on students' attitudes. However, later in this chapter, the concept of motivation will be touched when discussing instrumental and integrative attitudes since those two concepts have a lot of similarities.

Something that is very characteristic to attitudes is their polaristic nature. One's attitudes towards a certain subject cannot be anything else other than negative, neutral or positive. On top of this, attitudes are very fluent meaning that one's attitude can exist anywhere on that negative-positive axel (Bohner et al., 2014: 50-51). Another thing that is very characteristic to attitudes is that they are not innate, meaning that they can be learned (as well as unlearned). In a school context, this leaves a lot of space for the students themselves and the teacher to affect the attitudes students have towards learning a language.

By nature, attitudes are situational (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011: 997). As with every concept that is reliant on the human psychology, also attitudes can vary greatly depending on the various variables, such as the time, the participants involved, the energy levels of the individual and so on. Due to the situational nature of attitudes, they are easily generalized.

What is also important to note when considering the current thesis is that this research focuses solely on the attitudes the students have towards learning language not the attitudes towards the language itself. Usually, when talking about language attitudes the focus is on attitudes towards the language, its speakers or the culture, or cultures that are attached to it. In this case, however, the focus will be on the aspect of learning and the attitudes discussed later in this thesis, that is, the attitudes towards learning English as a second language.

2.2   Instrumental and integrative attitudes

Having defined the main idea of the concept, I feel it is benefitial to look into two different components of language attitudes that further explain the topic: instrumental and integrative attitudes. This difference is very central when discussing language attitudes and the effects of them in the students perceptions about language learning. Al-Ta'ani (2018) describes the difference between instrumental and integrative motivation. According to him instrumental motivation is "the learners' interest in learning a language for getting essential qualifications and improving career prospects" whereas integrative motivation is "the learners' desire to learn a language so that they can communicate with confidence with a speaking community" (p. 91).

These definitions are widely used for instrumental and integrative attitudes as well throughout the research literature.

1. Instrumental attitude

Instrumental attitudes are the kinds of attitudes that revolve more around the individual and their own goals. These attitudes can be linked with one's need for achievement (McClelland, 1967). Overall, instrumental attitudes can manifest as such goals as getting a better job or a higher salary (Dörnyei, 2006: 12). In a school context instrumental attitudes usually mean wanting to get good grades or wanting to learn the language for the benefits it might have in the future, either study or otherwise.

Dörnyei (et al.) (2006: 12) says about instrumental attitudes that:

> It refers to the perceived pragmatic benefits of L2 proficiency and reflects the recognition that for many language learners it is the usefulness of L2 proficiency that provides the greatest driving force to learn the language.

Instrumental attitudes are thus something that stem from the student themselves and their own goals and ideas about what they want to achieve with the language.

2. Integrative attitude

Integrative attitudes, on the other hand, handle the individual's needs and wants to belong to a group or community. These attitudes stem from "a desire to be like representative members of the other language community" (Gardner & Lambert, 1972: 14). Integrative attitudes towards language learning in a classroom can be wanting to keep up with the rest of the group or wanting to be able to communicate with other students. More often, however, integrative attitudes are seen to be affected by the outside world making the students want to learn the language in order to be able to communicate with native speakers of the given language. Students with more integrative attitudes are also noticed to experience lower levels of language anxiety (Gardner, 2010: 172).

Attitudes are a relatively close concept to motivation in a sense that both topics affect one's actions. In a school environment the two are often intertwined in colloquial language. In research, attitude and motivation are very clearly separated but they do have many similarities in the research literature. For example, the way both attitudes and motivation appear in instrumental and integrative manners. In the end, they do have differences in manifestation but essentially they are similar.

I feel it is necessary to emphasize the difference at this point. Even though the concepts of attitude and motivation are very similar and they can be intermixed in everyday language, this study focuses solely on the attitudes the high school students have, not their motivation. However, in most cases both in research literature and in everyday life at school, those two concepts affect one another so the separation can be challenging to make.

Furthermore, Gardner (1985a: 84) suggests that the research done on language attitudes can be divided into two subcategories according to the two types of attitudes. In this thesis the kind of a separation will not be made. The main purpose of the current study is to look into the change in the attitudes not so much the origin of those attitudes. However, both integrative and instrumental attitudes will be included in the questionnaire and therefore will affect the data.

2.3   Language attitudes and second language learning

Under the umbrella term of attitudes is the concept of language attitudes that focuses more specifically on the kinds of attitudes people have towards languages. These attitudes can mean anything from the attitudes towards learning the language to speaking and using it to communicate in various situations. Gardner (1985a) proposes that attitudes are a central part of motivation in second language learning. He suggests the following formula:

Motivation = Effort + Desire to achieve a goal + attitudes (Skehan, 1989: 54)

According to this equation it would be impossible, or at least challenging, for students to find motivation for learning a language without having any kind of attitude towards the subject. Since "attitudes are related to behaviour" (Gardner, 1985a: 9) they can be seen as the "driving force" behind a student's actions in the classroom.

Attitudes

Language attitudes

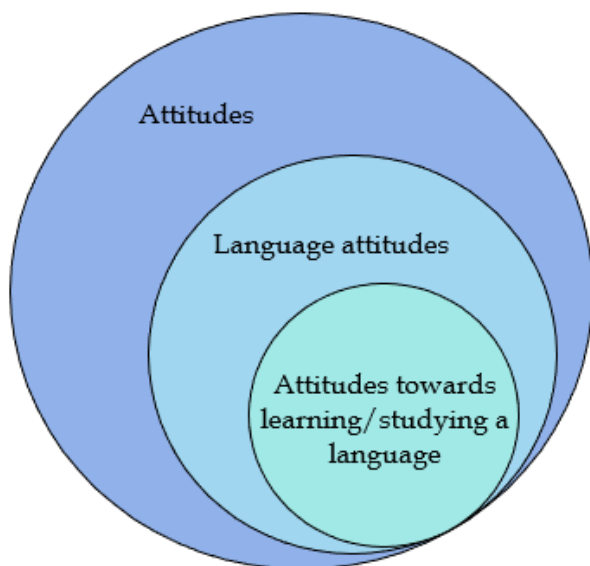Attitudes towards learning/studying a language

FIGURE 1   The relationship between attitudes and language attitudes.

Figure 1 above demonstrates how the concept of language attitudes fall under the umbrella term of overall attitudes and how the attitudes towards learning/studying

a language is an aspect of language attitudes. What this thesis focuses on is the aspect of attitudes towards learning/studying a language, and more specifically English.

The attitudes the students have towards learning a second language are considered to affect the proficiency and the success in learning the language (Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003; Dörnyei et al., 2006). Therefore, it is very important for the teacher to consider the kinds of language attitudes their students have towards learning the language in question. The work the students show in the classroom is very much dependent on their attitudes. Thus, what this present study aims to highlight is the importance of considering the students' language attitudes and taking them into consideration in planning the way English is being taught.

2.4 Research on language attitudes

When studying attitudes, it is important to recognize their structure in order to understand the way they manifest in behavior. Generally, it is recognized that attitudes consist of three components; cognitive (the intellectual side), affective (the emotional side) and conative (the behavioral side). Many attitude assessment theories (Thurstone, 1928; Likert, 1932; Guttman, 1944; Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957) focus on the affective side since attitudes mostly manifest as emotions that then in turn affect our actions (Gardner, 2010: 109). In the present study all three components are visible in the questionnaire (explained in more detail in the chapter 4) that was used to collect the data but no further distinction between the three will be made.

As it has now been established, attitudes are an abstract subject thus making the study of them quite difficult. However, a reasonable amount of research has been done on this field and there are a few things that research has shown to be important to consider when looking into such a complex topic. Some of the central difficulties in studying attitudes have been presented by Garrett (2010). According to him, it is beneficial to steer away from hypothetical questions because "the responses to these sorts of questions are often poor predictors of people's future behaviour in a situation where they actually encounter such objects, events or actions" (2010, 43). There was a study carried out by Breckler in 1984, where he studied people's attitudes towards snakes. He had two control groups from which the other one answered questions while there was a snake in the room and the other group was asked to merely imagine the snake there while answering the questions. The study showed that the presence of the snake affected the attitudes greatly, proving, in a way, that asking hypothetical questions when measuring attitudes does not work as a research method. Other kinds of questions to avoid when researching attitudes include strongly slanted questions, questions that can be interpreted in multiple ways and questions that include a certain

social desirability. Next I will move on to explaining two central concepts in research on language attitudes and the relations they have to this thesis.

2.4.1   The socio-educational model

The study of attitudes, and more specifically language attitudes, have been around for a considerable amount of time. Over the years, the area of research has gotten more attention and the models that are used in research have been edited. One model that got its beginning in 1972 by Gardner and Smythe was the socio-educational model of second language acquisition. Gardner & Smythe's socio-educational model got its origin from an observation about how, within the same class, some students could learn the language enough to become borderline fluent while others considered it to just be a course for school they had to take. The model took interest in this apparent bidirectional nature of second language students and started to look deeper into it. (Gardner, 2010: 78-79)

Figure 2 (below) explains the socio-educational model in more detail. The four main parts (socio-cultural milieu, individual differences, learning acquisition contexts and language learning outcomes) of the model are shown at the top. The figure below continues to explain the different variables and their relationships with each other. The socio-cultural milieu mean the student's cultural beliefs, meaning it "reflects the individual's level of interest in social interaction with the target language group and attitudes toward the learning situation. The student's individual differences are divided into cognitive factors (intelligence, language aptitude and language learning strategies) and affective factors (attitudes, motivation, language anxiety and self-confidence) (MacIntyre, 2002: 48).

