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Factors affecting the success of English language Human Resources training

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Käsillä olevan tutkimuksen tarkoitus on ollut tutkia tekijöitä jotka vaikuttavat englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen onnistumiseen. Tutkimuksen yleisenä viitekehyksenä toimi humanistinen johtaminen, jossa keskiössä vaikuttavuuden saavuttamiseksi on henkilöstön oppimisen korostaminen kaikissa henkilöstön kehittämistoimissa. Onnistunut koulutus määriteltiin tutkimuksessa koulutuksena, jonka henkilöstö koki merkittäväksi oppimiskokemukseksi tai muulla tavoin hyödylliseksi työnsä kannalta.

Tutkimuksen lähtökohtana toimi teoriapohjainen ”Merkittävät oppimiskokemukset vieraan kielen henkilöstökoulutuksessa” -malli, jossa yhdistyi aikuiskoulutuksen, vieraan kielen oppimisen sekä työpaikkaoppimisen kirjallisuus. Kehittääkseen mallia englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen kontekstiin sopivaksi käsillä oleva tutkimus pyrki selvittämään voisiko jo ennestään työpaikkaoppimiseen ja/tai vieraan kielen oppimiseen todetut vaikuttavat tekijät vaikuttaa myös englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen onnistumiseen.

Empiirinen tutkimus toteutettiin eräässä terveydenhuollon palvelualan organisaatiossa. Siihen osallistui yhdeksän työntekijää, jotka olivat osallistuneet keväällä 2014 työnantajansa järjestämään vapaaehtoiseen englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutukseen. Tutkimusaineiston materiaali koottiin henkilökohtaisissa keskusteluissa puolistrukturoiduin teemahaastatteluin kielikoulutuksen päättymiseen jälkeen.

Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että tekijät, joiden on aikaisemmin todettu vaikuttavan vieraan kielen oppimiseen vaikuttivat myös englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen onnistumiseen. Toisaalta tutkimustulokset osoittivat, että työpaikkaoppimiseen ennalta todetut vaikuttavat tekijät poikkesivat englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen onnistumiseen vaikuttavista tekijöistä. Tuloksissa onnistumiseen vaikuttavina tekijöinä korostuivat työntekijän sisäinen motivaatio osallistua koulutukseen, asenne omia oppimismahdollisuuksiaan ja englannin kieltä kohtaan sekä koulutuksen sisältö, koulutusryhmä ja kouluttaja. Tutkimuksen tulokset olivat yhdensuuntaisia humanististen oppimisteorioiden kanssa.

Globaali englanninkielisen kommunikoinnin kasvutrendi teollisuudessa, kaupassa ja kulttuurin alalla merkitsee erityisesti Suomessa sitä, että englannin kielen henkilöstökoulutuksen tarve kasvaa. Tutkimustulokset ja sen pohjalta kehitetty malli toimii apuvälineenä englannin, tai vaihtoehtoisesti muun vieraan kielen, henkilöstökoulutuksen suunnittelussa. Lisäksi mallia voi soveltaa YT-lain mukaisen ”Henkilöstösuunnitelma ja koulutustavoitteet” -dokumentin pohjana.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

In January 2014, a new law concerning human resources (HR) training came to effect in Finland (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2013). Allowing enterprises to claim tax compensations for HR training costs, the law aims to encourage enterprises to pay more attention to the support and development of employees' professional skills (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2013). Simultaneously, the law aims to increase the number of HR trainings conducted in general (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2013). However, to be able to claim back any compensation, such training needs to be provably in accordance with the company's general human resources development (HRD) strategy (Ministry of Employment and Economy 2013). This requirement demands company leaders carefully ponder the core values of their HRD policies and thus also evaluate why HR training is needed in the first place.

The present study concentrates on one specific type of HR training; English language HR training. That is, whilst English is nowadays chosen most commonly as the way of communicating between people, and in the context of international business between stakeholders, who do not share one another's native language, leaders in all types of organisations have in increasing amounts realised the need to organise English language training for their employees. However, as the number of enterprises offering varying types of language training today is high, the risk of choosing to conduct a non-suitable language training for employees is unfortunately very likely. Such wrong decisions cannot only end up being a total waste of an organisation's time and financial resources but also leave its employees feeling even more insecure about using English at work. Consequently, by examining factors that affect the success of English language HR training, the present study offers organisation leaders one viewpoint to how they could ensure that such training will be successful.

The study advocates a humanistic viewpoint to human resource management theories that see learning processes, instead of measured effectiveness, as the core concept in all human resources development practices. In the study, the concept of *successful English language training* is also approached from the learning point of view. In other words, the present study

is based on the idea that HR training is successful if employees consider it to have been a significant learning experience or otherwise beneficial for them in the context of their work. That is, as employees are the ones for whom HR training is conducted in the first place, the present study proposes that the factors affecting their perception of the training's success should be taken into account when aiming to conduct successful English language HR training. In accord with this notion, the main purpose of the present study is to find out what kind factors make employees consider English language HR training successful and how they do so. To achieve its goal, the study tests the validity of the theoretical Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training and reworks it to become more suitable for the context of English language HR training.

According to humanistic learning theories, desired type of learning is more likely to happen if it matches one's true learning needs. Similarly, in the context of HRD, HR training that is designed to correspond with employees' true work role related development needs, which refer not only to task but also to personal learning needs, is more liable to be successful than training that is based merely on employers' superficial observations about employees' way of working. This assumption also works as a starting point for the present study. In other words, in seeking to explore factors that affect employees' perception of English language HR training's success, the present study considers comprehensively employees' different learning needs that relate not only to their general work self-concept but also to their English language self-concept at work.

The present study serves as a diploma work for both of my university master-degree majors; English as well as Management and Leadership. For this reason, both research fields, that is, Applied Linguistics and Human Resource Management, are present throughout the study. The study relies strongly on the study field of adult education, too. However, it is mainly the literature of humanistic leadership as well as humanistic education theories that have inspired me to pursue my topic and approach it the way I have. In other words, although these two approaches highlight very similar issues when applied to HRD management, not a lot of HRD literature exists that takes both perspectives simultaneously into account. Hence, the present, multidisciplinary study contributes to the existing HR management literature by combining humanistic leadership and learning literature in the context of HRD and thus offering a more comprehensive way to examine HR training.

It is relevant to explain here, too, how some of the key terms are understood in the present research report. First, when using the term *an employee*, the present thesis refers to all members of an organisation, including managers, who could be in need of English language HR training. On the other hand, *an employer* refers to those whose leader position and status in the organisation require being responsible for supporting other employees' professional development and workplace learning. However, when the term *HR Manager* is used, it refers specifically to those whose task is to organise HR training in the organisation. Second, the term *an organisation* is used more often instead of *a company* or *an enterprise*. The reason for such preference derives

from the decision of taking all types of organisations, not just those who seek financial profits to which *a company* and *an enterprise* usually refer, into account when discussing the need to organise English language HR training. Likewise, *an international organisation* refers to any type of an organisation that deals with stakeholders from different countries.

The present thesis consists of eight chapters of which the first three review literature regarding the role of the English language in today's business world, HR training and workplace learning. These chapters serve also as a background for the empirical part of the study whilst the fifth chapter describes in detail how the study was conducted. In Chapter 6, the results of the study are presented and briefly analysed. Chapter 7 is dedicated to discussing the results in depth from different viewpoints and answering the research question. In addition, Chapter 7 consists of ponderings of the present study's theoretical contributions, research limitations and suggestions for future research. Finally, Chapter 8 summarises the whole thesis.

2   THE ROLE OF ENGLISH IN TODAY'S BUSINESS WORLD

This chapter exemplifies why it is English language HR training over any other language trainings that has come to be the centre of the present study. Moreover, this chapter gives reasons why studies regarding English language HR training are needed in increasing amounts. First, concentrating on reviewing literature concerning the role of the English language in today's business world, the concepts of the English Language as Lingua Franca (ELF) as well as Business English as Lingua Franca (BELF) are explained and discussed. Second, literature dealing with the role and need of the English language in today's Finland and Finnish organisations are considered in greater detail.

