

FINNISH UPPER SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES AND
PREFERENCES OF USER-GENERATED MEDIA CONTENT IN THE EFL
CLASSROOM

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Kielten opiskelu on kasvavasti multimodaalisempaa ja siinä hyödynnetään useita eri tapoja oppia. Tutkimustieto tietyistä medioista ja välineistä luokkahuoneessa on kasvanut viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana sekä kansainvälisesti, että Suomessa. Erityisesti opettajien näkemyksiä ja kokemuksia erilaisten internet materiaalien käytöstä osana opetusta on tutkittu, mutta tämän seurauksena oppilaiden näkökulma on jäänyt vähäiseksi.</p> <p>Kyseisen tutkielman fokukseksi valikoitui käyttäjakeskeiset mediat. Käyttäjakeskeisillä medioilla tarkoitetaan internet materiaaleja, joiden sisältö on sivun käyttäjien tuottamaa ja jakamaa, olkoon se wikia, blogi, tai joku muu vastaavanlainen. Ero esimerkiksi sosiaaliseen mediaan ei ole täysin itsestään selvää, mutta käyttäjakeskeisissä medioissa olennaista on, että huomio keskittyy luovaan sisältöön ja sen tuottamiseen, eikä esimerkiksi kommunikointiin.</p> <p>Tavoitteina oli selvittää mitkä ovat lukio-asteella olevien oppilaiden asenteet, kokemukset, ja preferenssit liittyen tiettyihin käyttäjakeskeisiin medioihin. Tämän lisäksi tarkoituksena on laajentaa yleistä käsitystä ja arvostusta oppilasnäkökulmasta ja oppijan osallistumisesta luokassa. Sisällyttämällä teknologiaa ja erityisesti käyttäjakeskeisiä medioita opettamiseen on suurta potentiaalia edistää näitä ilmiöitä.</p> <p>Tulokset osoittivat paljolti samoja asenteita ja kokemuksia, kuin aikaisemmat tutkimukset, vaikka näkökulma vaihtuikin opettajista oppilaisiin. Suurin osa kokee käyttäjakeskeisten medioiden käytön positiivisena. Erityisesti sen vaikutukset motivaatioon, mielenkiintoon ja jaksamiseen nähtiin hyödyllisenä. Käyttäjakeskeisten medioiden hyödyt ja niiden tarjoamien mahdollisuuksien esille tuominen, tulee toivottavasti rohkaisemaan opettajia lähestymään uusia opettamis- ja tiedonesittämistapoja, sekä oppilaita vaatimaan lisää menetelmiä jotka hyödyttävät heidän oppimistaan eniten.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Language classrooms are increasingly multimodal and taking advantage of various ways of learning. Research on specific media in the classroom has increased during the last decade. In Finland, the focus has been on studying how teachers react to, and use different internet content as part of teaching (see e.g. Leppänen 2012, Lehtimäki 2014, and Viitanen 2016). This presented an opportunity to change the view point to how students react to these, and instead of focusing on one website, or one material, I chose to focus further on user-generated content.

User-generated content (hereafter referred to as UGC) defines more clearly the kind of media content that will be researched and focused on, that is, internet content that has been shared, and usually made by the users of that specific platform, be it a wiki, a blog, or a podcast. UGC has many different names and definitions (user-created content, creative media content, UContent) but it all comes down to how the users are also creating content, rather than just consuming it (Tomaiuolo 2012: 4).

Previous studies indicate that multisensory learning is the most effective method – since humans are visual creatures whose memory and learning are enhanced by visual or audio aids (Pacansky-Brock 2013: 7). Based on this, and personal experiences supporting the latter, the hypothesis of this study suggests that creative contents will be the most common, as well as the most preferred learning materials in the classroom. I expect there to be mainly positive attitudes and feedback on these types of learning. However, I am also positive that some unexpected results will arise regarding different materials and preference.

In addition to finding answers to students' preferences and attitudes towards UGC, this study intends to broaden the understanding and appreciation of such themes as student perspective and learner involvement in class. Implementing UGC to learning can be of major assistance in increasing this phenomenon. As is highlighted in the Finnish National Core Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2015, 14–15), it is necessary to develop learning environments outside the institute through different information-, and communication technologies, as well as encourage the active role students can have.

Next, the background of this study is presented. Then the present study and its method are

introduced. Results are presented in chapter four, and discussed more in detail in chapter five.

2 BACKGROUND

Throughout the years, and especially during the 21st century, there have been studies on the relationship between internet, teaching and learning (see e.g. Forsyth 2010, Pacansky-Brock 2013, Richardson 2010), but very little on its exact features, occurrences, or consequences.

Questions concerning the new media as a producer of new high technology materials and learning opportunities, have arisen with increasing globalization. For this background section I have looked at past research done on SLA and EFL learning in the classroom – especially how technology and internet have been incorporated to it. In the following pages the focus is on user-generated content, materials in general, media in learning and teaching, as well as teacher versus student perspectives on different types of media and technology in the classroom. The goal here is to introduce previous research outcomes, as well as clarify some main terminology and theories associated with these topics.

