

LIFELONG LEARNING AND THE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE:
The significance of studying English
voluntarily at adult age

Master's thesis
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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Opiskelu ja tietoinen oppiminen ovat yhä tärkeämpiä asioita aikuisten elämässä. Elinikäinen oppiminen tarjoaa välineitä, joilla aikuiset pystyvät vastaamaan haasteisiin, joita globaali ja nopeasti muuttuva maailma tarjoaa. Kieli- ja viestintätaitojen kehittäminen aikuisiällä on yksi elinikäisen oppimisen muoto. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena oli selvittää millaisia merkityksiä aikuisopiskelijat antavat aikuisiässä tapahtuville omaehtoisille englannin kielen opinnoilleen sekä millainen rooli englannin kielellä on kyseisten opiskelijoiden elämässä. Tutkimuksessa selvitettiin aikuisopiskelijoiden syitä osallistua Englannin kielen kursseille ja näiden syiden kautta tutkittiin myös opiskelijoiden motivaatiota. Tutkimuksen osallistujat olivat kansalaisopiston englannin kielen alkeis- ja perustason opiskelijoita. Aineisto kerättiin kyselylomakkeella tammikuussa 2014. Kyselyyn vastasi 123 opiskelijaa. Kysely sisälsi monivalintakysymyksiä, avoimia kysymyksiä sekä vapaaehtoisen kirjoitustehtävän aiheesta ”Englannin kieli elämässäni”. Monivalintakysymykset sekä avoimet kysymykset analysoitiin määrällisesti kun taas kirjoitelmien sisältöä analysoitiin laadullisin menetelmin.</p> <p>Tilastollisen aineiston pohjalta tehdyt päätelmät osoittivat, että englannin kielen opinnot koettiin pääasiassa hyödyllisiksi matkailun kannalta. Englantia tarvittiin eniten ulkomailla ja suurin osa (98 %) halusi oppia englantia niin, että pärjää arkipäivän tilanteissa ulkomailla. Myös uusien taitojen oppimista ja niiden sovellettavuutta käytännön tilanteissa pidettiin tärkeinä syinä osallistua opintoihin ja ne olivat myös tärkeimmät hyödyt, joita opinnoista saatiin. 98 % vastaajista ilmoitti opiskelevansa englantia, koska kieli kiinnosti heitä. Tämä tulos osoitti selvää sisäistä kiinnostusta kieltä kohtaan. Ulkoiset vaikuttimet opiskelijoiden motivaatiossa olivat kuitenkin myös vahvoja, mikä kertoo osaltaan siitä, että Englannilla on selkeästi käytännöllinen rooli. Opinnoilta toivottiin eniten hyviä valmiuksia sujuvaan keskusteluun englannin kielellä. Laadullista aineistoa tarkasteltiin kahden pääteeman kautta: Englannin kielen tarve ja kohtaamispaikat sekä suhtautuminen englannin kieleen ja opiskeluun. Tulokset osoittivat, että opiskelijat suhtautuvat englannin kieleen ja sen opiskeluun yleisesti ottaen erittäin positiivisesti. Uusien asioiden oppiminen koettiin palkitsevana ja kiinnostavana. Englannin kielen rooli matkailun kielenä korostui myös laadullisessa aineistossa. Moni ei ollut opiskellut englantia kouluvuosina ollenkaan ja kielen opiskelu täytti yhden pitkäaikaisen haaveen. Tutkimus tarjoaa ajankohtaista tietoa aikuisten toiveista ja tavoitteista liittyen heidän englannin kielen opintoihin. Tutkimuksen tulokset ovat hyödyllisiä niille tahoille, jotka suunnittelevat ja järjestävät englannin opetusta aikuisille.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing and continuously reforming world learning has become an action that not only concerns the young and the uneducated but also adults and older population with formal schooling, education and occupations. Lifelong learning is a concept that has become a significant part of the modern world in recent decades. The benefits of lifelong learning are various as the European Commission (2013) lists in their lifelong learning policy the most important aspects of adult education: improving competitiveness and employability, enhancing personal development and active citizenship. On a larger scale, adult education and lifelong learning are essential for economic growth and global competitiveness. On the other hand, lifelong learning is considered to have positive benefits for individuals as they obtain new skills, participate in social events and become more competent. That further help build their self-confidence and thus well-being.

According to the Ministry of Education and Culture (2013a), half of the Finnish working age population (1.7 million people) takes part in adult education and training annually. In voluntary adult education people have various motives to participate. The growing and ever changing demands of working life is one the most common reasons to obtain new skills and qualifications or further enhance one's proficiency. One essential skill in today's globalized world is language skills and considering the role of English as the language of the world, especially English skills are valued and considered almost as a requisite these days. This can also be seen in the statistics as English is the most popular language studied in the adult education centers across Finland (Sartoneva 2007: 226). Adult education centers, as well as numerous other non-formal institutions offer a great variety of English courses from basic level to advanced level courses. The growing demand for these courses reflects the increasingly important role of English in Finland.

In the field of adult education research, the focus has recently been on studying vocational adult education whereas the study of liberal adult education today seems to be almost nonexistent (Pantzar 2007: 45). Vocational adult education is education that is designed to enhance adults' professional skills, provide new qualifications and degrees (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013b). According to the European Commission (2012), liberal adult education offers non-degree studies that do not lead to qualifications. The role of liberal adult education as an education provider in the Finnish education system is highly significant as in 2010 the number of adults participating in liberal adult education was one million people (Statistics Finland 2011). In other words, one million of the 1.7 million adults who take part in adult education annually are studying within liberal adult education. It is a notable number and therefore more attention should be directed to investigating the present situation of liberal adult education system.

In Finland, there is little up-to-date research on the impacts of adult education on individuals' lives. The primary focus of the present study is to discover the significance of voluntary studying at adult age and especially the significance of studying English. Since most of the language training that does not lead to a qualification takes place within liberal adult education, mostly in adult education centers (Sartoneva 2007: 224-225), the present study focuses on investigating the adult learners at adult education centers. Taking into consideration the little research that has been conducted on liberal adult education in recent years, the present study is needed as it will shed light on the present situation of adult education centers. Firstly, the present study aims to discover the overall significance of studying at adult age and to discover the short-term and long-term benefits that studying can offer. Secondly, the present study aims to provide an overview of the adult English language learners' profiles, their reasons to participate, desired goals and impacts related to the studying. Related to the reasons to participate, the present study examines the adult learners' motivation, whether it is more *intrinsic* or *extrinsic* by nature and whether the learners are more *integratively* or *instrumentally* oriented. Intrinsic

and extrinsic refer to the division of studying for the pure pleasure of studying, and studying for some other purposes (Deci et al. 1991: 328). Integrative and instrumental are more related to the purposes of studying; whether English is studied due to interest towards the language or the native speakers and their culture or whether for some other reasons that have little connection with the target language's culture and its speakers (Gardner 1985: 11). It also explores whether there are differences women and men's answers in relation to their reasons to participate and the goals they have for learning English. In addition to discovering the significance of studying English, the present study examines the adult learners' relationship with English; the attitudes towards the language and learning it.

The present study is a mixed-method study; the data was gathered with a questionnaire that included multiple choice questions, open-ended questions and a short writing task. The data from the multiple choice questions was analyzed statistically producing only quantitative information. The data from the open-ended questions and from the writings was analyzed by using content analysis that produced both quantitative and qualitative information.

The present study begins by introducing the idea of lifelong learning and how adult education in Finland is organized to follow the principals and goals of lifelong learning (chapter 2). Adult education is discussed in theory as well as in practice. The various forms of adult education in Finland are introduced and the focus is particularly on liberal adult education and adult education centers as those institutions are the main interest of the present study. Chapter 3 will shed light on both the global role of English and the role of English in Finland. The methodological framework of the present study will be presented in chapter 4 and the results of the study in chapter 5. The main findings will be discussed in more detail in chapter 6 as well as the limitations of the study and suggestions for further research. Chapter 7 concludes the study.

2 LIFELONG LEARNING AND ADULT EDUCATION

In this chapter I will introduce the most relevant theoretical background, concepts and previous research. First, the concepts related to lifelong learning will be introduced and discussed. Lifelong learning will be observed from the perspective of globalization and how it has created completely new demands for companies and their employees. Considering the topic of the present study, the focus will be on the growing demand for language skills and its relation to lifelong learning. Second, the most central features of adult learning and education will be introduced; what is adult education and how does adults' learning differ from children's or young people's learning. Third, I will take a look at the adult education system in Finland and discuss previous research on the significance of liberal adult education for individuals.

2.1 The idea of learning across the lifespan

The discussion of *lifelong learning* is often characterized by several occurring themes: development, growth, activity, competitiveness, improvement and well-being, just to mention a few. These themes reflect the general mentality of the world as the global objective is to grow, continuously to improve and to ensure competitiveness (Edwards 2003: 7). Development is a necessity in order to succeed, or even to 'do well'. Lifelong learning is only one part of this mindset. It has arisen from the idea of development that seems to dominate the present global discussion.

Concepts such as *lifelong learning*, *learning societies* and *learning organizations* are essential part of the post-wars world where growth requires constant development and acquiring new skills. Tight (2002: 38) points out that lifelong learning and learning societies as concepts appeared during the 1960' and the 1970's in consequence of the rapid technological, social and economic change on a global level. Edwards (2003: 7) notes that since the economic crises in the 70's lifelong learning has been considered necessary for successful economies.

Developing learning opportunities for adults has been the main interest of international organizations, employers, national governments and trade unions (Edwards 2003: 7).

According to Longworth and Davies (1996: 9), the concept of *learning* has slowly become more complex and wide as we have entered the new era of information societies. Training is no longer considered to be targeted only to the young and it is not considered to have some predetermined impacts. Learning in the 21st century is an ongoing process and an important part of self-development. Cohen and Leicester (2003: 65) note that the idea of self-development is a global ideal that has overpowered the old idea of not developing one's knowledge after formal education. This change in the way of thinking has generated a new concept of learning societies which describes well the present view of the importance of lifelong learning and training. Tight (2002: 39) points out that the original idea of lifelong learning that raised interest in the 60' and 70's and that still dominates today was that learning should be available for everyone throughout their entire lives.

In addition to learning being a privilege, it is also a necessity. Learning and acquiring knowledge are the two most important skills people today should possess in order to survive in the changing social environment and with the changing knowledge. Change is the keyword here; as Jarvis (2010: 29) points out, "the more rapidly knowledge changes, the more the recipients have to learn and the more society emphasizes this need to learn." In other words, people adapt to social change by learning and the more people learn the more they themselves are creating a learning society, a society that revolves around knowledge and information. Jarvis (ibid.) notes that there are two types of knowledge that have a rather different nature. The first is the knowledge necessary for social and cultural life and the other is knowledge necessary for work life. Jarvis (ibid.) explains that the latter is characterized by rapid changes, continuous new information and thus fast-paced learning. The knowledge necessary for social and cultural life changes more slowly and the learning is

less visible as learning the structures of the society is something we consider to be self-evident (Jarvis 2010: 29).

Collin and Paloniemi (2007: 9) state that lifelong learning can be viewed from two different angles or perspectives that are linked together. One is the perspective of society and the other the perspective of the individual. On the one hand, lifelong learning is about ensuring the competitiveness of society and on the other hand, lifelong learning is considered to spring from individual's needs to develop oneself and from an innate need to learn. Tight (2002: 43) notes that the concept of learning organizations, as well as the concept of lifelong learning, has evolved from the international question of survival in the competition. Organizations have to realize the importance of training their staff in the rapidly changing business world in order to stay afloat. Competition between companies is intense as more competitors enter the scene. Longworth and Davies (1996: 57-58) state that successful companies, whether large or small, have to be able to respond to the occurring changes and challenges of the present day. Since a company is only as good as its staff, successful companies value their employees and ensure their development by investing in their training and learning.

Sajavaara and Salo (2007: 233) point out that globalization requires greater knowledge of and specialization to certain areas of business. Each country and company has to be the experts in their domain to be able to survive in the international competition. In addition, Sajavaara and Salo (2007: 233) highlight that employees in the future are multi-skilled people who can be retrained to new tasks in a short period of time. Therefore, the significance of lifelong learning will be much greater as people need to acquire new skills together with changing work assignments (Sajavaara and Salo 2007: 234). Two of the most essential skills that future employees will need in the globalizing world are language and communication skills. Sajavaara and Salo (2007: 235, 243) explain that language skills are already recognized as part of any professional ability. However, in the future their role will be much more prominent as workplaces

become more diverse ethnically and culturally. According to Sajavaara and Salo (2007: 237), since Finland became a member of the European Union in 1995, the need for more diverse and more profound language skills has grown significantly as distances diminish and people travel more. Language skills are seen essential in creating relationships and networks and obtaining and diversifying knowledge (Sajavaara and Salo 2007: 237).

The chapters above attempt to explain the magnitude of lifelong learning as a concept. The idea of lifelong learning has spread to organizations and it has generated an ambitious idea of learning societies. So far, lifelong learning has been discussed only from the perspective of society and economy where learning is somewhat compulsory. The staff training organized by employers is usually designed to develop employees' skills for some specific tasks or new profession. Lifelong learning in this context is somewhat mandatory and does not spring from individuals' need to learn and develop themselves. It springs from the companies' need to stay competitive. However, lifelong learning can be viewed from another perspective, the perspective of individual and self-motivated learning, as was brought forth above. People do learn throughout their entire lives. Often the learning is un-conscious and takes place in various situations where learning is not instructed. A great number of Finnish adults attend annually some type of instructed learning that is not mandatory. For various reasons adults want to take part in studies that do not necessarily have any connection to working life. Lifelong learning has different significance for individuals, and in the case of the present study, the focus is particularly on discovering the significance of self-motivated learning during adulthood.

2.2 Adult education in theory: goals, motivation and features of learning

Adult education is a broad concept that can be divided into parts. Looking into the features of adult learning, the purposes, goals, motives and types of motivation and learning will help us understand the nature of adult education

and learning and the differences between childhood learning and adult learning.

The European Commission (2012) states in their web page of adult education in Finland that the main purpose of adult education is to enable lifelong learning for adult population, and thus, enable them to develop their skills and knowledge. Therefore, adults' learning is strongly defined by the adults' own needs for development and self-improvement. Alanen (1988: 15) defines four features of adult education that differ from children's or young people's education and learning; first, adult education is education designed and targeted at adults. Second, adults study according to their own goals. Third and fourth, education is provided by some organization and it takes place outside standard education. Alanen (1988: 18) points out that although learning is present in everyday life, learning as a concept in adult education includes aspects such as goal-oriented, planned and conscious action towards some specific target(s). Studying is structured and supervised and the contents and the tuition are designed for adult learners.

Jarvis (2010: 42) explains that adults' learning can take place in *formal, non-formal* or *informal* situations. Formal refers to an official education system where learning is guided by a syllabus. Non-formal refers to learning that is conscious and takes place for example in the work place or in liberal adult education where the learning is instructed and goal-oriented. According to Jarvis (2010: 63), informal learning refers to everyday learning or self-directed learning. We learn from other people, in social interaction and in everyday situations (Jarvis 2010: 64). In addition, people acquire new skills independently, alone and together with other people. Jarvis (2010: 42) points out that in addition to learning being formal, non-formal or informal, it can be *intended* or *incidental*. Intended refers to learning that is expected and can be somewhat predicted to take place whereas incidental learning can occur unexpectedly and it may not even be intended to happen (Jarvis 2010: 42). For example, in a formal learning situation where the instructor is teaching the alphabets to primary school

pupils, the pupils are consciously learning the alphabets and if they do learn them, then the learning has been intended. However, a child that learns the alphabets very quickly may also learn that others may not learn as quickly as she or he does and that people seem to learn at different pace. This realization is not the intended learning outcome; it is incidental and happens alongside with the intended learning.

Terms such as “self-directed” and “goal-oriented” have been used here to describe the learning process of adults. According to Tuomisto (1992: 93), participating in adult education can be a voluntary decision where people can choose what they want to learn, if anything at all. As an opposite is a situation where education is an obligation and the learner’s own interests are not essential. However, it is assumed that in the case of adult education centers, adults are studying voluntarily and that their learning is self-directed and at some level goal-oriented. Goals are usually related to reasons to perform a particular action. Furthermore, reasons are usually related to motivation, as Gardner explains (1985: 50). Since the aim of the present study is to discover the reasons why adults take part in adult education, it is relevant to talk about their motivation as well. Asking “Why do you study English?” is the same as asking “What motivates you to study English?” Therefore motivation will be discussed here also. Gardner (1985: 50) notes that the two most fundamental features of a motivated person are that he or she is goal-oriented and shows some effort to reach the goal. Motivation is, however, a much more complex issue, and in this context the concept of motivation will be discussed on a rather general level dividing it into two main categories or *orientations*. Dörnyei (2001) and Deci et al. (1991) call these categories *intrinsic* and *extrinsic*, whereas Gardner (1985) calls them *integral* and *instrumental* orientations. Despite the name the terms signify the same aspects of motivation with minor differences that will be discussed below.

Self-motivated learning is, as it states, learning where one participates based on personal interests and reasons. What motivates adults to participate in adult

education is a vast question. Dörnyei (2001: 27) discusses the features and differences between the two most well-known orientations of motivation: *intrinsic* and *extrinsic motivation*. Intrinsic motivation occurs when a certain behavior is carried out for the pure sake of satisfaction or pleasure of doing so, whereas extrinsic motivation deals with receiving some type of “extrinsic reward” or attempt to avoid some unwanted consequences that would follow if a certain activity would not be performed. Similarly, Tuomisto (1992: 111) presents that learning can be divided into two categories based on the function and significance that learning has on individuals. On one end is learning as an *intrinsic value*, and on the other end is learning as an *instrument*. Intrinsic motivation can be connected to learning as an intrinsic value, and in a similar way extrinsic motivation can be connected to learning as an instrument or instrumental value.

