

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH STUDIES

**REMOTE TEACHING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE
EXAMPLE OF ESTONIAN EFL TEACHERS OF FORMS 7-9**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic suddenly changed the way people used to live, work and study. In the spring of 2020 most schools in the world were forced to close their doors and start remote education to stop the virus spreading. This study investigates Estonian EFL teachers' readiness to distance teaching during the first months of lockdown in spring 2020. Research focuses on the schools administration support, students' readiness and online environments used during Covid-19 pandemic. Also changes in the way of teaching and biggest obstacles are studied.

The First part of the research gives an overview of studies published about teachers' experiences during the pandemic globally and in Estonia. The second part consists of the methodology, the results of the questionnaire and interviews. It analyses the results of the questionnaire answered by the English teachers all over Estonia and gives an overview of the information collected through interviews with 9 EFL teachers from forms 7-9. A mixed-methods research approach was considered as the best option to understand EFL teachers readiness to distance teaching, support provided by educational institutions and colleagues, online environments used and overall feelings towards students readiness, workload and challenges around pandemic situations.

The findings of this thesis suggest that Estonian EFL teachers did not have distance teaching experience before Covid-19 and they were mostly pleased with the educational institution support. Most teachers were engaged in the decision making but it took time to understand the clear action plan. Teachers assessed students' readiness and capabilities for independent learning quite low. The biggest problem was time management. The most time consuming task in teachers' opinion was giving feedback to students. All teachers admitted that after the first experience with remote education, they developed better digital skills and managed their time more effectively.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECDPC - The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, an agency of the European Union

EFL - English as a foreign language

ICT - Information and Communications Technology

JRC - The Joint Research Centre, European Commission's science and knowledge service

OECD - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PISA - The Programme for International Student Assessment by the OECD

UN - The United Nations, an intergovernmental organization

UNESCO - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, specialised agency of the United Nations

WHO - World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 was extraordinary for people all over the world – the pandemic unexpectedly forced everyone to keep a social distance. The 'pandemic' is defined by Porta (2008) as an epidemic occurring worldwide, crossing international boundaries, and influencing a large number of people. The World Health Organization (WHO) provides an explanation for a pandemic as “the worldwide spread of a new disease”. If a widespread illness has a stable number of infected people then it is not considered to be a pandemic. Defining a specific epidemic as a pandemic is mostly related only to its spread and refers to a global outbreak. Throughout history humankind has suffered from different kinds of infectious diseases like the plague, the Spanish flu, cholera, typhus etc, which have killed hundreds of millions of people but never before have mankind been so informed about the virus and its scope. Nowadays world news are easily accessible for most people. Data collection is more organized and statistics are available for everyone. Travelling is easier and humankind is extremely mobile. In the 14th century, roughly 25 million people died in Europe and entire villages disappeared due to plague (Britannica 2020) but people worldwide were not affected immediately. Today, it is hard to find a country in the world who has not been influenced by the coronavirus. The virus has changed the way of life, communication, work and study.

According to the WHO, the COVID-19 virus originates from a coronavirus named SARS-CoV-2. It is a large family of viruses that causes respiratory diseases from the common cold to more rare and serious diseases such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The first human cases of COVID-19 were first reported from Wuhan City, China, in December 2019 (WHO 2021).

On 24th of January of 2020, the first European case was reported in France and from that time forward the virus has been spreading fast all over the world. On 11th of March Director of the WHO declared Covid-19 a “global pandemic” and by the 25th of March more than 150 countries worldwide had been affected (ECDPC 2021). Estonia reported its first coronavirus case on 27th of February 2020 and two weeks later, the government announced the state of emergency. For the first time in Estonian history, all schools were forced to start providing distance education (Estonian Government 2020).

The Covid-19 virus has created the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries and on all continents (UN 2020). Educational institutions all over the world were closed in March to minimize the spread of the virus. Teachers needed to improve their digital competence very quickly, without any warning beforehand. Schools had to make decisions fast and efficiently to continue providing remote education for students and at the same time support teachers as much as possible. It was mostly up to teachers to figure out how to continue their work in this unprecedented situation. Learning and teaching did not stop but continued taking place online.

Remote education as a way of learning and teaching has been in use since the 1800s (Berg, Simonson 2016), but it has never been widely used in first and second level education before the coronavirus pandemic. According to White (2003), remote learning happens if students and teachers are not physically present in a traditional classroom environment, so information is shared through technology, such as video conferencing and online assessments. Remote teaching can occur synchronously with real-time face-to-face interaction and collaboration, or asynchronously, with self-paced learning activities that take place independently (White 2003).

There are many pieces of research published already about students' well-being, but not many studies concentrate on teachers, or specifically on English teachers. This research aims to study teachers' readiness to start remote teaching and the difficulties encountered during the experience. Current study aims to answer following questions:

1. Was there any support provided to language teachers by schools and colleagues?
2. How prepared were students to start remote learning?
3. Were there any changes in the teaching methods and which online environments were used?
4. What were the biggest challenges during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The thesis has two chapters. The first chapter, the literature review, explains the forms and occurrences of distance education according to different definitions the phenomenon has. It covers historical formation of distance learning, remote language learning and emergency remote teaching. It also concentrates on the studies about teachers coping with distance teaching during Covid-19 pandemic globally and in Estonia. Additionally, educational institutions' support to teachers is investigated together with students' attitudes in relation to cooperation with teachers. Most of the information is collected from global surveys and reports, with focus on Europe. More studies specifically about Estonian teachers are yet to be published (as of March 2021) but some of the results from regional pieces of research are highlighted.

The second chapter of the thesis concentrates on the experiences of EFL teachers of Estonia. The information was collected by quantitative and qualitative research methods. An online survey and interviews were carried out with English teachers in Estonia. A mixed-methods approach, which gives a more complete picture of a problem (Paltridge,

Phakiti, 2018), was considered as the best option to understand EFL teacher's readiness for remote teaching.

The survey was created through the Google Forms software and was sent to EFL teachers of all counties of Estonia. 99 respondents answered in May 2020. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions, mostly with 10 scale ratings. In the survey the teachers assessed their readiness, and schools' and students' preparedness to start remote learning. Also, teachers' existing digital competences were rated and possibilities to teach English online. The respondents were also asked to name the online environments they used during distance teaching, discuss the time spent on preparing the lessons and point out issues they faced.

The interviews were conducted in February 2021 with 9 EFL teachers from 6 counties of Estonia. The questions were formed based on the earlier studies on the same general topic and on the survey results from May 2020. The teachers were asked semi-structured, open-ended questions. The teachers were asked about their exposure to distance teaching before the Covid-19 pandemic, the support they received from the administration and from colleagues, and their students' readiness for remote learning. The informants were also asked about how they changed the way they were teaching and how they managed their time.

The overview of methods and participants is followed by the results, the discussion and the conclusion where the author suggestions for future research can be found.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Distance education

Distance education (also known as remote education) is defined by Bates (2005) as a method of education where students can learn at their own pace, choose the best suitable place and without face-to-face contact with a teacher. Its history goes back to the 19th century when geographical isolation, growing industries and military created favourable circumstances for distance learning to form (Berg, Simonson 2016). This was possible mostly because of new postal services which were reliable due to wide spread of the railway network (Moore, Kearsley 2012). Distance education was first implemented at the University of Chicago in the late 1800s where the first major correspondence program in the United States was established in which the teacher and learner were at different locations (Jonassen 2004).

Distance education evolved in three main generations. In the first generation, a single technology, such as lists of books for independent reading was used and there was very little interaction between students and teachers, mainly in the form of correspondence. In the second generation, a multiple-media approach with educational materials created especially for distance learning (radio, television, open universities) was used. So, many students at the same time could be served and educating them was cost-effective. In the third generation, distance education is based on two-way communication like video lessons where a more individual approach can be created between the teacher giving instructions and students learning remotely (Bates 2005).

Nowadays distance education is carried out mostly online where teachers are assigning either individual tasks to students or conducting live online lessons. Principles

and resources of different generations of distance education can be mixed easily according to the subject and students' needs.

Language teaching methodologies have mostly developed around the model of face-to-face communication, which means that the teacher and the students are working together in the same place at the same time (White 2003). In different situations, such as remote learning, new complex challenges might appear. According to White (2003) students can face problems, such as isolation, lack of access to regular classroom interactions, low motivation and self-discipline and less opportunities to learn through informal contacts. Students can also experience frustration due to problems with the materials or course delivery or the need for support for effective time management while competing demands from study, family, social and professional contexts.