The learning acquisition context is divided into formal (e.g. classroom learning) and informal (e.g. having a conversation with a user of the target language) situations. The significance that the socio-educational model has on this thesis is the fact that it "recognizes that the learning situation is an important element in learning a second language and considers the motivation to learn the language to be influenced by the learning context" (Gardner, 2010: 119). What this current study aims to propose is that the word "motivation" could be changed into "attitude" and the statement would still stand.
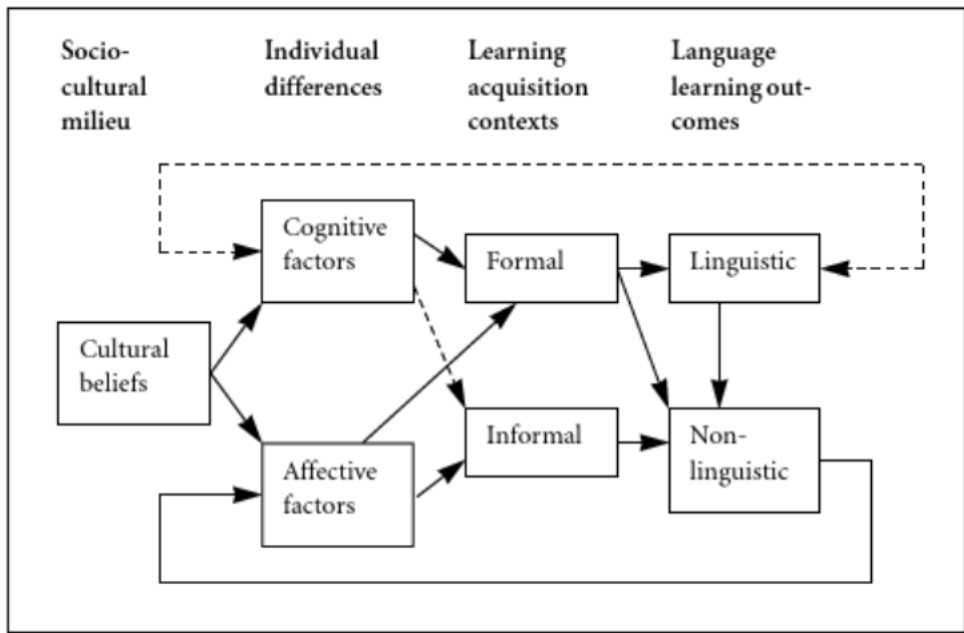
FIGURE 2   The socio-educational model (The image cited from McIntyre, 2002. Originally from Gardner & MacIntyre, 1992)

The last part of the model, the language learning outcomes, addresses how the other parts of the model affect the learning outcome. It has been proposed by Gardner and MacIntyre that "individual differences act in both formal and informal language learning situations, generating linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes" (MacIntyre, 2002: 48).

2.4.2   The AMTB

The Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was created later and it leaned heavily to the socio-educational model. The AMTB was originally created by Gardner in 1958 but has since been extended by Gardner and Lambert in 1972 and the finally presented by Gardner and Smythe in 1975 (Gardner, 1985b). The AMTB has since become a vital part of attitude and motivation research in second language acquisition. What AMTB aims to offer is a method for attitude measurement in second language acquisition (Gardner, 2010: 107). It has been utilized by not only Gardner and Smythe themselves but by numerous other researchers (Al-Mubireek, 2020; Hashwani, 2008: Ghazvini & Khajehpour, 2011). The AMTB was also the foundation for the questionnaire carried out during the current study but more on that will be explained in the chapter 4.

There is a number of published edited versions of the AMTB (e.g. the mini-AMTB and the International AMTB for English as a foreign language) but on top of that the original test battery was designed so that the researcher could focus on the items that supported their own study and offered the data they were looking for

(Gardner, 2010: 108). Therefore, the AMTB created by Gardner et al. offers a very flexible base for a variety of different types of language attitude research.

The AMTB (Gardner, 2004) that was used as a base for the questionnaire that was carried out for the current thesis consists of 104 Likert scale items and twelve additional items that the participants answered using a self-rating scale. Other applications of the AMTB include other types of question compilations. The version from Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret (1997) consisted of 94 Likert scale items and two semantic differential scales. The questionnaire used in the current thesis (Appendix 1) included three sets of ten Likert scale items, two sets of three fill-in-the-blank items as well as two open ended questions at the end of the questionnaire.

3   DISTANCE EDUCATION

In addition to language attitudes, distance education is a very central concept for this thesis. The history of distance education dates all the way back to the 19th century but the form in which distance education is being viewed has changed along with the commonization of communication technology (Mehrotra et al., 2001: 1). With its beginning in envelope courses, distance education has now formed into online meetings between the teacher and the students as well as education website -based self-study courses. According to the definition of Encyclopedia Britannica distance education is a "form of education in which the main elements include physical separation of teachers and students during instruction and the use of various technologies to facilitate student-teacher and student-student communication" (Berg & Simonson, 2016). The aspect of student-teacher communication has been a major one in all the different stages distance education has gone through but the student-student communication is something that was not seen in the early stages of distance education.

What is important for this thesis is to define some different aspects of distance education as well as the situation under the COVID-19 pandemic in Finland during the 2020-2021 academic year. In this chapter, I will continue to go over some central concepts within distance education. I will also define distance education further as well as tie the theory into the reality in Finland.

3.1 Synchronous and asynchronous communication

When it comes to delivering information there are two separate types of communication: synchronous and asynchronous. The difference between these two types is the time between delivering the information and receiving it. Synchronous communication happens when the information is being received at the same time as

it is being delivered. In asynchronous communication information is received some time after it has been delivered. The time between delivering and receiving the information does not matter; if those two acts do not happen at the same time it is asynchronous communication. (Mehrotra et al., 2001)

Some decades back the difference between these two communication types was also about the special separation. Synchronous communication required for the teacher and the student to be in the same space at the same time. Now however, after the ever more universal use of communication technology, communication between two people can be synchronous even though they are not physically in the same place at the same time. Obviously communication happens outside of school as well but in this thesis the communication will be considered from the perspective of teacher-student relationship.

Something that is important for the synchronous communication is the opportunity for two-way communication between the student and the teacher (Mehrotra et al., 2001: 71). It does not always happen but even if the other participant wouldn't take part in the conversation the communication is still considered to be synchronous.

3.2   Three generations of distance education

It is widely agreed within the research area that there are three generations of distance education. The three generations describe and explain the different types of teaching that show the multifaceted nature of distance education. Bates (2005) describes the three generations very explicitly and those explanations are showcased in the table below.

TABLE 1   The three generations of distance education. Bates (2005: 6-8)

First generation	Mainly in the form of print-based correspondence education. Characterized by the predominant use of a single technology, and lack of direct student interaction with the institution providing the teaching.
Second generation	Characterized by a deliberately integrated multiple-media 'print + broadcasting' approach, with learning materials specifically designed for study at a distance, but with communication with students mediated by a third person (e.g. tutor). Second generation distance education institutions can serve very large numbers of students.
Third generation	Based on two-way communications media such as the Internet or video-conferencing that enable interaction between the teacher who originates the instruction and the remote student. Communication is facilitated among students, either individually or as groups, but at a distance.

The main aspect that separates the three generations is the amount and the form of communication, both between the teacher and the student as well as amongst the students themselves. Since the first generation distance education (e.g., envelope courses) revolves mainly around asynchronous communication, it means the student does not have an opportunity to have a discussion with the teacher if there is anything the student finds difficult, for example.

The second generation approach (e.g., self-study courses online) offers a little bit of a more multimodal approach to distance learning but the aspect of synchronous communication still lacks. As Bates (2005: 7) notes, "one way transmission of information" is a typical characteristic for second generation distance education. In most cases, the learning process is supported by an opportunity to exchange messages with, for example, a tutor but still there is no space for a face-to-face conversation with the teacher of the course.

From the three generations, the third one (e.g., zoom lectures) is the one with an emphasis on communication. Via various video-conferencing tools the teacher is able to communicate synchronously with the students. On top of that, this approach allows the students to have conversations amongst themselves and it enables various kinds of group work for the students.

3.3   Distance education in Finland during the COVID-19 outbreak

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak the way teaching was organized in Finnish high schools during the 2020-2021 academic year differed a lot based on the region. In the spring of 2020, The Finnish Government decided that all teaching would be orchestrated remotely for a month (Vähäsarja, 2020). The National Agency for Education determined that all teaching would be orchestrated by using all possible methods outside of contact teaching (Vuorio et al., 2021). The schools returned to contact teaching later in the spring but the official recommendation from the government was for the high schools to stay in distance education (Konttinen, 2020).

