

Finnish good practice case: Experiences and examples of virtual teaching in a lower secondary school

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Arja Kangasharju

Background information

- Two distance education periods in our lower secondary school in Espoo (Spring 2020 and 2021, 6-8 weeks)
- Students: 13-16 years old (7th - 9th graders)
- Subject: Finnish language and literature

Digital tools for virtual lessons

All the material for my lessons are in **Google Classroom** -> easy to use also during virtual lessons, because the students already know how to use it

All the material in the same place

The students find the materials whenever they want to study them again

It is easy to share homework in Google Classroom, and give and get feedback

Google Meet: the students find link for the lessons from Google Classroom

Some teachers used Microsoft Teams -> the students said that it would be easier for them if all the teachers used the same applications



Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Forms, [Kahoot](#), [Padlet](#)
[Mentimeter](#) etc.



-> individual and collaborative working, tests, social
interaction

Challenges of virtual lessons

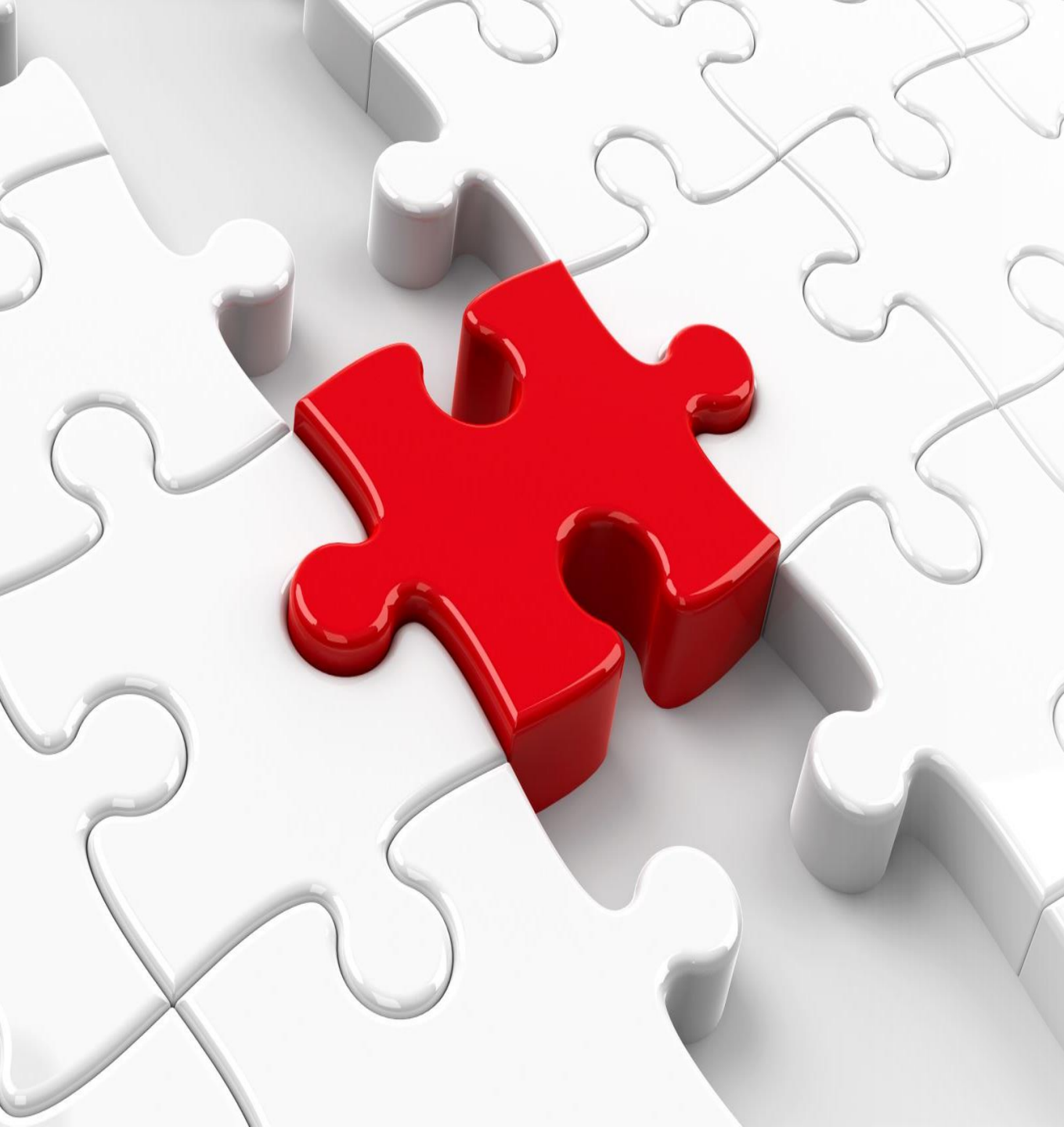
- The difficulty of some students to focus on the essentials
- The younger students started to play with the Meet links (e.g. invite strangers to the lessons), and I started to hide the link and published it just before the lesson
- Too much things to do during the same lesson, a sense of urgency
- Lack of self-discipline with some students
- Lack of interaction
- How to increase informal social interaction?

- -> On the other hand, young people generally have a positive attitude towards distance education.