Remote learning can also cause the increase of language learning anxiety. Krashen (1981) describes this as the “affective filter hypothesis”, which means that when language learners become anxious their mind might block the linguistic input and this influences foreign language learning negatively. Russel (2020) brings out the most common reason behind online language learner anxiety – it can increase due to new technologies used which require higher digital skills. It is recommended to use one type of technology throughout the course and give as much feedback as possible, as often as possible (Russel 2020). Most important in distance language learning is to keep or increase learners' motivation, supporting them with resources, providing administrative advice and making learners feel that they are connected (White 2003).

Remote learning/teaching is nowadays usually taking place online and it is called online teaching (more in chapter 1.1.1). Distance or remote teaching cannot be mixed up with homeschooling where teachers' role is carried out usually by parents (more in 1.1.2).

In case of unpredicted circumstances where distance education cannot be planned before, it is called emergency remote teaching (chapter 1.2.3).

1.1.1 Online teaching

Online learning/teaching is one of the four forms (post, radio, television, internet) of distance education where students and teachers are physically separated (Kentnor 2015). In case of online education, the internet is used and at least 80% of the course content is delivered online (Allen, Seaman 2008). Online education became more popular after World Wide Web (www) was launched in 1991 by Tim Berners-Lee (WWWF 2008).

Moore and Kearsley (2012) find that for effective teaching, online educators need a deep understanding of the nature of interaction states. They identify three types of interaction: learner-content interaction, where learner is independently working through the study materials provided and teacher presence is needed only for supporting when any questions arise; learner-instructor interaction, where teacher is actively supporting the learning process by presenting the content and motivating students, and learner-learner interaction, where groups of students support each other in the learning process (Moore, Kearsley 2012). Teachers should identify which of the three forms of interactions mentioned is the most effective for their students and apply it in the current situation (2020-2021) of coronavirus pandemic. Making sure that all learners get the support they need is often hard to identify from the distance, especially in the first and second level of education where people are not so self-motivated and independent yet. Moore and Kearsley (2012) find training important and consider organising them as responsibility of administrators. Teachers were not given much time to prepare or think their work through, no proper training was conducted. The Covid-19 pandemic forced them to start experimenting themselves with what works and what does not.

By now (a year later from the coronavirus outbreak) there are many studies, reports and guidelines published to support and improve teachers' skills for online education. In a case study (Bao 2020) done in Peking University, online teaching was observed, and some instructional approaches were found for better practise. Bao (2020) therefore suggests having a backup plan for unexpected problems, to divide the content into smaller units than usually presented in the classroom and to talk slower for the students to make up for the missing body language.

1.1.2 Homeschooling

Homeschooling is also known as home education where school-aged children are learning at home or a variety of places other than school. According to Estonian law, homeschooling is learning outside the educational institution premises in case due to health issues a student is not capable of participating in the schools' daily agenda and/or if a parent wants to educate their child on their own. (Riigi Teataja 2018). It is usually conducted by a parent, tutor, or an online teacher and is less formal and more personalized. Many families who travel frequently use this option. It needs to be planned and the local educational institution needs to be officially informed (Riigi Teataja 2018).

1.1.3 Emergency remote teaching

Emergency remote teaching (ERT) differs from distance education and online teaching in that it cannot be planned beforehand. Typical online teaching principles and guidelines are not suitable in case of emergency. Hodges et al (2020) explain the ERT as “a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances”, where remote teaching instructions are used only temporarily. ERT's primary objective should not be re-creating a new educational ecosystem but instructions

which are quick to set up and are reliably available during an emergency or crisis. In the case of ERT, educators need to understand that most likely not only learning conditions are changed but students' daily lives are also disrupted. Teachers need to be more flexible with deadlines and considerable with different scenarios.

1.2 Existing research about distance teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic

Many studies about distance learning have been conducted from the start of the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020. At first, researchers (Darling-Hammond et al 2020, Di Pietro et al 2020, OECD 2020) concentrated mostly on the wellbeing of students and the quality of the education they were receiving. Later, from the autumn 2020 and on, more studies (MacIntyre et al 2020, Lepp et al 2020, Rekonen & Siltanen 2021) about teachers appeared. UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank published a worldwide survey in October 2020 according to which 63 million teachers in primary and secondary schools were affected by global school closures and played a lead role in students' awareness about the Covid-19 virus.

More specific findings from existing studies are divided into separate topics. Current study is concentrating on teachers' role in distance education, support from school administration, changes in the teaching methods during pandemic and time management.

1.2.1 Teachers' role in distance education

Di Pietro et al. (2020) declare that teachers' preparedness and a positive attitude are the most important components of successful online learning. Teachers play a key part of the whole process and they should learn how to adapt to the Covid-19 pandemic in which they can communicate only online and in which even students who usually perform well at school tend to lose motivation.

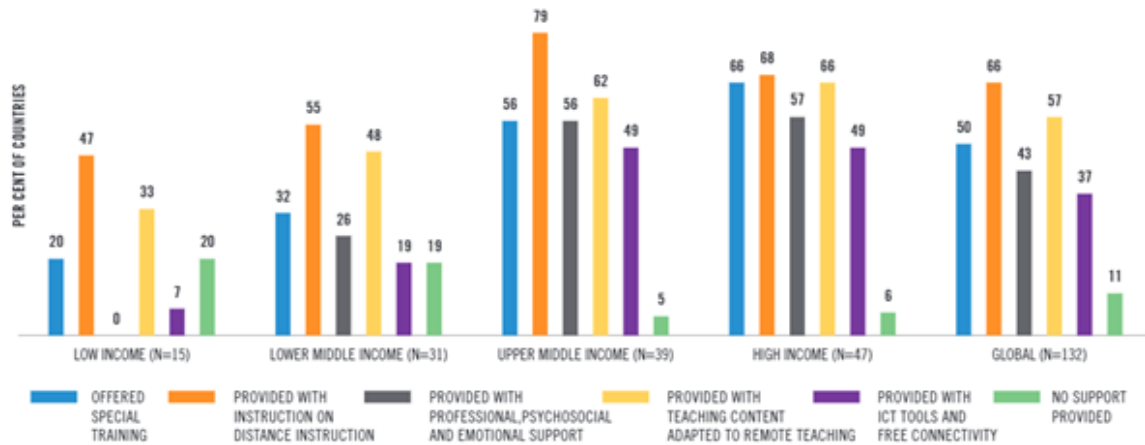
Reimers and Schleicher (2020) suggest that the teacher's role is more important to the success of the learning experience than the physical environment of school or technological infrastructure, both in synchronous or asynchronous reaching. They also maintain that educational institutions need to allow teachers more flexibility to adjust their balance between educational services, professional collaboration and work with families.

The essential role of teachers is also mentioned in the United Nation policy brief in the context of governments having an ongoing duty of care to education staff and support teachers' readiness to remote education (UN 2020).

1.2.2 Support provided by educational institutions

On the topic of schools' support for teachers, findings from previous studies were controversial. UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank confirm that 66% of countries reported that their teachers received guidelines and instructions on how to teach and deliver their lessons during remote learning. The survey questionnaire (UNESCO, UNICEF, WB 2020) was completed by Ministry of Education officials from different countries. Respondents were in charge of education planning and according to their answers teachers were provided with instructions and content on distance teaching (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Support provided to teachers, by income group (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2020)



It is hard to validate how well the supporting guidelines were actually implemented and whether the results would be the same if teachers instead of officials had participated in the survey directly.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) survey carried out from 18-27th of March 2020, the majority of the respondents answered that there was not much support from local governments with providing academic instructions. Some of the respondents from all over the world mentioned that guidelines from the Ministries were not aligned with the realities of schools. In this survey, information was collected not only from officials but also from teachers.

UNESCO (2020) highlights teachers' uncertainty during unexpected closures of schools: "teachers are often unsure of their obligations and how to maintain connections with students to support learning". Report states that transitions to distance education platforms are messy and can be frustrating to both teachers and students. In many contexts, school closures lead to teachers' furloughs.

In the United States one out of five teachers said that they are unlikely to return to schools because they felt not well-trained for the current situation and it is not worth the effort they are putting into teaching (Darling-Hammond et al 2020).

The situation with support from educational institutions seems to be somewhat better in Estonia. Lepp et al (2021) discovered that almost a half of the science teachers from 16 informants agreed that they were able to influence the arrangements around distance teaching in their school. Two-thirds of teachers felt that they were supported and valued by management of the education institution and they were informed enough to understand how the distance education was organized.

Teachers did not only highly depend on school administrations but also on their coworkers. According to Esisenschmidt and Granström (2020), the participants from Tallinn schools valued highly weekly meetings with teachers teaching on the same level, where they could exchange experiences, discuss feedback provided to students and plan the next week. Lepp et al (2021) study, on the other hand, confirms that only some teachers mentioned having meetings with other teachers to exchange tips and tricks.