In the fall of 2020, the teaching in high schools started with in-class teaching but the situation with the pandemic quickly changed and later in the fall some high schools in the bigger cities were recommended to move to distance education (Yle, 2020). After this decision, the Finnish high schools continued the academic school year of 2020-2021 by following the regional guidelines.

Bates & Poole (2003: 127) have provided a figure of where the different education styles fall on a "no e-learning — fully e-learning" -spectrum (Figure 2). The significance of this figure for this thesis is the fact that the preferred teaching style in language

classes in Finnish high schools during the 2020-2021 academic year was the mixed-mode in the Figure 2. Since the pandemic spread at different speed and rate the schools in different areas were following different regional guidelines. Some schools worked entirely online while others worked with a mix of contact classes and online classes (Yle, 2020). The model was named a "hybrid model" (fi. *hybridimalli*) but it essentially meant the same thing as the mixed-mode in the model.
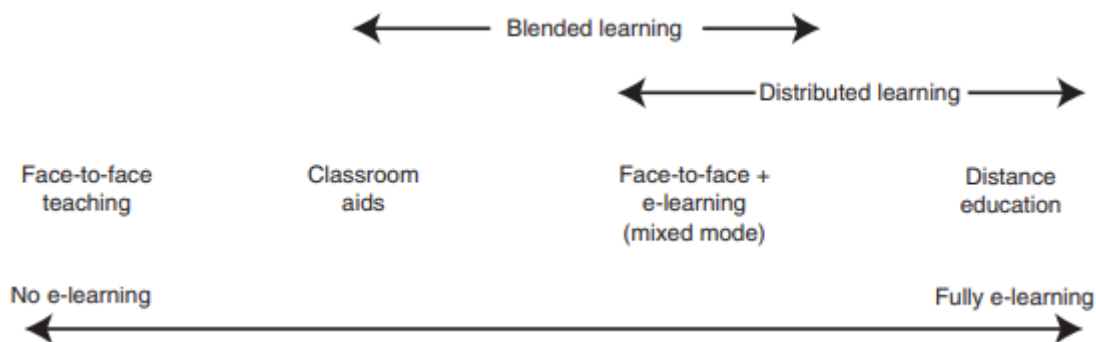
FIGURE 3   The continuum of technology-based learning (Bates & Poole, 2003: 127)

According to Bates' three generations of distance education, the hybrid model was a combination of the second and the third generations. In some cases, the teacher would teach the class online while the students were present in the conference call (e.g., in zoom, google meet or Microsoft teams). But sometimes the teacher would offer the students some independent exercises to do at home (Nissilä, 2021).

4   METHODS

4.1   The research question

As it has been established during the previous chapters, a lot of research has been done both about language attitudes and distance learning. However, the effect distance learning has on the students' attitudes towards language learning has not been investigated that deeply, especially before the last few years. The main aim of this study is to find out if (and how) distance learning has affected the attitudes high school students have towards learning English, and thus give some insight into the existing research gap.

The main research question in this current thesis is: **How does distance education affect high school students' attitudes towards studying English as a second language?** The situation during the 2020-2021 academic year in Finnish high schools was varying. Different schools had different kinds of approaches to the existing circumstance and what this study aims to investigate is the affect those approaches had on the students' language attitudes.

The main question will be supported by smaller emphasis areas. Something that will be considered, in the light of the main research question, is the tools and applications that were used to teach English online in Finnish high schools during the pandemic. I believe, as was also pointed out in the previous chapter, that the studying tools available to the student are vital in dictating how deeply and intensely they are going to immerse themselves in the subject that is being studied. Therefore, I believe it is important to compare the findings in my data to the knowledge of the tools and applications used.

Something that comes up in the questionnaire, that I also would argue gives a lot of insight into the attitudes the students have towards the studying methods they

were subjected to during the distance learning period, is whether and how they would change the studying style to better suit their needs. It is easier for a student to think of an answer to a concrete question like this, but it still gives a lot of knowledge about their outlook about the situation.

4.2 Participants

The participants in this study consisted of Finnish high school students who study English as a second language. All together the questionnaire had 27 responses from which 14 were first grade students, eight were second grade students and five were third grade students. Majority of the participants studied advanced English (N=25) and only two participants studied basic English.

Data was collected by using a questionnaire (explained further in the next subchapter) which was posted on a timeline of a Facebook group for English teachers (Englannin opettajat) during the spring of 2021. The teachers in that group were asked to forward the questionnaire to their students. The questionnaire did not collect any personal information about the students so the identities of the participants are entirely anonymous.

4.3 Data collection

4.3.1 The questionnaire for the current study

The questionnaire (Appendix 1) that is used in the thesis is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the background information and it collects some information about the different studying styles that are being used during the distance lessons for English as well as the different tools that are accessible for the students. At the end of the first part there are ten statements that measure the attitudes the students have towards English as a language.

The second and the third part of the questionnaire both have the same content with small changes to the wording of the questions. The second part focuses on contact education and the general attitudes the students have towards English when studying in a classroom. At the beginning there are ten statements about the attitudes the students have when studying English. Ten statements have been seen to yield reasonable results (Gardner, 2010: 131). After that there are three "fill in the blank" -sentences the students can continue with their own words. The third part, which

focuses on distance learning, has the exact same statements and sentences as the second part, only "studying in the classroom" is changed into "distance learning".

The questionnaire ends with some open-ended questions about the way distance education has affected the students' attitudes towards learning English as a second language as well as if there were anything the student would like to change about the way English is being taught online.

The statements in the questionnaire were picked from the AMTB. Due to the age of the participants and the expected attention span the questionnaire was constructed to be as easy to follow and quick to answer as possible, while not compromising on the needed data. When picking the different statements I felt like were the most central for my study, I aimed to have the whole range of possible attitudes be reflected in the statements (Newby, 2014: 323).

4.3.2   Methods of analysis

As Oppenheim (1966: 187) points out attitude research is meant "to divide people roughly into a number of broad groups with respect to a particular attitude". Therefore, conclusions should not be made from individual pieces of data, rather the data should be investigated as a whole when drawing conclusions about the group's collective attitudes.

It is slightly difficult to analyze attitudes given their abstract nature. Without an appropriate value and a measuring tool it would be impossible to gather any kind of analysis from the data. Gardner and the other researchers who have worked on the AMTB have provided the constructs that can be analyzed by using the test battery. Integrativeness is one of the main aspects of the socio-educational model and one of the constructs the test battery measures. It has been defined as "a desire, willingness, or affective ability to adopt features of another cultural community and make them part of one's own behavioral repertoire" (Gardner, 2010: 114). In the questionnaire, which was carried out for the current study, the statements 1, 4, 7, 8 and 10 in the question 4 deal with integrativeness.

Another construct that is being analyzed by the test battery is the attitudes towards the learning situation, which is also a significant aspect in the current study given the fact that the effect of in-class learning versus distance learning is the main focus of the study. The construct in the test battery consists of many other aspects as well on top of just the space in which the teaching is being orchestrated. Things such as the nature of the curriculum, the teacher, the individual course, the views and regulations of the school authorities, the materials and the quality of instructions are mentioned as being something that affects the attitudes towards the learning situation (Gardner, 2010: 119). Statements 1, 5, 7, 8 and 10 in question five in the questionnaire

for this thesis deal with attitudes towards the learning situation. Other constructs that the test battery measures are motivation, language anxiety and instrumentality.

The attitude statements will be analyzed by using mainly quantitative methods. However, some qualitative content analysis will be done as well. The fill-in-the-blank—sentences and the open-ended questions will be looked at from a qualitative point of view but also some numeral categorization will be done.

5   RESULTS

5.1   The background of the participants

The questionnaire started with collecting some background information about the participants. The information that was considered to be central for the study were the year class, the level of English (basic/advanced) and the latest grade the student got in English (this question was not obligatory, but all the participants did provide an answer). All this information was considered to, in one way or another, have an effect on the attitudes towards learning English as a second language but more analysis on the correlation will be done later in this chapter.

I will start the analysis by setting up the basis of the studying style that the participants used during the 2020-2021 academic school year. After that I will look into the overall attitudes the participants had towards English as a language. Then, I will finally look more closely into the way or if the attitudes changed according to the studying style (in-class/distant).

5.2   The studying style during the 2020-2021 academic school year

What the data shows us is that the majority of the participants were studying under the "hybrid model", meaning they had a mix of in-class lectures and distant lectures (Table 2 below). The question about the studying style was a multiple-choice question and the participants were able to choose more than one option in case their studying style was a mix between two options. Therefore, the number of answers is higher than the number of participants since some of them chose more than one of the choices.

TABLE 2   The studying style during the 2020-2021 academic school year.

Studying style	n	%
In-class learning	2	7.4%
Distance learning	1	3.7%
In-class learning and distance learning	25	92.6%
Distance learning and self-studying	3	11.1%
Self-studying	1	3.7%

Alharthi (2020: 15) states how the cost of the devices and the access to the internet connection are some of the problems the students face in distance education. I would add the access to the devices to this list as it cannot be expected for every Finnish student to have access to a smart phone, for example. The participants were asked about the different tools they had at their disposal when studying and hundred percent of the participants said to have had their own laptop. This is not surprising given the fact that the majority of Finnish high schools either demand or suggest that the students have their own laptop to use for their studies (Varjonen, 2021). The laptops are either provided by the school or funded by the student themselves depending on the school (Pirskanen & Tebest, 2014). On top of having a laptop 63% of the participants reported having a smart phone to use for their studies. Other answer options included a shared computer (e.g., with a family member) and an iPad, but these options were not chosen by the participants.