This division into intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is part of the *self-determination theory* (Deci et al. 1991). Intrinsic motivation is considered to be the ultimate form of self-determination since the behavior completely and purely proceed from the individual and from his or hers inner desires of performing the action whereas extrinsically motivated people find their motivation from some external source such as gaining a reward or avoiding punishment (Deci et al. 1991: 328-329). Extrinsically motivated behaviors are thus not as self-determined since performance is regulated by some external force or motive. However, every action performed voluntarily and not out of total obligation or against one’s will is self-determined, regardless of intrinsic or extrinsic motivation.

Gardner (1985: 51) states that the type of motivation for language learning can be defined by discovering the goals and reasons to study the language, since the goals and reasons are tightly connected to motivation. If the reasons are related to the actual learning and to the goals, they can be classified under two main categories (Gardner 1985: 51). As discussed above, Gardner (1985) talks about two types of orientations of motivation which are quite similar to the intrinsic

and extrinsic division. Integrative orientation is related to a person's need to learn the language in order to be able to interact with the people of that speech community (Gardner 1985: 11). The reasons to study a particular language are therefore to do with having interest in the language and in the native speakers and their culture. On the other hand, instrumental orientation is related to more practical reasons that have little connection with the native speakers or their culture (Gardner 1985: 11). These instrumental reasons are quite similar to the reasons listed above related to the extrinsic motivation. For example, one may be learning English in order to obtain a job or better salary. These reasons show no interest towards the target language or its speakers. Gardner (1985: 12) points out that although integrative and instrumental orientations have been compared to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, they are not equivalent. Both integrative and instrumental orientations are related with some other goal than the pure pleasure of learning. For example, a person might study English because he or she wants to travel to England and be able to speak with the native speakers. The type of orientation is thus integrative (according to Gardner 1985) but the person's motivation is extrinsic by nature (according to Deci et al. 1991). Therefore, integrative and intrinsic do not signify the same. Gardner (1985: 12) states that "both the integrative and instrumental orientations are extrinsic in that they indicate that the language is being learned in order to satisfy some goals". However, extrinsic and instrumental are seen to share so many similar features that in the present study they are considered as the same although extrinsic can be seen as the main category and integrative and instrumental as the two sub-categories under extrinsic.

The present study focuses on observing adults who are studying the English language voluntarily on their own time in an instructed non-formal environment; in adult education centers. The adult education system and where adult education centers are placed in it are introduced and explained in the following sub-chapter (2.3) and in figure 1. What is relevant here is that the adults who take part in the courses offered by adult education centers are there free-willingly and their learning is thus automatically self-determined. How

strongly self-determined and whether more intrinsically motivated or extrinsically motivated the adults are to study English and whether their motivation is more integrative or instrumentally directed are the issues the present study is set out to discover.

2.3 Forms of adult education and lifelong learning in Finland

Figure 1 shows that adult education in Finland can be divided into labor market training, staff training and self-motivated learning. Self-motivated learning can be further divided into formal education that takes place within the official education system and liberal adult education. As mentioned above staff training is organized by employers. Labor market training is administered by the Ministry of Employment and the Economy and it is targeted at adults over 20 years of age who are unemployed or in danger of becoming unemployed (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013b).

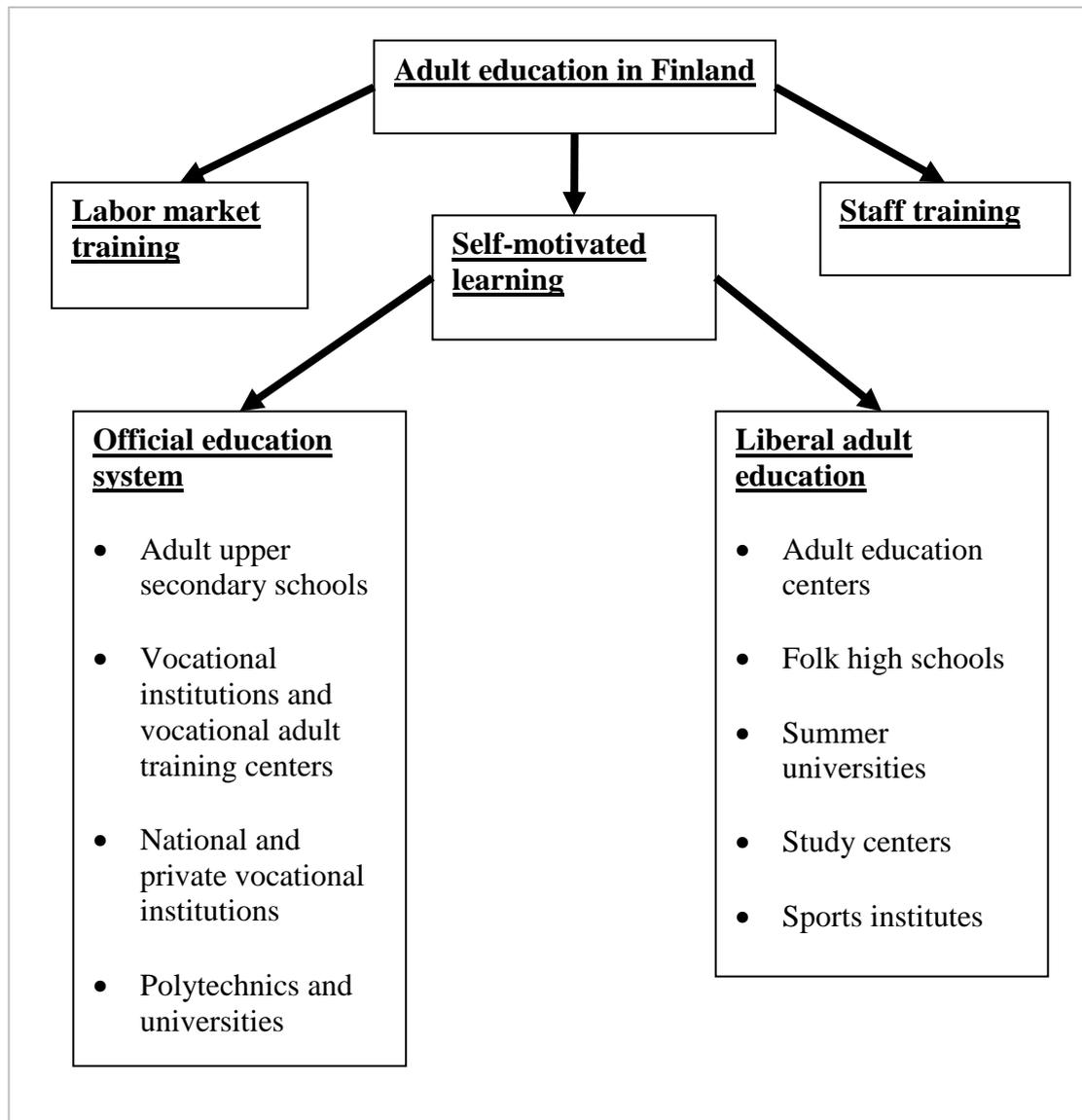


Figure 1. Adult education in Finland (adapted from Ministry of Education and Culture 2013b).

Self-motivated adult education is often divided into general adult education and vocational adult education. General studies and vocational studies are organized within both the official education system and within liberal adult education. According to Ministry of Education and Culture (2013a), these can be non-degree studies or studies that lead to qualification. The purpose of vocational adult education is to enhance and maintain adults' professional skills and employability. Liberal adult education, which we will observe more closely in the following chapter, provides non-formal studies with subjects that mostly relate to citizenship skills and hobbies but can also have some connections to work life and to the skills needed in one's profession. In general, people attend

liberal adult education voluntarily and choose their studies based on their own personal interests (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013b).

2.3.1 Liberal adult education and adult education centers

The beginning of liberal adult education in Finland dates back to the end of the 19th century. Traditionally education was mainly provided and organized by the church but after the law of the compulsory education was enacted in 1921, the church lost its role as the main educator of the citizens (Karjalainen 1984: 14, 17). Tuomisto (1992: 70-73) notes that the oldest form of liberal adult education included folk high schools, adult education centers and education provided by several different organizations and associations. Folk high schools were boarding schools and their primary purpose was to offer general education to the young adults living in the countryside. At the same time adult education centers were founded to provide education to the working people in urban areas. Today, folk high schools are still boarding schools but the students are no longer only people from the countryside, some folk high schools are even situated in larger towns. Similarly adult education centers can be found in rural areas today. Adult education centers have become the most distinguishable part of liberal adult education since their target group is no longer only the working people but the whole nation.

As we can see from Table 1, liberal adult education forms a significant part in adult education with altogether 394 institutions, 258 of which are adult education centers. According to Pantzar (2007: 30), adult education centers provide study opportunities in almost every municipality in Finland. However the variety and number of courses offered varies considerably between the centers. Sartoneva (2007: 225) points out that the range of study opportunities depends on the demand. In other words, courses are organized according to what adults want to learn. In addition, since adult education centers are financed by municipalities, available resources depend largely on municipality's financial situation. According to Keto and Takamaa (2008: 45),

adult education centers are important in providing equal services and activity opportunities for people living in different regions. Particularly important is their role in rural areas and in smaller municipalities where there are fewer opportunities for leisure-time activities and studies. Adult education centers strive to provide services even in the smallest municipalities and respond to the demands and the needs of the students.

Table 1. Number of institutions that provide adult education in Finland in 2013 (Ministry of Education and Culture 2013c).

	Number of institutions
Liberal adult education	
Adult education centres	258
Folk high schools	91
Study centres	11
Summer universities	20
Physical education centres	14
General adult education	
Upper secondary schools for adults	54
Vocational training (upper secondary level)	
Initial vocational education providers	220
Specialised vocational institutions	54
Vocational adult education centres	45
Tertiary education	
Polytechnics	29
Universities	20

The Adult education center's union reports on their web page (Kansalaisopistot.fi 2014) that 23 per cent of the education is related to handcraft. 19 per cent consists of courses related to music and 18 per cent to language courses. These are the three biggest subject groups that are offered in most centers. The rest are usually subjects related to physical education, visual arts, theater, dance and information technology. Teaching for immigrants, for example Finnish courses are also offered in several centers, particularly in larger towns and municipalities. Languages are a very popular subject in every adult education center in Finland. English is by far the most popular language and according to the Adult education center's union (Kansalaisopistot.fi 2014), 27 per cent of all the courses are English courses. Other languages that are popular are Finnish (17 per cent), Spain (14 per cent), Russian (8 per cent),

Italian (7 per cent), French (6 per cent), Swedish (5 per cent) and German (5 per cent) (Kansalaisopistot.fi 2014). However, the variety of languages taught varies between towns and municipalities and the range is often wider in larger towns where it is usually possible to study over 20 different languages (Sartoneva 2007: 227). Since English courses are the most popular and the demand is high, there are several different types of courses offered. There are courses for people with different level of skills; education from basic level to advanced level is offered in most municipalities. Most courses welcome people of all ages but there are also special courses for senior citizens. In addition, there are courses with different themes such as traveling, working life or English culture. Some courses focus on different areas of language learning such as grammar or pronunciation and conversation skills.

Table 2 shows that around half of the adults that participate in liberal adult education are studying at adult education centers. The number of adults studying at adult education centers has stayed relatively stable (ca. 600 000) in recent years. Adult education centers are open to everyone; there is no age limit or requirements for previous degrees. Nevertheless, the number of women participants is substantially higher than the number of male participants. In 2007, the proportion of women studying at adult education centers was 78 per cent (Kumpulainen 2009: 91). In addition, it seems that adults who participate in adult education have already a broad educational background (Virtanen 2007: 103). In Finland education tends to accumulate to people who are already educated and to people with higher socio-economic status.

Table 2. Number of participants in liberal adult education and in adult education centers from 2004 to 2007 (Kumpulainen 2009: 91)

	Liberal adult education	Adult education centers
2004	1 040 570	621 923
2005	1 066 932	604 127
2006	1 051 061	592 410
2007	1 022 851	600 294

2.3.2 Previous research on liberal adult education and the benefits of lifelong learning

Adult education has various positive benefits for individuals. In liberal adult education adults take part in courses related to subjects that interest them. In addition to learning new skills, studying can have other benefits that have little to do with learning. These benefits can be for example enhancing one's self-esteem and building new relationships (Schuller et al. 2002: 80-82). Meeting other people can be an important aspect of participating in adult education and thus studying can be as much a social situation as it can be a learning situation. In this chapter I will introduce previous research on the significance of adult education and lifelong learning. First, a study conducted in London (The Center for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Schuller et al. 2002) on the benefits of learning will be introduced and then two studies conducted in Finland concerning liberal adult education and adult education centers will be discussed. One of the studies conducted in Finland is a more recent research (Manninen 2008) that investigated the reasons why adults participate in liberal adult education and the various impacts and benefits they received from studying. This particular study focused on the perspective of the learner whereas the second study (Keto and Takamaa 2008) conducted in Finland focused on observing the opinions of adult education center principals on the significance of the centers as providers and developers of cultural services and teaching.

The Center for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning in London is focused on researching the benefits and outcomes that intentional learning can have on individuals as well as on society. In one of their earlier research reports, Schuller et al. (2002) discovered some causal links between learning and its effects, for example, on people's health and well-being. The study showed that learning enhances people's health by helping them to set goals and to feel that they are in control of their own lives, which increases their sense of self-esteem and gives them a sense of purpose and meaning (Schuller et al. 2002: 80-81). As a result, it is probable that learning can even prevent depression. In addition, learning increases social capital by involving people in different kinds of networks where they are likely to communicate more and build friendships, which helps them at the same time to build their own identity as well as feel membership and belonging (Schuller et al. 2002: 81-82). Self-regulated or voluntary learning can thus have many positive effects on adults' lives and especially on their mental health and well-being. In general, it can enhance adults' self-awareness and self-efficacy, and it is possible that these changes have many other further positive effects.

In Manninen's (2008) research on the reasons of participating in liberal adult education and the benefits of studying, the data was gathered by interviews and by an online questionnaire. Altogether 1744 people took part in the online questionnaire, a clear majority of who were women (75.7 per cent). According to the respondents' background information (2008: 34), most of the adults (56.3 per cent) were between the ages of 40 and 63. Furthermore, the number of people who were over 64 years old was also significant, slightly over 18 per cent. In addition, over half (54 per cent) of the participants had completed upper secondary school and slightly over half (50.5 per cent) of them were employed at the time. Only 6.1 per cent of the participants were unemployed. A significant group was pensioners who constituted 28.8 per cent of the participants. Comparing this information to the statistics that were presented above (Kumpulainen 2009), Manninen's (2008) research supports the fact that

the number of women participating in liberal adult education as well as studying at adult education centers is considerably higher than the number of men, since most of the respondents were women. In addition, there is some indication that education does indeed accumulate to those who are already well educated and with higher socio-economic status.

In Manninen's (2008: 68) research, the main discovery was that studying at adult age can have multiple positive benefits, most common of which were that participating in adult education has inspired and encouraged to study even further. In addition, building mental well-being, developing skills and knowledge, building self-confidence, mental strength, creativity, self-esteem and general information were benefits that the adult students had experienced (Manninen 2008: 68). Having better career and earning possibilities were also mentioned, however, they were the less common benefits. Benefits that were less instrumental were the most common. These results support the idea that adults who are studying voluntarily subjects that they have personal interest in are very much self-determined and more intrinsically motivated than extrinsically. In other words, they are studying for the pure pleasure or satisfaction they receive from doing so and any material reward or external pressure is less significant.

A large-scale research on the role of adult education centers was conducted in 2007 in Finland and the review was published in 2008 (Keto and Takamaa 2008). For the research, an internet survey was sent to all principals in adult education centers. In addition, four principals were interviewed in order to receive more profound information (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 14). The questionnaire was used to gain information on role of adult education centers as cultural actors in their region and to discover their significance in developing the regions cultural scene (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 14). Based on the principals' responses, four different themes were created. Firstly, in almost every answer there was a remark that adult education centers serve as providers of financial resources (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 17). Adult education centers are highly

important since they employ teachers, support small cultural organizations and organize, coordinate and fund cultural events (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 17-18). Secondly, in many rural areas adult education centers are the only institutions offering basic education in the arts. Most of the respondents emphasized the importance of teaching traditional art forms and thus transmitting traditional crafts and skills to next generations (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 18). Thirdly and fourthly, adult education centers were seen essential in creating and developing communality and also in building and strengthening people's own cultural identity (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 17). According to the study (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 19), participating in the activities organized by the centers, especially serves to fill people's personal instrumental needs as well as their social needs. Working together with other people in meaningful projects increases the sense of communality and social capital and thus is seen to increase people's mental well-being. Furthermore, adult education centers provide education both in Finnish and in Swedish which helps people to fortify and build their own cultural identity and to operate in a bilingual environment (Keto and Takamaa 2008: 21).

As noted above, the range of courses offered in adult education centers is diverse. Nevertheless, foreign languages have maintained their popularity year after year, especially English. Learning languages can be a fun, challenging and an interesting hobby. However, the popularity of the English courses also reflects the present importance of the language in Finland. It could be argued that the need and demand for these courses emerges from a real need to learn and know English. To understand the present role of English and the growing importance of the language, we need to observe both the global role of the language and also its development in Finland. This will be discussed more in the following chapter.