1.2.3 Changes in the way of teaching and online environments

Di Pietro et al. (2020) states that virtual environments need to compensate for the lack of physical presence in a comfortable and easily accessible way. Also, implementation of Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) is very important in facilitating remote lessons, giving access to educational resources and in connecting students with teachers. The overall impact of VLE mostly depends on teachers' pedagogical and technological readiness (Di Pietro et al 2020). From the beginning of pandemic, Microsoft and Google both have opened up their remote education tools and provided assistance to teachers and students on how to use them (Di Pietro et al 2020).

According to Rekola and Siltanen (2021) most of the Finnish EFL teachers in their study conducted video conference meetings for every lesson, while others used online lessons only for remedial instructions. A common practise was to adapt old teaching

methods to the new distance format. Due to the nature of distance delivery, Finnish English language teachers increased the submission of assignments, video material and written tasks. For some teachers, there was a notable decrease in interactional exercises, as they felt that they were difficult to facilitate in the online environment (Rekola, Siltanen 2021). Teachers had to adjust their practises and develop new methods to replace immediance and classroom setting. Rekola and Siltanen (2021) discovered that most of the teachers interviewed for their study could not see how language teaching could be adapted to the distance teaching situation due to the importance of interaction. Even though they were confirmed to have developed new skills, the lack of interactional properties of language education reduced their work satisfaction.

During the first months of the pandemic many teachers gathered into online groups and communities to support each other and exchange knowledge, experiences about distance education and virtual learning environments. Johnson (2020) observed teachers' online community in Georgia from March to June 2020 and the research confirms that the group was used mainly to ask remote education related questions from each other. Most common topics of discussion were digital tools and sharing teaching resources with each other.

According to Johnson's observations (2020), Zoom was the most frequently used digital tool, which was mentioned 170 times. After Zoom, MS Teams was in the second place with 162 times. Facebook the third (133) and then far behind were Google Classroom (40) and Google Forms, mentioned only 32 times. In the Georgian teachers' online community several other digital tools were mentioned fewer times: Google Meet, Skype and Messenger.

Around 40% of the teachers from Tallinn School of Economics (Tallinn School of Economics 2020) noted that Google Meet as the best platform for distance learning,

secondly Skype was mentioned and the third place was shared between Zoom and Moodle. Compared to the first results of Eisenschmidt and Granström study (2020) from all over Estonia, teachers from Tallinn adjusted their teaching more to synchronic style to try to engage students more from distance. A half of the respondents used digital learning materials at least once per week (Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020). Finnish teachers preferred Google Meet and MS Teams which they confirmed not using before the Covid-19 pandemic (Rekola, Siltanen 2021).

During remote learning, messaging apps were the most popular way to interact between teachers, students and parents (UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank 2020). Also, emails and phone calls were used. There were no significant number of home visits done during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic according to the UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank survey.

A professional approach to digital tools and effective practices are necessary but it will not ensure the success of remote teaching. “Students’ attitudes towards learning are strong drivers of their academic achievements in regular times. Indeed, these may be crucial in sustaining students’ motivation and active learning in times of homeschooling” (OECD 2020). A positive attitude towards learning can improve students’ results at school and helps to keep up their motivation when schools are closed. According to the OECD (2020) survey teachers’ enthusiasm was the second most important factor for students after parental support.

1.2.4 Time management

According to MacIntyre et al (2020), who carried out a global survey of 634 language teachers, the most stressful experience during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic was workload. The study shows that the worldwide response to pandemic

created a number of difficulties for language teachers, such as a sudden change to online teaching, fuzzy boundaries between work and home mixed with concern about the health of family and oneself. All of the factors produced a high level of stress.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, teachers needed to immediately implement distance teaching, often without any sufficient training or support. According to the UN (2020) teachers were highly unprepared all across the world to adapt to new teaching methodologies. Some countries have already started providing psychological support to teachers. Without mental support, the strain can lead to burnout and giving up on teaching.

Survey of Tallinn School of Economics (2020) brought out two biggest obstacles during distance teaching: the first complication was missing face-to-face interaction with students, and the second one was the time spent on adjusting the materials for online teaching.

Rekola and Siltanen (2021) confirm that Finnish EFL teachers struggled with teaching some aspects of language, such as communication skills, in remote teaching. The teachers felt that certain areas of language got less attention and were harder to implement from distance. Teachers reported not having the energy for innovation as the distance teaching was new to them and taking more effort. According to the Lepp et al. (2021) study, most of the teachers did not consider their digital competence as an obstacle during distance learning.

In the research of Tallinn public schools (Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020) two-thirds of the teachers who participated in the survey noted that their workload increased with distance teaching. The most common method was an individual approach to students. Almost 200 respondents out of 761 spend more than four hours per day to assess and give feedback to students. 60% of the teachers created new materials daily or weekly.

The teachers spent three hours per day on average to prepare the lessons (Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020).

Increased workload was also mentioned in Lepp et al's (2021) study where feedback to students was highlighted as the most time consuming task during distance learning. Teachers mentioned that they tried to find the balance between the learning process and looking after themselves. They aimed for achieving the minimum goals during distance learning to not burnout themselves.

Overall, distance education is a known concept which has been around for more than two centuries. It exists in different forms and has helped humankind to develop knowledge regardless of geographical location or working circumstances. Nowadays distance teaching is mostly carried out online with live lessons or through individual instructions. Although it was not unprecedented, distance teaching was not commonly used in the first and second level of education – the Covid-19 pandemic has changed this.

The most significant issues for teachers during pandemic distance teaching occurred to be time management, lack of digital skills and support from educational institutions. Distance teaching was more time consuming due to adjustments needed for the previously used materials and new knowledge about VLEs. Most popular online platforms teachers used during the first months of the pandemic were Zoom, Google Meet and MS Teams. Teachers spend a lot of time on giving instructions and feedback to learners. Support and clear guidelines from schools were less received globally than in Estonia.

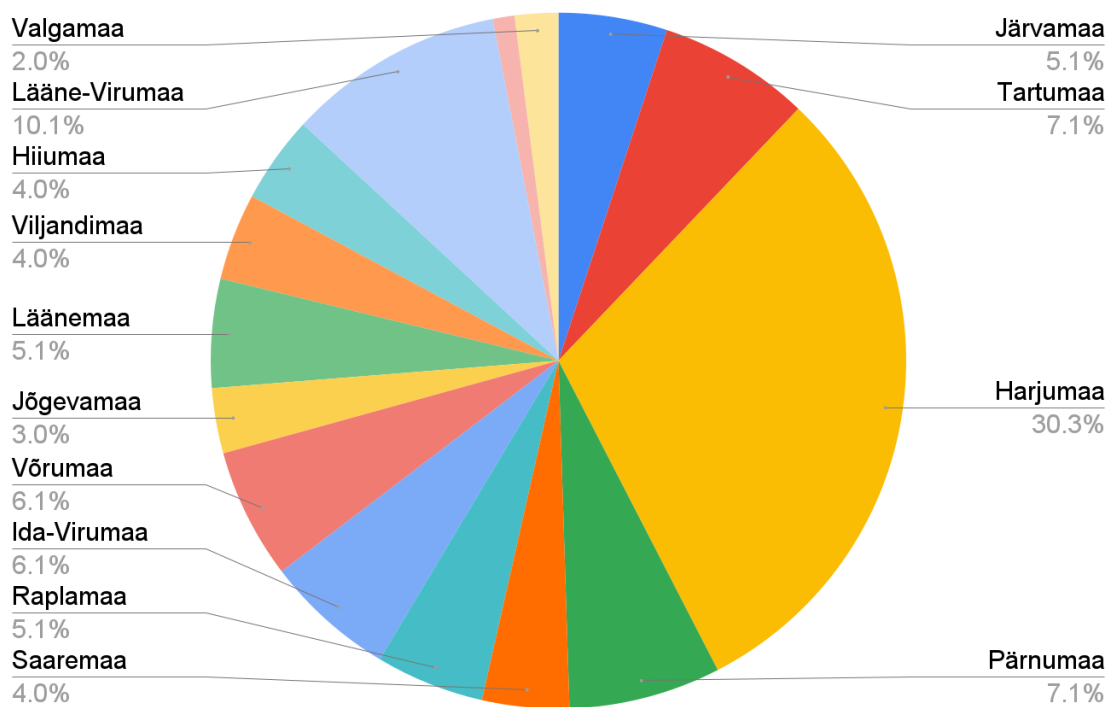
2. EMPIRICAL STUDY

2.1 Survey respondents and method

Empirical study of current research is using mix-methods and carried out through online surveys and interviews. First part of the empirical study concentrates on the qualitative data collected through an online survey (see Appendix 1). The survey was carried out via email in May 2020 by contacting English teachers from every county of Estonia. The suitable schools were searched in Google by looking for public schools separately in all 15 counties. Data was collected via the questionnaire created in Google Forms in Estonian. The form was sent out to 94 emails found on schools' websites, most of them directly to English teachers, if addresses were available. The survey was also forwarded to researchers' course mates at the University of Tartu. 99 teachers filled in the form in total.