5.3   Overall attitudes towards English as a language

As established in the previous chapter, the first part of the questionnaire collected information about the participants' overall attitudes towards English as a language. Participants were asked to answer ten statements about attitudes towards English on a five step Likert-scale (1: strongly disagree, 2: somewhat disagree, 3: depends on the situation, 4: somewhat agree and 5: strongly agree). The statements were chosen directly from the AMTB and translated into Finnish since the participants were all Finnish natives. The statements can be seen in the Table 3 below (the Finnish translations can be found in Appendix 1).

TABLE 3   Attitudes towards English as a language.

	1	2	3	4	5	Average	Median
I wish I could speak English perfectly.	0.0%	0.0%	7.4%	22.2%	70.4%	4.6	5
I would get nervous if I had to speak English to a tourist.	14.8%	18.5%	7.4%	25.9%	33.4%	3.4	4

I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear.	0.0%	3.7%	18.5%	48.2%	29.6%	4	4
I would like to know more native English speakers.	3.7%	7.4%	29.6%	40.8%	18.5%	3.6	4
My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English.	0.0%	7.4%	22.2%	51.9%	18.5%	3.8	4
I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	11.1%	22.2%	29.7%	25.9%	11.1%	3	3
I wish I could have many native English speaking friends.	7.4%	22.2%	25.9%	33.4%	11.1%	3.2	3
Knowing English isn't really an important goal in my life.	33.3%	51.9%	11.1%	3.7%	0.0%	1.9	2
It would bother me if I had to speak English on the telephone.	11.1%	14.8%	18.5%	22.2%	33.4%	3.5	4
I'm losing any desire I ever had to know English.	29.6%	33.4%	22.2%	7.4%	7.4%	2.3	2

When we look more closely at the data in the Table 3, we can see that the majority of the participants had agreed strongly with the first statement (70.4% strongly agree) showing us that the participants had a high desire to learn English. Also, with the negative statement "knowing English isn't really an important goal in my life" 33.3 percent strongly disagreed and 51.9 percent somewhat disagreed with the statement. Overall, it can be said that the participants had quite positive attitudes towards English as a language as well as using it.

While the participants had positive attitudes towards English as a language it is also visible in the data that the possibility of having to use the language was something that the participants were nervous about. Such statements as "I would get nervous if I had to speak English to a tourist" and "It would bother me if I had to speak English on the telephone" both have their medians at a four meaning that the majority agreed with the statements. Difficulties using a language or being nervous to speak in the language may affect negatively to language attitudes (Horwitz, 2000) but it was interesting to see that the majority of the participants still had very high opinions about English as a language.

As far as instrumental and integrative attitudes go, the participants seem to have both affecting their views on English language. Such statements as "I wish I could speak English perfectly" (median at 5), "I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear" (median at 4), "I'm losing any desire I ever had to know English" (median at 2) show us the level of instrumental attitudes that the participants had. With the first two statements, which are positive ones, having a high median at

four and five and the third, negative statement having a median at two we can conclude that the participants had a very high instrumental attitudes towards English.

The participants' integrative attitudes can be seen in the statements such as "I would like to know more native English speakers" and "I wish I could have many English speaking friends". 40.8 percent of the participants somewhat agreed with the first statement and 33.4 percent somewhat agreed with the second one. This shows that the participants felt a high wish to integrate themselves into English speaking communities and get to know more people who speak that language.

An interesting point in the data comes up with the statement "My parents feel that it is very important for me to learn English". The statement has its median at four with 70.4 percent of the participants agreeing with it. This shows that there is a possibility for the majority of the participants having a portion of their attitudes stemming from an outside source. The questionnaire and the available data do not offer any evidence about the parents' attitudes affecting those of the students. However, some level of correlation can be drawn and the possibility of the parents' positive attitudes towards English affecting the students' attitudes should not be disregarded.

5.4   The effect of the studying style to the attitudes

5.4.1   The attitude statements

As was previously established, the questionnaire was divided into three parts with the second revolving around in-class learning and the third part around distance learning. Both the second and the third part had ten statements about learning English. The statements were the same in both parts and the participants were instructed to consider and focus on in-class learning when answering the statements in part two and distance learning when answering part three.

The statements in the part two and three are as follows (the Finnish translations are found in the Appendix 1):

1. I look forward to English classes.

2. I enjoy studying English.

3. I always postpone my homework to the last second.

4. I want to drop out of English class.

5. English is an important part of the curriculum.

6. I don't get anxious when answering the teacher's question in English class.

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7. English classes are boring.

8. I would rather spend time in other classes than English.

9. When I struggle with something in class I always ask for help from the teacher.

10. English classes don't interest me at all.

The table 4 (below) shows the different statements and comparison between the answers for the part two (in-class learning) and those of the part three (distance learning).

TABLE 4   Attitudes towards studying English in class and remotely.

Statement		1	2	3	4	5	Ave.	Med.
1	in class	33.4%	33.3%	25.9%	3.7%	3.7%	2.1	2.0
	remotely	25.9%	33.4%	29.6%	7.4%	3.7%	2.3	2.0
2	in class	22.2%	22.2%	37.1%	14.8%	3.7%	2.6	3.0
	remotely	18.5%	25.9%	33.4%	11.1%	11.1%	2.7	3.0
3	in class	0.0%	7.4%	33.3%	18.5%	40.8%	3.9	4.0
	remotely	0.0%	7.4%	29.6%	7.4%	55.6%	4.1	5.0
4	in class	37.0%	40.8%	7.4%	3.7%	11.1%	2.1	2.0
	remotely	37.1%	25.9%	22.2%	7.4%	7.4%	2.2	2.0
5	in class	3.7%	3.7%	7.4%	37.0%	48.2%	4.2	4.0
	remotely	7.4%	3.7%	11.1%	29.6%	48.2%	4.1	4.0
6	in class	33.4%	11.1%	14.8%	18.5%	22.2%	2.9	3.0
	remotely	40.8%	11.1%	3.7%	33.3%	11.1%	2.6	2.0
7	in class	0.0%	14.8%	22.2%	37.1%	25.9%	3.7	4.0
	remotely	3.7%	3.7%	25.9%	29.6%	37.1%	3.9	4.0
8	in class	0.0%	7.4%	44.5%	29.6%	18.5%	3.6	3.0
	remotely	0.0%	11.1%	37.1%	29.6%	22.2%	3.6	4.0
9	in class	11.1%	33.4%	25.9%	18.5%	11.1%	2.9	3.0
	remotely	37.1%	33.3%	11.1%	11.1%	7.4%	2.2	2.0
10	in class	7.4%	25.9%	44.5%	14.8%	7.4%	2.9	3.0
	remotely	7.4%	18.5%	48.2%	11.1%	14.8%	3.1	3.0

5.4.2   The correlation between the overall attitudes and the attitudes depending on the studying style

The purpose of collecting data of the participants overall attitudes towards English as a language (section 1 of the questionnaire) was that those findings could then be related to findings from studying style specific attitude statements (sections 2 and 3). Getting a picture of what kinds of attitudes the participants had towards English helps us to explain any variation in the data when we are comparing the attitudes towards studying English in the classroom versus online.

Cross tabulation was performed between the overall language attitudes and both the attitude statements in section 2 and those in section 3. The correlation coefficient numbers that are close to 1.0 and -1.0 mean there is a higher correlation between the statements. If the correlation coefficient is positive the participants were either agreeing or disagreeing with both of the statements. If correlation between the statements is negative the participants would agree with one of the statements and disagree with the other. The further away from zero the correlation coefficient is the more agreement there is in the positive cases and disagreement there is in the negative ones. For clarity's sake, the statements about the overall attitudes about English (table 3) will be referred to as statements (S) 1 through 10 for question (Q) 4 (for example, statement 3 for question 4 is S3Q4). The attitude statements about studying English in the classroom (p. 22-23) will be referred to as statements 1 through 10 for question 5 and those for studying English remotely (p. 22-23) will be referred to as statements 1 through 10 for question 7. It should be noticed that the statements for the questions 5 and 7 are the same statements but the participants were asked to think about their opinion about in-class learning with the question 5 and distance learning with the question 7.

When analyzing the cross-tabulation table, it was found that the S10Q4 "I'm losing any desire I ever had to know English" (Olen menettämässä kaiken mielenkiintoni englantia kohtaan) and the S4Q5 "I want to drop out of English class" (Haluan lopettaa englannin opiskelun kesken) had a high correlation coefficient of 0.669. Interestingly, the number for correlation between S10Q4 and S4Q7 (the same statement as S4Q5 but for distance learning) is lower at 0.457. This means that those who agreed to losing their desire to know English were more likely to want to drop out of English class when they were studying in class than when they were studying online.