2.1 Media and user-generated content as learning tools

The rapid growth of the computer industry since and during the 70's resulted in today's modern information society; a world of Web 2.0., computer-aided language learning (CALL), computer-mediated communication (CMC), apps, and social media. That decade over 40 years ago was also the time that one Michael Hart produced and introduced the first UContent on the internet (Tomaiuolo 2012: 5–6). UContent is what is now called by many names, of which the most common one is user-generated content.

One of the most intriguing and valuable scientific texts, and one that has been cited in almost all the other sources used in this study, was written by Richard Clark almost 20 years ago, and is called “Media will never influence learning” (1994). During the 90's various studies and researchers claimed that the type of media (which is used in the learning situation) has no influence on learning or learning achievement. Rather, what mattered was the method and content. This theory is based on the unique and unreplaceable cognitive affect an attribute or medium should have on a learning task or learner. If this does not happen, the attribute and/or medium is declared non-beneficial and thus not responsible for motivating or enhancing

learning. Clark (1983: 445) has also claimed that media is barely “vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement”.

I would argue that people have very different learning skills and styles that with the right method and medium together, can provide the best possible achievement and enjoyment for that learner. Thus, separating methods and media seems unnecessary, because they are both an integral part of learning. The results that support the media’s non-existing influence on academic achievement cannot be disregarded – those solely based on a medium versus those solely based on a method – which show no significant differences between the two. However, in defining and understanding the benefits of something, it is essential to research more than just one aspect – in this case more than just the academic achievement.

Clark (1994) does acknowledge an opposing point of view presented by other researches such as Salomon (1979) and Kozma (1994), which is more positive and in line with the present study, in arguing that especially new media does have attributes and qualities that are in fact unique and thus provide previously non-available and unique representations of language, leading to new learning opportunities. This counter-argument has gained more ground than that Clark previously presented.

Moving on to more recent distributions in the field of UGC, a book by Blake (2008: 16) discusses Krashen’s theory of comprehensible input, and especially the role it plays in SLA. L2 learners need *comprehensible* input, but also *challenging* input, in a different way than L1 learners. Blake suggest that incorporating technology could enhance learners’ contact with their target language, thus also providing new and different opportunities for input (2008: 22). Some answers to how technology and media sites could be best utilized to achieve what students need, are provided in the discussion section based on the findings of this study.

In addition, Blake (2008: 12) emphasizes that an activity cannot, without any planning, produce positive results, even if the audio or visual elements of the medium are attractive. Certainly, unconscious learning, or passive learning, does happen but for one thing to have an authentic and conscious, and thus effective influence on another – especially pedagogically – a plan or an instructional basis is necessary. Methods alone contribute very little, and the same goes with media. Together, however, they can make a difference.

An article by Allwright (1980: 10–11), in which he analyses teaching materials through terms such as “the management of language learning”, “teacher overload” and “learner underinvolvement”, provided insights on how to define different materials. Since this study approaches UGC as a material in class, this information is valuable. In Allwright’s article, the focus is on understanding the role of teaching materials and what we want them to do, i.e. what their goal is. Allwright (1980: 14) makes a distinction between teaching materials and learning materials, which is a very relevant distinction to make – and this difference is very much acknowledged these days. Learning materials are, in this case, materials that encourage learner involvement, and include the learner in decision-making, and this is certainly something that should be aimed towards, and something that UGC encourages, if used appropriately.

Throughout the last 20 years, the arguments and theories surrounding the best learning materials have changed. In SLA learning the consensus seems to be that authentic materials (including UGC) that provide real, cultural, comprehensive input to students and can bring students closer to the target language, are an important motivational factor (see Lehtimäki 2014 and Viitanen 2016). Indeed, there are now whole courses based on authentic materials to encourage participation and motivate the students to shift from a passive role to an active one (Warren & Wakefield 2012: 98). These recent developments and changes highlight the importance of media and using different mediums in the classroom.

2.2 Teacher versus student perspective

Research in the field of media and technology in the English classroom in Finland has been done, but mainly on the point of view of teachers and teaching. Through three different studies executed in Finland, the preferences, and experiences of teachers will be summarized. Understanding teachers’ attitudes towards media, will provide useful information for this study to compare and contrast to when introducing a student perspective.

In a very recent Master’s thesis by Viitanen (2016), the use of media and ICT in foreign language teaching are researched from the teacher perspective. Viitanen summarizes the history

of media education, and educational media in Finland well and presents several studies (e.g. Kotilainen & Kivikuru 1999, Minkkinen 1978) that expose how different types of media have been used for educational purposes and how the types of media have expanded during the last few decades. Results show that most teachers realize the benefits of using different teaching materials, such as new media content and UGC. However, it is important to acknowledge, as Viitanen has, how despite the rapid growth both in use and in incorporating media to the classroom, there are still teachers who do not see new media or new technology as part of their teaching (2016: 20).