Most of the responses – 30 – were received from Harjumaa, and 10 responses were from Lääne-Virumaa (see Figure 2). The smallest number of responses were received from Põlvamaa, where 5 emails were sent out but the researcher got a reply back only from one teacher. Two teachers filled in forms from Valgamaa and three teachers answered from Jõgevamaa. Rest of the counties were represented with 4-7 replies.

Figure 2. Overview of the survey respondents location



The one probable reason behind the larger respondents' rate in Harjumaa is because more schools were approached and the researcher shared more common acquaintances there.

The respondents received an email with a brief introduction of the researcher and why the information is collected. Also, an average time expenditure a phone number was to reach out, if necessary.

The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions in total. Half of the questions were asked in 10-scale ratings form, where 1 is the minimum/lowest score and 10 is the maximum/highest. The teachers needed to rate statements below:

1. Their level of readiness to start distance teaching
2. Educational institutions' readiness for distance teaching
3. Students' readiness for distance teaching/learning
4. Possibilities of distance learning in English

5. Their digital competence before distance teaching

6. Their digital competence after distance teaching

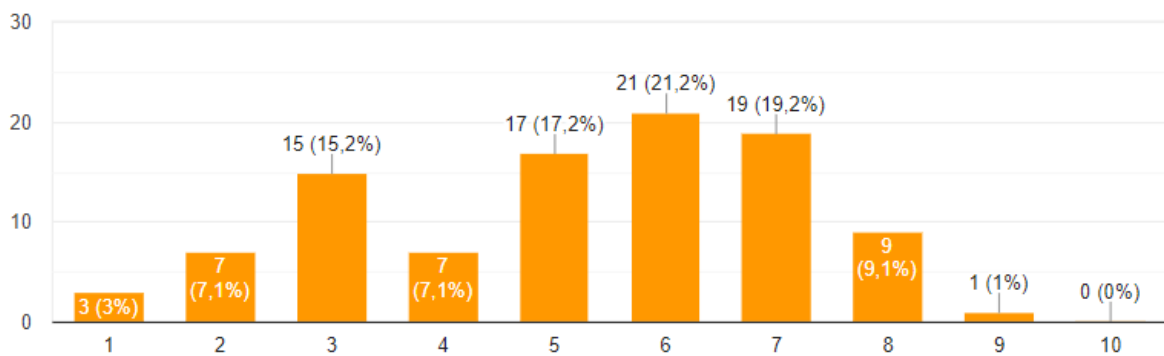
The respondents were also asked via open-ended questions about time they have spent on preparing the lessons and most time taking tasks. The teachers were able to write in a free form about what online learning environments they have used and what are the main issues that appeared during the pandemics. Finally, the respondents need to explain what are the main things that they learned from the distance education experience and changed in the way they are teaching.

2.2 Survey results

2.2.1 Teachers' readiness to distance teaching

Firstly, the teachers needed to evaluate their own readiness for remote education by using a 10-point rating scale where 1 was not ready at all and 10 denoted to be very comfortable with the change to distance teaching. Only 21 teachers out of all respondents assessed their readiness to distance teaching a little over the average (see Figure 3). While most people felt moderately comfortable and ready to start teaching English from home, 3% of the respondents were not ready at all. Nobody from the 99 English teachers rated themselves as completely ready and confident enough to start distance teaching.

Figure 3. Overview of the teachers readiness to distance teaching



2.2.2 Digital competence

The teachers were also asked to evaluate their digital competence before and after distance teaching experience during Covid-19 pandemic. The respondents had the option to choose confidence levels from 1 to 10, where 1 is not confident at all and 10 being very confident in their digital knowledge. Figures 4 and 5 below clearly indicate the improvement of their skills due to being forced to start teaching remotely. There were 6 people who declared that they felt comfortable using ICT in teaching of English before the Covid-19 pandemic. After the first distance teaching experience, twice as many teachers felt very comfortable in using ICT.

The results are showing that a lack of experience in online teaching can result in low digital skills. The pandemic has managed to grow teachers' digital proficiency in Estonia and improve their competence in using ICT.

Figure 4. Overview of the teachers digital competence **before** pandemic

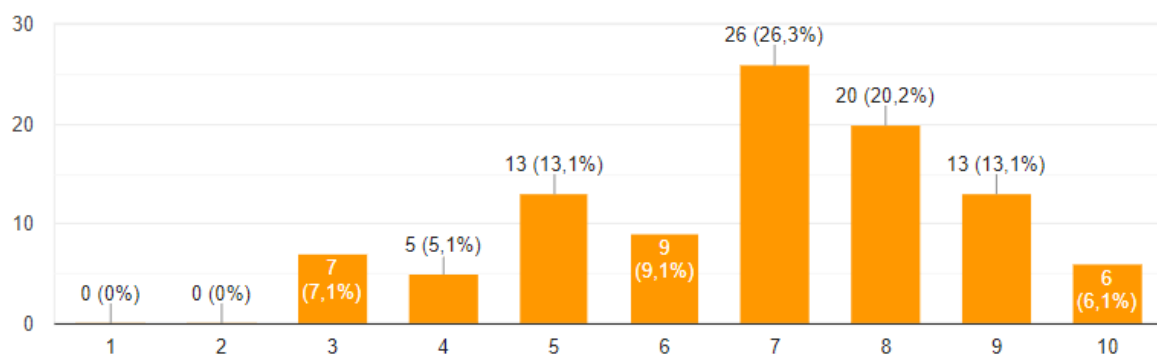
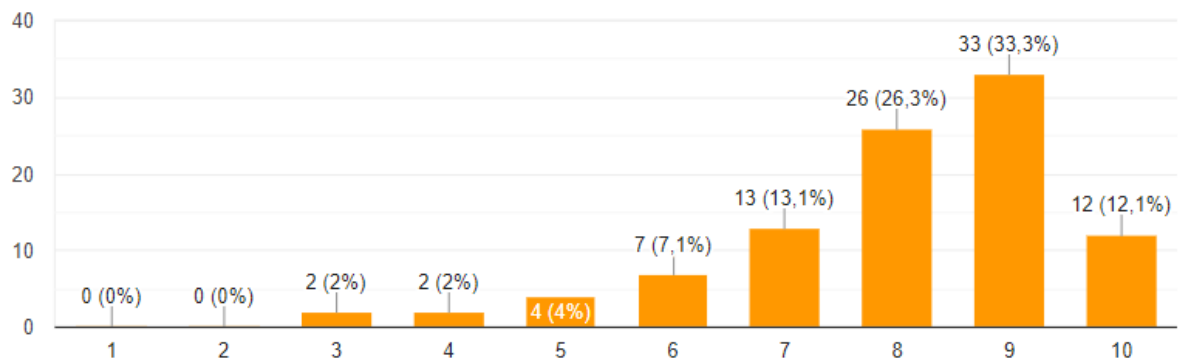


Figure 5. Overview of the teachers digital competence *after* pandemic



2.2.3 Educational institutions` and students` readiness to distance education

The teachers were more confident in the readiness of their educational institution than their students (see Figure 6). More respondents rated their school over the average (more than 5 on a 10-scale) in preparedness for distance education while no one felt that the students were completely ready (see Figure 7).

Figure 6. Overview of the *schools`* readiness to distance education

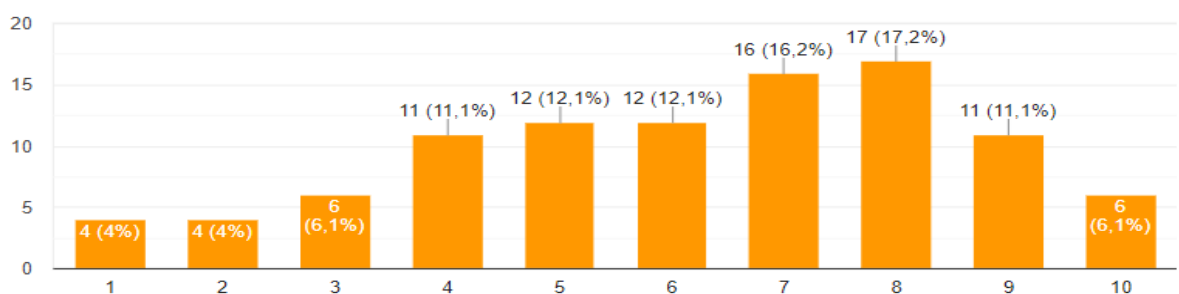
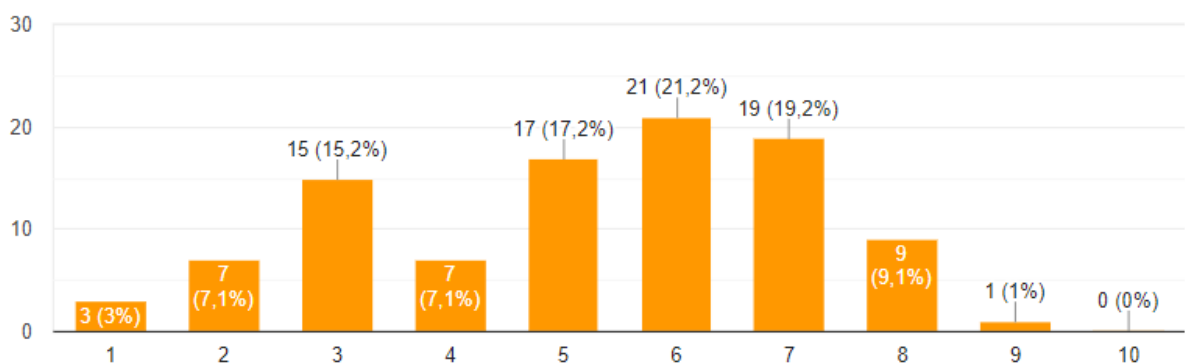