2.1   English as ELF and as BELF

Crystal (2002, 10) estimates that approximately 1.5 billion of the world's people can nowadays be classified as users of the English language. This is roughly a fifth of the world's population. Most of these people are, in fact, non-native English speakers who use English daily not only in formal situations such as work and school but also during their free time (Crystal 2002, 10). Hence, as so many people around the world are able to communicate in English, it often is the most convenient language choice in situations where mother tongues are not shared. For this reason, the English language is an important *lingua franca*.

The term lingua franca (LF) refers, as Crystal (2003, 3) puts it, to a language that has achieved a certain global status recognised in every country. In addition, lingua franca refers to a language that people who do not share a common mother tongue with one another choose to use as the language to communicate in (Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's English Dictionary 2006). Although several researchers have aimed to explain why the English language has achieved the status of lingua franca over all the other world's languages, a commonly-agreed theory does not yet exist (Leppänen & Nikula

2007, 14). However, most of the theories explain the phenomenon with the English speaking countries' increased political power during the past 300 years; first, the British Empire's power in the 1800s and later, the United States' power in the 1900s (Crystal 2003).

Whilst being used as the international communication tool around the world, the use of English has also changed. That is, due to globalisation, the movement of people between countries thorough the globe has increased dramatically over the past thirty years (Fink, Robinson & Wyld 1996). Such demographic shifts worldwide, according to Cogo and Dewey (2012, 27) as well as to Leppänen and Nikula (2007), have not only increased the use of English in general but also created new ways of using it in different contexts. For instance, the English language has developed a significant role in today's international commerce (Louhiala-Salminen 1999, 100).

The effects of the English language on international business life have indeed been remarkable. To illustrate this, the role of English as the lingua franca has led increasing number of companies around the world to adopt English as their official corporate communication language (Louhiala-Salminen 1999, 100; Charles 2006; Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta 2005). For the same reason, educational and research institutes such as the Finnish Aalto University School of Business have changed their teaching programs' official language to English (Hallamaa 2013). Hence, it is no wonder that English has been acknowledged as the lingua franca of international business which has also led sociolinguists to discuss a separate field of study *BELF*, Business English as Lingua Franca (Charles 2006). According to Charles (2006, 264), the main domain of BELF is solely business and "its frame of reference is provided by the globalized business community". In addition, Charles (2006) argues that BELF should be distinguished from the concept of ELF as the English language used solely for international business differs, to some extent, grammatically, lexically and communication-culturally from the common English language.

Nickerson (2005) states that the number of studies related to BELF have increased during the past decade. Among these studies, according to Nickerson (2005, 369), "a shift from the analysis of the language used in isolated written texts or speech events towards the analysis of contextualized communicative genres, emphasising the organizational and/or cultural factors that contribute to the realization of the individual text/event under investigation" can be recognised. In addition, Nickerson (2005) states that another BELF related research trend is closely related to the increasing concern with language as discourse. Nickerson (2005) further explains that such a shift can be seen in the studies which have changed their focus from people's language skills to people's language usage strategies. These studies often deal, according to Nickerson (2005), with effective business communications. For instance, foreign language learning researchers have studied how non-native English speakers develop foreign language competences in different contexts such as work in the first place (Hall & Doehler 2011, 1).

This section has briefly explained what the concepts of the English language as lingua franca and business English lingua franca mean. However,

as the present study concentrates on English language HR training mainly in the Finnish context, the changing role of English in Finland is discussed next.

2.2   Changing status of English in Finland

Whilst the important role of the English language as the lingua franca in today's world has kept growing, the meaning of it in Finnish society has also changed quite radically during the past decades. These changes illustrate well why the demand of English language HR training in Finnish organisations has also increased. However, it is good to acknowledge that the effects of the English language on Finnish society derive not only from the general spreading of English around the world but also from Finland's own cultural, political and educational changes (Louhiala-Salminen 1999, 16). For instance, Leppänen and Nikula (2007) explain how the spread of English in Finland can be seen as a process in which instead of being forced to use English, Finns choose to adapt English themselves in varying everyday-life situations.

Leppänen and Nikula (2007) explain how certain discourses, such as information and communication technologies, entertainments industry and media are globally becoming increasingly bilingual. In addition, Leppänen and Nikula (2007, 35) state that English has gained a significant role in constructing new forms of expertise and social relations especially in Finnish business settings, where "English is a valued asset that makes it possible to participate and succeed in new transnational working collectives". They also explain that English has a big role in the renegotiation of the social relationships and hierarchies within these collectives.

As the English speaking countries have not played a major role in Finnish history and politics, the use of English as a means of communicating can be seen as a rather recent phenomenon there (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005). However, the spreading of English in Nordic countries has been so influential that Leppänen and Nikula (2007) speculate that they will soon change from EFL (*English as a foreign language*) to ESL (*English as a second language*) countries. To illustrate the difference between these two terms, it should be pointed out that a *foreign language* is considered to refer to all languages that are not one's mother tongue (Mitchell & Myles 2004, 5–6). Hence, as for the time being English is taught as a foreign language in Finland it means that English is not generally spoken in the country (Ringbom 1980). In contrast, if English was to gain the status of a second language and also be taught as so in Finland, it would be comprehended not as a mother tongue of Finns but as a language that is commonly used in certain parts, all alternatively everywhere, in Finland (Ringbom 1980). Then, the ability of being able to communicate well in English would be emphasised in all types of organisations which would also naturally result in the increase in the demand of different, alternative types of English language HR training.

The above-explained speculation of Leppänen and Nikula (2007) is not totally groundless. For instance, Risto Siilasmaa (2014), Nokia's current

Chairman's of the Board has stated how, in his opinion, English should be classified as one the official languages of Finland with Finnish, Swedish and Sami (Teittinen 2014). Siilasmaa argued that this could attract more different types of foreign specialist to work in Finnish companies which, in the long run, would contribute to the growth of the Finnish economy (Teittinen 2014). Nevertheless, whatever the official status of the English language in Finland will be, it is clear that the importance of English as a first, second and foreign language continues to grow (Leppänen & Nikula 2007).

The changing role of the English language in Finnish society has inspired many researchers to study the phenomenon from different aspects. In the context of the present study, the most relevant approach is business communications. That is, the phenomenon of BELF has created various communicative challenges for Finnish organisations that not only call for more carefully designed HRD practises but also consideration of the issue in the organisations' functioning strategies. Thus, the next section reviews literature regarding the effects of English on Finnish organisations' communication systems. For instance, some possible effects on organisations' operations are discussed if employees' needs of English language HR training are ignored.

2.3   English communications in Finnish organisations

Seeking to expand their markets, companies all around the world have crossed their domestic borders by dealing with international stakeholders (Fink et al. 1996). Even a number of Finnish companies have expanded their operations abroad. Hence, to be able to communicate more efficiently with their international stakeholders, some organisations, such as Finnish companies KONE, Metso and TietoEnator, have changed their official corporate communication language to English (Virkkula 2008; Vollstead 2002, 90). Such language choice means, for instance, that all corporate-level documentation and reporting as well as communications between different units are mostly done in English (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005). However, it is not only the employees and employers of multinational Finnish organisations who have been challenged to pay more attention to the English language use in their communications strategy. That is, it seems as the English language communication skills are generally appreciated and seen as an asset in any type of position even in organisations that are traditionally considered as monolingual.

The corporate English language usage has been widely studied (see e.g. Leppänen, Nikula & Kääntä 2008; Lehtonen 2004; Virkkula 2008). For instance, Virkkula (2008, 389) found out in her study regarding multinational Finnish organisations that English was often used in both internal and external communications, mostly at meetings, emails and other documents at least every week, sometimes even daily. This finding is supported by Lehtonen (2004) as she also found out that employees in Finnish organisations encounter the English language mostly in activities related to communications. Furthermore,

Lehtonen (2004) explains that the spread of the English language has created a great deal of new communicational challenges for employees at work in general. Thus, as the correlation between organisations' well-functioning internal and external communication systems and business effectiveness has been proven by many researchers (see e.g. Kreps 1990; Charles 2006), the support of employees' English language skills development is a matter that should not be left ignored in organisations' HRD strategies.