A previous study by Leppänen (2012: 53–58) found similar results as Viitanen. Most teachers believe using content like videos, will increase students' enjoyment and motivation of SLA, both inside and outside the classroom situation. Again, there were exceptions, as some teachers who did not use e.g. video materials in the classroom reasoned their choices with:

“Ei sitä kieltä hauskaa pitämällä opi vaan kovalla työllä.”

”You learn a language with hard work, not by having fun.” (Leppänen 2012: 58)

Leppänen made a valid, but also a slightly generic point that this teacher in question might have more of an “old-fashioned view” of language learning. However, this does leave some room for speculation and raises the question of; if one has the opportunity to reach similar results, by either having fun or by hard work, which one is more important, and who is to determine the answer.

A study by Lehtimäki (2014), centring around YouTube, aimed at finding out how much teachers implement YouTube in their teaching and what are the purposes for using it. It became clear that the main reasons for using YouTube were awaking interest and introducing culture and new topics (2014: 12). Again, similar results can be found in Viitanen's study, where motivation, and the authenticity of the new media were major reasons for using it (2016: 109).

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

In this section I will introduce research aims and questions of the present study. In addition, the process of collecting and analysing data are described and a brief introduction to the questionnaire and the participants is given.

I chose to utilize both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods, in the interest of presenting both general and somewhat statistical analysis and outcomes. The quantitative results are compared with previous research results, and the qualitative results analysed and discussed in the results and discussion section.

3.1 Research questions

In my study, I will be focusing on different media platforms used as learning materials in EFL classroom situations. More specifically; platforms where content is published and shared by the users i.e. vlogs, blogs, et cetera. The purpose is to find out what students experiences and thoughts are about the use of specific internet content as part of learning. Analysing the results from the point of view of motivation, authenticity and preference could highly increase our understanding in the field of EFL classroom learning.

My research questions include:

1. *What kind of user-generated media content are the EFL learners on upper secondary level familiar with?*
2. *What are the upper secondary level EFL learners' preferred learning materials in the classroom and why?*
3. *What (if any) are the disadvantages and advantages of using user-generated media content in the EFL classroom experienced by learners?*

3.2 Data collection and analysis

The study is primarily empirical and data-driven, considering that it observes experiences and attitudes through self-produced data, instead of relying on existing theories and materials,

which is only the secondary method. Empirical studies focusing on experiences, opinions and attitudes often adopt a qualitative strategy, whose features and aims are the most fitting for the study in question as well.

Data was collected through a self-produced material, a questionnaire. Collecting of data began in late February of 2017. The questionnaire was in the form of an online survey and has been constructed by using the Webropol survey tool. The final version of the questionnaire was checked for its content as well as linguistic validity and understandability by receiving feedback from other university students and bachelor's thesis seminar instructor. The questionnaire was then sent to teachers of English via email, as well as principals in upper secondary schools. In the email, teachers and principals were asked to encourage their students to partake in the survey, whether during class or during their spare time. The number of answers was monitored via Webropol, which automatically saves and collects the data.

The UGC media that I chose to introduce in the questionnaire are YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter, Vimeo, Instagram, Soundcloud, Blogspot, Tumblr, and Vine. These sites have a few things in common. First, they are all focused on user-generated, or user-concentrated, content. They are, fundamentally, sites that are made for people to be used by the people. Second, the main point is to create, share, and enjoy the content, and that content can be pictures, audio, text et cetera. Facebook is too personal to be in this category, and its focus is on communication rather content and creativity. Kahoot as another example, which appears in multiple open-ended answers given by the students, I do not associate with UGC based on how it is used. Kahoot is an interactive game, a mobile learning tool. It centres around content, as does the aforementioned sites, but how the content is created and consumed, is very different.

The questionnaire was divided into five sections. The first section is a short introduction that explains the key terms and focus of the present study. The second section includes two questions concerning the participants' background and one question that affirms that participants understand and agree to their answers being used in the present study. This section's questions take the participant directly to the last page if they answer negatively to any of the questions. The last sections, numbered from one to three (1-3) focus on different research questions, each with their own subheading. The questionnaire includes multiple-choice, open-ended, and Likert-scale questions, and they were formed based on the research questions, so as to provide

the most sufficient results as possible for a study of this degree. The questionnaire was in Finnish to reach high intelligibility.

The questionnaire was sent to two areas, which differ geographically as well as socioeconomically. In total, the questionnaire was sent to five different upper secondary schools, of which four are greater in size as well as in terms of student population. By distributing the questionnaire in this form and in this capacity, the study is more accessible to the adequate total of participants, as well as to receiving varied answers. Due to this, the answers are not nationally wide, but regardless, I believe they will provide beneficial and interesting insights to language learning in general.

The gathered data was analysed and categorized using both qualitative, and quantitative analysis in the form of content analysis. The qualitative approach enables us to comprehend the topic and its characteristics and meanings. The qualitative approach is also fitting to my study because at its core it is an empirical study that relies on interpretivism. However, my study does adopt some quantitative aspects as well. Some of the results are analysed quantitatively by using graphical and numeral representations of the data (e.g. answers on the most preferred UGC media) and possibly looking at relative frequencies of specific words and phrases (e.g. answers describing experiences and attitudes).