Figure 7. Overview of the *students`* readiness to distance education

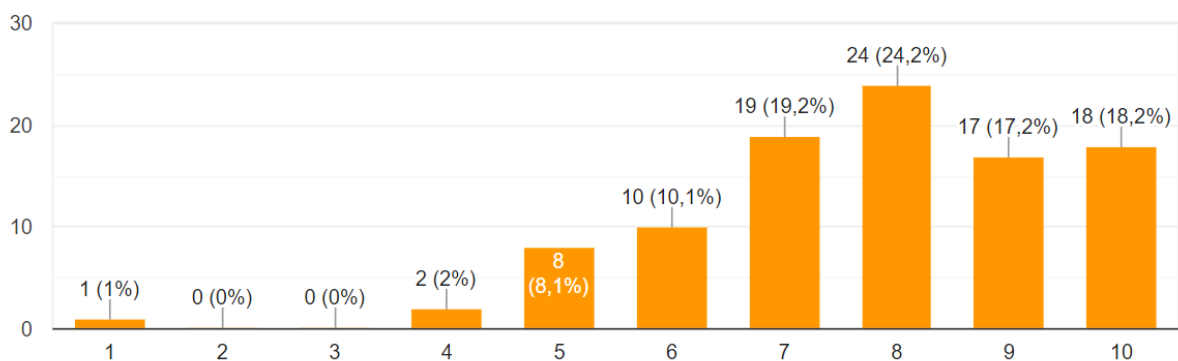


The survey revealed a lack of students' independent learning skills and the importance of clear straightforward instructions by teachers. The majority of the respondents mentioned that tasks needed to be adjusted to be understandable for everyone and cut into smaller pieces than in face-to-face teaching.

2.2.4 EFL distance teaching possibilities

Distance teaching possibilities (availability of teaching materials online, different VLEs which are ready-to-use) for the English language were rated over average. The respondents were again given a choice to vote in 10-scale ratings where 1 is no option and 10 is a very good possibility to teach English remotely. Only 3 teachers out of 99 felt like there are none or bad possibilities for English distance teaching (see Figure 8).

Figure 8. Overview of EFL distance teaching possibilities



2.2.5 Online environments

More than 40 different online platforms were mentioned by the respondents. The most popular one was YouTube which was mentioned by 33 teachers. The second place was shared by Zoom and Quizlet, which were both mentioned 32 times. Live Worksheets came third, mentioned 31 times (see Figure 9).

Several respondents pointed out that several websites need students to register and sign up. Some examples:

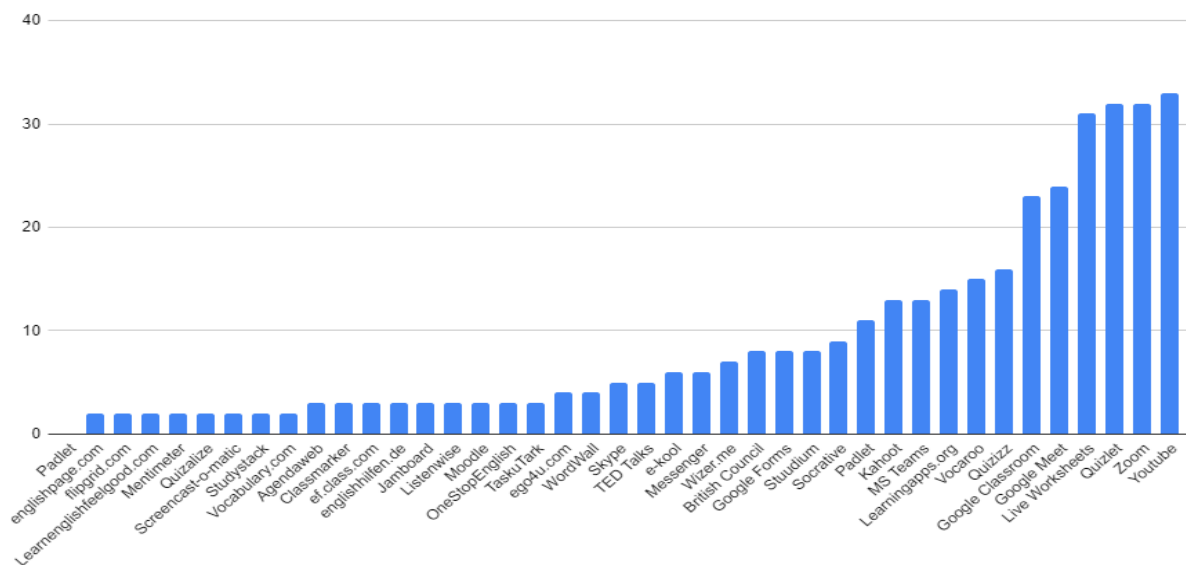
“I avoided environments where students would need to register. Students forget their passwords.”

“Some are password-protected, and sometimes some servers are overloaded and therefore inaccessible”.¹ (hereinafter author’s translation).

“It takes a lot more time”²

The teachers tried to avoid virtual learning platforms that were hard to navigate and where registration was mandatory. They tried to use websites familiar to the students and keep away from tasks which needed advanced digital skills. Many EFL teachers noted that hyperlinks were not working properly or not loading at all from students' devices. Students' digital skills were on a very uneven level and they had difficulties with following the instructions.

Figure 9. Overview of online platforms used by Estonian EFL teachers



Technical peculiarities were mentioned as something to be prepared for and many teachers mentioned different scenarios about errors that might appear. For example:

¹ “Mõned on parooliga ja vahel on mõned serverid ülekoormatud ega pääse ülesannetele seetõttu ligi”.

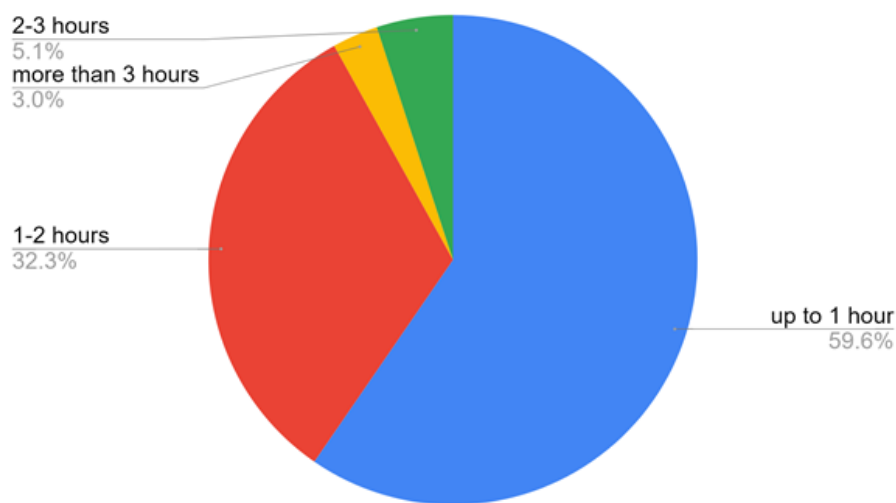
² “Tohutult palju rohkem kulub aega”.

“Students` computers have different settings and do not load some pages (or at least they claim that they do not load)”³

2.2.6 Time management

More than half of the teachers (see Figure 10) spent up to one hour to prepare for the lessons in distance teaching but there were few who noted that they are spending more than three hours to get ready for the class.