Since organisation leaders are responsible for monitoring and creating communication systems in their organisations, they should be aware of the effects that the changes regarding the English language usage policies in both external and internal communications can have not only on organisations' general functioning but also on individual employees' every-day work (Juholin 1999, 113). In other words, it is vital that all organisation leaders are in the know about the communication situations in which English is used in their organisation and what types of effects, for instance, employees' differing English skills might have on the smoothness of communications. Next, the effects of English on organisations' both external and internal communication systems are discussed in order to illustrate what types of issues organisation leaders should be aware of in relation to the effects of the English language on their organisation as well as why tools to design successful English language HR training are needed.

2.3.1 The effects of English on internal communications

According to Kreps (1990, 20), internal communications take place inside a company and could be defined as the "human interaction that occurs within organisations and among organisation members". In other words, internal communications refer to the communications between organisations' headquarters, affiliates and subsidiaries.

Whilst the effectiveness of internal communications has an impact on the success of organisations' sustainable development and financial performance (Meng 2012) and the English language is used increasingly in Finnish organisations' internal communications (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005), the need to take the foreign language issue into account in organisations' HRD strategies should be emphasised. Furthermore, considering such need is also stressed since fluent internal communications have been proved to contribute to organisations' general wellbeing, collaborative environment and organisational change as well as to its employees' loyalty to the organisation (Mazzei 2010).

Realising the multidimensional effects of internal communications' fluency on organisations' functioning should encourage employers to consider in detail how the English language use really affects organisations' internal communication systems. Thus, some of the possible effects are next illustrated. These examples also support the idea that instead of relying always on conducting the same type of traditional, very vocabulary-focused English language training for employees, employers should consider alternative types of English language HR training to solve the different types of communicative challenges that arise in organisations.

Most of the communication between employees in the workplace is informal, that is, casual conversations. Tukiainen (2000, 40) explains that unlike it is commonly believed, informal internal communication among employees has many important functions for organisations. For instance, informal communications, or the social talk as Holmes and Stubbe (2003) call it, between employees create and shape organisations' values and culture and also enhance employees' commitment to the organisation. Informal internal communications also support the functioning of formal internal communications (Tukiainen 2000, 40).

Informal internal communications affect the relationships between employees, too (Tukiainen 2000). Thus, the language barrier between employees might have consequences that could even affect organisations' general functioning. To illustrate this, if employees do not share a common language with their colleagues, or are not just confident enough or willing for some reason to use any other language than their mother tongue at work, it automatically affects their capability to communicate with one another. The latter example, where an employee refuses or is not confident enough to use English in any work-related situations, could be solved, for instance, by organising English language HR training that concentrates on specifically on boosting employees' confidence in communicating in English.

The lack of social talk in an organisation affects employees' chances of creating relationships with one another, which, then again, correlates with employees' general job satisfaction, feeling of communality, commitment and therefore also with their work effectiveness (Mazzei 2010; Kerce & Booth-Kewley 1993; Vollstedt 2002; Juholin 1999, 72). The poor quality of internal communications caused by language barriers among employees might also create an uncertain atmosphere throughout an organisation and hinder employees' creativity (Vollstedt 2002; Mazzei 2010).

Another example of informal internal communications' impact on organisations' functioning relates to power issues. That is, according to Holmes and Stubbe (2003), politeness in the workplace speech is strongly connected, and can reflect, power relations between employees. To illustrate this, as being able to be polite in a foreign language requires certain level of language skills, communication problems might cause authority issues as well as general confusion and misunderstandings about the managerial and subordinate roles between employees. Similarly, in multinational organisations where English has been chosen to be the common corporate language, the older leaders might feel at disadvantage if their younger subordinates' English skills succeed theirs. Such situations might also result in employees' lack of respect towards their superior. Then, the quality of formal communications might be hindered, as employees who do not respect their employer might, for example, not put an effort relaying their informal and formal messages forward (Louhiala-Salminen & Charles 2006, 48).

Formal internal communication channels are used, for instance, to provide employees with instructions and evaluation messages, to co-ordinate tasks and carry employee feedback to the managerial level (Kreps 1990, 201). Internal communications are no longer considered having merely a message-forwarding

function in organisations (Mazzei 2010). Instead, formal internal communications are seen to have a key role in encouraging active employee behaviour, too (Mazzei 2010). Hence, in an organisation where the English language is used in formal internal communications, employers should make sure that all of the employees are capable of understanding, for instance, official announcements written in English.

Kreps (1990, 201) explains how formal internal communication channels reflect an organisation's structure, that is, the arrangements concerning organisational levels, divisions, departments as well as its members' specific responsibilities. In addition, Tukiainen (2000, 40) notes that the purpose of formal internal communications is not only to distribute formal information in an organisation but also to help the people who belong to it to comprehend their jobs as part of the organisation's comprehensive pursuit. Consequently, if a language barrier restricts the organisation's formal internal communication systems, it is very likely that both managerial and personnel problems will occur.

Tukiainen (2000, 13) states that formal internal communications play a significant role in establishing general order and co-ordination in organisations. For instance, as the chance of having communicative problems is higher in organisations where employees are driven to use a non-native language for communications (Vollstedt 2002, 100), a language barrier among employees might lead to misunderstandings regarding their tasks or roles (Juholin 1999, 111). Moreover, Vollstedt (2002, 100) claims that such misunderstandings among employees might result in information flow delays inside organisations, which again can affect these organisations' functioning by, for instance, creating extra financial expenses. At worst, misunderstandings between employees might cause catastrophic accidents, for example, in air traffic control communications where the English language has chosen to be the worldwide aviation language.

2.3.2   The effects of English on external communications

An organisation that operates and does business on an international level has external stakeholders often in numerous countries. When communicating with such external stakeholders, which refer, for instance, to an organisation's customers, subsidiaries, affiliates, business partners, owners and other organisations that operate in the same external environment (Tukiainen 2000, 48), the challenges that have an impact on communications often relate to lack of cultural knowledge and linguistic differences (Vollstedt 2002, 87; Charles 2006).

As external stakeholder relations affect not only the financial well-being of an organisation but also its reasons to operate, it is essential for organisation leaders to understand how an organisation can overcome these communicative challenges (Kreps 1990, 133). In addition, all the channels that an organisation uses for stakeholder communication need to be well designed and organised (Kreps 1990, 231). In this design process, organisation leaders need to carefully consider their employees', for instance those who are responsible for the

organisation's international stakeholder communications, current and future requirements regarding their foreign language competences (Charles 2006).

As the communication between an organisation and its different stakeholders is interactive, it is necessary that both the organisation and its stakeholders are able to understand each other's messages in the intended way. In other words, employees who are required to use English in situations in which their communicative language skills are not competent enough might end up causing unintentionally misunderstandings that could affect their employer organisation's functioning in many ways, for instance by slowing down the information flow and hence causing extra financial costs. In addition, a language barrier between an organisation's employees and its external stakeholders' representatives might lead to misunderstandings that could, in the worst-case scenario, result in the organisation losing a customer or causing general unwanted publicity.

Making sure that all of the employees dealing with external stakeholders are given enough support to be able to communicate in the chosen communication language is especially important as Uusi-Rauva and Nurkka (2010) have found out that stakeholders see all employees of an organisation as credible and reliable information sources regarding the organisation's activities. In other words, even a wrong word choice of an employee whose task is to explain external stakeholders how his or her employer organisation functions might leave some stakeholders believing wrong information about the organisation.