3 FROM GLOBAL ENGLISH TO ENGLISH IN FINLAND

This chapter provides an overview of the role of English both on a global scale and in Finland. To understand the present importance of English in Finland it is essential to first understand its role globally and the reasons that have led to the spread of the English language. Chapter 3.1 discusses the issues related to the global development of the language; history, the present situation and also future perspectives of English while chapter 3.2 focuses on the development of the role of the English language in Finland. Through recent large-scale studies on the role of English, chapter 3.2 will shed some light on how significant English is for Finns, where English is mostly encountered and needed, and by whom. In addition, the chapter will discuss the dominant role of English as the language of media, popular culture and business in Finland.

3.1 English around the world

Today, the exposure to English is inevitable in most countries of the world. As Crystal (2002: 7) states:

English has become the dominant language of world communication... It is the main language of the world's books, newspapers and advertising. It is the official international language of airports and air traffic control. It is the chief maritime language. It is the language of international business and academic conferences, of diplomacy, of sport. Over two thirds of the world's scientists write in English. Three quarters of the world's mail is written in English.

Crystal (2002: 10) explains that it is estimated that the total number of English speakers in the world would be around 1.5 billion people. This number consists of c. 400 million *first-language* speakers, other 400 million *second-language* speakers and c. 700 million people who speak English as a *foreign* language. 1.5 billion is a quarter of the world's population and therefore it is justifiable to call English the language of the globe. Kachru (1986: 127) points out that there are only five languages in the world that have clearly the highest number of speakers: Chinese, English, Hindi-Urdu, Russian and Spanish. However, only English is truly a universal language. In other words, English is used around

the world in communication between people who do not share the same language background (Kachru 1986: 127). This type of role gives English the status of *lingua franca*, a shared language of communication.

According to Kachru (1986: 19, 128), the speakers of English can be divided into three groups. The first group consists of native users of English that are called the first-language speakers. This group could be for example most of the Americans, British, Canadians and Australians. The second group is called the second-language speakers of English. This group of English users have acquired the language after they have learned their mother tongue. Kachru (1986: 19, 129) notes that this could be the case for example if English is the official language of government or education. The last group, foreign-language speakers use English as a foreign language for some specific purposes. Kachru (1986: 128) mentions that these purposes can be for example science and technology, tourism and international commerce. In addition, Kachru (1986: 128) notes that in Sweden English is the most popular language taught in schools. This is also the case in Finland today, and I will discuss the issue more in chapter 3.2. However, first I will take a closer view on the development of the role of English globally.

According to Kachru (1986: 127), any human language could gain a similar role of universal language that English has gained. Different languages have had similar important roles in particular areas of life in certain periods of history. The reasons behind this trend are not depended on linguistic features; rather they are more or less political, social and technological reasons. The most fundamental reason for English having such a large number of second-language speakers today is colonization and the impacts it had (Kachru 1986: 128). Oppressing significant parts of Africa and Asia under the rule of Britain and thus spreading the English language has left a permanent imprint on the world language history and the history of English. From the sixteenth century onwards the usage of English has spread all around the world and today

dominates in several areas of human life being the language of business, Internet, economy, technology, media and tourism.

Graddol (2006: 22) notes that the English language and globalization are very much connected with each other. On the one hand, the spread of English seems to have advanced globalization, on the other hand globalization has enabled the quick and extensive expansion of English around the world. It seems that this phenomenon is a two-way street and it is difficult to say which came first. Several changes in the modern world have influenced the spread of English. Graddol (2006) mentions demographic, economic, technological and societal reasons. For example, global migration and demographic changes have led to spreading of English and caused language contacts between English and other languages in new areas (Graddol 2006: 30). Furthermore, western world has dominated the economic scene for almost three centuries now and it has also had significant influence on the expansion of English. As mentioned above, English is also the language of media and the Internet. English is the *lingua franca* in computer-mediated communication as well as in face-to-face communication. English is also the language of international news and journals (Graddol 2006: 46-47). Rapid technological development has led to more international communication, and on a larger scale, to globalization. Graddol (2006: 50) points out that the English language is more and more associated with urban lifestyle; a middle class lifestyle. Urbanization has been seen to increase the usage of English all around the globe. Social change often leads to linguistic changes and in many developing countries the emerging of the new urban middle classes will result in more English usage (Graddol 2006: 56).

However triumphant the path of English has been, there are some signs of weakening. Graddol (2006: 14-15) lists several trends concerning the role of English in the near future; other languages will start to compete with English in many different areas, for example the dominance of English on the Internet will start to decrease while other languages will begin to gain more power in the field of economy. In addition, the number of English learners will decline after

it has reached its peak in about 10-15 years. Finally, Graddol (2006: 110) argues that English is strongly becoming something that we could call a basic skill and as a consequence the term English as foreign language (EFL) would lose its meaning since most foreign language speakers are starting to resemble more like second language speakers. The role of English is in constant transition and it seems that the traditional terms of first, second and foreign language speakers are changing too as English simultaneously both gains even more specific and diversified functions and loses its significance. Nevertheless, for now the English language remains as the most powerful language of the world.

3.2 The many roles of English in Finland

The history of English in Finland does not extend very far back. Sajavaara (2006: 225-226) points out that until the Second World War classical languages such as Greek and Latin were considered the most important languages to learn. However, at that time, language learning had quite different functions than it has today. Language learning was considered important primarily for developing one's intelligence and thinking. Learning Latin and Greek also helped to interpret classical texts. Languages were not taught in order to provide students with practical skills such as communication. Languages that were taught were appreciated because they had some cultural prestige. For that reason, it is possible and very likely that people who have had their formal schooling before the 1960's have never studied English. Sajavaara (2006: 226) notes that after the Second World War the world started to rapidly change and Finnish society became more international. Education was now seen to have more practical functions and language teaching was designed to better respond to the real demands of communication. Now languages were taught because they were considered to have some practical usefulness to individuals. Today the emphasis is on having diverse language skills in order to succeed in the international business and professional life.

Taavitsainen and Pahta (2003: 5) note that today English has a strong presence in Finland. Through the mass media and entertainment people are involved in learning the language and using it in various meaningful contexts. As on many other Nordic languages, English has had a notable influence on the Finnish language as many loanwords and phrases have become a part of everyday spoken language. Moreover, Finnish people's English skills are comparatively good and studies have shown that Finns' attitudes towards the language are quite positive. A large-scale national survey on the English language in Finland was conducted in 2007 and the study revealed that 60 per cent of the respondents thought English was quite important for them (Leppänen et al. 2009: 49-50). Younger respondents as well as people living in larger towns were more positive about English being important for them whereas older population and people living in the countryside did not consider English to be as important (Leppänen et al. 2009: 49). In addition, the respondents' level of education had a strong connection to their perception of the importance of the language for them. The higher the education, the more the respondents thought English was important for them (Leppänen et al. 2009: 50).

According to that same national survey (Leppänen et al. 2009: 92), a majority of the respondents said that they use English mostly in their free time and only nine per cent said that they do not use English at all. The situations where Finns use English are various; the study showed that mostly Finns use English when they are traveling or at work (Leppänen et al. 2009: 43). Other situations were when talking with friends, at school, at hobbies and at home. Overall, the study revealed that most Finnish people consider English to be an important language for them. Furthermore, even if the language was not perceived as important personally, most of the respondents (90 per cent) thought that the overall significance and the importance of English in Finland will continue to increase in the next 20 years (Leppänen et al. 2009: 131). In addition, the majority thought that English will become more visible in the Finnish street scene and that the number of English lessons and English teaching in basic education will increase in the next 20 years. Again, younger respondents, respondents with

higher education and respondents living in urban areas believed more strongly that the role of English will become more significant in Finland in the future (Leppänen et al. 2009: 132).

Taavitsainen and Pahta (2003: 4) argue that the role of English is changing in many countries, Finland being one of them. English as a foreign language (EFL) is gradually changing into English as a second language (L2). For example, English is being used in corporations and higher education among people who share or do not share the same native language. This trend of English being the common working language is prominent in most parts of Europe. Graddol (2006: 92) points out that although Europe is highly multilingual and although Europeans are encouraged to study several languages to embrace the linguistic diversity, English is and continues to be ever more important and it has slowly gained an irreplaceable role and a status as the *lingua franca* and the first foreign language in European schools. English has in some cases replaced languages such as Russian and French in countries where they have traditionally been taught as the first or main foreign language (Graddol 2006: 93).

The question of whether it is important to have knowledge of many languages or to only have good skills in English has caused debate not only in Europe but also in Finland. A research conducted by the Confederation of Finnish Industries (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2005: 29) revealed that most companies in Finland consider English skills as one of the most important criterion when recruiting. From 720 companies over 80 per cent thought English is the most important foreign language to master (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2005: 9, 29). Nevertheless, 65 per cent of the companies emphasized the importance of Swedish and 40 per cent mentioned German and Russian as valuable skills (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto 2005: 29). According to the study, several languages, such as French, Spanish, Italian and Chinese have become more valued, compared to the earlier reports (*ibid.*). In short, it seems that companies have need for employees with diverse language skills. Particularly important

are good and diverse language skills for companies in the field of technology, business and transport (ibid.) The continuously growing importance of English in Finland creates pressure to learn the language. As a result, organizations provide English training for their employees and English courses at all levels and in all institutions of liberal adult education are filled with adults willing to learn the language.

4 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this chapter the methodological frame of the present study will be explained. Firstly, the aim of the study will be described in detail and a set of research questions will be presented. Secondly, the nature of the present study will be discussed; the benefits of conducting a mixed method study and how it is essential in this case. In addition, the data collection and the questionnaire will be introduced and described in detail, and the questionnaire will be evaluated according to its suitability for the present study. Thirdly, the participants of the present study will be introduced and finally, the methods of analysis.

4.1 The aims and research questions

The purpose of the present study was to discover adult Finnish English learners' opinions of the meanings and the significance of studying the language voluntarily at adult age. The goal was to examine the reasons why adults take part in English teaching at adult education centers, what the benefits of participating in adult education and learning are, and especially, what the perceived benefits of learning English are. In addition, the present study was focused on investigating the role of English in the respondents' lives and their attitudes towards and relationship with the language. To study these issues, three main research questions were created through which the main purpose of the study was to be examined. The research questions of the present study are:

1. In what ways and to what extent is learning, especially at adult age, important to adult English learners?
 - o What are the short-term or long-term benefits that the learning experience or situation can offer to individuals?

2. What is the significance of studying English?

- What are the individuals' reasons for participating on an English language course and are the reasons more intrinsic or extrinsic / integrative or instrumental by nature?
- What are the desired impacts or goals that the participants wish to achieve by studying?
- Are there any significant differences between men and women's answers?

3. How do the participants describe the role of English in their lives?

The first research question is about the benefits of learning at adult age. The benefits can be related to the learning of English but the main goal here is to discover the benefits that can arise from learning any subject at all at adult education centers. The second question includes questions about why learning English is important; what are the concrete goals and benefits the participants will achieve or wish to achieve by studying. This research question sets out to reveal the reasons why the participants have chosen to study English. Aspects such as motivational orientation (intrinsic and extrinsic) are examined. In addition, the role of English in the participants' lives is examined by discovering the situations where they encounter or use English. The third research question focuses thus on investigating the participants' thoughts about English and particularly their relationship with the language based on their own writings on the matter. These research questions are tightly connected to the format of the questionnaire which will be explained in more detail in chapter 4.3.

4.2 Mixed method study

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 136-137), quantitative and qualitative should not be considered as separate methods or orientations that exclude one another. Quite the opposite, they should be considered as strategies that supplement each other and when combined they provide more holistic results. Quantitative

and qualitative methods can be used together in various ways. In the present study these methods were used side by side so that the primary focus was on quantitative methods and quantitative information. However, qualitative methods were used to gather more profound information that further supported and supplemented the quantitative information. The data for the present study was gathered with a questionnaire that included several multiple choice questions (see Appendix). The data from these questions was analyzed by using quantitative methods. In addition, the questionnaire included open ended questions and a short writing task. The data received from the open ended questions was analyzed by using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The responses to the writing task were analyzed by using only qualitative methods. Quantitative methods in the present study refer to transforming the data into numbers whereas qualitative methods refer to content analysis; the data was condensed into a verbal analysis that explained the main points and most important aspects (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 108). The questionnaire and the methods of analysis will be explained in more detail in chapters 4.3 and 4.5.

Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 138-139) state that the purpose of the study usually defines the methods that will be used. Research can be exploratory, explanatory, descriptive or predictive. Exploratory research focuses on exploring a topic, discovering new perspectives and phenomena based on the researcher's own interests and curiosity. Explanatory research attempts to find answers or explanations to certain situations and issues usually by presenting causal connections. Descriptive research, unlike explanatory research, is not interested in asking why. Its purpose is to describe as accurately as possible the people, events or situations that are being studied. Finally, predictive research aims to predict future events or human behavior and to explain what are the impacts of certain phenomena and who and how will it affect. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 138) note that a study can also have multiple purposes instead of only one. The present study attempts to describe, explore and to some extent also explain simultaneously. Quantitative methods were used to describe and to explain the

situation, the adult learners, their opinions, experiences, goals and desires. Furthermore, qualitative methods were used to explore new uncharted areas and to discover perspectives that would not have been discovered by only using quantitative methods.

4.3 Data collection: the questionnaire

In the present study the data was gathered by using a questionnaire. Survey research has a long history as it is a traditional way of conducting research. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 193-194) note that survey research is often used to discover thoughts, opinions, feelings and attitudes towards a particular issue. Data is usually gathered with predetermined questions in a standardized way and it is analyzed by using quantitative methods of analysis. In order to be able to investigate correlations, make generalizations and to have a representative sample, it is essential to gather data that is large enough. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 195) point out that a questionnaire is an easy, cheap and time-saving method when information is needed from a large group of people. Moreover, most people are familiar with the format of questionnaires and therefore not knowing how to proceed should not be a reason not to participate. In the case of the present study, the participants had the opportunity to fill in the questionnaire at home on their own time which allowed them to take time and think about the questions more profoundly.

However, Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 195) note that questionnaires can also have some weaknesses some of which are dependent on how successfully the questionnaire was planned and carried out, and some of which are not; if the questionnaire is poorly planned and composed, the respondents may not understand the questions and therefore provide only information that is not purposeful or useful. Nevertheless, misunderstandings may take place even though the questionnaire is well planned. In addition, the respondents may not take the questionnaire seriously if they lack motivation to think about the questions and to answer them honestly and carefully. To minimize the possible

disadvantages, the questionnaire in the present study was planned carefully and equipped with detailed instructions of how to answer the questions. Moreover, the purpose of the study and the themes and issues that are being studied were explained truthfully and in detail. The respondents were informed that their participation is valued and that each response is extremely important. In order to see how the questionnaire served in practice, a *pilot study* was conducted. Dörnyei (2010: 53) points out that piloting can help in detecting some problem areas before conducting the actual data collection. These problems are partly the ones mentioned above; unclear questions or instruction. In addition, a pilot study may show that there are some irrelevant questions that do not provide important or relevant information. Feedback on these issues was collected from the respondents of the pilot study and several modifications were made according to their suggestions.

The questionnaire was divided into four sections (see Appendix). First, the questionnaire included a section where the participants were asked to fill in some background information. They were asked about their gender, age, mother tongue, education and employment situation. The two following sections included multiple choice questions and open-ended questions. The second section was about adult education, learning at adult age and the significance of lifelong learning. The purpose of the second section and the questions was to provide an answer to the first research question (*1. In what ways and to what extent is learning, especially at adult age, important to adult English learners?*). Questions number 7 (*“How significant were the following reasons to you when you decided to participate in the course(s) offered by the adult education center?”*) and 9 (*“How important are the following benefits of studying to you personally?”*) and the different statements related to those questions were partly guided by Manninen’s (2008: 80-82) online questionnaire. Similar questions were asked in order to discover how the results would compare with Manninen’s results. The third section investigated the participants’ reasons for English studies and their desired goals and impacts that they wish to achieve by studying the language. The purpose of these questions was to provide answers to the second research

question (2. *What is the significance of studying English?*). At the beginning of the third section the respondents were asked to fill in information about their previous English studies. Question number 11 (*When have you studied English?*) and especially the response options to that question were guided by the national survey on the English language in Finland (see Leppänen et al. 2009) where similar response options can be found in the questionnaire (question number 10). The fourth section consisted of a writing task. It was situated at the end of the questionnaire and it was voluntary. The instructions were simple and included only a notion of the voluntariness and the title “Englannin kieli elämässäni” (“English in my life”). The participants were informed that they could write anything they wanted about the subject, and as little or as much as they wanted. The purpose of the writing task was to give the respondents a chance to write about the role of English in their lives and thus the data were to provide answers to the third research question (3. *How do the participants describe the role of English in their lives?*).