Figure 10. Time management



The respondents noted that giving instructions and feedback to students were time consuming :

“What was the most time consuming and frustrating was giving feedback. The first week, handwritten exercises, photographed and sent. Essays electronically sent. Giving meaningful written feedback is very time consuming. Marking an essay with handwritten notes takes roughly 10-15 minutes per essay. Marking an essay/report electronically, highlighting errors/syntax, grammar/vocabulary/structure, with notes, closer to an hour for each essay.”

³ “Õpilaste arvutite seaded on erinevad ja neil ei lae osad lehed ära (või vähemalt väidavad, et ei lae)”

“The materials have to be submitted in very small parts, because the students are not able to work independently.”⁴

“Everything that seems simple and understandable to me may not be for students and parents.”⁵

“I have learned to write down very detailed and clear guidance to students.”⁶

“You need to plan your time better, and set limits, because otherwise you will have to work 12 hours and more a day.”⁷

Improving their time management skills were mentioned by most of the respondents and Estonian EFL teachers valued their experience of distance teaching as part of their growth.

“I have learned to plan my time and be spontaneous”⁸

“I’ve learned to build lessons in a more compact way, I’ve learned to differentiate more from the important to the irrelevant, and a lot of creative approaches have come”⁹

2.2.7 Learning points

The teachers were also asked to explain in a free form text what they have learned from distance teaching experience during the Covid-19 pandemics. Out of 99 respondents, 83 answers were received to this question. 11 Estonian EFL teachers confirmed that they have learned how to better plan their time. Many respondents mentioned that they know

⁴ “Materjale tuleb edastada väga väheste osade kaupa, sest õpilased ei oska iseseisvalt töötada.”

⁵ “Kõik mis tundub mulle lihtne ja arusaadav, ei pruugi seda olla õpilastele ja lapsevanematele.”

⁶ “Olen õppinud ülesandeid väga detailselt lahti kirjutama ja kirjeldama.”

⁷ “Oma aega tuleb paremini planeerida, ja piirid seada, sest muidu juhtub et teed tööd päevas 12 tundi ja rohkemgi.”

⁸ “Olen õppinud aja planeerimist, spontaansust”

⁹ “Olen õppinud tundi kompaktsemalt üles ehitama, olen õppinud rohkem eristama olulist ebaolulisest ning loomingulist lähenemist on palju juurde tulnud”

much more about ICT and understand that technical issues can occur very often. The teachers have learned about many different online learning environments and navigating between them. Several teachers noted that they have learned to be more flexible and patient and they have also adjusted their work and requirements to students accordingly. Most of the respondents mentioned their improvement on performance in front of a camera and better skills to record and carry out video lessons.

2.3 Interviews` informants and method

Qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews which allowed the informants to express freely their opinions and attitudes towards distance teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic. The interview questions were open-ended to receive longer answers. The first interview was conducted face-to-face as a pilot to understand the shortcomings of the interview structure and adjust the possible follow-up questions but mostly they were carried out online via the Zoom environment in February 2021. One informant answered in a written form to all interview questions.

The interviews were conducted with 9 EFL teachers who teach in 7-9th grade in different schools in different parts of Estonia. The convenience sampling strategy (Dörnyei 2007) was used as a less complicated and prompt option. Five teachers were researchers` acquaintances and the rest were recommended by their colleagues.

All of the informants were women, varied in their length of employment and are currently working in public schools. The smallest school was with around 80 students in total and the largest school represented was with 1300 students in total (see figure 11). The teachers were from Harjumaa, Viljandimaa, Tartumaa, Pärnumaa, Järvamaa and Raplamaa.

Figure 11. Overview of the interview informants

Size of the school	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
up to 100	Järvamaa	Raplamaa	Järvamaa
around 300	Harjumaa	Tartumaa	Harjumaa
over 1000	Pärnumaa	Viljandimaa	Tartumaa

The interviews lasted 15-30 minutes and informants were notified about the topic beforehand. All of the nine informants were explained about the purpose of the interview. They agreed to participate and gave their consent to recording the interview. While conducting the interview, eight key questions were used and additional five supporting questions were asked. The questions were as follows:

1. Did you practise remote English teaching before the pandemic?
 - 1.1. Have you heard or read about remote teaching before?
2. How clear were the instructions from the educational institution concerning the?
 - 2.1. How well did you understand the expectations for teachers?
3. How did the school administration support you?
 - 3.1. Was there anything educational institutions could have done differently?
4. How did your colleagues support you?
5. How much time did you spend on planning lessons during remote teaching?
6. How would you assess the students' readiness to learn more independently from home?
 - 6.1. What were the biggest issues?
 - 6.2. How did it influence students' results?
7. What helped you to “survive” the first months?
8. What other topics come to your mind if you think back to spring 2020?

The data was analyzed right after the interview in order to record as many observations as possible about the circumstances and context of the interview.

2.4 Interviews` results

2.4.1 Teachers` readiness to distance education

None of the informants participating in the current research had ever practiced remote English teaching before and most of the teachers had never even heard anything about it. Three informants thought that remote teaching was something used for private lessons or as a part of adult education. One teacher mentioned that she has participated in MOOC courses but had never thought about it as something which could be used with middle and secondary school students. One informant had heard about online seminars and language teachers from different countries who teach remotely. One project was mentioned where small islands in Estonia were looking for English teachers who could teach remotely, but the informant was not involved personally.

2.4.2 Educational institutions` readiness

The majority of the interviewees did not have any clear instructions from their educational institution at first. *“It all went very fast”* and *“it started really suddenly”* were the most common phrases to describe the situation in March 2020. Schools gave teachers much freedom to decide on their own how to approach distance teaching and which methods and solutions to use. A teacher from a school with more than 1000 students confirmed: *“We were allowed to use any devices or environments we found comfortable”*. *“At first they were not clear at all but as the time went on, through practising what work and what doesn't, I developed a new way of thinking and everything became much faster.*

Only then I understood what I was supposed to do,” says a teacher from a school with less than 100 students. Two teachers out of nine replied about the guidelines provided by school: *“Not very clear”* and one teacher from a school with more than 1000 students brought out a more specific time when expectations got more understandable: *“They were a mess, there were no specific guidelines, there was a lot of arguing about grades. There was a lot of conflicting info during the first months. In May they finally figured out”*. *“It took time to get the specific type of rules or recommendations”* replied one of the informants from Viljandimaa. Six interviewees admitted that expectations for them and the nature of the remote teaching got clearer only after a few weeks. Only one teacher from a small school in Järvamaa stated that the teachers at her/his school got clear guidelines and they knew what to do.

In the smaller communities and schools with less than 100 students, the teachers were very closely involved in making decisions for the whole educational institution. *“We decided it all together,”* replied a teacher from Raplamaa. All informants acknowledged that weekly teacher conferences were conducted and guidelines were modified together. In smaller schools, expectations and action plans were agreed collectively on and in schools with more than 500 students, teachers were just expected to *“survive and stay healthy”*.

Mostly, guidelines were sent out via email and/or e-school environment. Two informants, both from Tartumaa, mentioned that there were disagreements about grading students. It was not clearly communicated if teachers should grade independent work and if they should, then in which way. No specific rules in any of the informants' schools were put into place about how often and how long teachers should conduct online classes. At the same time, it was important to keep a neat record in e-school and enter clear instructions for students on time.

All of the informants confirmed that their educational institution supported them

with advice and kind words. The teachers felt that most useful were staff meetings where it was possible to exchange experiences and motivate each other. Simple questions like “how are you doing?” were very important to all English language teachers. Educators were giving hope and positive emotions to each other. Three informants claimed that they felt closer to their colleagues during the spring of 2020 than ever before.

2.4.3 Students` readiness to distance teaching

The majority of the informants were not able to assess unequivocally students' readiness to learn more independently at home. Four informants out of nine claimed that it depended on the student. Students who were motivated in the classroom mostly managed nicely also remotely, but there were some students who disappeared at all and neither submitted tasks nor replied to teachers' messages. Three informants mentioned that it was hard to understand if students were having technical issues, personal problems or just did not want to take part in remote learning. Also, it was mentioned that from a distance, it was much harder to detect if students understood the task they needed to perform. Sometimes the teachers realized the instructions were confusing or lacking information only after their students had submitted the homework. Most of the informants admitted that “gaps” in the English language learning needed to be filled in autumn once they met their students face-to-face.

Biggest issues with students were brought out as follows:

“Some students refused to take part in zoom lessons, some didn't keep to the deadlines, and some forgot to send me their home tasks via email”.

“Some of them disappeared as they are very bad with their time planning”.

“Perhaps I am being unfair but students are not used to learning independently. They need hand holding and we need to tell them what to do and read”.

“I was surprised that they participated at all. I teach classes where motivating students takes a lot of energy. Some of them who did not do anything in the classroom did more from distance. Some did and some went missing. They don't understand what they have to do and they don't say anything. They needed extra guidance. For those who participated, they managed”.