With the data available in the cross-tabulation there are also some changes that are small but still significant. The correlation between the S3Q4 "I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear" (Pyrin ymmärtämään kaikki ympärilläni näkemäni ja kuulemani englanninkieliset tekstit ja äänet) and the S1Q5 "I look forward to English classes" (Odotan innolla englannin oppitunteja) is 0.090. The correlation is small but positive meaning that there is only little correlation between the statements but the group of participants as a whole tended to agree with both statements. However, when we look again at the S3Q4 now with S1Q7 (the same statement as S1Q5) the correlation coefficient is -0.007. Again, the correlation is close to zero but this time it is negative meaning that participants who agreed with the S3Q4 were more likely to disagree with the S1Q7 while they were somewhat agreeing with the S1Q5.

5.5 The fill-in-the-blank — sentences

At the end of the sections two and three of the questionnaire the participants were asked to fill in three sentences about in-class learning (section 2) and distance learning (section 3). The sentences (below, Finnish translations in the Appendix 1) were the same in both sections, only the wording was different with either "in class" or "remotely" being used correspondently with in-class learning and distance learning.
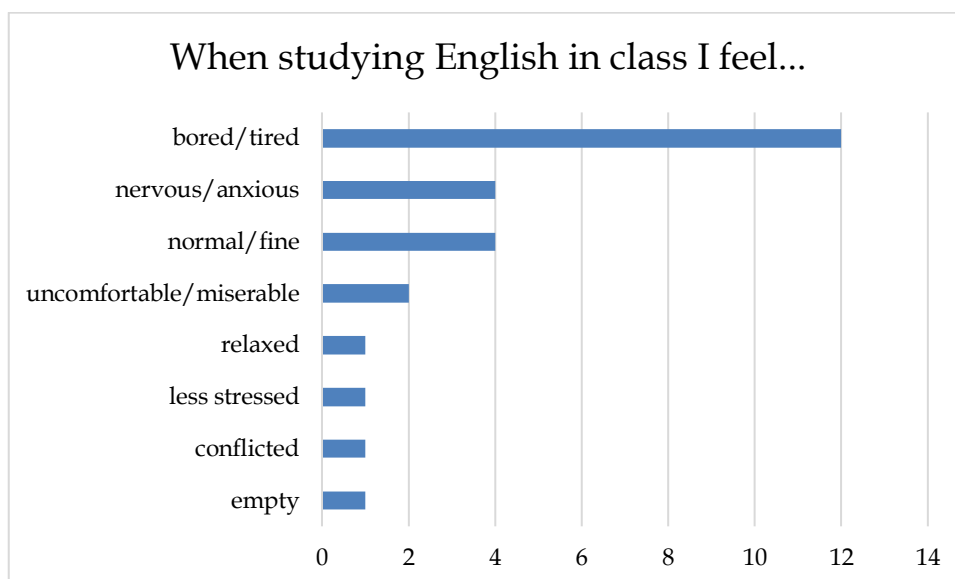
1. When studying English in class/remotely I feel…

2. Studying in class/remotely makes my learning…

3. I find studying in class/remotely to be…

There were no further instructions other than to fill in the sentences so the participants were able continue the sentences in any way that felt natural to them. This way there was no unnecessary leading to any direction.

1. In-class learning:

The section 2 of the questionnaire was about in-class learning. The answers (figure 4 below) for the sentence 1 included adjectives such as bored (tylsä), anxious (ahdistava), normal (normaali), uncomfortable (epämukava), relaxed (rento) and less stressed (vähemmän stressaantunut). The words bored/tired (tylsistynyt/väsynyt) were used 12 times, which was the largest number. The impressions nervous/anxious (hermostunut/ahdistunut) and normal/fine (normaali/ihan jees) were both used four times. The words relaxed, less stressed, conflicted (ristiriitainen) and empty (tyhjä) each appeared once.

FIGURE 4   Fill-in-the-blank: When I study English in class I feel…

When studying English in class I feel...

Feeling	Count
bored/tired	12
nervous/anxious	4
normal/fine	4
uncomfortable/miserable	2
relaxed	1
less stressed	1
conflicted	1
empty	1

The answers for the sentence 2 can be seen in the figure 5 (below). The majority of the participants thought that in-class learning was easy and better or nicer than distance learning. There was a lot of speculation from the participants' part about the relation between in-class and distance learning. One participant said that in-class learning is "better because when studying remotely I can't find myself to bother to even open the textbook, in class I try to at least do something" ("Parempaa, koska etänä en jaksa edes avata oppikirjaa ja luokassa yritän tehdä edes jotain"). Another participant pointed out that studying in class is "easier because I get more done when I study in class" ("Helpompaa, koska saan enemmän aikaan kun opiskelen koulussa"). At the same time, there was a large portion of the answers where the participants found in-class learning to be unmotivating, frustrating and challenging, for example. A participant said in-class learning to be "sometimes a little challenging because there are other distractions around all the time" ("joskus hieman haastavaa, koska on muita häiriötekijöitä koko ajan ympärillä").

FIGURE 5   Fill-in-the-blank: Studying in class makes my learning…
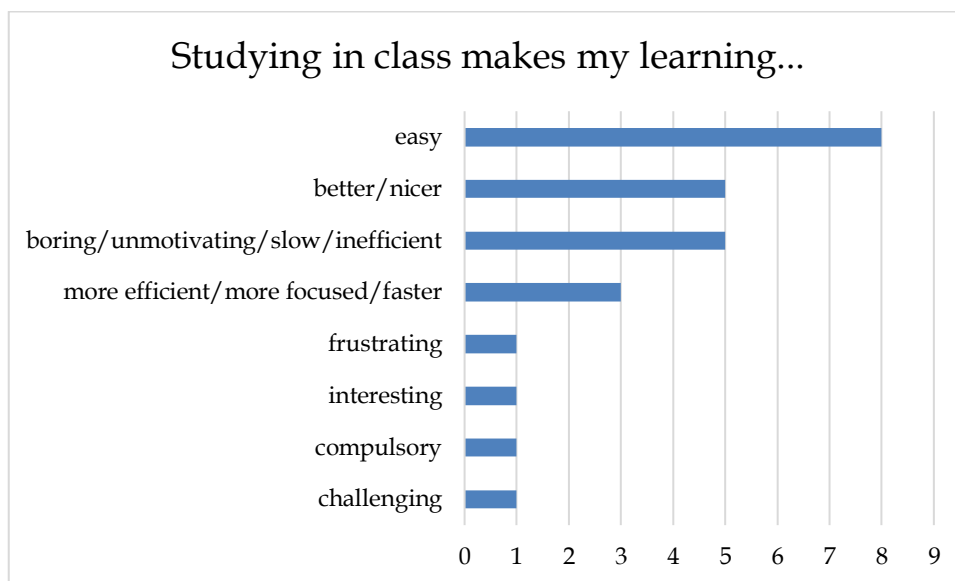
With sentence 3 the answers were somewhat conflicting. Figure 6 (below) shows the found results. The answer better/fun/nice/easy (parempaa/hauskaa/kiva/helppoa) appeared nine times in the participants' answers showing us that the majority of the participants enjoyed in-class learning. However, the answer that was the second most used was rough, awful, unpleasant or nasty (rankkaa/kauheaa/epämiellyttävää/inhottavaa). This type of answer appeared four times in the data. Four participants found in-class learning boring and three participants felt like it made them anxious. So, while the majority of the participants

had very positive attitudes towards studying in class there was also a lot of participants who had a lot more negative stance towards it.