Content analysis was used to analyse the answers to some of the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Answers were divided into units of single words and phrases, and categorized into positive, negative, and neutral. Next, frequencies of the designated units were counted. Using this type of content analysis will hopefully reveal the values and priorities of students, and this in turn will help in classifying and interpreting students' attitudes and opinions associated with UGC.

Results and progress of the study were to an extent affected by the time of studies of the focus group, which led to low regional reach, and the number of answers being lower in some open-ended as well as multiple choice questions. The number of participants was positive relative to the questionnaire being sent out late. Anonymity and approachable questions supported the validity of results.

3.3 Participants

The focus group consists of upper secondary level students (aged at least 18) in Finland studying English as a foreign language. The focus group was mostly chosen due to personal experiences; I believe using creative and authentic content is more prominent in higher level education. In addition, upper secondary level students are more likely to have experience on different learning methods and materials than e.g. lower secondary students or even younger. Originally, the idea was to have everyone in upper secondary level (aged 15–18) participate in the survey, but after considering the distribution and various permissions needed from underage participants, it was decided that the research would focus on students at the end of their upper secondary level studies. Due to the amount of experience and age, this focus group will presumably provide in depth answers to the questions posed.

In the questionnaire and in the emails sent to teachers of English, it was made clear that the focus group was third-year upper secondary level students. With respect to research integrity and ethics rules, each participant answered the questionnaire voluntarily and anonymously. Permissions from the school's principal or municipal authorities were not necessary, although, principals were informed of the questionnaire as well. The questionnaire was open for approximately one month, and was answered by a total of 44 participants.

4 RESULTS

This section presents main results and findings based on the answers given in the questionnaire. The results are divided into three individual sections, and each section has a specific theme, relating to research questions. Figures are introduced before written analysis of each part, to present the results in a logical and clear manner. In addition to this, lowest and highest scores in each table are bolded, and frequencies that reveal something to consider are italicized.

4.1 UGC media: familiarity to students and frequency of use in class

Table 1. UGC sites: Familiarity

	N	Percentage
YouTube	44	100%
Wikipedia	42	95%
Instagram	35	80%
Twitter	29	66%
Blogspot/Blogger/Other	21	48%
Tumblr	16	36%
Vine	16	36%
Soundcloud	14	32%
Vimeo	11	25%

As Table 1 shows, all the UGC media sites were familiar to participants from some environment or another. Only YouTube reached 100% familiarity of the nine mentioned. The second and third most known were Wikipedia (95%), and Instagram (80%). The least familiar was Vimeo (25%). The average value of familiarity to students is 57%. We can conclude that students, generally, are quite familiar with different types of UGC sites, even if the concept of UGC is new to them.

Table 2. UGC sites: Frequency of use

	Never	Rarely	Once a month	More than once a month	Once a week or more
YouTube	0%	24%	31%	33%	11%
Twitter	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Wikipedia	27%	41%	15%	13%	2%
Soundcloud	91%	9%	0%	0%	0%
Blogspot/Blogger/Other	86%	14%	0%	0%	0%
Instagram	96%	2%	2%	0%	0%
Tumblr	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Vine	98%	7%	0%	0%	0%
Vimeo	93%	7%	0%	0%	0%

Students were asked to choose which of the UGC media were used during class and how often. This time, it was specified that only materials familiar from the English classroom were to be focused on. The results showed that in terms of use, from most frequently used to least, the order is: YouTube, Wikipedia, Blogspot and others, Soundcloud, Instagram, Vimeo, Twitter, Vine, and Tumblr. Every single one was used in various amounts in the classroom, except for Tumblr. Also notable is that YouTube was the only one that received zero *never* answers, with most answering *more than once a month*. Despite Instagram being the third most familiar to students (see Table 1), it is clear the reason behind this is not classroom usage. Even though the environment where these UGC sites are used was specified, the user – teacher or student – was not. For example, Wikipedia might be more of a tool for students (to check or find information), not something the teacher presents and uses as a teaching material as such.

In an open-ended question, students were given the possibility to describe other possible, or similar, UGC sites used in the classroom. Three out of nine answers mentioned Kahoot, and one mentioned online textbooks. These are both valid remarks that show how our classrooms

are increasingly multimodal, however, these are not included in as UGC. One argument supporting this is that Kahoot and online textbook are both, to a various degree, designed specifically for teaching purposes, whereas YouTube, Wikipedia, Blogspot and others, are not.

4.2 Students' preferences on materials used in class

First, students were asked to name materials that they liked used in the classroom. The goal with this question was to get an overall picture of what are students' preferred learning materials, thus the type or medium of materials were not specified.