2.4.4 Changes in the way of teaching

Teachers had to change the way they were used to work. *“I tried to get the same amount of work done but parents were complaining that it was too much so I had to slow down,”* said the EFL teacher from Tartumaa. The majority of informants stated that they used materials which were available online and adjusted them to their needs.

Two English teachers out of nine mentioned that they had to think of a new activity which could replace the group work and discussions usually happening in the classroom. Students were divided into smaller groups for participating in online lessons and different kinds of speaking activities were used like creating a story in a chain where everyone can supplement one by one on the previously said. *“ (...) those speaking tasks that they would have done with a partner in a classroom (...) all these tasks had to be taken out from the class context or rearranged in a way they could do it in the Teams environment,”* explained an informant from Järvamaa.

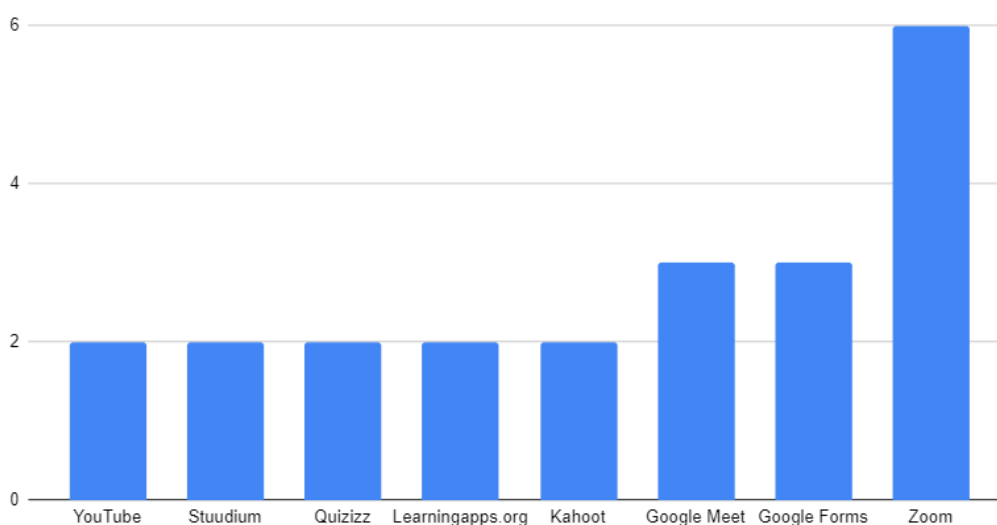
Also, video recordings were used to explain language rules so younger students could watch the video lessons as many times as they needed and older students choose the most convenient time for them to go through the video. Recordings were also used for giving instructions. It was mentioned three times that live online lessons and recordings were shorter than face-to-face lessons.

2.4.5 Online environments

The results about the online environments EFL teachers used were very similar to the survey results collected in spring 2020. The Zoom online environment was mentioned the most during interviews (see figure 12).

The teachers were interacting with each other via online environments like Facebook messenger, email, Whatsapp, Zoom and Intercom.

Figure 12. Overview of online platforms use



2.4.6 Time management

Six informants did not plan any remote classes. Instead, they aimed to check and give feedback to all independent work students were submitting. *“I went a little crazy and I sort of wanted to see everything that the students did independently which meant I had this huge amount of homework to check and to give feedback on but I think because of that I really had very little holes to fill when we came back to school”*, said a teacher from Järvamaa. As the nature of teaching changed and more independent work was expected from students, it took much more time from the teachers to provide feedback to all students. Seven teachers out of nine mentioned that it took extra time to find online

materials, adjust the existing ones and redesign their lesson plans they had used in class.

2.4.7 Teachers' personal attitudes towards distance teaching during pandemic

The interviewed teachers coped with remote education during the Covid-19 pandemic thanks to their colleagues, families and pets. Some set strict rules of not working after 6 PM, some baked and almost everyone spent time outdoors. Half of the language teachers mentioned that the hopes of things getting back to normal soon kept them going. Three informants admitted that they cried together with other colleague(s) after working hours because of the overwork and lockdown situation.

None of the informants were able to bring out any specific actions that the school could have done differently in the beginning of remote teaching, mostly because of this pandemic situation escalated very suddenly for everyone. *“Even the government was not ready at first to take hard decisions and provide clear guidelines,”* says the teacher from Raplamaa.

Two teachers gave their students a chance to interact with each other on non-English related topics in online classes to make sure they could interact with each other.

All of the teachers declared that they missed face-to-face interaction with students and colleagues the most. They missed classroom lessons and the school atmosphere. Words like *“exhausted”* appeared in the interviews more than a few times. *“I felt very tired, constantly working”*, *“I worked during night hours and weekends”*, *“it was very difficult”* were some of the phrases to describe EFL teachers' feelings in spring 2020.

2.5 Discussion

The results of the empirical study show that EFL teachers were not ready to start distance teaching but they adapted fast and managed to continue their work after schools

were closed. UN (2020) brought out that governments have the ongoing duty of care to education staff and obligation to support teachers' readiness to remote education. In Estonia the clear guidelines from schools, who were waiting for the instructions from the government, were not published immediately, so teachers started to experiment with the test error method and developed an efficient distance teaching approach within time.

Support and clear guidelines from school administration were less received globally than in Estonia. In the OECD survey (2020), the majority of respondents all over the world answered that there was not much support from local governments for providing academic instructions. Some respondents mentioned that guidelines from the Ministries were not aligned with the realities of schools. Estonian EFL teachers felt more involved in the decision making around arrangements of distance teaching. Teachers from small communities and schools with fewer students felt especially strongly involved as they were able to create guidelines together with the school administration. The current study does not show whether the teachers were involved due to lack of knowledge on the school management level or because of creating an environment where everyone was free to express their ideas. The majority of Estonian EFL teachers in the current research said that the support and guidelines provided by local governments and the school administration became clearer in time and none of them knew what educational institutions could have done differently. While in the United States (Darling-Hammond et al 2020) one out of five teachers said that they are unlikely to return to schools after Covid-19 remote teaching, Estonian teachers felt stronger to continue educating their language learners with improved digital skills and better time management competency.

There were many changes that teachers needed to implement while forced into remote teaching. Classes moved to virtual learning environments and teachers needed to find the best suitable way to carry out teaching online. Online environments are very

important (JRC 2020) to facilitate remote lessons, giving access to educational resources and in connecting students with teachers. Estonian EFL teachers used mostly free versions of online environments and avoided, where possible, time taking login procedures. They tried to work with simple websites where advanced digital skills are not required from students and systems can tolerate high usage. Most of the teachers used the Zoom online platform to conduct online classes (Johnson 2020, Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020). Finnish teachers preferred Google Meet and MS Teams which they confirmed not using before the Covid-19 pandemic (Rekola, Siltanen 2021).

The majority of Estonian EFL teachers explained that they needed to adjust the way they were giving instructions – guidelines need to be more thoroughly explained and very simple, so everyone could understand them clearly. Also, video recordings were made so students could choose the time to study and rewatch if needed. Finnish English language teachers increased the submission of assignments, video material and written tasks. For some teachers, there was a notable decrease in interactional exercises, as they felt that they were difficult to facilitate in the online environment (Rekola, Siltanen 2021). The Estonian EFL teachers who participated in the current research said that they conducted shorter online classes/meetings than they would have in the classroom. Teaching communication skills from distance occurred to be the most difficult part for EFL teachers. Rekola and Siltanen (2021) confirm that Finnish EFL teachers struggled with developing students' speaking skills remotely and many Estonian English teachers mentioned spending more time on figuring out how to involve students to communicate. Some teachers divided language classes into smaller groups so that they could practice speaking in online environments more smoothly. They also used games where all the students needed to speak in "chains".

Remote teaching was more time consuming as the majority of teachers confirmed that they had had an increased workload. In the research of Tallinn public schools (Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020) two-thirds of the teachers noted that their workload increased with distance teaching and Lepp et al's (2021) study, feedback to students was highlighted as the most time consuming task during distance learning. In the global survey (MacIntyre 2020) most of the language teachers said that an increased workload was the most stressful experience during the first months of the pandemic. Estonian EFL teachers mentioned that they spent most of their time on giving instructions and feedback to students. As the learning was done independently, individual feedback was expected by students. Almost 200 respondents out of 761 (Eisenschmidt, Granström 2020) spend more than four hours per day to assess and give feedback to students. Many participants of the current study admitted the work setup being very overwhelming and some gave up on giving feedback to all the tasks students performed autonomously.

