"OIS HIENOA JOS KAIKKI OIS SÄHKÖSESSÄ MUODOSSA":
Digital self-revising material for adult language learners

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Tämän kandidaatintutkielman tarkoituksena oli selvittää onko aikuisille kohdistetulle digitaaliselle itseopiskelumateriaalille tarvetta. Tällä hetkellä edistyneemmille aikuisopiskelijoille ei ole olemassa itsekertausmateriaalia. Aikuiskoulutusta on vasta viime vuosina alettu tutkia tarkemmin ja olemassa oleva kirjallisuus aiheesta on hyvin yleisellä tasolla ja keskittyy lähinnä iän tuomiin haasteisiin opiskelussa sekä nuorten ja aikuisten eroavaisuuksien tarkasteluun oppimisen näkökulmasta. Aikuisten itsenäistä kielten opiskelua ei ole aikaisemmin juurikaan tutkittu. Jo olemassa olevat tutukimukset aiheesta ovat hyvin yleispiirteisiä sekä pysyttelevät usein teoreettisella tasolla. Tämän vuoksi tutkielma on ensimmäisiä, joka kohdistuu tarkemmin aikuisopiskelijoiden tarpeisiin sekä vaatimuksiin, kun kyseessä on itsenäinen kielen kertaus sekä opiskelu. Tutkielma perehtyy myös oppimateriaalin digitaalisuuden hyötyihin sekä haasteisiin. Digitaalisia oppimateriaaleja koskevia tutkimuksia on olemassa vasta muutamia, mutta yksikään niistä ei ole keskittynyt aikuisopiskelijoiden itsenäiseen kielenkertaukseen.

Tutkielman aineistoina toimi viidelle aikuiselle tehdyt haastattelut. Aineiston analysoinnissa käytettiin kvalitatiivista aineistolähtöistä sisällönanalyysia. Jokainen haastattelu litteroitiin, minkä jälkeen haastattelujen kesken etsittiin yhtenäisiä teemoja. Tämän avulla aineistosta saatiin tiivistettyä tutkimuksen kannalta olennaisimmat tiedot. Nämä aineistosta kootut yhteiset teemat koottiin vielä kuuteen eri ryhmään. Tämän lisäksi analyysissa verrattiin saatua aineistoa aiheesta olevaan kirjallisuuteen.

Tutkielman tulokset osoittivat selvästi, että aikuisille kohdistetulle digitaaliselle itseopiskelumateriaalille on tarvetta. Aineiston avulla saatiin myös selville se, että materiaalin digitaalisuus toisi sille lisäarvoa, mikäli sisältö olisi laadukasta ja sen käytettävyys olisi hyvä. Tuloksista kävi myös ilmi, että aikuisopiskelijoilla oli toisistaan poikkeavia kielen osa-alueita, joita he halusivat kerrata. Kaikki aikuisopiskelijat kuitenkin ilmaisivat epävarmuutta omasta kielitaidostaan sekä kokemattomuutta kielen käytössä, mihin tulisikin jatkossa keskittyä materiaalin sisällön suunnittelussa.

Tutkielman aineiston suppeuden vuoksi tuloksia ei voida yleistää koskemaan kaikkia aikuisopiskelijoita. Johtuen tutkielman laajuudesta, suurempi katanta aikuisopiskelijoista tai itseopiskelumateriaalin sisällön tarkempi selvitys ei ollut mahdollista. Tutkielmaa voisikin jatkaa laajemmalla otannalla aikuisopiskelijoita sekä lisäselvityksellä mahdollisen materiaalin sisällöstä.

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Muita tietoja – Additional information

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1   INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, English is considered as a lingua franca. However, after finishing the Finnish school system there are quite limited possibilities to maintain and revise the language skills in English that have been achieved. Even though the presence of English has grown in Finnish society in the 20th century, maintaining the achieved proficiency in English relies heavily on self-guidance. From all the possibilities to revise one's skills in English, the most efficient and organized option is to study at an adult education center. Nonetheless, it requires resources that one may not have, which makes learning material for self-study ideal for those who do not have such resources.

However, there is no learning material for adult students who already have a certain level of proficiency in English. In other words, the possibilities for self-revising are extremely limited and practically do not exist. Moreover, previous research in the field of adult education has mainly focused on general features of adult learners and what differentiates them from young learners. No attention has been paid to adult language learners who wish to revise their skills in English. Furthermore, research on digital learning material for adult language learners does not exist even though the power of the Internet and digitality has grown enormously in the past decade. Nowadays, we are surrounded by constant digital information due to the recent development of smartphones and tablets, and yet, digital learning material has received little attention in previous research.

Therefore, I wanted to investigate if there is a need for digital self-study material that adult language learners can use to revise their skills and proficiency in English. With my study I wanted to point out how adult language learners differ from children and young language learners and point out the possible need for material that is solely targeted at adult language learners. Also, attention has been paid to digitality in the present study since it provides great new opportunities for learning and self-revising that traditional language textbooks fail to achieve.

2   DIGITAL LEARNING MATERIAL FOR ADULTS

Research on digital based learning is very scarce; most research on online learning and digital learning material dates back to the last millennium, and therefore, the results of those studies are outdated as the technology studied is not in use anymore. Moreover, digital learning material in adult education has received barely any attention. In addition, more sophisticated, accessible and usable technology has emerged after the publication of previous studies. Due to the lack of relevant previous studies concerning the topic of my research, I will focus on the existing theories and concepts on adult education and online learning separately.