One of the purposes of external communications is to create and enhance organisations' image and profile (Vaahtio 2005; Van Meurs, Korzilius & Hollander 2006, 169). In addition, external communications aim to help organisations with benchmarking, marketing and advertising processes (Tukiainen 2000, 48-49). Thus, poor external communications caused by the lack of employees' English communication skills can not only damage an organisation's reputation but also make its investors and customers lose confidence in it and its management (Kreps 1990, 231). Furthermore, repetitive English grammar and vocabulary mistakes, for instance, in emails might not only give an unprofessional impression of the organisation to its stakeholders but they can also leave some possible customers feeling that the organisation is not trustworthy to do business with.

Finally, Van Meurs et al. (2006, 142) point out that the English language is used for commercial advertising all over the world as English words are considered as more prestigious and interesting than, for instance, Finnish words. For the same reason, as Jussila, Mäkinen, Mäkirinne and Tomperi (1997) found out, English is used often in recruitment advertising in Finland. However, using English in any type of a promotion campaign in non-native English countries also has its risks (Paakkinen 2008). For instance, in Finland, many might find advertising campaigns that use English in their slogans especially irritating when equivalent Finnish phrases exist, too. Such negative feelings that possible customers relate to some organisation's products will most likely affect the seller's sales figures negatively.

This chapter has dealt with concepts of ELF and BELF that illustrate why the present study has come to focus on the need to organise English language HR training in Finnish organisations. However, the need to consider the effects of the English language usage on organisational communication and the support of employees' English language skills in HRD call for more English language HR training specified studies. Thus, the next chapter focuses on covering the main phenomenon under observation in the present study, that is, *English language HR training*, from different viewpoints.

3   ENGLISH LANGUAGE HR TRAINING

This chapter concentrates on discussing one of the main concepts of the present study, *English language HR training,* in order to explain how it is comprehended in the context of the present research. However, as HR training is, in fact, a practical implication of a more general organisational framework, HRD (*human resources development*), the chapter begins by discussing how different approaches, such as a humanistic approach, to HRD have also an effect on the perceived need to organise HR training.

3.1   Human Resources Development (HRD)

The term HR *(human resources)* refers to an organisation's workforce. Likewise, the term HRM (*human resources management*) is used to describe the function that oversees an organisation's human resources. Furthermore, HRD (*human resources development*) denotes the concepts and practises that aim to further human resources' development at work. It is noteworthy to acknowledge, too, that the definition and purposes of HRD have changed over time (Hamlin & Stewart 2011). For instance, Hamlin and Stewart (2011) state that in the 1970s, behavioural change was seen as the intended purpose of HRD activities in organisations. In contrast, the current focus of HRD literature, which the present study discusses in Chapter 4, has shifted to emphasise concepts such as organisational learning and employees' professional growth. These HRD trends are also visible, for instance, in organisations' webpages where HRD ideologies and practises related to employees' professional development are often explained.

In contrast to the past when HRD research and theories foregrounded leadership styles and traits as the most important way in controlling organisations' effectiveness, today's research takes the vital role of human resources in organisations' functioning into account, too (Lämsä & Uusitalo 2002, 138). According to McGuire, Cross and O'Donnell (2005), this trend reflects a humanistic approach to HRD which emphasises a more employee-

centred form of management practises. For instance, researchers such as Krüger (1998), Aktouf (1992), Bond and McCracken (2004) as well as Hall and Torrington (1998) argue for the importance of organisation leaders being aware of their employees' true competences, day-to-day operational level practises from the employee-point-of view and taking all these observations, in addition to employees' opinions, into account when designing HRD strategies and ways to implement them.

Aktouf (1992) discusses how employers must stop seeing themselves as the only people fit to think, to decide and to manage. Instead, they should let employees be more involved in HRM processes in general and emphasise the interaction between themselves and their employees (Perruci & Schwartz 2002). If this is not done, the HRD strategy might end up being too disconnected from the reality for its implications such as HR training to result in any desired benefits for the organisation. After all, HR training that does not take employees' viewpoints into account at all will most likely end up being a waste of an organisation's resources.

Listening and trying to understand employees' viewpoints regarding an organisation's functioning is beneficial as not only does it help organisation leaders to create a realistic HRD strategy for future but it also motivates employees to work towards the goals they have set for themselves (Sisson & Storey 2000; Eraut & Hirsh 2007). Latham (1988) states that in addition to the annual employer-employee development discussions, other intensive interviews and group meetings with employees offer employers ways to understand their employees' perspectives. Listening to employees offers also, as it will be discussed in the next section, a great way to understand employees' true learning and HR training needs.

Gilley and Maycunich (2000, as quoted by McClure 2011) have analysed the purpose of HRD in organisations. According to them, the purpose of HRD is to promote an individual employee's personal growth, lifelong learning and expertise, as well as to improve organisations' productivity, profits, survival and effectiveness. HRD can also be understood as the integrated use of training and development, organisation development and career development to improve individual, group and organisational effectiveness (Swanson & Arnold 1996). Both of Swanson and Arnold's (1996) and Gilley and Maycunich's (2000, as quoted by McClure 2011) definitions represent the current HRD literature trend. However, they are simultaneously, in fact, very general and thus fail to specify how different approaches to HRD might change how the detailed purposes and focuses of HRD are understood in organisations' different contexts. That is, as will be discussed soon, a humanistic approach to HRD sets different purposes to HR training than, for instance, an effectiveness-orientated HRD approach.

Another recent HRD literature trend that advocates very humanistic values is to challenge the traditional ideas of work life culture in today's global business world in order to find different ways to further employees' wellbeing in organisations. For instance, Marja-Liisa Manka has studied and lectured widely about the concept of work happiness (*työnilo*) in Finland. Another way to illustrate the arising trend of furthering employees' wellbeing can be seen in

the increasing number of hired Work Wellbeing Managers in Finnish organisations. Consequently, as one of the purposes of HRD practises is to enhance employees' wellbeing at work (Gilley & Maycunich 2000, as quoted by McClure 2011), ensuring that all conducted HR training in organisations supports it becomes more important. For instance, not only can HR training focus merely on improving employees' wellbeing at work but offering employees a chance to participate in HR training in the first place also leaves employees feeling glad that their employers care for supporting their professional growth.

3.2   Humanistic Approach to HRD

Swanson and Arnold (1996) state that there are differences among organisation leaders as well as researchers related to the question of what the main emphasis of HRD practises is or should be. Swanson and Arnold (1996) clarify that some view HRD as tied to business goals and performance whilst some believe that furthering learning or the capacity to learn is the most valuable outcome of HRD. This dichotomy is termed, according to Swanson and Arnold (1996), the *Performance versus learning debate* which, in short, depicts two different viewpoints to HRD. In other words, as the initial purpose of HRD is to further general organisational effectiveness, the difference between these two approaches derive from their viewpoints to how such effectiveness should be achieved. More precisely, the performance-orientated approach to HRD emphasises, for instance, measuring effectiveness of HR training programs whilst the latter, humanistic point of view sees employees' learning processes that happen during HRD practises as the key aspect. The latter, humanistic viewpoint to HRD represents also the approach that the present study supports for which reason the concept and its core values and ideologies are discussed next.

McGuire et al. (2005, 131) explain that the humanistic approach to HRD proposes that perceived effectiveness derives from "meeting job-related employees' personal needs which then results in employees' moving from job compliance to job commitment". McGuire et al. (2005, 131) add that managers advocating such humanistic values encourage employees to develop personal relationships with their employer organisation. Moreover, Aktouf (1992) states that managerial practices that support the development of employees' desire to belong and to use their competences to serve an organisation instead of financial profits represent also humanistic leadership values.

Another key concept of humanistic leadership is to aim to create *common good*. According to Perruci and Schwartz (2002), this refers to, for instance, seeing collaboration, participation, sharing and inclusion as desirable elements in an employer-employee relationship. Similarly, Davila, Rodriguez-Lluesma and Elvira (2013, 183) state that employers who advocate humanistic leadership values "honour their duties toward their fellow human beings". In other words, employers pay attention to their employees' wellbeing in all management

practises regarding their organisations' operations. However, Davila et al. (2013) point out that the social relationships, which leaders who advocate humanistic leadership values develop with stakeholders, can sometimes cause moral conflicts for the employers.