Table 3. Most preferred materials

	N	Percentage
Videos/YouTube	22	29%
Textbooks/Books	22	29%
Interactive games (Kahoot, Quizlet)	8	10%
Internet (not specified)	6	8%
Handouts	5	6%

The materials that were mentioned the most were divided into three groups: *internet materials* including videos, games, dictionaries, and news (i.e. newsbreaks, online magazines); *printed materials* including books, notebooks, handouts, and news (i.e. newspapers, printed articles, magazines); and *others* including games, discussion exercises, and apps. In total, there were 43 mentions of different internet materials, 28 mentions of printed materials, and 6 mentions of others. Out of all these, the materials mentioned the most were videos and textbooks. YouTube was specifically mentioned in seven answers. Out of the UGC sites introduced in the questionnaire, YouTube was the only one mentioned in open-ended answers.

Secondly, students were asked to elaborate on and justify their preferences in another open-ended question. Out of the two questions relating to preferences, the other one asking students to rationalize their previous answer, I chose to study how they described their preferences through looking at the adjectives in their answers.

Table 4. Describing preference of materials used in in class

Positive (83%)	Neutral (15%)	Negative (2%)
<i>Fun</i> , good, useful, important, <i>easy</i> , authentic, entertaining, nice, real, convenient, fast, educational, diverse, light, exciting, inspiring, handy, timely, effective, simple, optimal, new, clear, the best	Digital, different, similar, ordinary, traditional, electronic, normal	Unpleasant

Table 3 shows that the number of positive adjectives is relatively high and the number of negative adjectives low. The fact that both open-ended questions related to preferences, from the beginning creates a positive mindset for participants, as well as a positive setting in general, and this guides answers and thus affects the results.

Worth mentioning is that the adjectives *fun* and *easy* were the most common, and that approximately 22 out of 50 (44%) positive adjectives were with printed and other materials. Approximately 28 (56%) were associated with internet materials, and sometimes specifically UGC related:

“ Myös YouTube videot ovat kivoja, ja toimivat hyvänä kuunteluharjoituksena.”

” YouTube videos are also nice and work well as a listening exercise.”

“—niissä kielen opiskelusta voi tehdä hauskaa ja jää paremmin mieleen asiat.”

”—they can make language learning fun and things.”

Despite the number of negative adjectives being low, there were a few answers that critiqued internet materials, only constructed slightly differently. For example:

“Internetin ja videoiden avulla on hyvä tutustuttaa oppilaat aiheeseen, mutta en näe, että niiden avulla oppisi yhtään paremmin.”

”It is a good way to introduce students to a subject/theme with the internet and videos, but I don’t see how they would increase learning any better.”

And:

“Henkilökohtaisesti vastustan sosiaalista mediaa, joten en halua sitä lähelle opetusta millään tasolla.”

”Personally I am against social media, so I do not want it anywhere near education.”

Here again, it is important that we understand that social media and UGC are not the same. They do overlap, and they both rely on computer-mediated technologies. In fact, UGC is sometimes described as an umbrella term for social media for it, the user-generated decisions, enabled the birth of social media sites (Obar & Wildman 2016).

4.3 Personal experiences of user-generated content in class

The final part of the questionnaire included multiple choice, as well as open-ended questions on preference, and personal experiences. First, participants were asked to choose up to three of their favourite UGC sites used in class.

Table 5. UGC sites: Preference

	N	Percentage
YouTube	41	100%
Wikipedia	20	49%
Vimeo	2	5%
Twitter	2	5%
Blogspot/Blogger/Other	2	5%
Soundcloud	1	2%
Instagram	0	0%
Tumblr	0	0%
Vine	0	0%

Again, we notice that YouTube is the only one with 100%, out of the total number of answers. Wikipedia reached only half of the answers YouTube did, but is still the second out of all nine. Instagram, Tumblr, and Vine were the least favourite. Thus, preferences according to Table 4, are very apparent. What is noticeable here is that the total number of answers is lower than the total number of participants in the questionnaire.

Next, students were asked to elaborate on their UGC experiences and attitudes towards UGC, by choosing to what extent they agree with five positive, and five negative statements. The statements were introduced in a Likert-scale type question, with the following values: 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = undecided, and 5 = strongly agree. The positive statements are introduced first.

Table 6a. Experiences: Positive statements

Positive statements	1	2	3	4	5	Average
(1) Has been positive and fun	2%	9%	23%	45%	20%	3.73
(2) Has increased my motivation in class	9%	14%	25%	45%	7%	3.27
(3) Has made learning more interesting	5%	5%	14%	52%	25%	3.89
(4) Has taken too little time out of the lesson	23%	30%	39%	9%	0%	2.34
(5) Has encouraged me to use new ways of learning and using language	16%	11%	20%	45%	7%	3.16

Positive statements received high average values of agreeing. The statements with the highest agreement value were; *Has made learning more interesting* (3.89), *Has been positive and fun* (3.73), and *Has increased my motivation in class* (3.27). The latter one also seemed to be one of the most controversial statements, for it received several answers on the disagree side as well. Another one with most students agreeing, but with a surprising amount of disagreement, was the fifth statement.