2.1   Adult Education

Adult education can be divided into different sections depending on how organized learning is and whether there are specific goals set for learning. Pantzar (2007:28) divides adult education into formal and non-formal. The area of informal learning in adult education is also recognized. Even though this kind of division has been criticized, the division between different forms of learning and learning environments can be beneficial from the perspective of adult learners and different goals in learning. Both formal and non-formal learning are goal-directed and intentional learning. The aim of formal adult education is a formally acknowledged degree whereas non-formal adult education aims at informal but predefined learning goals.

According to Marsick and Watkins (2001:25), formal and non-formal learning happen usually institutionally in classrooms and are highly structured whereas informal learning can occur in institutions but it is not structured. Learners themselves set the goals for informal learning. Valleala (2007: 59-60) explains that informal learning takes place in everyday settings where learners acquire new information and skills independently. Marsick and Watkins (1990: 12) point out that even though informal learning is generally intentional, incidental learning is still part of informal learning. Usually, adult learners seek formal or non-formal education when informal learning is noticed to be insufficient (Jarvis 2004: 107-108). Valleala (2007: 87) states that the most common form of adult education is informal learning. Most informal learning takes place in spare time activities, such as traveling and in libraries. Valleala (2007: 87) points out that the introduction and expansion of new information and communication

technology are changing the possibilities and forms of adults' informal learning in their spare time.

Valleala (2007: 58-60) defines an adult learner as someone who is at least 25 years old and starts studying again after the first cycle of education. The term "adult" can be defined also by social status and role in society. Autonomy and responsibility to take care of oneself and others are seen as part of adulthood. Adulthood is best defined through social roles instead of an age limit. Learning is defined as adopting new skills and knowledge and the development of know-how and expertise. According to Valleala (2007: 60), adult learning as a process means giving new meanings to things and new ways of doing them. However, she adds that learning is an extensive phenomenon that includes multiple processes on multiple levels. Therefore, one theory or one point of view can give only a limited idea of the concept of adult learning.

Valleala (2007: 55) claims that there are many different beliefs, ideas and experiences on adult learning and the capability of adults to learn new information. All adults have some knowledge about learning that is based on their own learning experiences as a child and how that learning differs from the learning process as an adult. Biological aging causes gradual decline in some physical functions such as vision, hearing and reaction time. Nevertheless, Valleala (2007: 65) states that biological aging affects adults' ability to learn more through preconceptions and beliefs than directly. When physiological changes are exaggerated, they can create images of total degradation and loss in ability to learn as one ages. Changes in the functionality of memory are usually considered to affect adult learning. Valleala (2007: 66) claims that changes in the functionality of memory, as well as other physical changes in aging, are usually exaggerated. In fact, it has been proven that both physical and mental ability to learn is maintained in all ages (Jarvis 2004: 69). In conclusion, as Paloniemi (2007: 235) points out, it is important to remember that the normal changes in aging do not create any special needs for adult learners. Those actual changes caused by aging that do affect learning occur approximately after the age of 75.

There are many similar features in learning at all ages. For example, learning always requires interaction with the environment which is based on experience. However, the most relevant question in adult education has always been the difference between adult learners and young

learners. The way adults learn has been described by examining the changes in adulthood and how they affect learning. (Valleala 2007: 58.) Such studies as those of Brookfield (1986) and Knowles (1980) have shown that adults learn differently than children and young people. Valleala (2007: 71) states that one of the most typical features of adult learners is self-directedness; adult learners typically have more self-directed learning and self-reflection than children or young learners. Therefore, adults can direct, assess and observe their learning, and also, observe matters from different points of view more easily than children or young people. In addition, Rogers (2004: 56) explains that feedback is an important factor for adult learners because adult learners seldom have the same external compulsion to learn as children and young people have. The learning of adults is based on their own wish and motivation, which is influenced by feedback on their learning. According to Valleala (2007: 68-72), especially in adult learning and in the instruction of adult learners the importance of previous knowledge must be emphasized when learning and acquiring new information. Children and young people expect to adopt the information they learn later in life whereas adults usually expect the learning matter to be something that they can adopt immediately. Therefore, adult learners recall and adopt information that they find meaningful more easily and, usually, learning goals are set by strong internal motivation and identified needs for learning. Valleala (2007: 73) states that adults have more personal ways to notice, think, remember and solve problems than children or young people have. Furthermore, Torff and Sternberg (1998: 67) state that adults have a better ability than children or young people to use their practical experience and contextual information in problem solving.

2.2   Digital learning materials and mobile learning

Distance education, as in individualised form of studying, has evolved greatly over time. It has, for example, changed from non-instructional mail correspondence courses to more instructionally designed online courses. Distance education has been renamed as flexible learning, computer-mediated communication, online learning or e-learning. (Griff 2004: 189.) One of the benefits in online learning, according to Löfström et al. (2006: 22), is that it is learning orientated, and therefore, learners can proceed in their own terms. Besides learning the content of the digital material, online learning can help learners to achieve other skills, such as metacognitive skills, as well.

Tschudi et al. (2009: 123) point out that learners' motivation is critical in learning and especially in distance learning. Moreover, learners' previous experience on learning environments is crucially important. According to them, online learning enables students to participate more freely and without anxiety of being surprised. Students might also be more prone to take risks and they can rehearse more freely. Blake (2009: 26) mentions that online learning appeals especially to those who work full-time and need different kind of access to instructions and to those who prefer to work by themselves. Lancashire (2009: 3) claims that "a fully online course is a risk-reward opportunity". In other words, writing, reading, learning can be done with one device, and learners can work independently at their own pace where ever they want.