FIGURE 6   Fill-in-the-blank: I find studying in class to be…
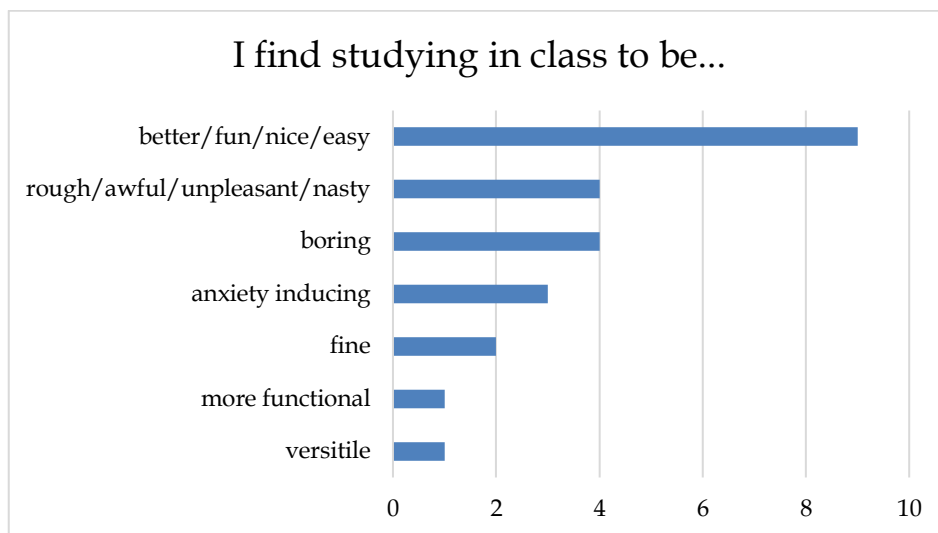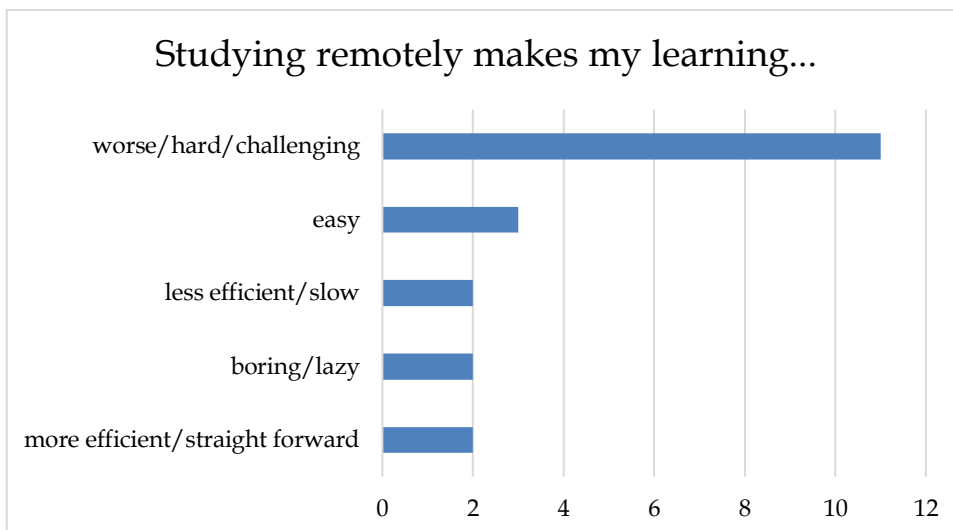

2. Distance learning

When the participants were asked about studying remotely and how they feel during online classes the most common answers (figure 7 below) were similar to the ones concerning in-class lectures. The words bored and tired appeared eight times in the answers. Normal/fine was mentioned four times. Something that was different compared to the same fill-in-the-blank—sentence in the section two of the questionnaire was that the answer stressed/frustrated/conflicted/helpless (stressaantunut/turhautunut/ristiriitainen/avuton) was mentioned five times. The participants seemed to feel lonely behind the screen and one participant said that they felt themselves "a little hopeless, because the threshold to ask help from the teacher feels higher." ("Hieman avuttomaksi, koska kynnys kysyä opettajalta apua tuntuu suuremmalta.")

FIGURE 7   Fill-in-the-blank: When studying English remotely I feel…

When studying English remotely I feel...
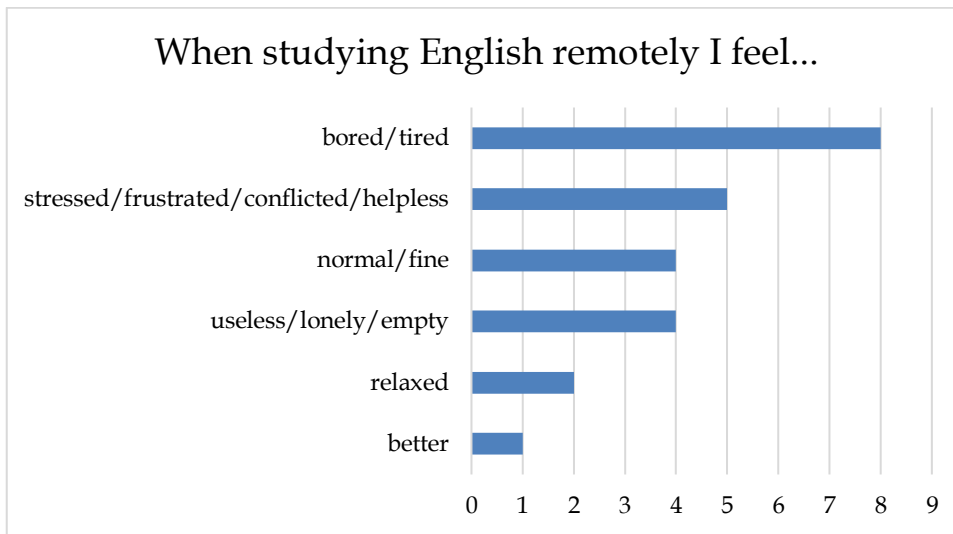
Concerning sentence 2, the answers (figure 8 below) were vastly different compared to the ones about in-class learning. The answer that appeared most frequently was worse/hard/challenging (huonompaa/vaikeaa/haastavaa) with 11 participants finding that studying remotely had that effect on their learning process. There were more negative word choices used in the answers for this question with only three participants finding distance learning to be easy and two participants finding it more efficient or straight forward. All the other participants found studying remotely to be really challenging, slow (hidasta) and less efficient (vähäisempää) or boring (tylsää) and lazy (laiskaa).

FIGURE 8   Fill-in-the-blank: Studying remotely makes my learning…


Studying remotely makes my learning...

With sentence three for section three of the questionnaire the data (figure 9 below) was quite polarized. 11 participants described their distance learning experience with

very negative adjectives such as challenging, hard, awful (hirveää), tough (vaativaa) or nasty (inhottavaa). Still, nine participants used the words nice and fine when filling in the sentence. The rest of the answers included individual participants who found the distance learning to be tiring, easy, more free (vapaampaa), more fluent (sujuvampaa) or boring.

FIGURE 9   Fill-in-the-blank: I find studying remotely to be…
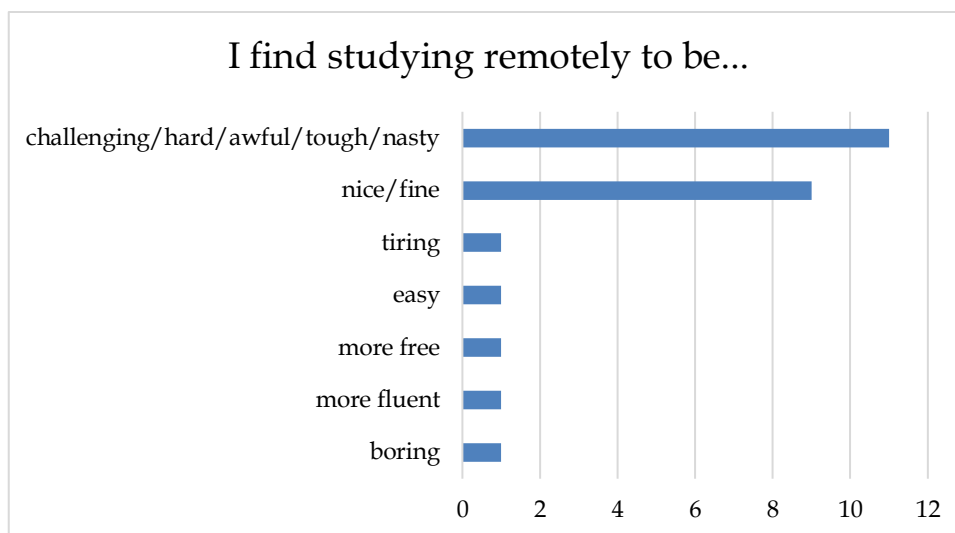
Content analysis of the fill-in-the-blank — sentences

Now that we have looked into the data for the fill-in-the-blank—sentences from a quantitative point of view, we can next have a bit more qualitative approach to the data. There were some very interesting revelations in the participants' answers that I find to offer us some central insight into the issue at hand.

A few participants seemed to have problems with the teacher that then affected their attitudes towards the learning process. One participant answered sentence 1 in section 2 (When studying English in class I feel…) that they feel "disappointed at the professionalism of [the] teacher" ("pettyneeksi opettajani ammattitaitoon"). In the section 3 with the sentence 3 (I find studying remotely to be…) another participant pointed out at how studying English remotely is "more fluent because you can disregard the bad teacher and study independently" ("Englannin kannalta jopa sujuvampaa, sillä huonon opettajan voi jättää huomiotta ja opiskella itsenäisesti".

The social aspect of in-class learning was brought up in the section 2 of the questionnaire six times. The participants mentioned that studying in class is nicer because communication with the teacher is easier. Also, the presence of friends was brought up by multiple participants and one of them said that they find studying in class to be "anxiety inducing because you might have to speak English but also nice because you have your friends' support" ("Ahdistavaa, koska voi joutua puhumaan

englantia, mutta myös kiva kun siellä on kaverit tukemassa"). So, even the distressing nature of being in the classroom was considered to be less awful when friends are present. Interestingly, classmates were not brought up in the data for the section 3 of the questionnaire. Only one participant mentioned that studying remotely feels a bit harder since you don't have a direct contact with the teacher ("Hankalampaa, sillä en ole suoranaisessa kontaktissa opettajan kanssa joten opiskelu tuntuu joskus haastavalta").

5.6 Open-ended questions

At the end of the section 3 of the questionnaire there were two open-ended questions. The first one asked if the participants felt distance learning had affected their attitudes towards English in any way (Koetko, että etäopiskelu on vaikuttanut asenteisiisi englannin opiskelua kohtaan? Miten?). The second question asked if the participants would change the way English is being taught in any way (Muuttaisitko englannin tunneille käytössänne olevaa opiskelutyyliä? Miten?).