The values of humanistic leadership represent also the basic values of the humanistic approach to HRD. However, it is noteworthy that there is a difference between the issues the humanistic approach to HRD highlights in HRD processes and actual humanistic HRD methods. That is, although one emphasised the learning aspect of HRD practises over performance improvement, he or she would not necessary use humanistic HRD methods in HRD implementation. For instance, although the present study advocates the humanistic approach to HR management and HRD, it does not focus on analysing the possible humanistic HR training methods used in the training under observation.

According to Kramlinger and Huberty (1990), humanistic HRD methods can be extreme, radical or moderate. Extreme humanist methods aim to make employees feel good by offering, for instance, those employees who sit behind a desk all day opportunities for massages whilst radical methods refer to mediation and visualization practises (Kramlinger & Huberty 1990). Moderate humanist HRD methods consists of, for instance, discussions, games and action plans (Kramlinger & Huberty 1990). In general, all humanistic HRD methods emphasise taking employees' feelings into account in all HRD practises. For instance, as Kramlinger and Huberty (1990) explain, employees are considered to need to feel comfortable with the work environment for any HRD implications to work.

All of the above-explained humanistic HRD methods aim to engage employees in HRD programs in an intense, personal way (Kramlinger & Huberty 1990) and to help them to broaden their internal capabilities (Järvinen, Koivisto & Poikela 2002, 82). This concept, according to Kramlinger and Huberty (1990) and Järvinen et al. (2002, 82) derives from the humanistic notion of emphasising the need of encouraging employees to think critically in order to judge their own role in an organisation and be creative. Such process is also believed to result in increasing employees' motivation to self-educate themselves and thus also in employees' learning and professional development (Järvinen et al. 2002).

In sum, according to Kramlinger and Huberty (1990, 42), the humanistic HRD approach emphasises the importance of HRD adapting to employees' experiences, diverse needs and expectations. Consequently, employers with humanistic leadership values see the that all, even very specified work-task HR training such as English language HR training should always meet the true learning needs and preferences of employees in order to result in desirable learning. This notion is also the present study's starting point in exploring the factors that affect employees' perceiving HR training as a significant learning experience for them.

The humanistic leadership approach has also gained critique. For instance, McGuire et al. (2005) state that the humanistic approach to HRD does not match with organisational actions of compressed career progression pathways, tight

budgetary constraints and a market-driven economic philosophy. In addition, they state that there is a risk that HRD interventions will be used by HR practitioners as effective tools in promoting unitarist ideologies in organisations. Swanson and Holton (2001) argue, too, that the intrinsic demands of the performance paradigm are not compatible with the humanistic approach in HRD.

Next, the present research report moves on to covering issues related to different types of HR trainings, and most importantly to English language HR training, in organisations.

3.3 English language Human Resources (HR) training

Organisations, especially Western ones, are nowadays expected to take care of their employees; it is an ethical responsibility (Carroll 1991; Latham 1988). In this context, *taking care* refers not only to paying attention to the well-being of employees, as was discussed in Section 3.1, but also to managing individual employees' work competences in the constantly changing organisational life. In other words, employers should make sure that every employee feels capable of doing their job not only in the present moment but also in the future. In addition, employers should ensure the employability of the employees in the organisation. One way to ensure that employees are provided with enough tools to cope with the demands of an organisation's as well as its external environment's development is to conduct training.

Hughey and Mussnung (1997) state that almost all companies provide some type of training for their employees nowadays. That is, as Knowles, Swanson and Holton (2005) explain, due to the rapid development, for instance, of technology, the role of HR training in all types of organisations has become more and more significant. When properly used, training increases both the effectiveness and efficiency of employees (Swanson 1992, as quoted by Knowles et al. 2005, 298). However, the motivation for providing HR training varies considerably between organisations; some do it to meet the safety regulations set by new laws or to enhance employees' skills or competences, some just for appearances' sake. For instance, as Erickson (2008) discusses, attracting young, highly-educated employees to apply for an organisation's open positions can get tricky as such employees often value pursuing their life dreams more important than earning money. Thus, offering employees possibilities to participate in different types of HR training can offer an organisation a way to become a more appealing employer.

In addition to HR training that aims to improve employees' specific competences related to their work tasks, Hughey and Mussnung (1997) mention that feel-good trainings that represent the humanistic HRD methods discussed earlier in Section 3.2 have also become more popular nowadays. Such training typically involves enhancing employees' listening, communication, teamwork and leadership skills. These types of training are seen especially useful when trying to help employees to get rid of their negative attitudes toward, for

example, some new specific work tasks or improving employees' work confidence. Employers are also becoming more interested in HR training that deals with employees' physical and mental health at work.

According to Hughey and Mussnung (1997), it is the responsibility of employers and/or HR managers to evaluate carefully organisations' HR training initiatives. However, employers often find it more beneficial and convenient to outsource the organisation of HR training to training-specialised companies and consultants. When planning to conduct HR training, employers are thus faced with the challenge of choosing the most appropriate training program for their employees. The risk then is, however, especially among employers who conduct HR training simply for appearances' sake, that they end up choosing to buy outsourced training that does not correspond at all with their employees' true training needs. To avoid such waste of resources, employers should use any help available in analysing the type of HR training really needed from different organisational aspects (Latham 1988; Louhiala-Salminen and Charles 2006, 48). Next, some examples of such analyses are presented.

First, according to Hughey and Mussnung (1997) as well as to Latham (1988), it is crucial that the goals of HR training are set in line with an organisation's overall operation strategy and its organisation structure. In contrast, in the context of English language HR training, Van Meurs et al. (2006, 140) advice organisation leaders to first analyse all the organisational levels where English is used and only then design the English language HR training program in detail. On the other hand, Latham (1988) emphasises the importance of conducting a future-orientated task analysis to ensure that the training will be linked to the organisation's future strategic objectives as well as to the different work roles needed in the future. Such analysis, according to Latham (1988), includes a comprehensive analysis of the organisation's different work roles' knowledge, behaviour and ability requirements. This analysis should be done even though the status of English as the lingua franca and its need in organisations in the future cannot be guaranteed (Charles 2006; Crystal 2003).

Next, Hughey and Mussnung (1997) mention that problems that could prevent accomplishing the objectives of HR training should be identified and prepared for. Moreover, as successful HR training programmes demand a significant investment in terms of financial and time resources, employers should be aware of how much employees' work time the planned training is going to use and whether the HR training arrangements could adversely affect and production schedules and deadlines. In fact, according to Hughey Mussnung (1997), the time question is the most common reason for employers to question the necessity of conducting HR training programmes. In addition, Welch, Welch and Piekkari (2005, as quoted by Charles 2006) point out that many multinational organisations still believe that organising English language HR training is not necessary due to the available mechanical translation tools.

Finally, a demographic analysis among employees should be conducted to identify the training needs of different demographic group populations in organisations (Latham 1988). For instance, when planning to organise English

language HR training, a demographic analysis might reveal imperative information about the factors that affect, for instance, different age groups' learning capabilities and attitudes toward the English language. The differing needs of employees for English language training are also in the focus of the present study.

As discussed in Chapter 2, many organisations that have branches located in different countries have nowadays adopted English as their common corporate language. Some organisations have even gone to extremes and have begun to demand all of their employees to communicate with each other only in English at all work-related environments (Kreps 1990, 133; Fink et al. 1996). Thus, mastering both written and spoken English are almost a basic requirement nowadays for all multinational organisations' employees (Virkkula 2008, 383 & 358.) In fact, employees are in general required to possess more advanced English language skills creating a need for a more comprehensive and long-term HR language training and support in organisations.