Using online environments, information network and multimedia in teaching create a new context in regard to data processing in learning. The technological media enable information to be presented in different and new ways. For example, interaction in learning environments, pictures, animations and voice can be included in the learning material. The use of hypertext creates cognitive challenges in the learning experience but it also creates conducive elements in it. At its best, online teaching and multimedia material with the teacher's support can enhance learners' way of thinking and constructing new information. This can be achieved when the requirements of learners' data processing are acknowledged in digital teaching material. Data processing along with assessment, processing and combining different source materials are all necessary for the learning process. Learners' motivation and learning are supported when learners' cognitive factors are taken into consideration in the designing of a digital learning material. (Löfström et al. 2006: 30-31.)

Moreover, the recent development in mobile technology has changed the nature of online learning and digital learning environments. As Mohamed (2009: 1-2) points out, mobile technology makes mobile learning possible; everyone can access learning materials and information anytime and everywhere. Furthermore, mobile learning empowers learners because it allows them to learn whatever they want and whenever they want because learning is not place or time-dependent anymore. Mobile learning can be formal but it can also be informal because it allows learning without predetermined goals. In order for mobile learning to be effective and useful, the learning material must follow instructional design and learning theories. As a consequence, learners will benefit from well-designed learning material because learning can now take place everywhere and at any time due to mobile technology.

The pedagogy of mobile learning, according to Mohamed (2009: 11-12), at the moment uses the theory and practice of pedagogies used in classroom and in technology improved learning. Even though research on mobile learning is slowly starting to rise, many believe that mobile learning provides better access to relevant information and reduces cognitive load. Mobile learning, its pedagogy and concept is still unclear and research on the area is slowly emerging. On the other hand, mobile learning and its technology, such as handheld computers, tablets and mobile phones, are developing very fast. As Mohamed (2009: 281) points out, previous studies show that mobile learning can be successful if it is conducted suitably. As mobile technology becomes more popular and widely used, it will be used even more for informal learning.

Clough et al. (2009: 107) point out that since informal learning is generated by the learners' own aims and motivation, they will use all kinds of techniques, tools and resources to suit their learning goals and own preferences. Clough et al. (2009: 110) found out that mobile device owners exploited their devices' functionality in their informal learning activities. Their results suggest that those who have mobile devices use them to support a great deal of informal learning activities, both unintentional and intentional. Due to the portability of such devices, they were always with the users and, therefore, supported both unexpected learning opportunities and planned learning activities.

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 The research aim and questions

Since revising and maintaining proficiency in English using digital material has not been studied, my research aims to investigate the need for digital self-study material to be used in revising English and the possible content of the material. In other words, my research aims to answer the following questions:

- How can adult language learners benefit from digital self-study material in revising their skills in English?
- What language skills should be emphasized?
- What kinds of exercises would be most beneficial to attain the skills defined?

With the first question, I would like to be able to adduce the possible need among adult language learners for material to revise their skills in English. Detecting the need for the material will support my notion that there are no available sources at the moment for revising English outside of classroom. Moreover, the need for the material will give ground and support for further research. Therefore, I hope that with the second question I can provide some answers and reasons for the existing need of the material, that is, what demands and needs the already existing sources fail to meet. Furthermore, with the third question I would like to reflect the demands and needs of the material and its content from a pedagogical point of view.

3.2 The data

Four interviews were conducted face to face and one of them was conducted using videotelephony software. All of the interviews were recorded and the recordings were stored on a computer and on an external hard drive. Before the interview, the consents for the interview were asked from the interviewees. The data of the qualitative study consists of interviews with five adult language learners:

- First interviewee (I1): 27 years, male, engineer, English in comprehensive school, upper secondary school and university of applied sciences.
- Second interviewee (I2): 56 years, female, teacher, English in comprehensive school and in vocational school.
- Third interviewee (I3): 29 years, female, student, English in comprehensive school, upper secondary school, university of applied sciences and university.
- Fourth interviewee (I4): 28 years, male, engineer, English in comprehensive school, upper secondary school and university of applied sciences.
- Fifth interviewee (I5): 25 years, female, physical education instructor, English in comprehensive school, upper secondary school and university of applied sciences.

The interview was a semi-structured interview to give the interviewees a better chance to describe their needs and demands for revising their skills in English, and also, giving me, the

interviewer, the opportunity to make more specific questions if needed and to probe the interviewees' answers for explanation (Galletta 2012: 24). This is important because all of the interviewees have different backgrounds and feelings towards learning English and some of them are already revising their skills in English independently.

The interview started with questions about the interviewees' past experiences of studying English, which was followed by questions about their current usage of English and possible methods of independent revision. Lastly, the interviewees were asked to give their opinion on digital self-learning material for adult students. The interview questions can be found in the appendix. The data of the study can be considered to be generalizable to an extent because the interviewees have different backgrounds, there are both men and women and they all belong to different age groups.

3.3   Methods of analysis

The interviews were transcribed, after which content analysis was used to analyze the answers. Content analysis allows the collection of most relevant information from data and the arrangement of the findings systematically into a useful form. The focus in content analysis is on meaning and what is being said whereas in discourse analysis the focus is on how the meaning is conveyed and how it is said. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 103-104.) Content analysis will be therefore used because the aim is to focus on the information itself and the focus is on what is said instead of how it was said.