Table 6b. Experiences: Negative statements

Negative statements	1	2	3	4	5	Average
(6) Has taken the focus away from the subject	16%	52%	18%	9%	5%	2.34
(7) Has taken too much time out of the lesson	30%	48%	16%	2%	5%	2.05
(8) Has felt pointless	25%	43%	14%	16%	2%	2.27
(9) Has felt too difficult	61%	27%	9%	0%	2%	1.55
(10) Has decreased my motivation in class	32%	30%	23%	11%	5%	2.27

The negative statements were mostly disagreed with; there were only a few answers indicating

strong or weaker agreement. For example, in statements (8) and (6), there are some who agree with UGC taking focus away from the subject, as well as rousing feelings of pointlessness. These attitudes, considering the few critical comments towards UGC that were presented earlier, are not surprising. In Table 5b, we can see a similar pattern as in Table 4a, of how motivation is clearly one aspect of UGC that divides students' attitudes and experiences.

Finally, students were asked to describe and share their experiences of UGC in class. In the open-ended question, students' answers were clearly positive. Most of the answers highlighted the fact that using videos for example, helps students to focus and can be used to raise interest to the topics in class, as well as general interest to learning. In addition, the problem of concentration and feelings of boredom were brought up:

“—antavat taukoa kesken tuntien ja auttavat jaksamaan loppuun asti.”
 ”—give a break during lessons and help getting to the end”

Utilizing the power of UGC media gives the student's a time during class in which they can focus their learning, use their energies, as well as increase their interest in different ways.

Some of the answers were negative, for example:

”Tämä sosiaalisesta mediasta hömpötys on jo nyt viety liian pitkälle ja toivon, että koulut eivät lähde sitä viljelemään.”
 ”This blabbering on about social media has already gone too far and I hope that schools do not encourage it.”

Another had an important point of criticism:

”--laitteiden käyttö joillakin opettajilla on tökeröä ja se vie tunnista aina aikaa etenkin jos pitää kutsua apuja.”
 ” --using devices is clumsy for some teachers and it always takes time out of the lesson, especially if aid is sent for.”

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aims were to find out from the perspective of students, to which extent UGC is used in class, and how they react to this. Furthermore, this study intended to find out what are students' preferences of UGC and personal experiences of them. Most of the findings clearly supported the aims and the hypothesis of this study, as well as answered the research questions. In a more general note, the study aimed at bringing focus to learner involvement and student activity in the classroom. Due to the focus of the study, results regarding the latter are minimal, and thus I would suggest further research, specifically on learner involvement or learner under involvement, simultaneously with UGC in the classroom.

The first discovery was that students are not very familiar with the concept of UGC or what is included in it and what is not. However, students' awareness of different learning possibilities, and the increasing multimodality in the classroom seem to be high, and that is valuable to recognize. Secondly, it was clear that students are familiar with many different UGC sites, but not from the classroom. Out of the nine UGC sites presented to students, only YouTube and Wikipedia were used more than once a month, or more than once a week.

The answers given when asked about experiences and attitudes revealed the most. It became clear that students' experiences of and attitudes towards UGC are mainly positive. They do not find it too difficult, or too demanding. They are willing to use more time with UGC sites in the classroom. They find UGC sites motivating, encouraging, interesting, fun, and as something that diversifies learning. However, there were some students who did not see the benefits of using UGC in class, and this needs to be considered as well. As with studies focusing on teacher perspective, for example the study by Viitanen (2016: 20), showed that not all were content with using new media, or saw the benefits of them in teaching.

Some mentions of disadvantages included the shift of focus from the subject to something else, the ease of using UGC or technology in general (for teachers), and how social media is already too overpowering. Although technology and internet are included increasingly in teacher training, it is true that the situation might be very problematic for teachers currently in employment, because the need for these has changed so rapidly over the last decades. It might

be accounted for to study further on what can be done to make UGC more appealing and approachable to teachers. The problem with focus shifting might be simply due to lack of proper planning, where teachers rely excessively on the visual and audio aid, without providing a task. As was discussed earlier (see chapter 2; Lehtimäki, 2014; Blake, 2008) no activity, despite attractiveness visually or audially, cannot provide adequate support to learner, or expect to have a significant impact on learners' development or motivation. Without a task, or something to guide and validate the use of UGC, the relevance is left unclear for some students, thus the situation appears to shift focus.

Furthermore, students seem to associate "learning materials" as something rather concrete i.e. notebooks, boards, books, exercise handouts, et cetera. Second, there were more mentions of internet materials i.e. games and videos when asked about preferences. Internet in general was found to be quicker, and seen as something that brings variation to the learning situation. The most preferred out of internet materials was videos. The reasons for this were varied: a good way to introduce a subject, increases listening comprehension of English, visualisation, diversion, etc. Lehtimäki's study (2014: 12) proposes very similar results, even though the perspective was different: Teachers used YouTube to introduce a topic, for listening comprehension, and "to briefly motivate or entertain their students". From printed materials, textbooks were mentioned most often. Textbooks were described as well-designed, and as tool that enhances reading comprehension.