The need to organise English language HR training in Finnish organisations has grown, as was discussed in Chapter 2. This claim is also supported by Väärämäki (2014) who reports that studies conducted by University of Jyväskylä and the Finnish Population Register Centre have revealed that 10-15% of all Finns are not able to communicate in English at all. The demand of English language HR training is also reflected in the increasing number of enterprises offering foreign language training for organisations in Finland (Suomenyritykset.fi). These enterprises offer a variety of language training programs with differing teaching methods and goals (Hagen 2011).

The needed type of English language HR training might differ a great deal between organisations operating in different fields. For instance, in an IT company, employees might be expected to be able to use new technology to communicate effectively in English with each other or to use new computer software that operates only in English (Mazzei 2010). Hence, if employees communicate with each other and external stakeholders mainly via emails, employees' written English skills should be seen as the key topic of HR training. Similarly, if such communications are based more on face-to-face communication, the development of employees' English oral skills should be emphasised.

Although standards of the English language are generally high in Finland, the use of English in demanding professional activities places a great pressure on employees (Louhiala-Salminen et al. 2005). Thus, in a company where employees do not feel confident about their own English skills, English language HR training could, for instance, focus on mentoring and coaching employees to overcome feelings that might prevent their learning. That is, as it will be discussed later in Section 4.4, adult learners' attitudes toward a foreign language affect not just their confidence in using it at work but also their willingness and motivation to learn.

When designing foreign language HR training, organisation leaders should keep in mind that foreign language communicating skills do not refer only to the knowledge of a foreign language's vocabulary and grammar but also to flexibility, adaptability, social sensitivity, politeness and courtesy. The

terminology related to the initial purpose of foreign language learning has, in fact, been a debated topic among language learning scholars (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta 2011, 244). For instance, some researchers use the term *communicative competence* (see e.g. Hymes 1972) whilst others prefer *interactional competence (*see e.g. Hall & Doehler 2011). Furthermore, Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta's (2011) suggest that *global communicative competence is* a suitable term to describe one's foreign language skills whilst Räisänen (2013) uses the term *communicative repertoire*. All of these terms are also conceptualised differently. In the present study, the goal of English HR training is approached from the *global communicative competence* point of view. According to Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), the concept of global communicative competence refers not only to tacit language knowledge such as grammar and vocabulary but also to multicultural competence, business know-how (i.e. field-specific professional competence) and competence in English as a business lingua franca.

As it has already been stated, the present study supports the idea that employers should always take employees' perspectives and opinions into account not just in the organisation's HRD strategy design process but also in the planning of ways to put such strategy into practice. Otherwise, employers might misinterpret why training should be conducted in the first place. For instance, one employer might blame the poor international sales figures on his or her employees' lack of small talk and cultural knowledge skills and thus organise training concentrating on enhancing such skills. However, another employer might understand that it is not the small talk skills or lack of cultural knowledge that affect employees' selling figures but rather their shyness of talking to people from foreign countries. In the latter case, if the employer was to organise English language HR training that focused mainly on encouraging employees to use English in different situations, it would more likely to be perceived as successful training. This hypothetical example highlights, yet again, why the present study and its employee-orientated viewpoint to designing English language HR training is important.

The main purpose of present section was to illustrate the various types of English language HR training available to organisations and how employers should always carefully ponder what type of training would serve the best purpose for their employees' English language learning needs. However, in this process, understanding what might either prevent or support employees' English language learning in HR training and thus affect their perception of the success of the training is vital, too. Accordingly, the main theme of the next section is learning in HR training.

4 LEARNING IN HR TRAINING

As it has already been explained in the previous chapters, the present study advocates the humanistic approach to HRD which emphasises learning in all HRD practices. In accord with such approach, the present study defines successful HR training as training that leaves employees feeling to have gained a significant learning experience or as training that they consider beneficial in some other ways for their work. Hence, this chapter concentrates on reviewing literature concerning different aspects of workplace as well as foreign language learning in order to make inferences of possible factors that could affect employees' learning in English language HR training and thus also their perception of the success of HR training. These theoretical conclusions are then summarised in *the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training* which also sets the scene for the empirical part of the present study. However, before explaining and discussing what concepts such as workplace learning and professional growth mean and how the humanistic learning approach is linked to them, the present chapter begins by explaining how adult education and HRD are connected to each other in the first place. That is, understanding employees as adult learners sets a framework for Section 4.5 in which literature regarding factors affecting employees' learning are presented.

4.1 Adult Education (AE) as the core concept in HRD

According to Knowles et al. (2005), HRD is closely linked to the concept of *adult education*. That is, as Knowles et al. (2005, 165) add, "the disciplines of human resource development (HRD) and adult education (AE) both view the process of *adult learning* as being central to their theory and practice". For instance, according to Knowles et al. (2005), if the goal of HRD in an organisation is understood as to change organisational culture in order to achieve something else for the organisation's functioning purposes, the principles and practices of adult learning and thus also adult education play an important role as employees develop and learn new norms.

Knowles et al. (2005) argue that HRD is a broader concept than adult education. Swanson and Arnold (1996) support this viewpoint by stating that there are some HRD practises that see learning activities only as a part of the whole whilst some HRD implication programs can have no planned educational components at all. Swanson and Arnold (1996) add that adult education does not always relate to employees' performance improvement in the same way as some HRD practises, such as HR training, do. By stating this Swanson and Arnold (1996) mean that as HR training, regardless of the type of it, is most often initially conducted to improve organisations' effectiveness through supporting employees' performance at work, the outcome of adult education can also be personal growth, general knowledge, personal expertise, or even entertainment. However, such a way of understanding HR training possibilities is rather limited. That is, as discussed in the previous chapters, humanistic HRD methods consider all of the goals of HR training and adult education that Swanson and Arnold's (1996) recognise as intended outcomes of HR training.

Hughey and Mussnung (1997) state that the distinction between learning's relation to education and HR training should also be clarified. This notion offers also yet another way to try to clarify the blurred difference between adult education and HRD. According to Hughey and Mussnung (1997), training typically involves personal involvement, commitment as well as experiential gains. In other words, training involves learning by doing. In contrast, as Hughey and Mussnung (1997, 53) put it, education "typically takes place in a classroom and involves a transfer of knowledge through the use of formal methods such as lectures and directed discussion". However, Hughey and Mussnung's (1997) definition becomes problematic when trying to classify whether, for instance, an English language HR training program that focuses on teaching employees work task-related vocabulary in a classroom-like environment is considered as training or education.

As a commonly-agreed way of defining the difference between adult education and HRD cannot be found, the present study does not take the above-explained terminology issues into account in the research. Instead, it considers both education and training as possible types of HR training. In addition, the study relies on Swanson and Arnold's (1996) idea of understanding HRD policies and adult education as separate entities that are simultaneously closely linked to each other. Swanson and Arnold (1996) present also another concept, an intersection of HRD practises and adult education, that is more usable in the context of English language HR training. That is, according to Swanson and Arnold (1996), HRD practises that are classified to belong to this intersection combine both educational and training interventions and target to result in performance-focused educational interventions that aim to contribute to achieving organisations' operative goals.

When approaching HRD from the learning point of view, employees are seen to be involved in constant long-term learning processes at work. Thus, it is also necessary to consider the role of employers in employees' learning processes. For instance, as Järvinen et al. (2002, 82) illustrate, in an organisation where supporting employees' workplace learning is emphasised, an employer

needs to act as a non-judgmental and equal member of the learning community who, with his or her way of behaving, is able to affect the spirit of the learning environment. Järvinen et al. (2002, 82) further explain that in such organisations it is important that employers aim to create a learning-supportive working environment as it helps individual employees, for instance, to deal with their learning experiences openly. In addition, Järvinen, et al. (2002, 82) argue that an employer who wishes to further employees' learning at work needs to show authenticity, empathy and respect toward his or her employees. A discussed earlier in Section 3.2, and will also be discussed later in Section 4.4, such employer characteristics also reflect humanistic leadership traits which supports the close connection between the humanistic approach to HRD and humanistic learning theories.