Content analysis can be either inductive or deductive. In inductive content analysis different themes are combined from the data to get answers for the research questions whereas in deductive content analysis the data is used to support an existing theory or concept. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009: 112-113.) Inductive content analysis will be used as there are barely any existing studies concerning the topic of the study and no existing theory or concept can therefore be tested using deductive content analysis. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 109), inductive content analysis can be divided into different phases. Firstly, the interviews are listened to and transcribed word by word. Then the data is reduced, that is, all irrelevant information is removed from the data and relevant information can then be listed. When the reduced information is listed, the data can be clustered into sub-categories that represent similarities and dissimilarities in the reduced data. New main categories can then be created

using these sub-categories. Lastly, the gathered data is compared to the literature and the theories discussed in chapter two so that the relevance of the data can be shown.

4 DIGITAL LEARNING MATERIAL FOR ADULT LANGUAGE LEARNERS

After analyzing the interviews, it was obvious that there is a need for learning material that is targeted at adult language learners. All of the interviewees felt that they would benefit from this kind of material. All of the interviewees were already doing something to revise their language skills but all of them felt that they should do more in order to achieve better language competence. Moreover, it was evident that the interviewees felt that they have never achieved a sufficient level in English.

Examples are numbered in order and placed in tables. The tables also gather the examples in sub-categories. Only some of the examples are given in the tables; hence, the numbers in brackets in the sub-category sections are used to demonstrate how many out of the five interviewees gave answers that agreed with the sub-category. Lastly, the sub-categories are gathered under one theme, which is placed on the right side of the table. Only some of the examples in the table are discussed, and also, some additional examples are given in the text. The interviewee is indicated after each example.

4.1 Reasons for studying English

When the interviewees were asked where and why they need English, their answers demonstrated well how English is needed in all aspects of life. Examples of this are shown in Table 1:

Table 1. The needs for studying English

1. "[…] arkipäivän tilanteissa." (I4) - […] in everyday situations. 2. "Sitte tota tietysti jos kattoo elokuvia [….] mutta lukeminen ja muu median käyttö." (I3) -If you watch movies […] but reading and using media.	In everyday life (5)
3. "[…] työssä ja vapaa-ajalla." (I5) -[…] at work and in free time. 4. "Töissä tarvitsisin."(I2) - I would need it at work.	In working life (4)
5. "Ihan yleissivistyksen vuoksi." (I2) -Just for common knowledge. 6. "[…] yleissivistyksen takia haluaisin, että kielitaito ois parempi." (I5) -I would like my language skills to be better for common knowledge.	Common knowledge (3)
8. "Matkustelu pääasiassa […]." (I5) -Mainly travelling. 9. "Ensimmäisenä nyt tulee mieleen et jos matkustaa." (I1) -First thing that comes to my mind is if one is travelling.	Travelling (5)

The needs for studying English

Four out of the five interviewees are working full time, and of those four, two interviewees said that knowing English is a necessity in their current occupation. I2 said that she could perform better in her job if she could speak English but weak knowledge and self-doubt prevent her from using English. All of the interviewees said that they encounter situations in their everyday lives where they need some knowledge of English. Also, it was seen as impossible to travel abroad without using English. Those who did not use English regularly still considered that knowing English is a part of common knowledge nowadays. Not knowing English or not having sufficient skills in English caused embarrassment and shame, which is discussed more in the following chapter.

4.2 Negative feelings about English

When the interviewees were asked about what they did not like in studying English, it was surprising that few answers were related to learning or teaching methods. Most of the answers were involved with how studying and using English made them feel, which is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Negative feelings about English

10. "Kielen opiskelu on aina ollu itelle nii vastenmielistä ja hankalaa […] kaikki on aina ollu itelle nii hankalaa." (I5) -Language studying has always been repulsive and difficult for me […] everything has always been so difficult for me. 11. "[…] mä en koe olevani siinä sillee hyvä." (I3) -I don't think that I'm good in it.	Conceptions of poor skills in English (4)
12. "En koe yhtään varmuutta et pitäs mennä jonku oikean ihmisen kanssa niinku puhumaan et tuntuis tosi epämukavalta." (I5) -I don't have the self-confidence to speak to a real human being and it would feel really uncomfortable. 13. "Mua siis hävettää että mä en osaa." (I2) -I'm ashamed for not knowing English well enough.	Feelings of shame (5)
14. "Ja ehkä mieleen jollain tavalla tulee myös semmonen ykstoikkosuus jotenkin […] et luetaan se kappale ja tota tota sit tehään jotain tehtäviä" (I5) -Monotony comes to my mind […] that we'll read the chapter and then do some exercises.	Monotony (2)
15. "Se ulkoaopettelu, sanojen ulkoa opettelu tuntu raskaalta." -Memorizing, the memorization of words felt hard. 16. "[…] se pänttääminen ja ulkoaopiskelu." -[…] that studying and memorizing. 17. "[…] tuli liikaa uusia sanoja ja niitä ois pitäny opiskella omatoimisesti enemmän […] se tuntu välillä mahdottomalta se englannin kieli koska oli nii paljo uusia vaikeita sanoja." -[…] there were too many new words and I should have studied those more by myself […] sometimes English felt impossible because there were so many new and difficult words.	Studying and memorization (5)

Negative feelings about English

Conceptions of weak language skills or not being good at English at school made the whole idea of using English difficult and repelling. However, it was clear that all of the interviewees still wanted to learn more and master English better. Speaking English, encountering people and using English in authentic situations were considered uneasy and uncomfortable. The lack of knowledge caused embarrassment and shame. However, two of the interviewees said that they were more comfortable speaking with a non-native speaker of English than a native speaker.