The multiple choice questions in the questionnaire included questions where the participants were given different options and they had to choose one answer. In addition, the multiple choice questions included different scales where the participants’ level of agreement or disagreement with particular statements was measured. Most of the scales were 5-point *Likert scales*. According to Dörnyei (2010: 27), the Likert scale is the most popular scale model used to measure the level of agreement or disagreement, since it is easy to use and relatively reliable as a measuring method. Dörnyei (2010: 8) notes that the number of response options in Likert scales varies between questionnaires. However, Dörnyei (ibid.) argues that too many response options do not produce results trustworthy enough since it is difficult to recognize different levels of agreement if there are too many scale points. Originally the Likert scale consisted of five response options and that was also the case in the present study in most sets of multiple choice questions. In the questionnaire, questions 7, 9, 16, 18 and 20 included five response options. In questions 7, 9 and 20 the options measured agreement on a scale from 1 to 4,

where number 1 indicated strong disagreement, number 2 slight agreement, number 3 agreement and number 4 strong agreement with the statement. Option number 5 indicated no answer or not having an opinion. In questions 16 and 18 the options measured agreement quite similarly; however, the option number 2 in this case indicated slight *disagreement*. With one question in the third section, question 14 (“*How much do you need English in the following situations?*”), the numbers indicated the following: 1 Do not need at all, 2 Need sometimes, 3 Quite much and 4 Very much. In this case the amount of response options was reduced to only four. The question measured the actual need of English, i.e. it did not measure the participants’ opinions, and therefore option 5 No opinion, was irrelevant.

In the questionnaire there were 6 sets of multiple choice questions in a table format (questions 7, 9, 14, 16, 18 and 20), and each set included 5 to 10 questions or statements as I shall call them. After five of the multiple choice questions (7, 9, 14, 16 and 18) there was an open-ended question where the respondents were asked to provide more information related to the multiple choice questions above. The open-ended questions thus offered the participants an opportunity to add something that possibly did not appear in the multiple choice questions.

4.4 Participants

The target group of the present study consisted of adults over 18 years old who were at the time of data collection studying English at an adult education center. The participants were from Central Finland and from Eastern Finland. The participants were chosen according to the levels of courses. The present study was particularly interested in researching students in basic level courses who had not studied English more than five years. Altogether 11 courses were chosen, four of which were elementary courses for students who had no or very little experience of English. One course was aimed especially at senior citizens and the other six were courses aimed at students who had been studying

English from 2 to 4 years. Altogether 202 students received the questionnaire, 127 of which returned it.

The questionnaires were first given to the teachers of the courses in January 2014 and the teacher distributed the questionnaires to the students. The students had one month to answer the questionnaire and they were to return it to the teacher. The teachers contacted me when the students had returned the questionnaires and I collected the questionnaires from the teachers. Throughout the process the questionnaires were stored carefully. The teachers were asked to collect the questionnaires from the students and keep them in a place where they were out of reach from other people.

At the beginning of the questionnaire there was a short letter where the participants were informed about the purposes and the significance of the study (see Appendix). Moreover, they were asked to participate by filling in the questionnaire. They were informed that their anonymity was guaranteed throughout the research process. In addition, it was mentioned that the data would be analyzed mostly by using quantitative methods and that the information they give would be carefully preserved and used only for the purposes of the present study. The organization and the contents of the questionnaire were briefly explained and also the estimated time that answering the questionnaire would take was announced. The participants were also informed about the time they had to answer the questionnaire (one month) with an exact date of returning it and instructions of whom to return it (to the teacher of the course). Finally, permission to use their responses in the study was requested.

4.5 Methods of Analysis

Silverman (2006: 110-111) states that most methods of analysis are not tied strictly to either quantitative or qualitative data. The nature and the size of the data help to define the methods of analysis that are relevant. In the case of the

present study, data from the multiple choice questions were analyzed by using quantitative methods. The nature of the data is such that it would have been impossible to analyze them by using qualitative methods as the fixed-choice questions provided only quantitative results. For this reason, the data from the multiple choice questions were entered to SPSS Statistics for statistical analysis. SPSS Statistics transformed the data into numbers and the program was used to create mainly descriptive statistics. The data from the background information was processed first. Figures showing the distribution of age, gender, level of education, life situation and previous English studies were created (see chapter 5.1). The data from the multiple choice questions were placed in tables, similar to the ones in the questionnaire. The results are presented in percentages. In addition, mean value and standard deviation of the total of the answers are also reported in order to examine the average and variation between the answers. Standard deviation indicates how far the numbers are from the mean value and how much there is variation between the answers (Alanen 2011: 158). Low standard deviation indicates that there is little variation between the answers while high standard deviation signifies a greater variation between the answers.

Differences between men and women's answers was the only background variable that was examined. The role of the other variables such as age, mother tongue, level of education or life situation was not significant since they did not provide enough meaningful information. In other words, there was not enough variation between the participants' background information. For example, only two participants had some other mother tongue than Finnish, and thus it was not purposeful to compare the answers between Finnish and non-Finnish speakers. Men and women's answers were compared with each other and they are presented separately in each chapter in the analysis. In order to discover whether there were statistically significant differences between their answers, Chi-Square test was used. The Fisher's Exact Test provides *p*-values that indicate whether the results are statistically significant (Metsämuuronen 2003: 297, 369). The meanings of these values are the following:

$p < 0.001$ = very significant

$p < 0.01$ = significant

$p < 0.05$ = almost significant

Data from the open-ended questions was analyzed by using *content analysis*. Silverman (2006: 377) defines content analysis as “[d]ata analysis, usually of texts, using a systematic approach that involves sampling, coding and quantification.” Content analysis can be used to produce quantitative results or qualitative results depending on whether the data is categorized according to the participants’ categories or according to categories invented by the researcher (Silverman 2006: 111). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 105-106) define two different versions of content analysis; the first produces quantitative information and the second qualitative. In order to analyze documents that are in a written form, in other words text, a researcher needs to systematically organize and summarize the data to produce a condensed version of the most important content. In this process, the content can be reported and described quantitatively or it can be described verbally without quantifying the results (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 106).

In the present study, the data from the open-ended questions consisted of short pieces of text. The texts were first compared to each other and recurring themes were grouped together, after which they were categorized and quantified. The purpose was mainly to produce quantitative results. However, since the purpose of the open-ended questions was to provide information that did not exist or “come up” in the multiple choice questions, exceptional or otherwise intriguing answers were also reported separately.

The writings from the writing task were also analyzed by using content analysis. The purpose in this case was to find the most salient aspects from the writings and thus to provide answers to the third research question: *How do the participants describe the role of English in their lives?* The writings were read through while keeping in mind the following questions that guided the

analysis: How do the respondents describe the role of English in their lives? How prominent is the role of English? In what contexts do the participants encounter English? What is their attitude towards the English language and learning it? And of course: What are the most central matters that the respondents mention or concentrate on while taking into consideration the title of the essay ("English in my life"). Each response was observed as an individual case but some recurring themes between the essays were found. The data was categorized according to these themes. These categories were further grouped together and overall three main categories were created: Need for English and/or contexts of encounter, Attitudes towards English and learning it, and Other notes. The purpose was to concisely describe the contents of the writings and to create an overall view of the data. In order to do this, the data from the writings was quantified after the categorization process. In other words, each mention under a particular theme was counted. By quantifying the data I was able to show the frequencies and the commonness of the themes. Thus, the data provided both quantitative and qualitative information.

5 RESULTS

In this section the most important findings of the study will be presented. The data was gathered with a questionnaire that consisted of 21 questions (see Appendix). Furthermore, as the data was entered to SPSS Statistics for analysis, the main results will be concisely presented in a table or figure format. The first six questions in the questionnaire were related to the participants' background information. The results of the background information will be presented in the first chapter (5.1). In addition, in chapter 5.1.1 the participants' previous English studies will be presented as part of the background information. The results that are related to the participants' reasons to study at adult age and to the perceived benefits of studying are presented in chapter 5.2. In the following chapter, 5.3 the results that are related to the English language and to the English studies are presented. Firstly, the places and situations where participants use and need English will be discussed. Secondly, the participants' reasons to study English will be presented as well as the desired impacts or goals the participants reported to have related to their English studies. Thirdly, the participants' views on the importance of different aspects of the English language learning and knowledge will be presented. In chapter 5.4 are presented the results of the writing task which was the last question in the questionnaire.

5.1 The participants' background information

Altogether 202 adults who studied English at adult education centers in the spring 2014 received the questionnaire. 127 students returned the questionnaire adequately filled. Four questionnaires had to be excluded because the participants had forgotten to give their signature as a sign of permission to use their answers in the present study. Thus their answers were not used in the analysis but they were counted as students who responded. Therefore, 127 of the 202 returned the questionnaire and the response rate is thus 62.9 per cent. However, the number of participants whose answers were analyzed is 123.

In the first section of the questionnaire the participants were asked to give background information. The background information section included questions of gender, year of birth, mother tongue, level of education, life situation and the languages that the participant had studied during their basic education. The results of the background information are presented below in tables and figures. As we can see from Table 3, the number of female participants was slightly higher than the number of male participants. However, the difference is not remarkable. Table 4 shows that most of the participants' mother tongue is Finnish. No one had Swedish as their first-language and three participants reported Russian as their mother tongue.

Table 3. The gender distribution.

Gender	Frequency	%
Male	52	42.3
Female	71	57.7
Total	123	100

Table 4. The distribution of mother tongue.

	Frequency	%
Finnish	119	96.7
Swedish	0	0
Other	3	2.4
Missing	1	.8
Total	123	100

The age distribution of the participants can be seen in Table 5. Slightly over half of the participants were between the ages of 60 and 70 (56.1 per cent). The second largest age group were 40 to 59 years-olds (23.6 per cent). When combining these two age groups, we arrive at 79.7 per cent which is a clear majority of the participants. In short, 79.7 per cent of the students who participated in the present study were between the ages of 40 and 70. None were under 25 years old and only two were between the ages of 26 and 39. Nine

participants were over the age of 70. Fourteen participants did not announce their year of birth.

Table 5. The age distribution.

Age	Frequency	%
18-25	0	0
26-39	2	1.6
40-59	29	23.6
60-70	69	56.1
Over 70	9	7.3
Missing	14	11.4
Total	123	100

The level of the participants' education was also asked and the results show (Table 6) that approximately half of the participants (50.4 per cent) had an upper secondary level education. Upper secondary education in Finland consists of general or vocational education and is entered usually right after compulsory education (European Commission 2014). 27.6 per cent of the participants had a bachelor's degree level education. Bachelor's degree is a part of the higher education system in Finland, and education of this level is offered in polytechnics and universities (Finnish National Board of Education 2014a). The highest (and only) degree from polytechnics is called the bachelor's degree. At universities, bachelor's degree is the lowest degree and often followed by master's degree. Only 5.7 per cent of the participants had a master's degree level education. In addition, 16.3 per cent reported having completed only basic education which in Finland includes nine years of schooling and is compulsory for everyone between the ages of 7 and 16 (Finnish National Board of Education 2014b)

Table 6. Participants' level of education.

	Frequency	%
No education	0	0
Basic education	20	16.3
Upper secondary education	62	50.4
Bachelor's degree	34	27.6
Master's degree	7	5.7
Total	123	100

The participants were also asked about their current life situation. Table 7 reveals that 66.7 per cent of the participants reported to be retired at the time of the study. That is a significant number of the participants, and if these results are compared with the results shown in Table 5, we can see that they support each other since most of the participants (63.4 per cent) were over 60 years old and the official retirement age in Finland is around 63 years (Finnish Centre for Pensions 2014). 23.6 per cent of the participants were employed at the time while 8.9 were unemployed. Only one of the participants was a student and none reported to be at home. The last option "at home" included situations such as maternity or paternity leave or a long term sick leave.

Table 7. The participants' life situation.

	Frequency	%
Employed	29	23.6
Unemployed	11	8.9
Retired	82	66.7
Student	1	.8
At home	0	0
Total	123	100

The last question in the background information section asked the participants' previous language studies and especially the language studies they have had during the years of basic education. As discussed earlier and shown in Table 6, all the participants had at least basic level education. However, not all answered the question of previous language studies in basic education. Some mentioned that they had not had any language teaching. As can be seen in

Figure 2, Swedish and English were the two most studied languages, Swedish (69 per cent) slightly more than English (68 per cent). 33 per cent mentioned that they had also studied German in basic education. Only six per cent mentioned Russian and the other languages, French (2 per cent) and Spanish (1 per cent), had been studied by only a small number of participants. Two per cent mentioned some other language than the given options. These other languages were for example Latin. For this last question it was possible to choose many options and therefore the percentages surpass 100 when added together.

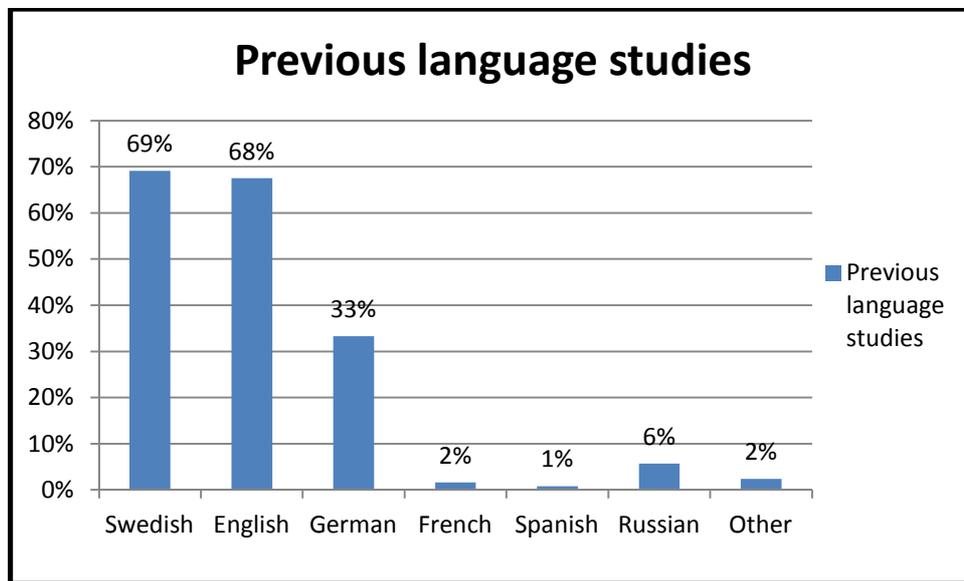


Figure 2. Previous language studies. The distribution for the question “What languages have you studied in basic education?”

5.1.1 Previous English studies

The questionnaire included three questions of the participants’ previous English studies. The first question asked the participants where they had studied English (question 11), at what stages of their life and in what institutions. The second question asked whether they had studied English previously at an adult education center (question 12), and if they had, the third question (question 13) asked how many years. These results are discussed here

as part of the background information since they provide information that is tightly connected to the other background information presented above.

Figure 3 shows that a considerable number of the participants (70 per cent) reported that they had studied English at an adult education center at some point of their lives. However, this option was quite ambiguous because the question did not clarify whether the present English studies at an adult education center were to be included or merely previous studies. Therefore this result does not provide reliable information of the participants' previous English studies. That is supported by the results shown in Table 8, where it can be seen that 62.6 per cent answered that they had studied English at an adult education center before their present English studies. Thus it can be assumed that 7.4 per cent of the participants also included their current English studies when choosing the option "Adult education center" to the question of places where English has been studied (question 11 in the questionnaire).

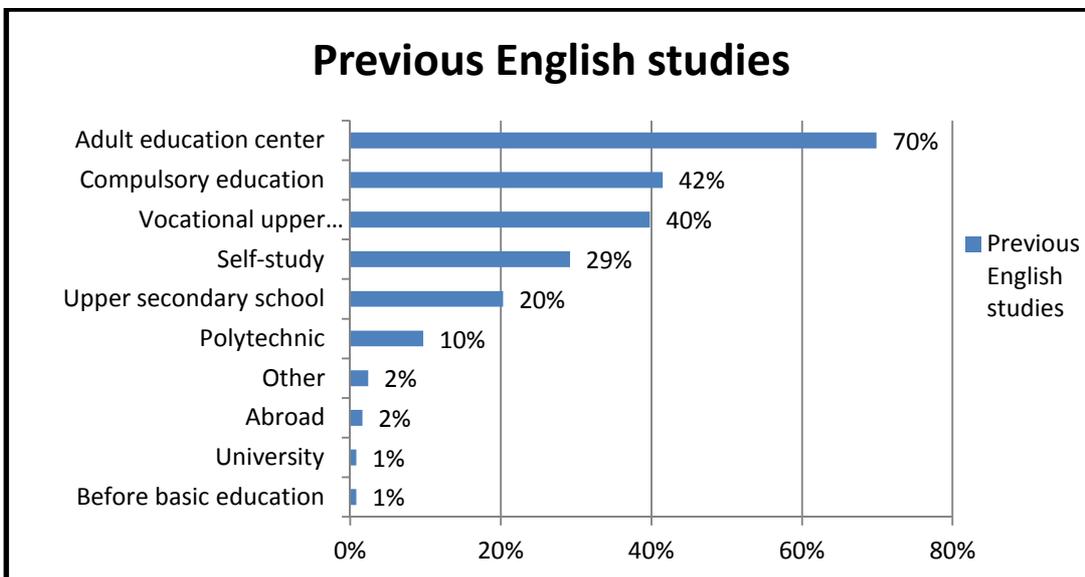


Figure 3. Previous English studies. The distribution for the question 11 "When have you studied English?"

In addition, it can be seen in Figure 3 that English had been studied mostly in compulsory education (basic education) and in vocational upper secondary school. These results are in tune with the results above, where it was revealed that most of the participants had an upper secondary level education (Table 6).

Figure 3 shows that English has been studied significantly more in vocational upper secondary school (40 per cent) than in general upper secondary school (20 per cent). In Table 6, it was not defined whether the participants' upper secondary education had been general or vocational. According to these results, it can be assumed that most of the participants have had indeed vocational upper secondary level education. Furthermore, a notable number (29 per cent) had studied English on their own as so called "self-study". Only a small number of the participants had studied English abroad (2 per cent), at university (1 per cent) or before basic education (1 per cent), meaning before the age of seven.