Ultimately, both internet and printed materials received almost the same amount of positive comments. However, the slight division between materials, seemed to create a slight need to defend traditional materials; internet materials were described as *fun* and *easy* and *interesting*, without no or little explanation, whereas printed materials were *useful* and *simple*, because they are "well designed", et cetera. Maybe this is just the result of our, rather false, impression in society that everything that is new, threatens everything that is old. When in fact, we should aim at finding a solution to bring the future and the past together. This was also reflected in some of the answers; students were talking in favour of using versatile and different materials, since they develop different skills and features, and support each other. They did not point out that some material or another is better in relation to something else, but how together, they can make the learning situation in the classroom more exciting. Every possible medium, channel, site, or material that can have pedagogical value, should be applied in the classroom.

Understanding that producing materials specifically for education purposes is taking away from benefiting and using what we already have (e.g. UGC) is at the core of this. A material, or a site, does not have to have pedagogical value, because we can create it ourselves. This kind of approach does not only enhance learning, but takes into consideration all different types of learners as well.

It was interesting to notice that most students felt the need to explain their preferences, although they were not asked to do so until in the next question. Some even wrote down further suggestions on how FaceTime and different social apps could and should also be taken advantage of, unfortunately without elaborating on them. This depicts that students are interested in the topic, eager to share their ideas, as well as to be an active learner.

What we can conclude after this, is that even though internet materials (specifically UGC) are not used often in class (Table 2), there is a need for it based on positive experiences. A need to use different materials, a need for doing something that students prefer, and a need to create a platform for discussion, as well as creativity. If students' preferences and experiences are accounted for in teaching and lesson planning, it will very possibly enhance the enjoyability of learning and coming to class.

Showing the different and beneficial usages of UGC platforms, and proving how positively students react to these, will hopefully encourage teachers to approach and explore new ways of teaching and introducing information. Creativity as well is something that could and should be focused more in education, and YouTube (or any other UGC platform) is a very good and encouraging example of this, especially when it is paired with a task that requires the students to create (video) content of their own.

Now that we have answered to what extent UGC sites are used and how it impacts students, we could study this area more, or focus on the question "how". A stronger change in perspective is suggested: from UGC to SGC, student generated content, which further highlights learner involvement. Questions for further research could include the following: *What are the roles of teacher and student in using UGC in the classroom? Who is the presenter of media, who is the receiver? To which extent UGC media is used: a quick tool for introducing a subject, or a tool for students to experiment with and apply to their own learning?*

Another aspect of UGC worth researching, is how it seems to be deprived of its fundamental creativity when introduced in class. Finding ways to introduce these sites in a way that allows students to receive the input that is essential for their learning, as well as having the possibility to produce, and create, and give *output* is encouraged. In other words, novel ways for students to experience these sites how they are meant to, students finding their own creativity and using it to guide their own learning. Thus, our goal could be how to bring UGC in class closer to what Blake (2008) and Lehtimäki (2014) already suggested; it is not our job to downgrade students to passive listeners, but to lift them up to an active role, by pairing different materials with tasks that require an active and creative approach from the student.

Development comes from understanding the current and the past. That is why it is valuable to understand and find answers to the questions posed in this study. Especially understanding how teaching materials affect students in the classroom, and how these materials can and should develop. Our society changes, and it always will, and people need to find ways to adapt to these changes, in education as in everything else. I believe UGC media in the classroom is encouraging students to create and be active and that is one of the most valuable observations one can make.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Questionnaire in Finnish

Erilaiset käyttäjäkeskeiset mediat englannin kielen tunneilla

Tervetuloa!

Olet osallistumassa kyselyyn, joka koskee käyttäjäkeskeisiä medioita englannin tunneilla, ja erityisesti oppilaiden asenteita näitä medioita kohtaan.

Mitä ihmettä käyttäjäkeskeiset mediat sitten ovat? Kyseiset mediat tarkoittavat erilaisia some-sivustoja, joissa käyttäjät eivät pelkästään katso/kuuntele/lue sisältöä, vaan myös tuottavat sitä itse. Tästä hyviä esimerkkejä ovat muun muassa YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Vine, Vimeo, Wikipedia, jne.

Kyselyyn vastataan anonyymisti, joten vastaajien yksityisyyttä kunnioitetaan. Kyselyn täyttämiseen menee noin 10 minuuttia. Osallistumalla kyselyyn vastaaja antaa luvan käyttää tietoja tutkimustarkoituksiin.

Let's go! ->

1. Olen vähintään 18-vuotias.

- Kyllä

- Ei

2. Opiskelen englantia lukiossa.

- Kyllä

- Ei

3. Annan luvan käyttää vastauksiani tutkimuksessa.

- Kyllä

- Ei

Osa 1: Käyttäjakeskeisten mediamateriaalien tuntemus ja kokemukset luokkahuoneessa. Kysymyksiin vastatessa mieti kokemuksiasi koko kouluajaltasi.