All of the interviewees associated memorization with studying English. Memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary was considered to be hard but still an essential part of language learning; see Example 18:

18. Sillee mä oon niitä sanoja opiskellu että lukee ne siinä listana ja joku on kyselly ne. Ja sit ne osaa melkeen järjestyksessä vaan ulkoa. Sit siinä käy nii et ku ne on opiskellu listana niinku sitä yhtä sanakoetta varten nii sitte ne unohtaa helposti ku ne ei oo mitenkään merkitseviä. (I5)
-I've studied vocabulary by reading the words in the list and somebody has tested me. And then you can remember them almost in order by heart. But when you have learnt them in a list for one word quiz, you will forget them easily because they are not important.

When the interviewees were asked if they had ever employed any vocabulary learning strategies, they all said that they were never taught any strategies. In general, learning new vocabulary was still seen as an important part of language learning, which is further discussed in chapter 4.4. However, two of the interviewees considered learning new vocabulary as demanding. Moreover, poor knowledge of vocabulary leading to feelings of total hopelessness towards the language as a whole as can be seen in following Example 19:

19. Mun mielestä se, että varsinki lukioenglannissa että yksinkertasesti tuli liikaa uusia sanoja ja niitä ois pitäny opiskella omatoimisesti enemmän ja ku ei riittäny aika ja motivaatio ja sit se tuntu välillä mahdottomalta se englannin kieli koska oli nii paljo uusia vaikeita sanoja. (I1)
-I think that there were too many new words in English especially in upper secondary school and I should have studied them more by myself and I didn't have enough time or motivation which is why English felt sometimes impossible.

Still the difficulty of learning new vocabulary may be caused by weak learning strategies, that is, learning new vocabulary can traditionally be seen as memorizing new words from a list of words. However, learning new vocabulary can take place in many different forms and I believe that it should be one of the main focuses when designing learning material for adult students.

4.3   Positive feelings about English

When the interviewees were asked about things that they liked in studying English, it was surprising how few good memories they had. The answers were mostly vague and they included something that was considered less negative than the matters discussed in the previous chapter. However, it was obvious that the interviewees had positive feelings towards the language and being able to use it gave them satisfaction, as shown in the examples in Table 3:

Table 3. Positive feelings about English

20. "Oli kivaa jos joskus ees oli vähä ees semmosta niinku toiminnalista." (I5) -It was fun when we had something that was active.	Activity in learning (3)
21. "Varmaan tämmönen sanojen opiskelu." (I4) -Learning new vocabulary.	Learning vocabulary (2)
22. "Siitä, että aukesi uusi maailma." (I2) -That it opened up a whole new world for me. 23. "Se, että se oli kiehtovaa ku se oli vieras kieli." -It was fascinating because it was a foreign language.	Enriching experiences (3)
24. " No ehkä kuitenkin mä tykkäsin kaikista eniten sitte sellasista ku piti puhua sitä englantia […] ku oli joku tällanen et piti joku esitys pitää joku tällanen keskusteluharjottelut" (I1) -Well maybe I liked it the most when I had to speak English […] when I had to give a presentation or discuss with a partner. 25. "Se oli niinku kivaa et jos kävi ulkomailla nii osas puhua toista kieltä. " (I3) -It was fun when you went abroad and could speak another language.	Producing the language (5)

> Positive feelings about English

Two of the interviewees, I4 and I5, said, although very vaguely, that learning vocabulary was the most enjoyable part of studying English. It was obvious that the term *studying* raised mostly negative feelings among the interviewees because in other parts of the interview the interviewees had palpably positive feelings about being able to use English in their everyday life as can be seen in examples 22-25. Even though studying English was seen rather negatively, the end result of that studying, that is, using the language, raised only positive feelings, which leads to the conclusion that using English is seen as a separate act from studying. This can be seen in Example 26:

26. Et tietty toiminnalisuus on siitä puuttunu aina et jotenki ku ajattelee et joutuis tavallaan ihan vaan nouseen siitä pulpetista jollain tavalla ja olemaan tekemisissä sen englannin kanssa. (I5)
-Interactivity has always been missing. If one had to just stand up and interact in English.

I believe that this example demonstrates well how interactivity and using the language have not been parts of the English lessons. Moreover, none of the interviewees associated the authentic use of the language, discussions or interaction with an act of studying or learning the language in the past or present. In conclusion, using English was seen as an end result of studying by the interviewees rather than as a part of the learning process.

4.4 Language areas that require revising

When the interviewees were asked which language areas they wanted to revise, the answers differed greatly from each other and almost all language areas were mentioned. All of the interviewees mentioned more than one language area that they would want to revise or

practice. However, there was one feature that the interviewees shared; when the interviewees were asked why they would like to revise those language areas that they had mentioned, all of the answers unveiled lack of experience and uncertainty caused by lack of skills in those language areas that they had mentioned earlier. This is demonstrated in the examples in Table 4:

Table 4. Language areas that require revising

27. "Just se kuulemisen ymmärtäminen." (I1) -The listening comprehension.	Listening comprehension (2)
28. "[…] se puheen tuotto." (I2) - […] that speech production. 29. "[…] lähteä sitä kieltä puhumaan" (I5) -[…] to start speaking the language. 30. "Pitäs puhetta harjotella enemmän."(I4) -I should practice speaking more.	Oral skills (4)
31. "Varmasti se erittäin se niinku kapea sanavarasto on yksi isoin […]" (I1) -Probably the very limited vocabulary is one of the biggest […] 32." Siis se kielen vieraus eli ihan sen sanaston puute." -The strangeness of the language so the lack of vocabulary.	Vocabulary (5)
33. "Se kieliopillinen englanti […]." (I3) - Grammatically correct English	Grammar (3)
34. "Ja sit tota toi se niinku se kokemattomuus et ei oo sellasta rutiinia." (I5) -And then the inexperience that it has not become a routine. 35. "En osaa puhua spontaanisti." (I1) -I'm not able to speak spontaneously. 36."[…] epävarma, nimenomaan se kielenkäyttö." (I3) -[…] uncertainty, especially in using the language. 37. "Olis varmaan pystynyt [= puhumaan], mutta itsellä oli kynnys nii korkea." (I2) -I probably would have been able to speak it but I had too much self-doubt. 38. "Ja just et meneekö oikein nää äänteet." (I4) -And whether the words are pronounced correctly.	Uncertainty and lack of experience (5)

Language areas that require revising

It can be seen in Table 4 that all language areas were listed except writing and reading. Only one interviewee (I3) mentioned writing when discussing language areas that needed revising. However, she felt that by revising grammar she would be able to write better. None of the interviewees expressed any specific need to revise reading. Among the interviewees the lack of experience and feelings of uncertainty was apparent, which can be seen in examples 34-38.

The feelings of uncertainty were caused by previous incidents in studying English and self-doubt.

 In Example 37, I2 said that she had encountered situations that would have required her to speak English but she had always evaded them due to doubts about her skills in English, even though she admits that she probably would have been able to manage those situations in English. This kind of doubt about one's abilities and skills in English was evident among all of the interviewees. It was surprising how much past mistakes, lack of experience and uncertainty about one's skills affected the overall usage of English. Not mastering some aspect of language, making a grammar mistake, not knowing a specific word or hesitance in speech caused feelings of embarrassment and reluctance to use English. By revising some language area, the interviewees felt that they would be more fluent in English and could then use it more spontaneously. Although revising some specific language area can bring all-encompassing self-assurance when producing the language, I believe that using the language and being interactive with the language will cause more experience, and therefore, less self-doubt.

4.5 Requirements and benefits of digital learning material

As mentioned above, all the interviewees said that they would benefit from learning material that is targeted for adult language learners. When discussing their ideas and requirements for the material, it was surprising how unanimous the interviewees' answers were, as can be seen in Table 5:

Table 5. Requirements and benefits of digital learning material

Quotes	Category
39. "Joku sellanen vuorovaikutuksellinen, toiminnallinen […] et se tilanne vastais aitoa." (I5) - Something that has interaction, functionality […] that the situation would correlate to real life. 40. "[…] englantia puhuvien kanssa oleminen."(I4) -[…] being with people who speak English. 41."Ehkä se vuorovaikutus**.** Semmonen [= materiaali] et uskaltaa lähtä vuorovaikutukseen." (I2) -Maybe interaction. That kind of [= material] that encourages to interact with others.	Interactivity (5)
42. "Et siinä yhdistyis kaikki nää kielen osa-alueet tai ainaki useimmat niistä."(I3) -That it would combine all language areas or at least most of them. 43. "Sellasta kokonaisvaltaista oppimista, siis ihan kaiken kertaamista." (I5) -Learning that is all-encompassing, in other words, revising everything.	All-encompassing (3)
44. "[…] et ois sellasia itseä kiinnostavia tekstisisältöjä." (I4) -[…] that there would be texts that are interesting. 45. "Ehkä se on yks syy minkä takia en hirveesti oo käyttäny sitä ku se ei oo just sitä mikä mua kiinostaa". (I2) -Maybe one of the reasons why I haven't used it is that it is not what interests me.	Interesting topics (5)
46. " […]sitä pääsis säännöllisesti harjottelemaan." (I5) -[…] one could practice reguralry. 47. "Koko aika saatavilla pitäs olla, oman aikataulun mukaisesti." (I2) -It should be always available, according to your own schedule. 48. "Et sitä vois tehä sillo ku itelle sopii." (I3) -That I could do it when it is convenient for me.	Always available (5)
49. "No jos se ois maksullinen ni se ois varmaan miinuspuoli." (I1) -If it cost something then that would probably be a con. 50. "[…] et pitääkö siitä maksaa." (I4) -[…] if one has to pay for it.	Low-cost (3)
51. "Ois hienoa jos kaikki ois sähkösessä muodossa". (I4) -It would be great if it was in a digital form. 52."Joku semmonen just niinku teknologiaa hyödyntävä." (I5) -Something that takes advantage of technology. 53. "Se on vaan hirveen paljo helpompaa tarttuu johonki laitteeseen […] ku sit se et menis kirjastoon ja lainais jonku kielioppikirjan." (I3) -It's much easier to grab a device […] than to go to a library and borrow a grammar book.	Digitality (5)
54. " Siinä pitäs sen käytettävyyden olla huippuluokkaa." (I4) -The usability of it should be top-quality. 55. "Hyvä käytettävyys on tärkeetä. " (I1) -Good usability is important. 56. "Sen pitäs olla laadukas." (I2) -It should have quality.	Usability (5)

Requirements and benfits of digital learning material

Everyone thought that this kind of material should definitely be in digital form. Digitality brings many benefits, such as availability at all times and ease of access and searching of information. These answers converge with the results of Clough et al's (2009: 110) study, which was discussed above in chapter two. Moreover, all of the interviewees required interactivity from the learning material, and, in my opinion, interactivity can be best achieved via digital material. The self-learning material should contain authentic material and real, or at least real-like, encountering with other people.