EFL teachers were not ready for distance teaching because the support from school administrations was not provided fast enough (UNESCO 2020), students were not prepared for learning independently and not all teachers had the digital skills to adjust language learning into VLEs. Managing the interaction part where development of communication skills are highly dependent on synchronous communication was especially hard. The informants of the current survey and the participants in the interviews were hopeful about the future. Many teachers mentioned to have grown in the process, and to have developed their digital and time management skills. They learned how to handle their workload and managed to be more efficient, although it took them time.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of current research was to investigate EFL teachers' readiness to remote teaching during the first months of Covid-19 pandemic in spring 2020 in Estonia. This thesis analysed the support provided to teachers by educational institutions and colleagues. Detected online environments teachers felt more comfortable using and overall appreciation of students readiness. Study investigated teachers' workload and challenges during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mixed methods were used to investigate EFL teachers' readiness for remote education. An online survey was sent to more than 100 English teachers all over Estonia and interviews with 9 EFL teachers were conducted. The survey questionnaire was filled by 99 English language educators and all counties of Estonia were represented. Interviews with open ended questions were conducted with teachers from froms 7-9. The informants were from 6 different counties of Estonia and from 3 types of schools (up to 100 students, around 300 students and over 1000 students).

The EFL teachers were asked about their previous experience with distance teaching and their digital skills. The author was interested in understanding the support offered by school administrations and students' readiness for distance learning. Changes in the way of teaching during the pandemic and the new methods teachers experimented with were studied. Most popular online environments were found and time management during the distance teaching was investigated.

While teachers globally did not receive much support from the local governments and it seems like guidelines from the Ministries were not aligned with the realities of schools, Estonian teachers were mostly pleased to have a right to participate in creating the guidelines. Even though there was much confusion about how remote education should be conducted, Estonian EFL teachers managed to figure it out mostly by trial and error .

According to many studies, students' readiness for distance teaching appeared to be minimal. They struggled mostly with understanding instructions. Some students were not able to motivate themselves enough to participate in remote learning, but according to Estonian EFL teachers' opinion most of them who participated in the learning processes managed generally well.

According to the current research results much changed in the way of teaching. Classroom materials needed to be adjusted to distance teaching and students needed more clear instructions and guidelines. Exercises for improving communication skills needed to be changed for online environments. Some teachers used video recordings which allowed students to watch them whenever they feel more comfortable. Shortened online classes and more specific instructions were applied.

Many teachers, who participated in the current study, had an increased workload during the remote teaching period. Feedback to students was highlighted as a task that consumed most time. Some teachers gave detailed feedback to all the independent work students did, but many gave up checking everything as it was very overwhelming. Most of the teachers were spending extra time to find online materials and redesigning their classroom lesson plans. The majority of the participants in this study confirmed that they learned much while trying to manage with remote teaching. Many teachers mentioned improving their digital skills and knowledge about how to use different VLEs. Almost all of the teachers admitted that they learned how to manage their time better and evolved a more flexible way of teaching.

In the current study teachers mentioned missing classroom settings where instructions were easier to provide and immediate feedback could be given. Teachers were exhausted and many teachers in the United States' research even considered not returning to school after the spring 2020. The Estonian EFL teachers were more positive and waiting

to return to the normal classroom setup.

The current study confirms that most of the EFL teachers from public schools had never experienced remote teaching and they were unprepared to start educating students from a distance. Guidelines and further actions were agreed mostly mutually with school administrations, but the process took longer than a few weeks after the lockdown in spring 2020. It took time to adjust and many teachers were just experimenting to find the best solution for remote teaching.

The research reveals that students were not prepared to study independently and the instructions were not always clear for them. Therefore, the teachers needed to adjust their methods – guidelines to their students were given in a more detailed and simplified way. Online classes were often shorter than the usual 45 minute language class and the time was mainly spent on explaining the instructions for independent study. Some of the EFL teachers tried to develop communication skills in English, but many claimed it was difficult remotely.

While the current study pinpoints several issues related to remote teaching, there is still need for further research. New methods and details of the changes that teachers applied need to be studied in depth. Also it would be necessary to understand what methods were successful and what did not work so well.

Overall EFL teachers tried their best to continue teaching remotely; they were more flexible and did their best to not overwhelm themselves and their students. Complications around time management were the most impactful issues during Covid-19 distance teaching in spring 2020. It was a rough and sudden start but EFL teachers in Estonia managed to continue educating language learners and develop themselves in the process. Many teachers learned to plan and manage their time better not only in the work environment but also in their personal lives. The Covid-19 pandemic forced many people

to come out of their comfort zone. Hopefully the virus can be defeated soon and evolution in education can proceed in a more stable pace.

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APPENDIX

Original survey questions:

1. Millises maakonnas õpetate inglise keelt?
2. Millises klassis õpetate inglise keelt?
3. Kuidas hindate iseenda valmisolekut distantsõppele üleminekul?
4. Kuidas hindate kooli valmisolekut distantsõppele üleminekul?
5. Kuidas hindate õpilaste valmisolekut distantsõppele üleminekul?
6. Kuidas hindate inglise keele distantsõppe võimalusi?
7. Milliseid veebikeskkondi olete distantsõppe perioodil inglise keele tundide raames kasutanud? Palun loetle.
8. Milliseid probleeme on tekkinud antud keskkondi kasutades?
9. Kui palju kulutate keskmiselt aega ühe akadeemilise tunni ettevalmistamiseks kaugõppes?
10. Kas jätkate veebilahenduste integreerimisega oma ainetundidesse rohkem pärast distantsõppe lõppemist?
11. Mida olete antud olukorras, kus õpetajad on olnud sunnitud planeerima ja läbi viima tunde distantsõppevormis, õppinud?
12. Kuidas hindasite oma digipädevust ENNE viiruse tõttu kaugõppele üleminekut?
13. Kuidas hindate oma digipädevust PÄRAST viiruse tõttu kaugõppele üleminekut?

Translation into English:

1. In what county are you teaching English?
2. In what form(s) are you teaching English?
3. How would you assess your readiness to distance teaching?
4. How would you assess schools` readiness to distance education?
5. How would you assess students` readiness to distance learning?
6. How would you assess possibilities to teach English from distance?
7. What kind of websolutions/sites have you used during the distance teaching period?
8. What kind of problems have you faced using online environments for teaching?
9. How much time have you spent to prepare a lesson on average?
10. Are you planning to continue with ICT solutions after returning to classroom teaching?
11. What have you learned from the distance teaching period?
12. How would you assess your digital skills before pandemic?
13. How would you assess your digital skills after pandemic?

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL
ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Marie Tõnts

Remote Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic on the Example of Estonian EFL Teachers of Forms 7-9

Distantsõpe Covid-19 pandeemia ajal 7-9. klassi inglise keele õpetajate näitel Eestis

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Annotatsioon:

Covid-19 pandeemia on tekitanud enneolematu olukorra üle maailma, kus kogu ühiskond pidi hoidma distantsi, et viiruse levik tõkestada. 2020. aasta kevadel sulgesid praktiliselt kõik õppeasutused üle maailma oma ukсед ja õppetegevus pidi jätkuma distantsilt. Käesolev uurimus keskendub Eesti inglise keele õpetajate valmisolekule alustada distantsõpet. Magistritöö selgitab välja, kas ja kui palju tundsid õpetajad koolipoolset toetust, kuivõrd olid õpilased valmis iseseisvaks õppeks ja tuvastab põhilised valupunktid ajaplaneerimisel. Lisaks on toodud välja ka õpetajate hinnang enda digipädevusele ja enim levinud muudatused ning takistused distantsõppe vältel.

Esimene osa uurimustööst annab ülevaate sarnastest publikatsioonidest, mis keskenduvad õpetajate kogemustele pandeemia ajal üle kogu maailma. Põhirõhk on Euroopal ning Eestil. Teine, empiiriline osa, tutvustab metoodikat ja uurimuses osalejaid ning leitud tulemusi.

Uurimuse tulemustest selgus, et inglise keele õpetajad Eestis, kes õpetavad 7-9. klassides, ei olnud varemalt kokku puutunud distantsõppega. Õpetajad olid rahul koolide toetusega, kuid harjumine uue olukorraga võttis aega. Enamasti katsetati iseseisvalt distantsilt õppetööd tõhustada, kuid toetuti palju ka kolleegidele. Suurem osa õpetajatest arvas, et õpilased ei olnud valmis antud olukorras iseseisvalt edukalt õppima. Kõige suurimaks probleemiks osutus ajaplaneerimine. Distantsõpe on oluliselt aeganõudvam, kui harjumuspärane klassiruumis õpe. Paljud õpetajad mainisid kõige aeganõudvamateks tegevusteks tundide ümber planeerimise, instruktsioonide andmise ja tagasisidestamise.

Märksõnad: Covid-19, haridus, võõrkeeleõpetajad, inglise keele õpetajad, distantsõpe.

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18.05.2021