As discussed above, 62.6 per cent of all the participants had studied English previously at an adult education center. In other words, 37.4 per cent of the participants were on their first English course offered by an adult education center. Table 8 shows that 69 per cent of the female participants had studied English previously at adult education center, whereas the number of male participants was 53.8 per cent.

Table 8. The gender distribution for the question "Have you studied English at an adult education center before?" (n= 123)

Gender	"Yes"- answers (Frequency / %)	"No"- answers (Frequency / %)
Male	28 / 53.8	24 / 46.2
Female	49 / 69	22 / 31
Total	77 / 62.6	46 / 37.4

In Figure 4 it can be seen that of those who had studied English previously, a clear majority (67 per cent) had studied from 2 to 5 years. 25 per cent had studied one year or less and only 8 per cent had studied more than 5 years.

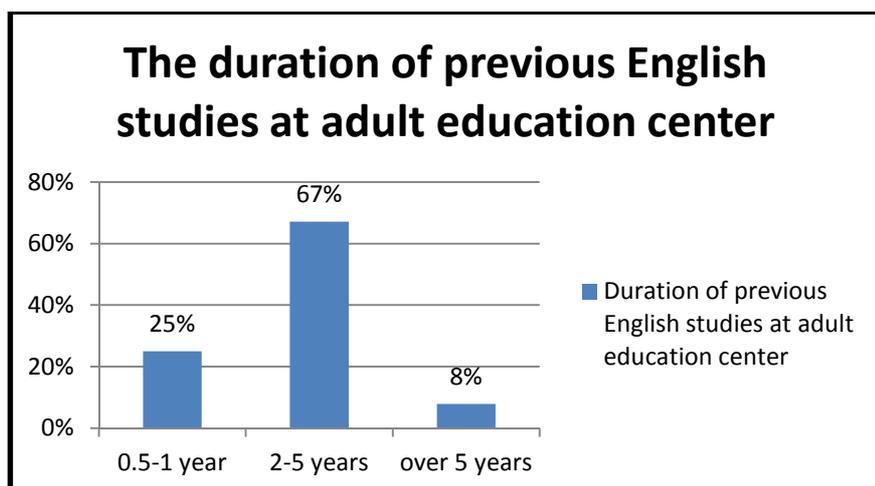


Figure 4. The distribution of the duration of the participants' (n=76) previous English studies at an adult education center.

5.2 Reasons to participate in adult education and the benefits of studying

In this chapter the results for the questions 7, 8, 9, and 10 are presented in a table and a figure format. The questions were related to the reasons to participate in adult education organized by an adult education center and to the benefits that can be gained by studying. Questions 7 and 9 were multiple choice questions and the results of the questions will be presented in Tables 9 and 10. The results for each statement are presented in percentages with the mean value, standard deviation and Chi-square values. The number of the respondents is mentioned separately with each statement (i.e. n=x). Questions 8 and 10 were open-ended questions and their results are presented in Figures 5 and 6.

Questions number 7 "*How significant were the following reasons to you when you decided to participate in the course(s) offered by the adult education center?*" and 8 "*Did you have any other reasons to participate?*" were designed to discover the participants' reasons to take part in adult education. Question 7 consisted of six statements (from a. to f.) that can be seen in Table 9. The statements represented reasons to participate in adult education and the participants were to choose an option that best reflected their own reasons to take part in adult education. The options were the following: (1) not an important reason, (2) slightly important

reason, (3) important reason, (4) very important reason and (5) no opinion. In Table 9 the response options 1 and 2 are grouped together as well as 3 and 4, in order to be able to present the results in a more condensed way.

Table 9. Importance of the reasons for participating in the course(s) offered by the adult education center (M=Men, W=Women).

Statement	Not an important reason OR Slightly important reason	Important reason OR Very important reason	No opinion	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi square
a. Learning new skills (n=122)	M: 25.5% W: 12.7% Total: 18%	M: 72.5% W: 87.3% Total: 81.1%	M: 2% W: 0% Total: .8%	3.2/.7	.092
b. Studying is fun and interesting (n=121)	M: 46% W: 15.5% Total: 28.1%	M: 54% W: 84.5% Total: 71.9%	Total: 0%	2.9/.8	.000
c. The studies are useful in working life (n=110)	M: 56.5% W: 64.1% Total: 60.9%	M: 39.1% W: 34.4% Total: 36.4%	M : 4.3% W: 1.6% Total: 2.4%	2.2/1.3	.549
d. Meeting new people on the courses (n=121)	M: 82% W: 52.1% Total: 64.5%	M: 18% W: 46.5% Total: 34.7%	M: 0% W: 1.4 Total: .8%	2.4/.9	.001
e. The studies are useful in everyday life (n=121)	M: 23.5% W: 25.7% Total: 24.8%	M: 76.5% W: 74.3% Total: 75.2%	Total: 0%	3.2/.9	.834
f. The studies are useful when traveling (n=123)	M: 3.8% W: 2.8% Total: 3.3%	M: 96.2% W: 95.8% Total: 95.9%	M: 0% W: 1.4% Total: .8%	3.8/.5	1.000*

*The value is invalid

Table 9 shows that a clear majority of the participants thought that 'Learning new skills' (statement a.), 'Studying is fun and interesting' (statement b.), 'The studies are useful in everyday life' (statement e.) and 'The studies are useful when traveling' (statement f.) were important or very important reasons to participate in adult education. Particularly with the last statement the participants were unanimous since 95.5 per cent thought that the studies were useful for traveling. However, less important reasons were 'The studies are useful in working life' (statement c.) and 'Meeting new people on the courses' (statement d.), as over 60 per cent of the participants chose the option 'Not an

important reason' or 'Slightly important reason' for these statements. Most variation between the participants' answers (standard deviation 1.3) was in the statement c. 'The studies are useful in working life' and the least variation was in the statement f. 'The studies are useful when traveling'. Statistically significant differences between men and women's answers appeared in two statements: statement b. ($p=0.000$) and statement d. ($p=0.001$). In statement b., women (84.5 per cent) agreed notably more than men (54 per cent) that 'Studying is fun and interesting'. In addition, women (46.5 per cent) agreed more than men (18 per cent) that meeting other people was an important reason to participate in the courses offered by the adult education center.

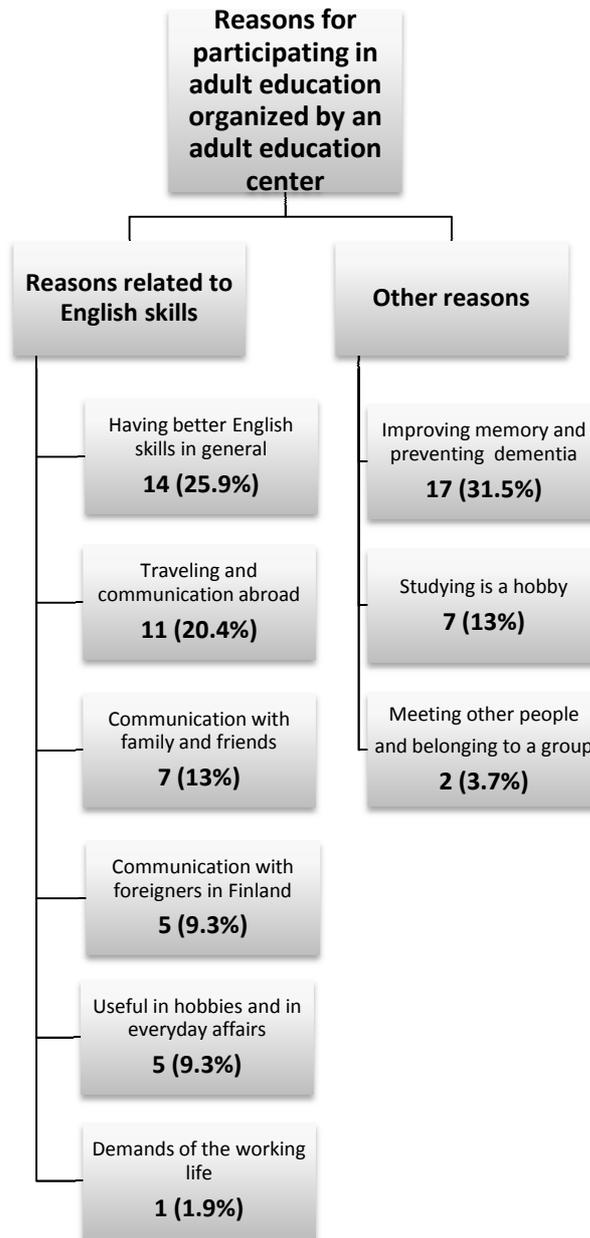


Figure 5. Reasons for participating in adult education organized by an adult education center. (n=54)

Figure 5 presents the results of the open-ended question number 8 (*“Did you have any other reasons to participate?”*). With the open-ended question, the participants were given an opportunity to report other reasons to take part in adult education than the ones already mentioned in the statements above. The reasons the participants reported were first divided into two main categories: *‘Reasons related to English skills’* and *‘Other reasons’*. Furthermore, the first category was further divided into six smaller categories according to the

answers that were given. The second main category (*'Other reasons'*) was divided into three smaller categories.

Figure 5 shows that improving memory and preventing dementia seems to be the most important reason in addition to the reasons discussed in Table 9, as 31.5 per cent of the participants who answered the question 8 (n=54) mentioned either improving memory or preventing dementia (or both) as a reason for studying at adult education center. In addition, having better English skills in general (29.5 per cent) and traveling and communicating abroad (20.4 per cent) were mentioned the most often. Comparing the results of the open-ended question with the results of the multiple choice question, it can be noted that the results support each other since learning new skills and usefulness for traveling are well represented in both results. Moreover, studying for fun or studying as a hobby and the usefulness of the studies for everyday life were considered important reasons in both, whereas in both results meeting other people and usefulness of the studies for working life were not considered as significant reasons. In Figure 5 it can be seen that these were the least mentioned reasons.

Most of the reasons reported in the open-ended question were quite similar or the same as the ones in the multiple choice question. However, improving memory and preventing dementia, as well as communication were reasons that were not mentioned in the multiple choice question's statements. For example, 13 per cent of the participants who answered the question 8 mentioned communication with friends and family in English as a reason to participate. Moreover, 9.3 per cent mentioned communication with foreigners as a reason. Thus, the open-ended question provided additional reasons to participate.

Table 10 presents the results for the question number 9 "*How important are the following benefits of studying to you personally?*" that included 9 statements (from a. to i.) of different benefits that can be gained by studying. Similarly to Table 9, the response options 1 (Not important) and 2 (Slightly important) are grouped together as well as options 3 (Important) and 4 (Very important).

As can be seen from Table 10, almost every participant (95.1 per cent) thought that the practical skills (statement i.) gained from studying were important or very important. In addition, a clear majority (over 80 per cent) considered benefits such as 'increases common knowledge' (statement g.) and 'develops thinking' (statement h.) important or very important. Similarly, over half of the participants (over 50 per cent) reported that aspects such as increase in self-confidence (statement a.), better mental health (statement b.) and better communication skills (statement f.) were important or very important benefits of studying. On the other hand, better physical health (statement c.), new relationships (statement d.) and increase in creativity (statement e.) were considered the least important benefits.

Statistically significant differences between men and women's answers appeared in statements a. ($p=0.002$), b. ($p=0.04$), c. ($p=0.005$), d. ($p=0.01$) and h. ($p=0.01$) as women considered each benefit to be more important than men did. The participants were the most unanimous (the standard deviation 0.6) with their answers in statement i. 'Increases practical skills' while the most dispersion between the answers was with the statement about physical well-being (standard deviation 1.2).

Table 10. Importance of the benefits of learning (M=Men, W=Women).

Statement of the benefit	Not important OR Slightly important	Important OR Very important	No opinion	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi square
a. Increases self-confidence (n=122)	M: 62.7% W: 32.9% Total: 45.1%	M: 36.5% W: 67.1% Total: 54.1%	M: 1.9% W: 0% Total: .8%	2.7/.9	.002
b. Mental well-being (n=121)	M: 38.5% W: 21.7% Total: 29%	M: 57.7% W: 78.3% Total: 69.4%	Men: 3.8% W: 0% Total: 1.6%	3/.8	.041
c. Physical well-being (n=121)	M: 72.5% W: 48.6% Total: 58.7%	M: 19.6% W: 44.3% Total: 33.9%	M: 7.8% W: 7.1% Total: 7.3%	2.4/1.2	.005
d. New relationships (n=123)	M: 76.9% W: 56.3% Total: 65%	M: 19.2% W: 42.3% Total: 32.5%	M: 3.8% W: 1.4% Total: 2.4%	2.4/.9	.011
e. Increases creativity (n=121)	M: 58.8% W: 44.3% Total: 50.4%	M: 37.3% W: 51.4% Total: 45.5%	M: 3.9% W: 4.3% Total: 4.1%	2.7/.9	.134
f. Increases communication skills (n=122)	M: 28.8% W: 30% Total: 29.5%	M: 69.2% W: 67.1% Total: 68%	M: 1.9% W: 2.9% Total: 2.4%	3/.8	1.000
g. Increases common knowledge (n=123)	M: 19.2% W: 16.9% Total: 17.9%	M: 80.8% W: 83.1% Total: 82.1%	Total: 0%	3.2/.7	.814
h. Develops thinking (n=123)	M: 26.9% W: 8.5% Total: 16.2%	M: 73.1% W: 88.7% Total: 82.1%	M: 0% W: 2.8% Total: 1.6%	3.2/.8	.012
i. Increases practical skills (n=123)	M: 9.6% W: 0% Total: 4.1%	M: 90.4% W: 98.6% Total: 95.1%	M: 0% W: 1.4% Total: .8%	3.6/.6	.013*

*The value is invalid

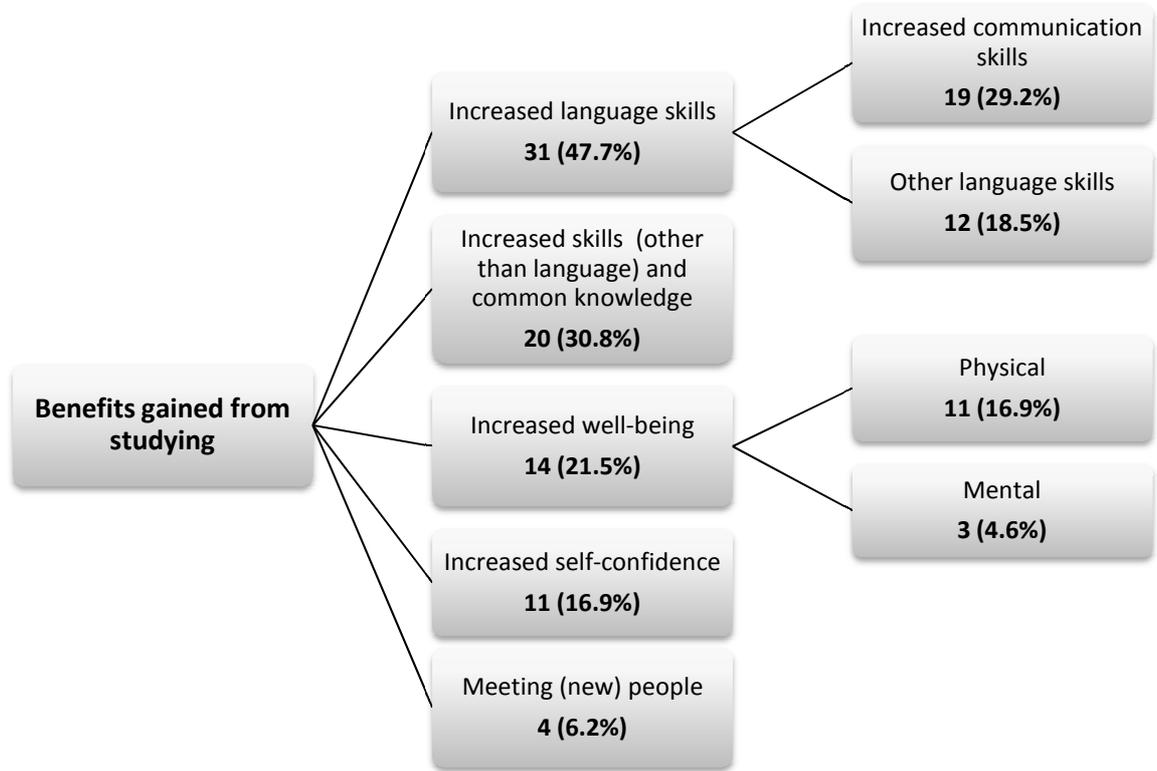


Figure 6. Benefits gained by studying. (n=65)

Question 10 “*What benefits have you gained from studying?*” was an open-ended question. The purpose of question 10 was to discover the actual benefits that the participants have gained from studying at an adult education center. In Figure 6 the results of the open-ended question number 10 are presented. The answers were grouped together under five main categories. Two of the main categories were further divided into two sub-categories: ‘Increased language skills’ was divided into ‘Increased communication skills’ and ‘Other language skills’ in order to show the significance of communication skills. In addition, the well-being category was further divided into ‘Physical’ and ‘Mental’ well-being to show the exact distribution.