Structure of my lessons

- Greeting each student by name when they enter the Meet
- Small talk, creating a positive atmosphere:
 - [mood pictures](#) (the teacher selects different pictures from which the students choose one according to their mood and type the number of the picture to the chat)
 - Mentimeter (feelings, expectations etc. by word clouds)
 - Padlet (students can load their own photo of feelings or expectations etc)





- Linking to the previous lesson, examining homework (e.g. [Kahoot](#) of the previous lesson)
- Introducing materials
- Instructions for the student - what, where, how
- Tasks
- Rhythm of the lesson: first together with the teacher (Meet), time for working individually, alternating work done alone and together, group works
- Discussion, social interaction – ask students to turn on the camera
- New homework and linking to the next lesson

Video

- **Watching a video together** in Meet and discussing about it
- **Tutorial video** (educational videos about grammar, writing instructions etc.)
- **Video as a homework:** An example: The lesson covered writing a film review using the textbook and the teacher's materials in Google Classroom. The teacher had chosen documentaries that were free to watch (copyright). Each student chose one of the suggested options, watched it at home and made a film review based on the document she/he had watched. The review was written on Google Docs in Google Classroom.
- **Students' own videos:** The students were given the task of shooting an informational video about environmental protection. (The task is suitable, for example, for practicing the vocabulary of foreign languages. The task takes the student away from the computer.)

Interview tasks

- The students were given the task of contacting a relative whom they have not seen recently due to the Covid 19 and lock down. The relative was interviewed and the interview was returned in writing. (during the beginning of the lesson the teacher gave instructions of interviewing a person and writing an interview)

Data search and presentations

Presentation of a social media personality

- The students searched for information about a social media personality on the internet and made a written presentation with pictures on Google Slides. (alone)
- Online inquiry process: searching, collecting, analysing and evaluating information

Presentation of cartoonist in pairs:

- A presentation on Google Slides
- File sharing and working together
- The teacher can monitor the students' work and give feedback during the process
- Online reading comprehension whilst searching information and making own presentations on the basis of it
- Learning copyright issues

-> **suitable for many topics**

Reading circles online

- The teachers chose books that could be freely read online, from which each student could choose what they wanted to read. Students who chose the same book formed a reading circle in Google Classroom. The teachers asked questions and gave discussion topics about the books every week. The students read on their own and discussed the books in the reading circle. The evaluation was based on discussion activity.
- In the assignment, argumentation skills are practiced.

Argumentation exercise

- The exercise can be carried out, for example, after reading a short story, but it can also be carried out in connection with reading the entire book.
- After reading the text, students are asked to write a justified comment or argument in a virtual environment about the main character, theme, etc. After this, another student must read the previous opinion and comment on it with justification. The third student reads both of the previous comments and chooses one of them. He should present his reasoned opinion about it, in which he shows that he agrees with the author. It is worth reminding that the message must state with whom the student shares her/his opinion. Finally, everyone reads the whole discussion and writes a final comment (e.g. a summary) in which she/he takes into account the comments of others

Book review on the blog



The teacher creates a blog and invites the students to be its authors. The task is to write a review of a book that was read during the literature course. Before writing, the teacher have taught the special features of both writing a review and writing a blog post.



When everyone's reviews have been published on the blog, you can also easily conduct a peer review of another student's book review, and in this way once again get to know the review as a type of text. Peer evaluation is also done virtually. Google Forms can be used for this, for example.



The student practices public publishing online

Podcasts



- The students had read books of the same genre.
- In the podcast, they discussed the books in small groups.
- In another task, the students were free to choose a topic for their podcast. They discussed, for example, of their favourite online games and introduced them for the class in the podcast.
- The podcasts were recorded using Google Meet, and they were shared in Google Classroom.

Feedback during the project



IN DISTANCE EDUCATION, IT IS RECOMMENDED TO GIVE PROJECT FEEDBACK BY DISCUSSING IN SMALL GROUPS.



THE TEACHER CAN ASK ONE OF THE STUDENTS TO SHARE HER/HIS PROJECT PAPER TO THE OTHERS.



STUDENTS DARE TO ASK QUESTIONS BETTER IN SMALL GROUPS AND LEARN TO GIVE FEEDBACK TO EACH OTHER.

Assessment of the tasks

- Reading circle tasks and discussion tasks (e.g. podcast) were evaluated based on activity in the discussion, and the ability to present and argue
- Videos and presentations were assessed according to content, structure, visual clarity and presentation skills
- Writing tasks were assessed in the normal way (content, structure, language, working on schedule)
- The students got teacher's feedback and evaluation forms online
- The discussion tasks, videos, presentations and project papers included peer assessment and self-assessment (Google Forms)



Exams in distance education

- My students could use a textbook in the exams. For example, a sentence parsing test was as follows:
- Student's instruction: "*Write a coherent and sensible text about 100 words long, in which you tell what thoughts and plans you have regarding next summer and the time after the lock down. - Put to your text at least:*
- *One predicate consisting of several words. Highlight the words with green colour.*
- *One sentence with no subject. Highlight the sentence with yellow colour.*
- *One adverbial expressing place. Highlight it with pink."* (Same way of all sentence members.)
- The student had to keep the camera on while taking the test.
- Also tests where you had to use the internet to search for information (about literature)

Distance lectures and visitors

For example:

Virtual author visits in cooperation with the library

Streamed visits by filmmakers (for schools)

In Finland, some museums organize virtual presentations for schools

Virtual theater performances

The virtual visiting service brings science and research to schools in Finland