However, digitality also raised questions about usability and quality. All the interviewees said that the digital material has to be usable and of high quality in order to work well. This claim is also supported by Mohammed's (2009: 1-2) statements discussed in chapter 2.2. Three of the interviewees also said that the material should be all-encompassing so that the focus should be on the language as a whole and not only on specific language areas, which supports the findings discussed in the previous chapter. Also, all of the interviewees expressed the need for the content of the material to be something that interests them. In Example 45, I2 had previously tried to revise her skills in English by using audiotape lessons but she said that the content of the lessons did not interest her so she stopped listening to them. The use of interesting material and its relation to self-motivation is further discussed in the following chapter. All in all, I think the following Example 57 demonstrates well how digital material could meet the requirements discussed above:

57. Siitä toiminnalisuudesta et joku sellanen missä mä yhdistyn itse ulkomaailman kanssa enkä vaan jotaki yhtä paperia rustaa tai mitään sellasta tai kuuntele jotain juttua ilman että mä saan vastata siihen ite. Tai niinku jotain sellasta vuorovaikutuksellista missä mä pääsen niinku semmoseen mahdollisimman aitoon tilanteeseen. (I5)
-About that interaction; something that would connect me with the rest of the world instead of writing on a piece of paper or listening to something without the opportunity to answer back. Something interactive where I would be put in a situation that is as close to an authentic situation as possible.

In this example, I5 expresses her wishes and needs for self-revising material and those are the wishes that also other interviewees mentioned. Learning material that is in digital form, as it was mentioned above in chapter 2.2, can best fulfil these kinds of wishes for self-revising material.

Altogether, all of the requirements and benefits of digital learning material can be supported by the literature discussed above. Only the possible costs of the material, which were seen as

a negative aspect of self-revising material, have not been discussed earlier. However, at this point, I do not think that the possible costs are relevant.

4.6   The interviewees as adult language learners

The main findings in the previous chapter support very well the statements made in chapter 2.2 about digital learning material. In this chapter I will try to further support the statements made in chapter two, especially those concerning adult education and adults as language learners. I believe that this is necessary as there is no existing research on digital learning material for adult language learners to support the findings of my study.

Although all those interviewed expressed the need to revise their skill in English, few of them were actually taking steps to better their skills. That is, four of the interviewees encountered English in their everyday lives, but only I1 and I4 said that they are actively revising English. Their way of revising can be seen as intentional informal learning, whereas, for the other interviewees learning was incidental. In this context, informal learning means that I1 and I4 consciously sought opportunities to interact with English and better their skills in it. For example, I4 searches articles and pieces of news in English regularly and deploys different learning strategies to learn new vocabulary. Why he has chosen this specific practice can be seen in Example 58:

> 58. Se on tavallaan lepposta, hauskaa tai semmosta ku en mie oikeen tiiä mitään muuta tapaa miten opiskella englantia ku lukemalla, koska siitä mie oon oppinu sen englannin. Sillo ku kävi lukeen kirjoja englanniks nii aika nopeesti huomas et se kielipää kehitty siinä paljo paremmin ku lukiossa ku pänttäs vaan niitä kielioppisääntöjä. (I4)
> -It is sort of laid back and fun and because reading is the only way I know how to study English because that is how I have learnt it. When I started reading books in English, I noticed quite fast how my language skills improved better by doing that than in upper secondary school where I only studied those grammar rules.

It can be seen from this example that I4 is motivated by previous results and that reading in English is relaxing and fun for him. He also reflects studying in upper secondary school as memorising grammar and reading during his free time as fun and rewarding. Also, I1, who likes to sing and play the guitar in his free time, revises English by reading and translating lyrics into English. In Example 59, he explains why he has chosen this form of revising:

59. No ne on sellasia kappaleita joita tykkään laulaa mielellään. Muistelen sit, että mitä ne laulun sanat merkitsee. Pointtina siinä on sekä ymmärtää sanojen merkitys et sit kerrata sitä kieltä. (I1)
-Well they are songs that I like to sing. Then I try to remember what the lyrics mean. The point in that is to understand the meaning of the words and revise the language.

I1 has also integrated revising English into something that he enjoys doing in his free time. Therefore I believe that when designing material for adult learners it is crucial that the content is relevant as well as motivating and interesting for learners. The revision and learning usually takes place in their free time, which means that it has to be enjoyable so that adult language learners want to spend their free time using the learning material. This conception is also supported by Rogers' (2004: 56) statement that the learning of adults is based on their own wish and motivation as well as by Valleala's (2007: 68-72) statement that adult learners recall and adopt information easier when they find it meaningful and when learning is supported by strong internal motivation and identified needs for learning. These two statements were further discussed in chapter two.

It was also discussed in chapter 2 how adult learners typically have self-directedness and self-reflection. The answers of the interviewees supported this notion, that is, everyone saw how they would benefit from mastering English better. Examples 60 and 61 demonstrate this well:

60. Jos se [=kielitaito] ois parempi ni sit ois enemmän mahdollisuuksia ja vois saavuttaa enemmän. (I3)
-If my language skills were better, I would have more opportunities and I could achieve more.

61. Voisin kohdata ihmisiä ja tilanteita. Helpottais elämää. (I2)
-I could face new people and situations. It would make my life easier.