As can be seen in Figure 6, increased language skills was the most common benefit, which is understandable since the participants were English students and currently on an English course. 29.2 per cent of all the participants mentioned ‘Increased communication skills’ as a benefit and 18.5 per cent mentioned having received other benefits related to language skills such as

learning grammar and new vocabulary. 30.8 per cent mentioned other skills than language skills, for example, cooking skills and skills related to handicraft. Increased well-being was also mentioned by 21.5 per cent of the participants. Physical well-being (16.9 per cent) was a benefit that was mentioned significantly more often than mental (4.6%). Improved memory was one of the most common benefits related to physical well-being. Strengthening in self-confidence was mentioned by 16.9 per cent and only a small number (6.2 per cent) mentioned meeting people as a benefit.

5.3 The significance of studying English and the desired goals

In this chapter the results for questions 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20 will be presented in a table and a figure format. The questions were concerned with the places where English is needed, the reasons to study English, goals related to English studies and the considered importance of different areas of language learning. Tables 11, 12, 13 and 14 present the results of the multiple choice questions (14, 16, 18 and 20 respectively) in percentages with the mean value, standard deviation and Chi-square values. The number of the respondents is mentioned separately with each statement (i.e. n=x). Figures 7, 8 and 9 present the results of the open-ended questions (15, 17 and 19 respectively).

Table 11 presents the results of question number 14 *“How much do you need English in the following situations?”* The question was a multiple choice question that included 5 situations (from a. to e.) and the participants were to choose from the response options (1) Do not need at all, (2) Need sometimes, (3) Quite much and (4) Very much, how much they need English in the different situations.

Table 11 reveals that a majority of the participants (over 60 per cent) do not need English at all at work or at home. Furthermore, almost half of the participants do not need English with friends or in free-time activities. A result that clearly stands out is with situation d. ‘Abroad’ where slightly over 40 per

cent reported that they needed English quite much and another 40 per cent reported they needed English very much in that situation.

Table 11. Results for the question 14 "How much do you need English in the following situations?" (M=Men, W=Women).

Situation	Do not need at all	Need sometimes	Quite much	Very much	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi Square
a. At work (n=113)	M: 68.1% W: 69.7% Total: 69%	M: 19.1% W: 19.7% Total: 19.5%	M: 8.5% W: 7.6% Total: 8%	M: 4,3% W: 3% Total: 3.5%	1.5/.8	.771
b. At home (n=114)	M: 60% W: 68.8% Total: 64.9%	M: 34% W: 26.6% Total 29.8%	M: 4% W: 4.7% Total 4.4%	M: 2% W: 0% Total .9%	1.4/.6	1.000*
c. With friends (n=117)	M: 40% W: 56.7% Total: 49.6%	M: 52% W: 38.8% Total: 44.4%	M: 6% W: 4.5% Total: 5.1%	M: 2% W: 0% Total: .9%	1.6/.6	.459*
d. Abroad (n=121)	Total: 0%	M: 17.6% W: 18.6% Total: 18.2%	M: 51% W: 35.7% Total: 42.1%	M: 31.4% W: 45.7% Total: 39.7%	3.2/.7	1.000
e. In free-time activities (n=118)	M: 33.3% W: 56.7% Total: 46.6%	M: 43.1% W: 37.3% Total: 39.8%	M: 15.7% W: 4.5% Total: 9.3%	M: 7.8% W: 1.5% Total: 4.2%	1.7/.8	.007

*The value is invalid

The participants were rather unanimous in their answers since the standard deviation was quite low with all the statements. The only statistically significant difference between men and women's answers appeared in situation e. ($p=0.007$) where men reported that they need English more in their free-time activities than women did. For example, 56.7 per cent of the women do not need English at all in their free-time activities while altogether 58.8 per cent of the men need English sometimes or quite much.

Question 15 "Mention other situations or places where you need English" was an open-ended question where the participants were given the opportunity to mention other situations or places where they need English. Many participants mentioned the same places that were given as options in the question 14 (Table 11). However, other situations and places were also mentioned. These results can be seen in Figure 7 where the answers were divided into three categories:

'Computer programs and Internet', 'Communication with foreigners in Finland' and 'Instructions and product descriptions'.



Figure 7. Other situations and places where English is needed. (n=53)

As can be seen in Figure 7, a majority of the participants who answered question 15 mentioned computer programs and Internet as places or situations where they need English. In addition, almost 30 per cent mentioned communication with foreigners. According to the answers, this kind of communication often takes place in the streets where a passer-by asks help in English. Furthermore, 17 per cent mentioned also instructions and product descriptions that are written in English.

Question number 16 consisted of statements related to the importance of studying English. These statements (from a. to j.) can be seen in Table 12. All the statements begin with a sentence "I study English because..." The participants were to choose a response option that best described their views and also their reasons to study English. The options were (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Slightly disagree, (3) Slightly agree, (4) Strongly agree and (5) No opinion. In Table 12, the options 1 and 2, as well as 3 and 4 are grouped together.

As we can see, over 97 per cent slightly agreed or strongly agreed that they studied English because they were interested in the language (statement b.). Moreover, over 85 per cent agreed that they wanted to understand English-speaking TV-programs or movies (statement j.) and books or magazines

(statement i.) written in English. In addition, a clear majority (78.3 per cent) agreed that they studied English because they were interested in the culture of the English-speaking countries (statement e.). However, over half of the participants (over 50 per cent) disagreed strongly or slightly with statements a. ('I need English at work') and c. ('I want to be able to communicate in English with my family') and a significant number of the participants, 87 per cent, disagreed with the statement of studying English because of a desire to work abroad (statement f.).

The participants were the most unanimous in their answers with statement b. 'I am interested in the English language' (standard deviation 0.5) and the least unanimous with statement a. 'I need English at work' (standard deviation 1.5). The only significant difference between men and women's answers appeared in statement d. ($p=0.003$) where men (76 per cent) agreed notably more with the statement 'I want to be able to communicate in English with my friends' than women (50.7 per cent) did.

Table 12. The participants' views on the importance of studying English (M=Men, W=Women)

Statement (Begins with: I study English because...)	Strongly disagree OR Slightly disagree	Slightly agree OR Strongly agree	No opinion	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi Square
a. I need English at work (n=111)	M: 53.2% W: 62.5% Total: 58.6%	M: 34% W: 25% Total: 28.8%	M: 12.8% W: 12.5% Total: 12.6%	2.4/1.5	.382
b. I am interested in the English language (n=121)	M: 2% W: 2.9% Total: 2.5%	M: 98% W: 97.1% Total: 97.5%	Total: 0%	3.5/.5	1.000*
c. I want to be able to communicate in English with my family (n=118)	M: 61.2% W: 75.4% Total: 69.5%	M: 32.7% W: 23.2% Total: 27.1%	M: 6.1% W: 1.4% Total: 3.4%	2/1.1	.208
d. I want to be able to communicate in English with my friends (n=119)	M: 20% W: 47.8% Total: 36.1%	M: 76% W: 50.7% Total: 61.3%	M: 4% W: 1.4% Total: 2.5%	2.8/1.1	.003
e. I am interested in the culture of the English-speaking countries (n=120)	M: 16% W: 21.4% Total: 19.2%	M: 82% W: 75.7% Total: 78.3%	M: 2% W: 2.8% Total: 2.5%	3.1/.8	.488
f. I work/I want to work abroad (n=115)	M: 85.4% W: 88.1% Total: 87%	M: 8.3% W: 1.5% Total: 4.3%	M: 6.3% W: 10.4% Total: 8.7%	1.6/1.2	.162*
g. I feel I have to know English (n=119)	M: 53.1% W: 42.9% Total: 47.1%	M: 46.9% W: 55.7% Total: 52.1%	M: 0% W: 1.4% Total: .8%	2.6/1	.352
h. I feel it is necessary to know English in Finland (n=120)	M: 31.4% W: 30.4% Total: 30.8%	M: 68.6% W: 65.2% Total: 66.7%	M: 0% W: 4.3% Total: 2.5%	2.9/1	1.000
i. I want to be able to understand magazines or books written in English (n=119)	M: 6% W: 17.4% Total: 12.6%	M: 94% W: 79.7% Total: 85.7%	M: 0% W: 2.9% Total: 1.7%	3.2/.8	.091
j. I want to be able to understand English-speaking TV-programs or movies (n=121)	M: 5.9% W: 12.9% Total: 9.9%	M: 94.1% W: 85.7% Total: 89.3%	M: 0% W: 1.4% Total: .8%	3.3/.7	.233

*The value is invalid

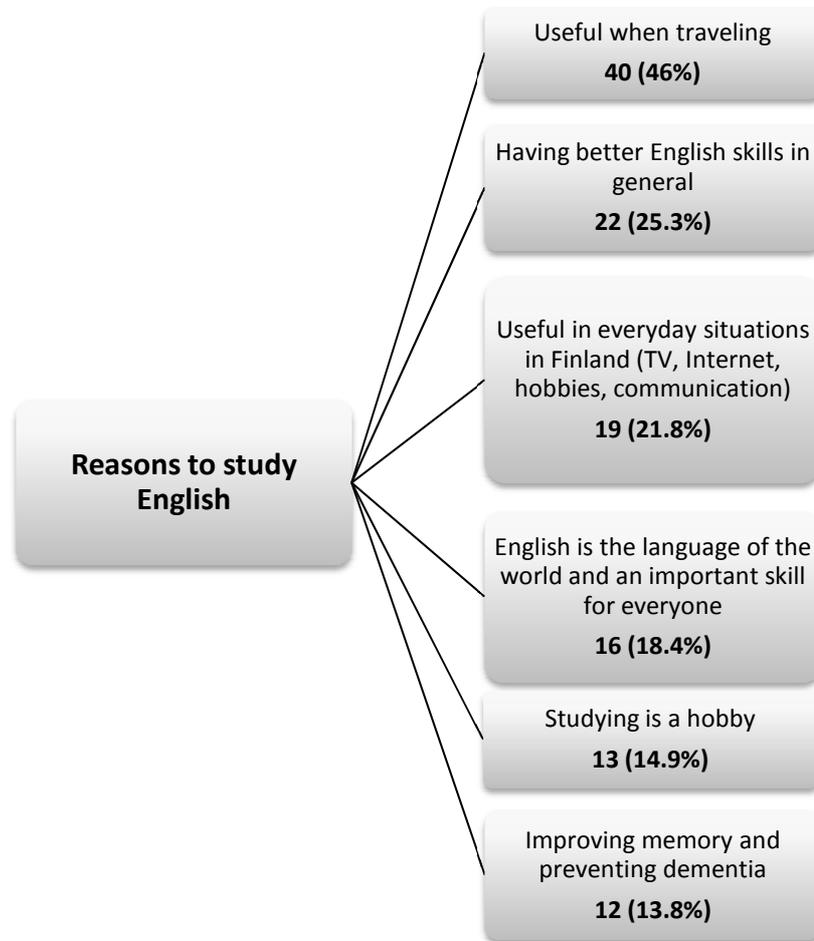


Figure 8. Reasons to study English. (n= 87)

Question number 17 was an open-ended question where the participants were to describe in their own words the reasons why they study English. The answers were divided into six categories: 'Useful when traveling', 'Having better English skills in general', 'Useful in everyday situations in Finland', 'English is the language of the world and an important skill for everyone', 'Studying is a hobby' and 'Improving memory and preventing dementia'. As can be seen, the reasons to study English are quite similar to the reasons to participate in adult education in general (see Figure 5). The most common reasons to study English were that it is useful when traveling (46 per cent) and having better English skills in general (25.3 per cent).

Question 18 was a multiple choice question that measured the participants goals related to their English studies. There were six statements (from a. to f.) and again the participants were to choose an option for each statement that best

described their own thoughts. The response options were (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Slightly disagree, (3) Slightly agree, (4) Strongly agree and (5) No opinion. Similarly to Table 12, options 1 and 2, as well as 3 and 4 are grouped together in Table 13 in order to present the results in a more concise way.

Table 13 shows that almost every participant (98.3 per cent) agreed that their goal was to study English to the extent that they can manage abroad (statement b.). None of the participants disagreed with the statement and there was the least dispersion in the answers with this statement (standard deviation 0.5). In addition, 95 per cent agreed that their goal was to learn English so that they can use it in everyday communication (statement c.). A clear majority (81.7 per cent) wanted to study English as far as possible (statement a.) and only 3.4 per cent agreed that they had no goals related to their studies.

Table 13. The participants' goals related to English studies. (M=Men, W=Women)

Statement (Begins with: My goal is...)	Strongly disagree OR Slightly disagree	Slightly agree OR Strongly agree	No opinion	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi square
a. to study English as far as possible (n=120)	M: 17.6% W: 14.5% Total: 15.8%	M: 78.4% W: 84.1% Total: 81.7%	M: 3.9% W: 1.4% Total: 2.5%	3.1/.8	.620
b. to learn English to the extent that I can manage abroad (n=121)	Total: 0%	M: 100% W: 97.1% Total: 98.3%	M: 0% W: 2.9% Total: 1.7%	3.8/.5	**
c. to learn English to the extent that I can use it in everyday communication (n=119)	M: 6% W: 2.9% Total: 4.2%	M: 94% W: 95.7% Total: 95%	M: 0% W: 1.4% Total: .8%	3.6/.6	.649*
d. to learn English to the extent that I can use it in work-related situations (n=111)	M: 54.3% W: 58.5% Total: 56.8%	M: 34.8% W: 27.7% Total: 30.6%	M: 10.9% W: 13.8% Total: 12.6%	2.4/1.5	.523
e. to only learn the basics of English (n=118)	M: 62% W: 63.2% Total: 62.7%	M: 38% W: 33.8% Total: 35.6%	M: 0% W: 2.9% Total: 1.7%	2.2/1.1	.846
f. I have no goals related to learning English (n=118)	M: 91.8% W: 94.2% Total: 92.2%	M: 4.1% W: 2.9% Total: 3.4%	M: 4.1% W: 2.9% Total: 3.4%	1.3/.8	1.000*

*The value is invalid

**No statistics available

Again, the most variety in the answers was with statement d. that was related to work and the desire to study English in order to manage at work. Over half of the participants (56.8 per cent) disagreed with wanting to learn English so that they could use it in work related situations. Overall, there were no significant differences between men and women's answers.



Figure 9. Results for the open-ended question 19 "Describe in your own words your personal goals related to the English studies". (n=73)

Question 19 "Describe in your own words your personal goals related to the English studies" was the last open-ended question in the questionnaire. The results were quite similar to the results shown in Table 13 where traveling, everyday communication and studying as far as possible were the three most common goals for English studies. From Figure 9 we can see that indeed these are the three most common goals. However, better communication skills were mentioned slightly more often (50.7 per cent) than traveling and managing abroad (41.1 per cent).

Question 20 "How important are the following areas of language learning to you?" was the last multiple choice question in the questionnaire and it consisted of six different areas of language learning (from a. to f.): 'Grammar knowledge', 'Conversation skills', 'Listening comprehension', 'Reading comprehension', 'Writing skills' and 'Knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries. The participants were to choose from five different response options an option that best described their own views of the importance of each area. The

response options were (1) Not important, (2) Slightly important, (3) Important, (4) Very important and (5) No opinion. In Table 14 the option 1 and 2, as well as 3 and 4 are grouped together.

As can be seen in Table 14, almost all participants (over 90 per cent) thought that 'Conversation skills', 'Listening comprehension' and 'Reading comprehension' were important or very important areas of language learning. In addition, a clear majority (76.9 per cent) of the participants considered 'Writing skills' important. Almost 60 per cent considered 'Grammar knowledge' important or very important. However, over half of the participants (54.9 per cent) considered learning about the culture of English speaking countries less important than other areas. Statistically significant differences between men and women's answers appeared in two statements: e. ($p=0.002$) and f. ($p=0.021$) as women considered 'Writing skills' and 'Knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries' more important areas of language learning than men did.

Table 14. Results for the question 20 "How important are the following areas of language learning to you?" (M=Men, W=Women)

Area of language learning	Not important OR Slightly important	Important OR Very important	No opinion	Mean value/Std. Deviation	Chi Square
a. Grammar knowledge (n=121)	M: 50% W: 33.8% Total: 40.5%	M: 50% W: 66.2% Total: 59.5%	Total: 0%	2.9/.8	.091
b. Conversation skills (n=122)	M: 11.8% W: 4.2% Total: 7.4%	M: 88.2% W: 95.8% Total: 92.6%	Total: 0%	3.6/.6	.163
c. Listening comprehension (n=122)	M: 9.8% W: 2.8% Total: 5.7%	M: 90.2% W: 97.2% Total: 94.3%	Total: 0%	3.6/.6	.128*
d. Reading comprehension (n=122)	M: 11.8% W: 2.8% Total: 6.6%	M: 88.2% W: 97.2% Total: 93.4%	Total: 0%	3.5/.6	.067*
e. Writing skills (n=121)	M: 37.3% W: 12.9% Total: 23.1%	M: 62.7% W: 87.1% Total: 76.9%	Total: 0%	3/.8	.002
f. Knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries (n=122)	M: 68.6% W: 45.1% Total: 54.9%	M: 27.5% W: 47.9% Total: 39.4%	M: 3.9% W: 7% Total: 5.7%	2.6/1	.021

*The value is invalid

5.4 The writing task

The last question in the questionnaire (question 21) was a short writing task that was voluntary. The participants were to write (in Finnish) anything they wanted on the topic “English in my life”. 28 of the 123 participants responded to the task. The length of the writings varied slightly but on average they were about 100 words per writing. The main purpose of the task was to examine the role of English in the participants’ lives and how they themselves describe the role.

Figure 10 presents the writings that were divided into different themes. Two main aspects were observed when reading the writings: the need for English and/or the contexts of encounter, and the attitudes towards English and learning it. The writings were categorized under these two themes and several sub-themes were created on the basis of the writings. In addition, other essential issues that the participants chose to write about were examined. These issues are under the theme ‘Other notes’.