4. Valitse sinulle tutut käyttäjakeskeiset mediasivustot.

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- Soundcloud
- Blogspot/Blogger/Muu
- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Vimeo

5. Merkkää mitä käyttäjakeskeisiä medioita on käytetty englannin tunneilla ja kuinka usein.

Ei koskaan / Harvemmin / Kerran kuukaudessa / Muutaman kerran kuukaudessa / Kerran viikossa tai useammin

Youtube
Twitter
Wikipedia
Soundcloud
Blogspot/Blogger/Muu
Instagram
Tumblr
Vine
Vimeo

Osa 2: Suosikkimateriaalit englannin tunneilla.

9. Valitse enintään 3 (vähintään 1) mielestäsi parasta käyttäjakeskeistä mediasivustoa, joita on käytetty englannin tunneilla.

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- Soundcloud
- Blogspot/Blogger/Muu
- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Vimeo

Osa 3: Mahdolliset hyödyt ja haitat, sekä henkilökohtaiset kokemukset.

10. Vastaa väittämiin oman kokemuksen pohjalta. 1 = Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä, 3 = En osaa sanoa, 5 = Täysin samaa mieltä. "Käyttäjakeskeisten medioiden käyttö englannin tunneilla on.."

1. ollut positiivista ja kivaa

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

2. vienyt huomiota opetettavasta aiheesta

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

3. vienyt liikaa aikaa oppitunnista

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

4. nostattanut motivaatiotani tunneilla

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

5. tehnyt oppimisesta mielenkiintoisempaa

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

6. vienyt liian vähän aikaa oppitunnista

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

7. tuntunut turhalta ja hyödyttömältä

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

8. tuntunut liian vaikealta

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

9. innostanut minua käyttämään uusia tapoja oppia ja käyttää kieltä

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

10. vähentänyt keskittymistäni tunneilla

Ei ollenkaan samaa mieltä o1 o2 o3 o4 o5 Täysin samaa mieltä

Avoimet kysymykset:

- 6. Onko englannin tunneilla käytetty jotain muita samanlaisia sivustoja/materiaaleja, joita ei vielä ole mainittu?**
- 7. Kerro vapaasti minkälaisista tunneilla ylipäätänsä käytetyistä oppimateriaaleista/oppimissisällöistä pidät eniten. Mieti kaikkea oppikirjoista lehtiin ja internettiin ja videoihin...**
- 8. Kerro miksi pidät juuri näistä oppimismateriaaleista/-sisällöistä.**
- 11. Kerro vapaasti omia kokemuksia (negatiivisia tai positiivisia).**

Appendix 2. Questionnaire in English

Different user-generated media contents in English lessons

Welcome!

You are participating in a questionnaire that studies user-generated media content used during English lessons, and especially students' attitudes towards these.

What is user-generated content? The media sites in question refer to various social media sites, where users are not only watching/listening/reading the content, but also creating it themselves. Good examples of this are YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Vine, Vimeo, Wikipedia, etc.

The questionnaire is answered anonymously, thus the privacy of participants is respected. Answering the questionnaire takes approximately 10 minutes. By answering, the participant allows their answers to be used for scientific purposes.

Let's go! ->

1. I am at least 18-years-old.

- Yes

- No

2. I study English at upper secondary level.

- Yes

- No

3. I allow the use of my answers for scientific purposes.

- Yes

- No

Part 1: Familiarity of user-generated media content and experiences in class. While answering, think about your experiences throughout your time in school.

4. Choose the user-generated content websites that are familiar to you.

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- Soundcloud
- Blogspot/Blogger/Other
- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Vimeo

5. Mark which user-generated content websites have been used during English lessons and how often.

Never / Rarely / Once a month / More than once a month / Once a week or more

Youtube
Twitter
Wikipedia
Soundcloud
Blogspot/Blogger/Muu
Instagram
Tumblr
Vine
Vimeo

Part 2: Preferred materials used during English lessons.

9. Choose up to 3 (at least 1) user-generated content website that you prefer, and that has been used during English lessons.

- YouTube
- Twitter
- Wikipedia
- Soundcloud
- Blogspot/Blogger/Muu
- Instagram
- Tumblr
- Vine
- Vimeo

Part 3: Possible advantages and disadvantages, as well as personal experiences.

10. Answer the statements based on your own experiences. 1 = Vastaa väittä miin oman kokemuksen pohjalta. 1 = strongly disagree, 3 = undecided, and 5 = strongly agree."Using user-generated media content during English lessons..."

1. Has been positive and fun

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. has taken too much focus away from the subject

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. has taken too much time out of the lesson

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. has increased my motivation in class

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. has made learning more interesting

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

6. has taken too little time out of the lesson

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

7. has felt pointless

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

8. has felt too difficult

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

9. has encouraged me to use new ways of learning and using language

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

10. has decreased my motivation in class

Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Open-ended questions:

6. What other similar websites / materials have been used during English lessons that have not been mentioned yet?

7. Based on what kind of learning materials / learning contents, in general has been used in class, and share freely what kind of materials or contents you prefer. Think about everything from textbooks to magazines to the internet and to videos...

8. Tell why you prefer these particular learning materials / -contents.

11. Share freely your own experiences (negative or positive).