From all the participants 15 of them, 60 percent, felt the shift from in-class learning to distance learning had affected their attitudes towards studying English. From those, 13 participants reported to having distance learning affect negatively to their attitudes while two participants said that it had affected positively. The most common answers to why distance learning had a negative effect were that studying from home is less efficient, the participants felt like they would not get as much done as in the classroom and at home it was easier to be lazy and let homework pile up. One participant said: "While studying remotely the level of studies isn't as good as in the classroom. It's harder to concentrate and get the exercises done. [ ] Teachers might give you more exercises than in the classroom." ("Etäopiskellessa opiskelun taso ei pysy yhtä hyvänä kuin opiskellessa luokassa. On vaikeampi yrittää keskittyä ja saada tehtäviä aikaiseksi. [ ] Opettajat saattavat antaa enemmän tehtävää kuin koulussa ollessa.") The two participants who felt like studying remotely had a positive impact to their attitudes towards studying English reasoned their stances by saying that while studying at home they feel less pressure because they can take their time with the exercises. The other participant said that they find distance lectures to be "less formal than in-class lectures" ("En koe tunteja niin jämäkiksi kuin lähiopetuksessa").

The participants were quite divided when asked about whether they would change the teaching style or not. The question had 23 answers from which three were inapplicable. From the remaining 20 answers ten participants said that they would change the teaching style and ten said that they would either keep it the same or they do not have any suggestions for changes. The number and the quality of the exercises

was brough up on multiple occasions. Three participants said that they wish the teacher would give less exercises per lecture and one participant wished there would be more time to do the exercises the teacher does give.

The current activities were found to be quite boring and four participants wished there to be more divergent exercises. One participant would change the teaching style "to be more student central and add more oral- and partner exercises." (Muuttaisin sitä enemmän opiskelijakeskeiseksi, ja lisäisin enemmän suullisia tehtäviä sekä pari- ja ryhmätehtäviä.") Another participant thought that "the style could be more versatile: instead of drilling all the time more interactive exercises." ("Tyyli voisi olla monipuolisempaa: jatkuvan pänttäämisen lisäksi interaktiivisempia tehtäviä.")

6 DISCUSSION

One of the main components that played a role in the data was the learning style (in-class or distance) that was used in the schools that the participants studied at. As was determined in the chapter 3.3, high schools would follow the regional COVID-19 guidelines when designing the teaching during the academic school year of 2020-2021. Therefore, there was no coherent way in which the teaching was organized. The majority of the participants (92.6 percent) reported to following the hybrid model and having some kind of a mix between contact classes and online classes. The rest of the participants reported to having either in-class teaching or distance teaching and independent exercises.

Something that can be argued to have helped with the studying was that 100 percent of the participants reported to having their own laptop to study with. Accessibility has commonly within the research area been seen as a central contributor to the students' attitudes towards learning. Therefore, the fact that the participants had access to technology was an important factor in the study.

The information about the language attitudes the data offered us was very polarized. It is evident that the participants had very varying attitudes towards English as a language and those attitudes affected their views on studying the language. Many of the participants had negative attitudes either towards English as a language or towards studying it. These attitudes stemmed from negative experiences with the teacher or a studying style that did not fit to the participants own needs as a language student. Conversely, many participants also had very positive attitudes towards English and its speakers and that was visible in the data.

The research question that this current study aims to find an answer to is: How does distance education affect high school students' attitudes towards studying English as a second language? The data shows us very varying conclusions. Some participants preferred in-class learning over distance learning for the benefits of being able to communicate with the teacher more fluently and having the number and the

type of the exercises be more suitable while others found studying from home more calming and less distracting than in the classroom. Many participants had negative attitudes towards studying English to begin with and therefore did not feel that distance learning would make the learning process any more uncomfortable.

The data in table 3 showed us that the participants' language attitudes towards English language were very positive. 70.4 percent of the participants strongly agreed to the statement "I wish I was fluent in English". 59.3 percent agreed with the statement "I would like to have more English speaking friends". 48.2 percent somewhat agreed to the statement "I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear". All of this shows us that the participants had very positive attitudes towards English as a language as well as the people in the English-speaking communities. The participants also showed high motivation towards learning the language.

While the participants' language attitudes were clearly positive there was also some evidence to show that the participants felt anxious about the idea of speaking English to a foreigner or a tourist. This was also visible later in the data with one of the participants mentioning that the possibility to speak English in the classroom makes them anxious. This kind of an experience seemed to be quite popular within the participants that the attitudes towards the language are very positive and the motivation to learn is high but to actually use the language feels intimidating and scary. What the data showed us is that the presence of friends and supporting classmates can help in a situation where using the language causes a student anxiety.

The table 4 showcased the data from the attitude statements. The set of ten statements were the same in both sections (section 2: in-class studying and section 3: distance studying). This way the effect of the studying style could be more easily detected in the data. However, the data received from the attitude statements did not seem to offer any extensive answers as to how the attitudes changed according to the studying style. Something that could be seen in the table 4, which was later supported by other data, was that studying remotely did make it harder for the participants to feel like they could ask for help from the teacher. In the section 2 the statement 9 ("When I struggle with something in class I always ask for help from the teacher") had 44.5 percent of the participants disagreeing with the statement. Later, in the section 3, 70.4 percent disagreed with the same statement. This finding was also supported later in the data when multiple participants reported to finding it difficult to ask for help from the teacher during a video conference lecture.

With the same attitude statements in the section 2 and 3, the average answer to the statement 3 "I always postpone my homework to the last second" jumped from 3.9 in the section 2 to 4.1 in the section 3. This is interesting because when completing the fill-in-the-blank—sentences something that was brought up by multiple

participants was that in distance education staying on top of the workload and finding the motivation to do things feels hard. The reason as to why this is so interesting is that the data from the fill-in-the-blank—sentences seemed to imply that more participants would agree with the statement 3 in the section 3 but the data from the attitude statements does not fully reflect this.

The data received from the fill-in-the-blank—sentences was the most enlightening. As was already established in the previous chapter, the participants seemed to have both negative and positive attitudes towards studying English and that did not vary too much between the studying styles. The answers for the fill-in-the-blank—sentence "I find studying in class/remotely to be…" in both sections had both negative and positive adjectives at the top of the list. In the section 2 (studying in-class) the answer better/fun/nice/easy was used nine times while in the section 3 the main positive adjectives that were used were nice and fine and they were also used nine times. The negative attitudes towards the learning situation in the section 2 were indicated with adjectives rough, awful, unpleasant and nasty and they came up four times in the data. In the section 3 the negative adjectives that were used were challenging, hard, awful, tough and nasty and they came up 11 times in the data. Here we can see that the participants described both learning styles with very similar adjectives but the occurrence of positive adjectives was a lot higher with in-class learning while negative adjectives were used more when describing distance learning.

The attitude statements were analyzed by using a cross-tabulation. The attitude statements, which dealt with the overall attitudes towards English as a language, in the section 1 of the questionnaire were compared to the attitude statements in the section 2 and the ones in the section 3. The findings that came up in the analysis were interesting given the fact that by comparing the two cross-tabulation tables we were able to see how the studying style affected to the participants' attitudes in relations to their attitudes about English as a language. As interesting as the findings were, the analysis was weak given the small amount of the participants. With a larger sampling the findings would without a doubt be more enlightening.

As was stated earlier, analyzing the attitude statements did not give us too much information about the participants attitudes towards studying English or the way they had changed with the change in learning style. The answers for the open-ended questions at the end of the section 3 of the questionnaire, however, were able to give deeper insight to the participants' attitudes towards the studying style that was used in their school during the academic school year of 2020-2021. The teaching style was quite straight forward according to many of the participants. They felt like the majority of the teaching was quite one sided and focusing more on the teacher own monologue than what the students needed. One participant wished that the teaching

would be more student centric and pointed out that when changing into a new studying style (from classroom to online) new teaching styles should be applied.

Circling back to the research question, it can be concluded that the studying style did have an effect on the participants' attitudes towards studying English. The findings cannot be collectively grouped into one solid attitude but the data does show that a big part of the participants did experience a change in their attitudes. However, a lot of the participants did have similar attitudes in in-class teaching and those attitudes carried out, and in some cases even strengthened, over to the distance teaching.

What was discussed about the socio-educational model in the chapter 2.4.1 was that the learning situation holds a big significance in the student's learning process (Gardner, 2010: 119). Those reactions to the learning context are said to affect the student's learning process as a whole, including the attitudes. This study further proved that point. Many things change when the learning situation is taken from a classroom to online video conferencing tools. The physical separation between the students makes partner and group work difficult, the digital aspect makes the communication between the student and the teacher challenging and working through a screen takes the fluency out of the situation. All of these changes are pound to make the students perceive learning in a different way.

Also in the chapter 2.4.1, there was a quote from Gardner about the socio-educational model that it: "recognizes that the learning situation is an important element in learning a second language and considers the motivation to learn the language to be influenced by the learning context". In that chapter I mentioned that one of the aims of the present study is to provide evidence of that the word 'motivation' could be switched to 'attitude' and the statement would still stand. I feel it is safe to say that the current study has managed to do that.