I will first discuss the results related to the attitudes towards English and learning it and then briefly the contexts of encountering English. The analysis includes brief quotations from the writings. The quotations are marked with quotation marks and they are presented both in Finnish and in English. The Finnish version is the original one and the English version is a direct translation of it.

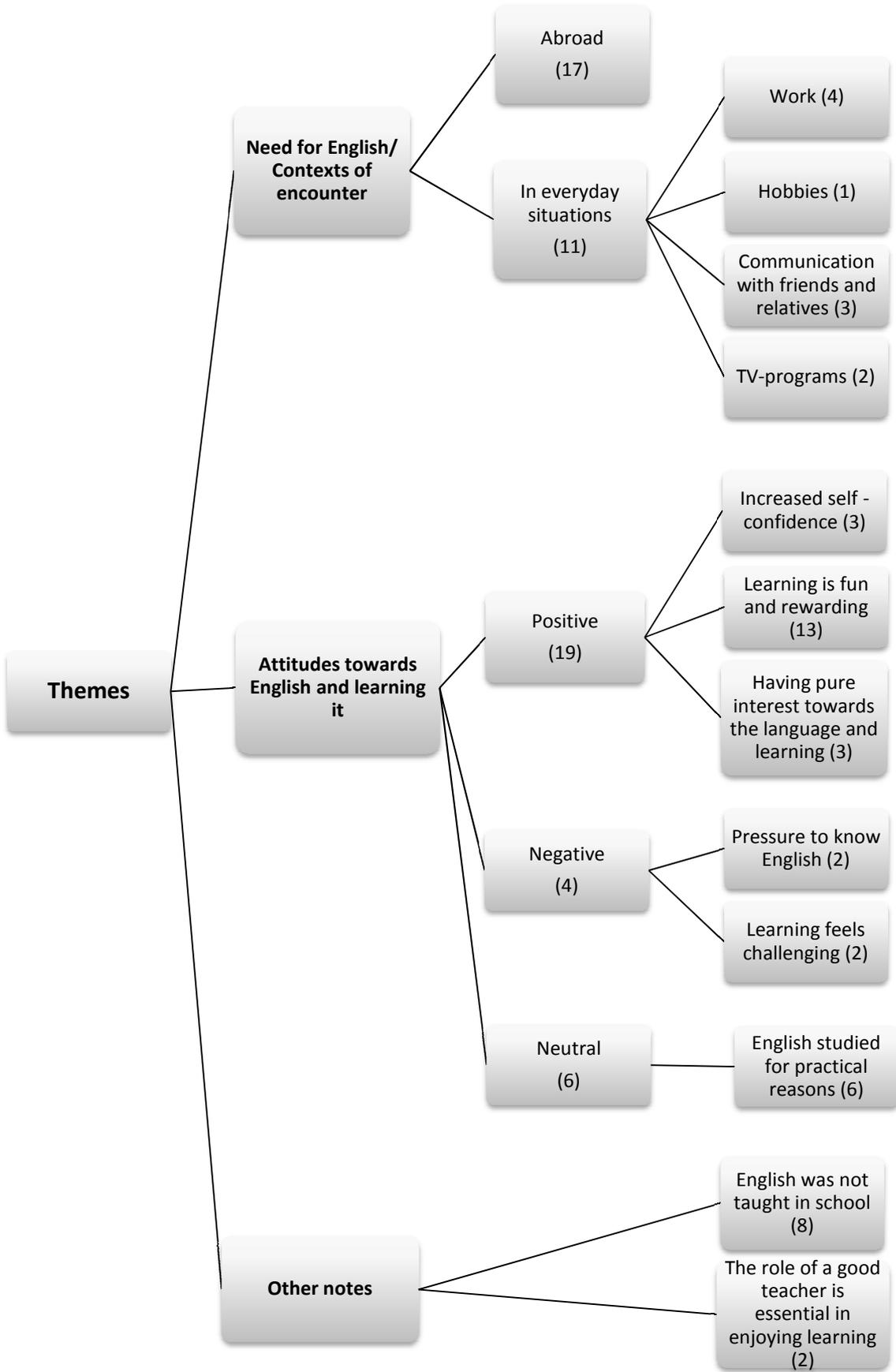


Figure 10. Categorization of the writings. (n=28)

Most of the respondents began their writing by telling about their English studies in school and whether they had or had not studied English in school. In their writings the past was very much connected to the present and to the reasons to study English. 8 respondents mentioned that no foreign languages, or at least English was not taught in their school. For not having the opportunity to study English in the past, the present study opportunity was appreciated by many of the respondents. Studying English had been a long-term dream for some. As example 1 demonstrates, the respondent has dreamed of having as good English skills as his or hers nieces/nephews and decided to begin studying at an older age in order to finally achieve that dream.

Example 1.

“Olen aina ihaillut ihmisiä, ennen kaikkea sisareni lapsia, jotka puhuvat sujuvasti englantia... Nyt eläkkeellä aloitin opiskelun syksyllä.”

“I have always admired people, especially my sister’s children, who speak English fluently... Now that I am retired, I began studying last fall.”

Some respondents wrote about their bad experiences of studying English in the past. Usually the bad experiences were related to the teaching methods of the teacher or to the teacher’s personality, as example 2 demonstrates. A couple of the respondents also emphasized the role of a good teacher in enjoying their present studies (see examples 3 and 4).

Example 2.

“Englannin opettajan ja minun kemiät eivät jotenkin kohdanneet. Motivaatio englannin kieleen oli siksi huonompi kuin muihin aineisiin.”

“The English teacher and I did not somehow get along. The motivation with English was thus poorer than with other subjects.”

Example 3.

“Kansalaisopisto on ollut minun pelastukseni! Ihana aikuisryhmä, sopiva aikataulu, sopiva rytmi, sopiva hinta ja ihana ope!!”

“The adult education center has been my rescue! Wonderful adult group, suitable schedule, suitable pace, suitable price and a wonderful teacher!!”

Example 4.

“Opettajan rooli on yksi asia joka vaikuttaa siihen että lähtee tunneille. Opettajamme on kannustava, ymmärtävä eikä hän “painosta”.”

“The role of the teacher is one thing that affects that one goes to class. Our teacher is supportive, understanding and he/she does not “pressure”.”

Figure 10 also shows that most of the respondents had positive feelings towards the English language and learning it. For most studying English at an adult education center has provided positive learning experiences, new valuable skills and thus increased self-confidence, as can be seen in example 5, where the respondent discusses how being able to understand English abroad has been rewarding. In general, learning was considered rewarding and fun. In addition, meeting other people with similar interests was appreciated by some respondents (see example 6). A couple of the respondents also mentioned that learning at an adult age is more relaxed and the fear of making mistakes has decreased, as example 7 shows.

Example 5.

“Etelän matkoilla huomasin kuinka kivaa oli ymmärtää mitä kysyttiin myöskin huonolla englannilla. Vielä hienompaa oli kun pystyi vastaamaan.”

“When traveling abroad I noticed how nice it was to understand what was asked even with poor English skills. It was even nicer to be able to answer.”

Example 6.

“Olen todella tyytyväinen, että menin tälle kurssille. Englannin tunti on viikon kohokohta. Kiva kuulua porukkaan, jossa kaikilla on lähes sama taso ja tavoite.”

“I am very happy that I participated in this course. The English class is the highlight of the week. It is nice to belong to a group where almost everyone are on the same level and share similar goals.”

Example 7.

“Rohkeus puhumiseen ja keskustelun aloittamiseen puuttui, koska pelkäsin kielioppivirheitä... Nyt “vanhuksena” voi rauhassa opetella oikeaa kielioppia ja ääntämistä...”

“I lacked courage to talk and to start conversations because I was afraid of making grammar mistakes... Now as an “elderly person” I can steadily learn correct grammar and pronunciation...”

However, some respondents showed slightly more negative feelings. For example, four respondents felt negative pressure to learn English or felt that the

process of learning was challenging in a more negative than positive manner. In other words, they considered the challenges overwhelming and frustrating (see example 8).

Example 8.

“Vapaaehtoisesti olen kansalaisopistossa opiskellut lähes joka vuosi aikuisiällä. Silti olen edelleen alkeis- ja peruskurssin opiskelija. Kielioppi vaikeata.”

“I have voluntarily studied English almost every year of my adult life. Despite that I am still a basic level course student. Grammar is difficult.”

Moreover, six respondents did not clearly show either positive or negative feelings. Instead, they mentioned that they studied English for practical reasons. As can be seen in example 9, the respondent uses English abroad but also mentions that the relationship with English is not particularly warm.

Example 9.

“Matkoilla olen englantiaakin ehtinyt jo useasti käyttää, tavallisesti lyhyehköissä tilanteissa. Mitään erityisen “rakasta kieltä” siitä ei ole kuitenkaan tullut.”

“I have used English many times when traveling, usually in brief interactions. However, it has not become particularly “dear language” to me.”

As can be seen in Figure 10, English is encountered and needed mostly abroad. It is considered useful when traveling and in many everyday situations such as work, hobbies, in communication with relatives and friends and in TV-programs. These results are in tune with the results presented above (see for example Figure 8).

6 DISCUSSION OF THE MAIN FINDINGS

In this section the most important findings that were presented in the chapters above will be more closely observed and discussed taking into consideration the research questions. Firstly, in chapter 6.1 I will discuss the respondents' reasons for participating in English courses, the benefits of studying and the connection of these two with the goals related to the studies. Secondly, in chapter 6.1.1 I will examine the participants' motivation on the basis of their reasons to study English and in chapter 6.1.2 I will take look at the most significant differences between men and women's answers in the multiple choice questions. Thirdly, in chapter 6.2 the participants' relationship with English and the overall role of English will be discussed on the basis of the participants' own writings. In the final chapter, 6.3, I will discuss the limitations of the present study.

6.1 Reasons, goals and benefits of studying

The first research question was concerned with the significance of studying at an adult age and especially discovering the benefits of studying. The significance was first examined through the reasons for participating in adult education. The results in Table 9 showed that the usefulness of the studies for traveling was considered as one of the most important reason for participating in education offered by an adult education center. The theme 'traveling' and 'abroad' appeared repeatedly in the results, whether it was about the reasons to participate, goals of studying or the places where English was encountered. Therefore, it can be assumed that the participants' reasons for participating on an English course are very much connected with their goals. For instance, 95.1 per cent of the respondents agreed that the usefulness of the studies for traveling was an important or very important reason for participating on an English course (Table 9). Over 80 per cent reported that they needed English quite much or very much abroad (Table 11) and over 98 per cent agreed that they wanted to study English to the extent that they can manage abroad (Table

13). In all these tables, traveling was clearly the most favored response option which is understandable considering the universal role of the language in international communication.

Other important reasons to take part in adult education were 'Learning new skills', 'The studies are useful in everyday life' and 'Studying is fun and interesting' as a clear majority of the respondents agreed with the statements. All these results must be examined by keeping in mind that the participants were on an English course and they probably responded thinking about their English studies. For example, the reasons, other than 'Studying is fun and interesting', are quite concrete and emphasize the practical aspects of studying. Reason such as 'Meeting new people on the courses' were considered less important. The role of social interaction was more prominent in Manninen's (2008) study. However, his study included participants who studied a variety of different kinds of subjects. It is likely that languages are learnt for more practical reasons than for example painting or dancing. 'Studying is fun and interesting' was a theme that occurred in both, the present study and in Manninen's study, as an important reason for participating in adult education.

Participants of the working age were a minority in the present study and that can clearly be seen in the results as well; 69 per cent reported that they did not need English at work (Table 11). In addition, only 29 per cent agreed that they studied English because they needed the language at work (Table 12). However, when asked about the reasons to take part in the education organized by an adult education center, only one participant mentioned the demands of the working life as a reason (Figure 5). The reasons to study English particularly as well as the nature of the participants' motivation will be discussed more thoroughly in chapter 6.1.1.

The purpose of the open-ended questions was to provide the participants an opportunity to add information that did not exist or could not have been discovered through the multiple choice questions. The open-ended questions

did indeed provide new information; for example, over 30 per cent (n=54) mentioned that improving memory or preventing dementia was an important reason for participating in education offered by an adult education center. As improving memory and preventing dementia are related to people's well-being, the results of the present study are in tune with the results of the research by Schuller et al. (2002) where learning was discovered to have positive effects on people's health and well-being. The frequent mentions of preventing dementia can be explained by the generally older age of the participants in the present study.

The benefits of studying were discovered with two different questions. One was a multiple choice question that asked the participants' views on the importance of certain benefits, and the other was an open-ended question that inquired the participants the benefits they had actually gained from studying. The role of increased skills (practical skills, language skills, communication skills) as well as increased well-being and self-confidence was emphasized in both the results from the multiple choice question and the open-ended question. These results support the previous studies by Manninen (2008) and Schuller et al. (2002) where especially well-being and self-confidence were discovered to be significant benefits of learning. All these benefits can be considered as long-term benefits that can have long-lasting effect on individuals' lives. These benefits may also have some causal connection. For example, Manninen (2008: 67) discusses in his research that the participants reported gaining better mental well-being through increased skills. Therefore, one benefit may increase another benefit resulting in more long-lasting effects. Another example would be that increased language skills result in increased self-confidence. Furthermore, increased self-confidence may encourage to study more and to use the language which as a result will increase the language skills even more.

An intriguing finding was that overall, increased mental well-being was considered substantially a more important benefit of studying than physical well-being. However, according to the open-ended question, physical well-

being was a more commonly gained benefit than mental. In the open-ended question, the participants were encouraged to take into consideration all of their studies at an adult education center instead of only thinking about the benefits gained from their English studies. Many of the participants had also participated in courses teaching physical exercises. In this light, the more prominent role of physical well-being can be explained and understood as it may have little connection with the English studies. In addition, defining mental and physical well-being can be rather difficult and in the case of the present study they were not particularly defined. Moreover, the participants were not given any definitions of mental and physical well-being. They have answered the questions based on their own views of the definitions of mental and physical well-being. For example, preventing dementia and improving memory are in the present study considered to belong to physical well-being. However, the participants may have considered it to be related to mental well-being.

6.1.1 Motivation and the role of English

The second research question was concerned with especially the significance of studying English; the reasons to take part in an English class and the desired goals. In addition, the question included sub-questions that were related to the participants' motivation. By looking at the reasons to study and the desired goals, we can discover aspects of the participants' motivation. Moreover, through their motivation we can discover different aspects of the role of English in their lives. According to the results of the present study, over 97 per cent of the participants agreed that they studied English because they were interested in the language. Thus, the participants seem to be intrinsically motivated, at least partially. However, extrinsic reasons for studying were not uncommon either; slightly over 66 per cent of the respondents felt that it was necessary to know English in Finland which indicates clear extrinsic obligation or a fear of punishment (Deci et al. 1991: 328-329). In addition, over 80 per cent of the respondents agreed studying English because they wanted to understand

English books, magazines, TV-programs and movies. These reasons are also indications of outside rewards. Nonetheless, I would like to emphasize that the participants agreed *most* with the statement of studying English because of having pure interest towards the language. No other statement related to the reasons to study English gained as many agreeing answers.

Moreover, these results provide clear indication of integral motivation since the participants show interest towards the language and the culture of the native speakers (Gardner 1985: 11). The desire to understand written sources and TV-programs and movies can be interpreted as interest towards the native speakers and their culture. Moreover, over 70 per cent agreed that they studied English because they were interested in the culture of the English-speaking countries. On the other hand, in the open-ended question that asked the participants their reasons to study English, no one mentioned pure interest towards the language or having interest towards the culture of the English-speaking countries as a reason. Instrumental reasons such as 'Useful when traveling' and 'Useful in everyday situations' were mentioned most commonly. It is possible that the English language has such a practical purpose for Finns that even though one may *also* have pure interest towards the language, its practical aspects and uses are more significant and more worth mentioning. It would appear that the participants at the same time are interested in the language and interested in learning the language for the sake of learning and having better English skills. However, they also feel that it is important to have English skills since it is the language that helps one to survive both in Finland and abroad. English has such an important role as a tool in many situations that it is impossible to ignore that role. The results are supported by the previous results of the large-scale study by Leppänen et al. (2009: 43) where it was discovered that Finns need and encounter English mostly when they are traveling or at work. However, work did not play a key role in the present study presumably because of the large number of older participants. On the other hand, it may be that in general studying at an adult education center has little connection with the working life. For example, Manninen (2008: 49) argues in his study that the

reasons to participate in the courses are not usually any instrumental reasons related to the working life. Quite the opposite, studying voluntarily within liberal adult education may bring welcome variety to adults' days that are otherwise dominated by work.

The role of English as a tool comes across in the results that show the participants' goals related to their English studies. Over 90 per cent of the participants had at least some goals related to their studies. Almost a hundred per cent agreed that they wanted to learn English to the extent that they can manage abroad and 95 per cent agreed that they wanted to learn English so that they can use it in everyday communication. It can be assumed that the two aspects 'Traveling' and 'Communication' are at some level connected with each other. Communication in everyday situations can include communicational situations outside Finland. Furthermore, spoken English is probably the most used form of English when traveling. This is also supported by the results of the question 19, which was an open-ended question, as two of the most common goals related to the English studies were 'Better communication skills in general' and 'To manage abroad'. In fact, it is probable that more interaction in English takes place outside Finland since English was most encountered and needed abroad (according to the results shown in Table 11).