In these examples, the interviewees see the knowledge of English as a skill that affects their life as a whole. Knowing English means more interaction with people as well as giving more options and achievements in life. All in all, it was obvious that all of the interviewees had strong internal self-motivation and self-reflection. When the interviewees were asked what aspects prevented them from revising English, all of them gave reasons that were external, such as lack of time and opportunities and the need to relax in their free time, rather than internal reasons, such inability to learn or the functionality of their memory, which further supports the statements made in chapter two.

5 CONCLUSION

Based on my data, it is obvious that there is a need for self-revising material for adult language learners in English. All the interviewees felt the need to revise their skills and at the moment such material for revision or language learning does not exist. Also, it is quite evident that adult language learners differ from children and young language learners and therefore material that is targeted solely on adult learners would benefit them the most.

In the present study my aim was to answer the following research questions:

- How can adult language learners benefit from digital self-study material in revising their skills in English?
- What language skills should be emphasized?
- What kinds of exercises would be most beneficial to attain the skills defined?

Based on the data, the material's digitality was one of the main criteria of such material. The revision would take place in learners' free time, which means that digital material would always be available and provide interactivity. However, the material has to be well designed and have good usability to work well. As to the content of the material, it should provide many opportunities for interaction with other people and genuine-like situations so that language learners would gain more experience in using the language. All language areas should be addressed in the material because all of the adult learners had different language areas that they felt the need to revise. However, they all expressed feelings of uncertainty and lack of experience in the usage of the language, and, therefore, I believe that the material would be most beneficial if its main focus was on the usage of the language and not on specific language features. I believe that this point of view is something that the other sources fail to meet. The material should be all-encompassing so that it would address the language as a whole. In other words, language should be seen as a tool for communication and not as different structures to be learnt.

As there is barely any previous research related to the topic of the present study, the relevance and comparison to other studies could not be done extensively. Due to the extent of the study, only five language learners were chosen to be interviewed to gather the data. Therefore, more extensive research is required with a larger sample size. Also, based on my study, it was quite

evident that adult language learners have specific needs for the material, such as topics that interest them and quality content. Further research is therefore required for the actual content and layout of the material. Attention should also be paid on mobile technology and different pieces of software in terms of their usability and cost. In other words, further research is required to determine what technological solutions would be most beneficial in terms of digital learning material for adult language learners. This can lead to the composition of such material, which can further be studied and developed by using usability tests and user interviews.

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APPENDIX: THE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Mihin tarvitset englannin kieltä?
   -Where do you need English?
2. Selviäisitkö ilman englannin kieltä? Miksi? Miksi et?
   -Could you manage without English? Why? Why not?
3. Mikä on englannin opiskelun taustasi?
   -When and where have you studied English?
4. Mistä et pitänyt englannin opiskelussa? Miksi? Mikä teki niistä epämieluisia?
   -What did you not like in studying English?Why? What made these facts unpleasant?
5. Mistä pidit englannin opiskelussa? Miksi? Mitkä seikat teki niistä mieluista?
   -What did you like in studying English? Why? What made these facts pleasant?
6. Piditkö ryhmätyöskentelystä vai yksin työskentelystä? Miksi?
   -Did you prefer working in a group or by yourself? Why?
7. Koetko saavuttaneesi riittävän kielitaidon?
   -Do you think you accomplished sufficient skills in English?
8. Koetko tarvetta ylläpitää saavuttamaasi kielitaitoa tai kerrata jo opittuja asioita?
   -Do you feel the need to maintain or revise the language skills you have once achieved?
9. Teetkö tällä hetkellä jotain kielitaidon ylläpidon ja kertauksen eteen?
   -At the moment, are you taking some steps to maintain and revise your language skills?
   a. Miksi juuri näitä?
      -Why these things in particular?
   b. Koetko niiden olevan riittäviä?
      -Do you think they are enough?
10. Minkälainen materiaali tai minkälaiset keinot olisivat mielestäsi hyviä ja/tai kiinnostavia englannin kertaukseen?
    -What kind of material or means would be good and/or interesting to revise English in your opinion?
11. Missä englannin kielen osa-alueessa tai –alueissa koet tarvitsevasi vahvistusta?
    -Which language areas you you feel the need to revise?
    a. Minkälaista vahvistusta?
       -What kind of revision?
    b. Mitä hyötyä saisit siitä?
       -What benefits would you gain from that?
12. Missä, milloin ja miten haluaisit kerrata englantia?
    -Where, when and how would you like to revise English?
13. Onko olemassa joitain seikkoja, jotka estävät tai hidastavat englannin kertaamista ja taitojesi ylläpitoa?
    -Is there something that hold up or prevents you from revising and maintaining your English?
14. Onko mielestäsi tarvetta sellaiselle digitaaliselle oppimateriaalille, joka on kohdistettu aikuisopiskelijoiden itsenäiseen englannin kielen kertaukseen ja opiskeluun?
    -Do you think there is a need for a digital learning material that is targeted at adult learners' self-revision and self-studying?
    a. Miksi?-Why?
    b. Kokisitko hyötyväsi tällaisesta materiaalista? Miksi?
       -Do you think you would benefit from this kind of material?
    c. Toisiko tämänkaltainen materiaali jotain lisää siihen, miten nyt kertaat tai ylläpidät englannin kielitaitoasi?
       -Would the material bring something new to the way you are currently revising and maintaining your skills in English?
    d. Mitä etuja näkisit siinä?
       -What benefits do you see in this kind of material?
    e. Mitä miinuspuolia näkisit siinä?
       -What disadvantages do you see in it?