The method used in this study did support the aim of it. By collecting the data with a questionnaire, we were able to keep the identities of the participants anonymous, the participants could be found from all around the country and the received data could be arranged in a way that made the analysis very straight forward. The big stumbling block with this method was settling for a smaller sample of data. With a wider range of participants, the data could have been generalized more and the cross-tabulation process would have been more fruitful. Nonetheless, this current study was able to gather information about the way Finnish high school students have perceived the change in teaching style and how that has affected their attitudes towards learning English.

7   CONCLUSIONS

As was established in the second chapter, the study of attitudes has been around for a long time. The study of language attitudes has gotten more and more researched within the area by some of the central researchers, such as Robert Gardner, Peter Garrett and Zoltán Dörnyei. Similarly, different types of education types have been studied and distance education has gotten more attention from the researchers. However, the COVID-19 pandemic was able to multiply and accelerate the number of studies being made in the area, at least in the Finnish context. What this study aimed to do is give more insight on the effect of distance education in a current situation from the point of view of the students.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic came in such a rapid pace and it had such a vast effect on the organization of education and the everyday of a Finnish high school student I felt like it was necessary to study this subject due to its current nature. Adding information about the subject will help the future research by giving more data that can guide the future studies that will be done on this field.

By basing the study on relevant theories about both language attitudes and distance education I was able to create a framework that supported the central meaning of this study. The Gardner & Smythe's socio-educational model on second language acquisition offered a good starting point for my own thesis. The model concentrates on the social aspect of second language education with the emphasis on the students' experiences with motivation and attitudes. The AMTB (Attitude and Motivation Test Battery) is a widely used test battery when studying students' motivation and attitude with respect to second language acquisition. The test battery also offered a solid base for the questionnaire that was used to collect the data for this thesis.

The main research question for this thesis was how distance education has affected the attitudes Finnish high school students have towards studying English as a second language. The research method that was chosen to collect the data with was,

as previously mentioned, a questionnaire that was based off of the AMTB. The questionnaire consisted of questions about the participants' background (the school year, the most recent grade in English, the teaching style that was used during the academic school year 2020-2021) as well as the teaching style that was used in their school (in-class teaching, distant teaching, a hybrid model). There were also ten attitude statements about the participants overall attitudes towards English as a language. The next two sections of the questionnaire were identical with the only difference being that the section 2 dealt with in-class teaching and the section 3 dealt with distant teaching. Both sections had ten attitude statements about studying English and three fill-in-the-blank—sentences about how studying English makes the participant feel. The section three ended with two open-ended questions about the participant's own perception of whether the teaching style has affected their attitudes towards studying English in any way.

The findings were quite multifaceted. There were students who found in-class teaching to be the preferable method while some participants enjoyed the freedom of distance education more. There was a certain level of change in the attitudes with the overall attitudes towards studying English becoming more negative in distance education but any universal conclusions cannot be drawn. A lot of the participants reported to having somewhat negative attitudes towards learning English to begin with and therefore there was no significant decay in the attitudes when changing into distance education.

The participants were able to express themselves quite clearly with the fill-in-the-blank—sentences and the open-ended questions. A lot of explanation was provided as to why the attitudes had gotten more negative with distance education. Many participants felt that communication with the teacher was harder through the video conferencing application and therefore they felt like they could not get the help from the teacher when facing a problem. Also, the lack of friends' support was brought up and it was mentioned that studying is easier in the classroom when there are other people around and it is not that easy to skip the exercises.

As far as answering the research question, this study was able to give insight on the problem it was aimed to solve. Information about Finnish high school students' attitudes towards studying English as a second language was received and it revealed that more attention should be given to the students' experiences in future distance education situations. It came up in the data that many of the participants felt like the way English was being taught online did not suit their learning patterns and more emphasis should be put on the students and exercises that benefit their learning. So, as much as this study did answer the question I feel that it would be fruitful to continue the research with a larger number of participants. Also, as this study focused on the high school level future research could be done on other school levels.

What I hope this study brings up is that teachers should focus more on the students' experiences in the classroom (both physical and digital). As language attitudes (as well as motivation) do play such a big role in the learning process of a new language it is vital that the students feel heard and seen in the space they study in. The responsibility of that falls on the shoulders of the teacher. However, as teaching becomes more and more student oriented it does seem desirable to hope that teachers could assist students in realizing their own preferences and potential so that the student and the teacher could work on building a pleasant learning environment together.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Master's thesis questionnaire: Etäopiskelun vaikutus asenteisiin englannin kielen opiskelua kohtaan

1. Perustiedot:
Vuosiluokka*

_____

Englannin opiskelutaso (lyhyt/pitkä)*

_____

Viimeisin englannin arvosana

_____

*SIVUNVAIHTO

2. Millainen opiskelutyyli teillä on ollut englannin tunneilla lukuvuoden 2020-2021 aikana?*
       □ kontaktiopetus (luokassa opiskelu)
       □ etäopetus (esim. zoom)
       □ kontaktiopetus & etäopetus
       □ etäopetus & itseopiskelu
       □ itseopiskelu

3. Mitä työvälineitä sinulla on ollut käytössäsi?*
       □ oma tietokone
       □ jaettu tietokone (esim. perheen yhteinen)
       □ iPad
       □ älypuhelin
       □ muu, mikä:_____

4. Seuraavassa on väitteitä englannin kieltä kohtaan. Valitse yleistä asennettasi lähimpänä oleva vaihtoehto.*
1=vahvasti eri mieltä 2=eri mieltä 3=riippuu tilanteesta 4=samaa mieltä 5=vahvasti samaa mieltä

Väite	1	2	3	4	5
Toivon, että osaisin puhua englantia sujuvasti					

Minua jännittäisi puhua englantia turistille					
Pyrin ymmärtämään kaikki ympärilläni näkemäni ja kuulemani englanninkieliset tekstit ja äänet					
Haluaisin tuntea enemmän englanninkielisiä ihmisiä					
Vanhempani pitävät sitä tärkeänä, että minä osaan englantia					
Kehitän englannin taitoa harjoittelemalla melkein joka päivä					
Toivon, että minulla olisi enemmän englanninkielisiä ystäviä					
Englannin kielitaito ei ole kovinkaan tärkeä taito minulle					
Minua jännittäisi puhua englantia puhelimessa					
Olen menettämässä kaiken mielenkiintoni englantia kohtaan					

*SIVUNVAIHTO

5. Tämä sivu koskee kontaktiopetusta. Mieti siis asenteitasi luokassa opiskelua kohtaan, ja vastaa väitteisiin kyseisten asenteiden mukaisesti.*
1=vahvasti eri mieltä 2=eri mieltä 3=riippuu tilanteesta 4=samaa mieltä 5=vahvasti samaa mieltä

Väite	1	2	3	4	5
Odotan innolla englannin oppitunteja					
Haluan lopettaa englannin opiskelun kesken					
Nautin englannin opiskelusta					
Lykkään aina englannin läksyjen tekemistä viime hetkeen					
Englanti on tärkeä osa oppiainetarjotinta					
En ahdistu vastatessani opettajan kysymyksiin englannin tunnilla					
Englannin oppitunnit ovat tylsiä					
Kuluttaisin aikani mieluummin muiden aineiden tunneilla kuin englannin					
Kun minulla on ongelmia englannin tunnilla, pyydän aina opettajalta apua					
Englannin oppitunnit eivät kiinnosta minua ollenkaan					

6. Täydennä seuraavat lauseet:
Opiskellessani englantia luokassa tunnen oloni _____.
Luokassa opiskelu tekee oppimisestani _____.
Luokassa opiskelu on minusta _____.

*SIVUNVAIHTO

7. Tämä sivu koskee etäopetusta. Mieti siis asenteitasi etäopiskelua kohtaan, ja vastaa väitteisiin kyseisten asenteiden mukaisesti.*

1=vahvasti eri mieltä 2=eri mieltä 3=riippuu tilanteesta 4=samaa mieltä 5=vahvasti samaa mieltä

Väite	1	2	3	4	5
Odotan innolla englannin oppitunteja					
Haluan lopettaa englannin opiskelun kesken					
Nautin englannin opiskelusta					
Lykkään aina englannin läksyjen tekemistä viime hetkeen					
Englanti on tärkeä osa oppiainetarjotinta					
En ahdistu vastatessani opettajan kysymyksiin englannin tunnilla					
Englannin oppitunnit ovat tylsiä					
Kuluttaisin aikani mieluummin muiden aineiden tunneilla kuin englannin					
Kun minulla on ongelmia englannin tunnilla, pyydän aina opettajalta apua					
Englannin oppitunnit eivät kiinnosta minua ollenkaan					

8. Täydennä seuraavat lauseet:

Kun opiskelen englantia etänä, tunnen oloni _____.

Etäopiskelu tekee oppimisestani _____.

Etäopiskelu on minusta _____.

9. Koetko että etäopiskelu on vaikuttanut asenteisiisi englannin opiskelua kohtaan? Miten?

10. Muuttaisitko englannin tunneilla käytössänne olevaa opiskelutyyliä? Miten?