The role of English as a tool for communication and the participants' wish for better communication skills can also be seen in their answers for the most important areas of language learning. Clearly the three most important areas of language learning were listening comprehension, reading comprehension and conversation skills. Grammar knowledge and knowledge of the culture of English-speaking countries were considered as the two least important areas. English is an excellent example of a language that is not directly associated with any specific country or a culture since it is the language of the world (see for example Kachru (1986) or Graddol (2006)). The motivation to study English cannot be compared to the motivation to study other languages since no other language has the same global role (yet). This argument is supported by the

results of a large-scale study conducted in Hungary in 2006 by Dörnyei et al. (Dörnyei and Ushioda 2011: 68, 71) where it was discovered that students considered English as a “must-have” skill and they were clearly instrumentally motivated. The study revealed that the role of integrative motivation was not as prominent as the role of instrumental, since the role of English is such that it is often needed for other purposes than surviving in a country where English is the native language of the people. In addition, it is considered almost as a basic skill in today’s world. The participants of the present study seem to appreciate the kind of English skills that allow them to communicate, to understand and to become understood, not only in English-speaking countries but also all over the world.

6.1.2 Differences between men and women’s answers

Here I shall briefly discuss the differences between men and women’s answers that were the most statistically significant ($p < 0.01$). Overall, women agreed more with the statements that were presented in the multiple choice questions of the questionnaire. For example, women agreed notably more than men that meeting new people was an important reason to take part in adult education as well as studying being interesting in itself. In addition, women were considerably more positive towards increased self-confidence and physical well-being as important benefits of learning. It is possible that women in general appreciate more the social aspects of the learning situation. However, men reported needing English significantly more in their free-time activities than women did and men agreed notably more than women did that they studied English because they wanted to be able to communicate with their friends.

In Manninen’s research (2008: 66-67) men appreciated more the concrete learning benefits whereas women appreciated more the benefits that were related to the quality of life, friendships and well-being. According to the results of the present study and Manninen’s study, it indeed seems that women

seem to value more the social aspects of the learning situation whereas men do not find the learning situations as socially interesting. Nevertheless, they also need English for social purposes. In addition, in both studies women valued aspects such as well-being and self-confidence more than men. Manninen (2008: 67) argues that the results may be consequence of the differences between men and women's styles of answering; it is possible that it is more natural for women to highlight the more "softer" benefits of learning whereas men feel more comfortable focusing on the more concrete and practical benefits.

6.2 English in my life

The writing task resulted in 28 brief but informative descriptions of the English language in the participants' lives. The purpose of the writing task was to provide an answer to the third research question of how the participants describe the role of English in their lives. The writings were at first examined individually but it was soon noticed that they all contained rather similar aspects. Therefore, it was meaningful to observe them together and to compare the contents of the writings with each other. The contents were similar in many ways; for example, the narrative nature was apparent in most of the writings. Most of the respondents began their stories by describing the past, school years and how the past has affected the present. Quite many of the respondents had not studied English at all in school and studying at an adult education center at an older age had provided them an opportunity to finally fulfill their lifelong dreams. Studying English at an adult age has opened up new opportunities as it has provided important skills and tools for a more competent life.

The significance of English came across in many aspects. Knowing English increases self-confidence as it is empowering to realize that one understands and becomes understood in English, one is less dependent on other people's help and one can manage alone. This is also supported by the results of the research by Schuller et al. (2002: 80-81) as they discovered that learning helps people to set goals and to have a sense that they are in control of their own

lives. Thus people feel more confident and capable. The present study discovered that knowing English makes life richer since studying is considered to provide more content to life. That too can enhance people's health since studying can provide meaning and purpose to life (Schuller et al. 2002: 80-81). Regardless of bad experiences related to English studies in the past, some of the respondents have found the language important enough to try again. Studying at an adult education center has provided a safe learning environment where everyone can learn at their own pace with other people who share similar life experiences and especially similar experiences with English. As Keto and Takamaa (2008: 19) discovered, adult education centers serve to fill a diverse range of people's personal needs. The most important benefit that Manninen (2008) discovered in his study was that participating in adult education had significantly increased the courage to study even further. That is also the case in the present study, according to the writings. Some of the respondents mentioned that adult education has provided positive learning experiences that motivate to continue studying.

The respondents described their relationship with the language in various ways; some extremely positively, some quite neutrally and some slightly negatively. For some the relationship and attitude towards the language and learning it had stayed stable throughout their lives while for some the feelings towards the language had changed (usually to more positive) over the years and through good experiences. The attitude and the relationship with English can be quite difficult for many because of the global role of the language. On the one hand, English is a highly important language in today's world and knowing it provides people with essential surviving skills in both working life and in personal life. On the other hand, since its role is so important and the dominance of it is apparent everywhere, one may feel extreme pressure to learn the language and not knowing it might make one feel less competent and confined in situations where English is prominent.

6.3 Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

The present study has some limitations that must be taken into account. First of all, the present study had only 123 participants and therefore the results cannot be too much generalized. In addition, the data was gathered from only two regions in Finland. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to cover the entire country. A larger-scale study where there are more participants from various regions in Finland would be needed in order to produce more generalizable results. Moreover, if there were more participants with different backgrounds, the background variables could be used more efficiently to compare their influence on the results. In the present study, gender was the only variable that was meaningful enough to take into consideration as a comparable variable. There were not enough participants from different age groups or with different mother tongue or with different life situations for the comparing to be meaningful or useful enough.

Secondly, the questionnaire as a data collection method has its own weaknesses. For example, the researcher cannot ask any further questions or ask clarification similarly as the participants cannot ask for more instructions. There is always a possibility that the participants may have misunderstood the statements or the questions and that may affect the results.

Finally, the writing task resulted in 28 writings which was a rather large number for a qualitative analysis made alongside with the quantitative analysis which was at the heart of the present study. The present study provided a quite general overview of the writings. A qualitative study that examined only these types of writings would bring more detailed and profound information. In addition, a qualitative study could focus more on the exceptional cases that the present study was not able to completely investigate. Follow-up interviews could be considered in order to gain more specific information.

7 CONCLUSION

Learning in the modern world is a lifelong process. The most important skills that people need to learn today are language and communication skills, and the most important language on a global scale is English. The role of the English language in today's world is unquestionably significant. To support that statement we can look at statistics that show for example the great number of adult population who study English voluntarily on their free time. In Finland, adult education centers constitute a great part of the liberal adult education provided, and the English language is by far the most studied language in all adult education centers (Kansalaisopistot.fi 2014). For this reason, the present study was interested in those adults studying English at an adult education center. Combining the aspects of lifelong learning and the English language, the main purpose of the present study was to discover the significance of studying English at adult age; the reasons for participating on an English course and the desired goals. In addition, the present study set out to discover the benefits of studying at adult age. The role of English in the participants' lives was also examined through their answers in the questionnaire and through their own writings.

The data was gathered with a questionnaire and analyzed by using both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The most important findings were that English is mostly encountered and needed abroad and the reasons for studying English were mostly related to traveling and having better communication skills. The participants had both instrumental motives and integral motives for studying and they showed significant signs of intrinsic motivation; pure interest towards the language and learning. However, external rewards were not uncommon either. It seems that English is the language of traveling and communication as well as an important tool for managing in many everyday situations. Moreover, the adult participants appreciate the study opportunity and find language learning beneficial and a self-empowering form of lifelong learning.

The present study had some limitations that should be noted. For example, the number of the participants was such that the results cannot be over generalized. In addition, the questionnaire did not allow the participants or the researcher to ask for more information, thus misunderstandings could not be avoided and they must be taken into consideration when looking at the results. Moreover, the writing task resulted in 28 writings and that number was so large that it was quite impossible to examine them all as profoundly as they could have been examined.

The results of the present study are beneficial for both the designers and organizers of adult education and also for the consumers, in other words, adult learners. Adult education is mostly organized according to demand and as the present study provides information on adults' hopes, aspirations and expectations related to studying and the significance they attach to their learning, the present research is valuable in the designing of courses that more efficiently suit the adults' needs and purposes. In addition, the present research provides an up-to date review of voluntary and conscious lifelong learning from a perspective that has been little researched in recent years.

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9 APPENDIX: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Hyvä aikuisopiskelija!

Olen maisterivaiheen englannin kielen opiskelija Jyväskylän yliopistosta ja teen **Pro Gradu-tutkimustani**, jossa selvitän, millaisia merkityksiä aikuisopiskelijat antavat opinnoilleen, ja erityisesti englannin opinnoilleen aikuisiällä. Tutkimus tarjoaa tärkeää tietoa aikuisten kokemista hyödyistä ja vaikutuksista, joita he opiskelustaan saavat ja toivovat saavansa. Tietoa voidaan käyttää mm. opetuksen suunnittelussa ja kehittämisessä.

Kerään tutkimukseeni aineistoa kyselylomakkeella, jota jaetaan **kansalaisopistojen englannin kielen alkeis- ja perustason opiskelijoille**. Pyydän Sinua osallistumaan tutkimukseeni vastaamalla kyselyyn. Osallistumalla pääset kertomaan omia näkemyksiäsi opiskelun merkityksestä juuri Sinulle. Jotta aiheesta saataisiin luotettavaa ja kattavaa tietoa, jokainen vastaus on tärkeä.

Kyselyyn vastataan nimettömästi eikä yksittäisiä vastaajia pystytä tunnistamaan tutkimusraportista. Kyselystä saatu aineisto käsitellään pääosin tilastollisin menetelmin. Saatuja tietoja käsitellään luottamuksellisesti ja käytetään vain tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksiin. Kyselyssä on monivalintakysymyksiä, avoimia kysymyksiä sekä lopussa lyhyt kirjoitelma, johon vastaaminen on vapaaehtoista. Vastaaminen on helppoa ja kokonaisuudessaan vastaamiseen menee noin 10–20 minuuttia.

Kyselyssä on kolme osiota:

1. Taustatiedot
2. Kysymyksiä aikuisiällä tapahtuvan opiskelun merkityksestä ja syistä osallistua kansalaisopiston kursseille
3. Kysymyksiä englannin kielen opiskelusta, merkityksistä ja tavoitteista.

Aikaa kyselyyn vastaamiseen on tammikuun loppuun saakka. **Palauta täytetty kyselylomake englannin kurssin opettajalle viimeistään tammikuun viimeisellä oppitunnilla (viikko 5)**. Kyselyn voi palauttaa myös aikaisemmin.

Huomaa, että kyselyn ensimmäisellä sivulla pyydetään suostumustasi käyttää antamiasi tietoja tutkimuksen tarkoituksiin. **Allekirjoituksella annat suostumuksesi**. Nimenselvennys ei ole tarpeen.

Mikäli jokin jäi mietityttämään, annan mielelläni lisätietoja. Gradun ohjaajana toimivat Leila Kääntä ja Arja Piirainen-Marsh.

Kiitos mielenkiinnostasi ja osallistumisestasi!

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KYSELY OMAEHTOISEN ENGLANNIN KIELEN OPISKELUN MERKITYKSESTÄ**TAUSTATIEDOT**

Suostun siihen, että antamiani tietoja voidaan käyttää tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksiin saatekirjeessä mainittujen ehtojen mukaisesti.

Allekirjoitus

Rastita sopivin vaihtoehto ja vastaa kysymyksiin annetuille viivoille.

1. Sukupuoli

- Mies
 Nainen

2. Syntymävuosi

3. Äidinkieli

- suomi
 ruotsi
Muu, mikä? _____

4. Koulutustaso

- Ei koulutusta
 Perusaste (kansakoulu, keskikoulu, peruskoulu)
 Toinen aste (ammattikoulu, lukio)
 Alempi korkeakoulutus (opistotutkinto tai alempi korkeakoulututkinto)
 Ylempi korkeakoulutus

5. Elämäntilanne

- Työelämässä
 Työtön
 Eläkkeellä
 Opiskelija
 Kotona
Muu, mikä? _____

6. Mitä kieliä olet opiskellut yleissivistävässä peruskoulutuksessa?

- Ruotsi
 Englanti
 Saksa
 Ranska
 Espanja
 Venäjä
Muu, mikä? _____

7. Arvioi, kuinka tärkeitä seuraavat SYYT olivat kun päätit osallistua kansalaisopiston kurssille. Rastita jokaisen syyn kohdalla vaihtoehto (1-5), joka kuvastaa syyn tärkeyttä.

	1 Ei lainkaan tärkeä syy	2 Jonkin verran tärkeä syy	3 Tärkeä syy	4 Erittäin tärkeä syy	5 En osaa sanoa
Uusien asioiden ja taitojen oppiminen					
Opiskelu on hauskaa ja mielenkiintoista					
Opinnoista on hyötyä työelämässä					
Kurssilla tapaa uusia ihmisiä					
Opinnoista on hyötyä arjessa					
Opinnoista on hyötyä, esimerkiksi matkustellessa					

8. Kuvaile mahdollisia muita SYITÄ, joita sinulla oli opintoihin osallistumiseen liittyen.

9. Arvioi, kuinka paljon seuraavat opiskelusta saatavat HYÖDYT sinulle merkitsevät.
Rastita jokaisen hyödyn kohdalle sopivin vaihtoehto (1-5), joka kuvastaa hyödyn merkitystä.

	1 Ei lainkaan merkittävä	2 Merkitsee jonkin verran	3 Merkitsee paljon	4 Merkitsee erittäin paljon	5 En osaa sanoa
Itseluottamuksen kehittyminen					
Henkinen hyvinvointi					
Fyysinen hyvinvointi					
Uudet ihmissuhteet					
Luovuuden kehittyminen					
Vuorovaikutustaitojen kehittyminen					
Yleissivistyksen karttuminen					
Ajattelun kehittyminen					
Käytännön osaamisen kehittyminen (esim. kielitaito)					

10. Mitä HYÖTYJÄ koet saaneesi opinnoistasi, joita olet opiskellut kansalaisopistossa?
Voit ottaa huomioon kaikki aikaisemmatkin opintosi kansalaisopistossa nykyisen englannin kurssin lisäksi.

ENGLANNIN KIELEN OPISKELU

11. Missä eri vaiheissa/tilanteissa olet opiskellut englantia? Voit valita useampia vaihtoehtoja.

- Ennen kouluikää
 Oppivelvollisuusiässä
 Lukiossa
 Ammatillisessa koulutuksessa
 Ammattikorkeakoulussa
 Yliopistossa
 Itseopiskeluna
 Kansalaisopistossa
 Ulkomailla (esim. vaihto-oppilaana, asuessa, työskennellessä)

Jokin muu, mikä? _____

12. Oletko opiskellut englantia aikaisemmin kansalaisopistossa?

- Kyllä
 En

13. Jos vastasit kyllä, tarkenna kuinka monta vuotta yhteensä?

_____ vuotta

14. Arvioi, kuinka paljon tarvitset englannin kieltä seuraavissa TILANTEISSA. Rastita sopivin vaihtoehto (1-4) jokaisen tilanteen kohdalle.

	1 En lainkaan	2 Kohtalaisesti	3 Melko paljon	4 Paljon
Töissä				
Kotona				
Ystävien kanssa				
Matkoilla				
Harrastuksissa				

15. Mainitse myös muita TILANTEITA tai PAIKKOJA, joissa tarvitset englantia.

16. Seuraavassa taulukossa on esitetty väittämiä liittyen englannin kielen opiskelun TÄRKEYTEEN ja SYIHIN opiskella. Vastaa jokaiseen väittämään rastiittamalla vaihtoehto (1-5), joka parhaiten kuvaa suhtautumistasi omiin englannin opintoihisi.

Lause alkaa: Opiskelen englantia, koska...

	1 Täysin eri mieltä	2 Jokseenkin eri mieltä	3 Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	4 Täysin samaa mieltä	5 En osaa sanoa
Tarvitsen kieltä työssäni					
Englannin kieli kiinnostaa minua					
Haluan pystyä kommunikoimaan kielellä kotona perheen kanssa					
Haluan pystyä kommunikoimaan kielellä ystävien kanssa					
Englanninkielisten maiden kulttuuri kiinnostaa minua					
Haluan työskennellä/työskentelen ulkomailla					
Koen, että minun on pakko osata englantia					
Koen, että englantia on välttämätöntä osata Suomessa					
Haluan ymmärtää englanninkielisiä lehtiä ja/tai kirjoja					
Haluan ymmärtää englanninkielisiä tv-ohjelmia ja/tai elokuvia					

17. Kerro myös omin sanoin lyhyesti, MIKSI opiskelet englantia.

18. Seuraavassa taulukossa on esitetty englannin kielen opiskeluun liittyviä TAVOITTEITA väittämien muodossa. Arvioi omia tavoitteitasi englannin kielen opiskelussa. Rastita jokaisen väittämän kohdalle sopivin vaihtoehto (1-5) sen perusteella kuinka hyvin se vastaa omia tavoitteitasi.

	1 Täysin eri mieltä	2 Jokseenkin eri mieltä	3 Jokseenkin samaa mieltä	4 Täysin samaa mieltä	5 En osaa sanoa
Tavoitteenani on oppia englantia niin pitkälle kuin mahdollista					
Tavoitteenani on oppia englantia niin, että pärjään ulkomailla (matkustellessa tai asuessa)					
Tavoitteenani on oppia englantia niin, että pystyn kommunikoimaan kielellä arkipäivän viestintätilanteissa					
Tavoitteenani on oppia englantia niin, että pärjään kielellä työssä					
Tavoitteenani on oppia vain englannin perusteet					
Minulla ei ole mitään tavoitteita englannin osaamisen liittyen					

19. Kuvaile lyhyesti omin sanoin henkilökohtaisia TAVOITTEITASI englannin kielen opiskeluun liittyen.