When discussing learning in organisations, it should be noted that adult employees differ from younger school learners in many ways, for instance in their needs to learn as well as personal experiences. Factors that have proved to affect students' learning in school environment, and more specifically in foreign language classes, cannot therefore be inferred to have similar effects on employees' learning in English language HR training. As all employees that are interviewed for the present study are adults and the study's findings are aimed to provide information for organisations mostly with adult employees, some main characteristics of adult learners are next considered.

First, Knowles et al. (2005) argue that adult learners usually have a richer set of personal background experiences than younger school learners, which also have a greater impact on their learning and motivation to participate in HR training. Chao (2009) refers to the combination of these life experiences as an adult learner's *personal biography* that affects one's general view of the world. According to Chao (2009), this view of the world reflects one's value systems, cultural heritage, personal and social maturity as well as skills and competences. Based on this idea, an employee's previous experiences at school and in life can be assumed to affect, for instance, his or her idea of his or her capabilities to learn English in English language HR training. Chao (2009) highlights that for this reason, in order to create successful English language HR training programs, it is essential that employers and teachers of adult learners understand what aspect of employees' personal biography either further or prevent their learning in HR training.

Second, in contrast to younger school learners, Knowles et al. (2005) mention that adults' orientation to learning is often self-directing. Knowles et al. (2005) further explain that as one matures, his or her self-concept matures simultaneously by moving from a dependent personality towards self-direction. In other words, adults are more capable of learning in isolation without being dependent on others such as other learners or tutors.

Third, Chao (2009) states that adult learners' motivation to learn differs from school learners'. O'Connor, Bronner and Delaney (2002, as quoted by Thoms 2001, 4), explain that employees' motivation to learn varies depending on their individual experiences, aptitude and attitude regarding the topic under observation. Individual characteristics of the learner and their perceived value

of the learning tasks have an effect on the type and level of one's motivation, too (Chao 2009).

Knowles et al. (2005) state that the most potent motivators for adults to learn are *intrinsic* rather than *extrinsic*. In other words, adult learners are more likely to learn when they feel motivated to participate in HR training because it rewards them personally instead of some external reward. This claim of Knowles et al. (2005) is also supported by Edmondson and House (2003, 334) who discovered that understanding how learning a foreign language could benefit his or her career and every-day work was one of the biggest motivators for an employee to participate and make an effort to learn in foreign language HR training. According to Ruohotie (1998), to further employees' intrinsic motivation, an employer must give enough support to his or her employees as well as ensure that employees find work challenging and versatile enough. In addition, it is important that employers give clear instructions to employees about what it is expected from them as well as explain how their workplace learning is supported (Kauppila 2007, 120; Ruohotie 1998, 37–39).

Finally, as Merriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner (2007, 312-319) discuss, adult learners have more complex individual culturally associated roles as husbands and wives as well as workers and citizens than younger school learners. All of these roles that employees relate to not only explain their behaviour and value systems in different situations but they also create different needs to learn. That is, Chao (2009) argues that an adult's readiness and resources to learn correspond with the development of his or her social roles.

In sum, to be able to create successful HR training for employees, an employer must understand how adults learn. This means, according to Holopainen (2007), that an employer should be aware of his or her employees' individual differences and life experiences that call for different types of training as well as teaching methods. However, it is important to be aware of the fact that although an employer would use a great amount of time and resources to understand his or her employees' true training needs, the success of HR training cannot be guaranteed. In addition, when trying to understand what might prevent or support employees' learning in organisations, it is also necessary to understand the types of learning processes in which employees are involved at work. Hence, the next section concentrates on discussing the most relevant types of workplace learning in the context of the present study.

4.2   Professional growth and workplace learning

According to Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 3), learning in organisations can be divided into three levels: *organisational*, *team* and *individual*. They add that all of these learning systems in organisations are dynamic and they change over time along with organisations' changing aspirations of employees and demands of their external environment. Focusing on the concepts of *professional growth* and

workplace learning, this section concentrates on the individual level, that is, the employee approach, of learning in organisations.

Eraut and Hirsh (2007) as well as Hall (1990) state that *workplace learning*, which HR training aims to support, refers in general to a simple question; how one learns to do his or her job. Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 16) further explain that workplace learning refers also to the understanding of one's job and personal development process as well as to improving one's decision making and evaluating skills. In the present study, workplace learning is thus seen as a hyponym of the concept of professional growth.

Hall (1990, 436) names two dimension of workplace learning: *task learning* and *personal learning* (see Table 1).

	Task Learning	**Personal Learning**
Short term	Improving *performance*-related knowledge, skills, and abilities	Resolving issues regarding *attitudes* toward career and personal life
Long term	Improving *adaptibility*	Developing and extending *identity*

TABLE 1 Task and Personal Learning Dimensions (Hall and Associates 1986, as quoted by Hall 1990, 436)

Both of these types of workplace learning can, according to Hall (1990, 436) be either short-term or long-term processes. Task learning, as Hall (1990, 436) explains, consists of improving work role *performance*-related knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as more long-term learning of improving *adaptability*, that is, improving one's capability to adapt to changes in his or her work role. In addition, the personal learning aspects that also affect one's professional growth consist of resolving issues regarding one's *attitudes* toward one's career and personal life as well as developing and extending one's *identity*. The empirical part of the present study will concentrate mainly on the short-term task learning dimension.

According to Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 3), individuals are engaged in learning in different ways and in different contexts during their free time as well as at work. For instance, work self-concept (*työminä*) and home self-concept (*kotiminä*) are rather commonly known concepts even in everyday speech (Tuominen & Pohjakallio 2012). As already discussed in the previous section, these different learning contexts also create varying types of learning self-concepts that are in accord with employees' different social roles. Sometimes the requirements, value systems or characteristics of an employee's different roles or self-concepts might be in contrast with each other creating *role conflicts* (Burns 1982). The effect of these role conflicts on employees' way of working has been studied a lot among HR researchers.

Even if an employee was able to identify the differences between his or her work self-concept and home self-concept, he or she might find it hard to acknowledge that his or her general work self-concept can, in fact, also consist of many other work-task related self-concepts such as *English language self-concept*. This phenomenon will be discussed in a greater detail in Section 4.5.2. However, it is noteworthy that as all of these work self-concepts guide

employees' behaviour at work, they create varying learning needs for employees that require different types of HR training (Ruohotie 1998; Pihko 2007; Burns 1982). To illustrate this, an employee might feel very confident at work in general when speaking Finnish, yet extremely distressed when needing to use English. This situation might, for instance, illustrate how his or her English language self-concept is in lack of confidence and thus in need of English language HR training that concentrates mainly on encouragement.

Not being aware of the existence of employees' different work self-concepts might result in a situation where an employer makes faulty inferences of why certain type of HR training is needed. An example of such a situation was presented previously in Section 3.3 (p. 26). Equally important to such analysis is evaluating whether HR training that is aimed to correspond with the work self-concepts' true learning needs of employees has been successful. To do this, it is vital that an employer considers how he or she defines successful English language HR training in the first place. In addition, defining what the concept means is necessary in understanding what the main purpose of the present study is. Hence, the next section concentrates on presenting some different ways how successful English language training could be defined.

4.3   Significant learning experiences

As the initial idea of HR training is to further effectiveness in organisations (McGuire et al. 2005), it is relevant to consider how one evaluates what type of HR training is effective. This is important in regard of HR training programs' development, too. That is, if an employer does not pay any attention to evaluating the success of conducted HR training programs, the improvement of them will be practically impossible.

The present study supports the humanistic approach to HRD practices, as was explained in Section 3.2, that emphasises employees' learning processes as the key concept in aiming to improve organisational effectiveness. In accord with the approach, the present study adapts the same, learning-focused viewpoint to defining the concept of successful English language HR training. More precisely, the present study defines successful English language HR training as training that leaves employees feeling that they have gained a significant learning experience and/or consider it as beneficial in some other ways for their work. In defining it so, different types of learning experiences that happen during and after HR training need to be discussed in detail. That is, not all learning is significant for the indented purpose for which reason one cannot make a conclusion that every HR training that results in some type of learning in general is successful. In other words, in trying to define what type of HR training is successful, employers need to define what type of learning is considered relevant and purposeful in the first place (Eraut & Hirsh 2007, 6). However, as Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 6) explain, evaluating employees' learning processes in HR training is a challenging task. Thus, some alternative learning-

focused ways to approach the concept of successful HR training are presented next.

First, Kirkpatrick's training evaluation model has been used widely by training communities (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2006). This model suggests that there are four different dimensions that should be taken into account when trying to measure HR training program's overall effectiveness. These levels are: (1) *reaction,* which measures how employees reacted to the training, that is, for instance, to the topic, the material, its presentations, and the venue of training, (2) *behaviour,* which measures how employees change their behaviour based on the training they received, that is, how they apply the information, (3) *results,* which measures the outcomes that an employer has determined to be good for the organisation, and finally, (4) *learning,* which measures how much employees knowledge increased as a result of the training (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2006).

Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 6) state that since learning is invisible, one can only infer whether learning has occurred by noticing changes in a person's knowledge. However, as Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) put it, it is not just the changes in one's knowledge but also in skills or/and attitude that can indicate learning. This is how the present study also understands learning in English language HR training. In other word, as was it was discussed in Section 3.3, the present study defines the goal of English language HR training from the *global communicative competence* point of view which refers to increasing employees' grammar and vocabulary knowledge as well as multicultural competence, business know-how and competence in English as a business lingua franca. Furthermore, following Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) ideas, the present study suggests that learning in English language HR training can refer, in addition to improvement of employees' global communicative competence, for instance, to a positive change in employees' attitude toward their English language learning capabilities or the general use of English in their employer organisation.

In contrast to the present study, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) emphasise the measurability of learning. In other words, according to Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006), significant learning is something that can be proved statistically in changes between employees' knowledge, skills or attitude before and after training. However, decoding, measuring and analysing of such processes can be difficult not only due to the invisible nature of learning but also due to finding right, appropriate types of measurement tools.

In literature (see e.g. Silkelä 1999; Varila 1999) that discusses significant learning experiences, a distinction between positive and negative learning experiences is often made. According to Varila (1999, 45), both of these significant learning experiences refer to a situation in which one's viewpoint to her or himself or to the surrounding environment has changed. On the other hand, Antikainen (1996) explains more in detail that positive learning experiences reflect those experiences that include some change in an individual's behaviour or thinking whilst negative learning experience leaves, in contrast, individuals with a feeling that it has not triggered learning experiences at all. Varila (1999, 45) adds that positive learning experiences

increase one' beliefs about one's capabilities whereas negative experiences decrease it. Furthermore, Antikainen (1996) states that positive learning experiences might also give new meanings, for example, to one's work. For instance, to illustrate these definitions briefly, an employee who feels that HR training has been a positive experience would feel that that he/she has learnt things that he/she considers positive and beneficial for his/her work.

In the present study, significant learning is defined using Merriam and Clark's (1993) criteria. According to them, a significant learning experience is something positive that one finds to have expanded his or her skills and that one also subjectively values by naming its importance in his or her life. However, as naming something a significant learning experience might be challenging for some due to interpretation and context differences, the present study will broaden Merriam and Clark's definition. In other words, even if one were not able to name HR training as a significant learning experience but one might still indicate its importance in one's speech, his or her answers will be treated similarly to those who name the training a significant learning experience. It is noteworthy, too, that what might be a significant learning experience for some, might not be significant for others (Merriam & Clark 1993).

This section has concentrated on defining the key term, *successful English language HR training,* of the present study. That is, the present research studies factors that make employees perceive English language HR training successful. However, due to the limited scope of the present study, it cannot take all possible factors into account in the research. Thus, the next two sections focus on building the criteria for the chosen predetermined factors that will be under observation in the empirical part of the study.

4.4 A humanistic viewpoint to learning

A great amount of literature regarding different types of learning theories exists, which, according to Järvinen et al. (2002, 93-95), can be divided into four categories based on their theoretical viewpoints: *behaviouristic, cognitive, experimental and humanistic.* Following the general humanistic approach of the present study, this section focuses on answering the question *when does learning happen* from the humanistic learning theories' point of view. The humanistic approach to learning also sets the general framework for the present study in constructing criteria for the themes that are selected to study in detail.

Järvinen (et al. 2002) explain that humanistic learning theories are based on some well-known theories such as Maslow's (1970) hierarchy of individuals' needs, Rogers' (1980) creature psychology and Knowles' (1984) andragogy. Of these, the present study concentrates on the firstly mentioned one.

FIGURE 1 Abraham Maslow Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow 1970)

Applying Maslow's hierarchy of needs (see Figure 1 above) to the organisational learning context creates an assumption that learning at work cannot happen unless employees' lower hierarchical learning needs are first fulfilled (Järvinen et al. 2002). To illustrate this, an employer cannot expect to pursue employees' creativity at work even by conducting specific HR training concentrating on enhancing employees' creativeness if the general work environment lacks communality. Similarly, English language HR training that aims to improve employees' English language communication skills instead of focusing on their real English language learning needs related to, for instance, their low confidence as English language users, is not very likely, based on Maslow's model, to be perceived successful by its participants.

Maslow's hierarchy of needs adaptability to the context of employees' learning is, however, not always straightforward. That is, some of the hierarchy's needs can only be half satisfied and yet learning at work can happen. For instance, a very career-orientated person might be able to pursue his or her career successfully without having the level of respect or love fulfilled. One can also only ponder to what extent an employer should try to help his or her employees to satisfy personal needs even if they have an effect on one's performance and learning at work. Nevertheless, the hierarchy of needs offers an insightful, employee-orientated tool for employers to understand how their employees' learning needs regarding the English language are constructed in the organisation. It can be assumed that adapting this information to the HRD strategy and practises contributes also to the success of HR training. In addition, when emphasising learning as the core concept at work, it is necessary to take individual foreign language learning styles and strategies into account when designing English language HR training (Järvinen et al. 2002, 117-118).

Similarly to the humanistic leadership approach that was discussed in Section 3.1, Järvinen et al. (2002, 82 & 93) explain that the humanistic approach to learning differs from the other, more traditional learning theories by focusing on the sociopsychological knowledge, that is, the communication, interaction and cooperation among learning groups as well as between a learner and his or

her tutor. Based on this perspective, an employee is assumed learn if the interaction around him or her supports it. Consequently, the humanistic approach to learning highlights, for instance, the importance of learning supportive work-communities. In addition, development discussions between an employer and an employee should be stressed as not only do they give a chance for employers to find out more about the learning needs of employees but they also help employees to achieve the state of self-actualization, which has also proven to further learning (Järvinen et al. 2002, 93).

It is worth pointing out that the main critique towards humanistic learning theories is also based on their interactional aspect. That is, critics argue, for instance, that although a work group showed good dynamics in HR training, it does not always necessarily mean that all employees would end up learning as intended (Järvinen et al. 2002, 93). As will be next discussed, the work community as well as the training group are, in fact, assumed to play a great role in employees' workplace learning processes.

4.5   What affects learning?

Combining workplace as well as foreign language learning theories, the present research concentrates on studying issues that should be taken into account when aiming to conduct successful English language training. In accord with humanistic approaches to HRD and learning, it considers that successful English language HR training corresponds with employees' true learning needs in relation to their needs to use English at work. Moreover, the present study assumes that factors that either further or prevent employees' desired learning in English language HR training are also issues that should guide the design process of such HR training. Consequently, in order to be able to outline the factors that the study will concentrate on in its empirical part, the next two sections present literature that deals with factors affecting employees' workplace and foreign language learning.

4.5.1   Factors affecting workplace learning

When discussing employees' learning in organisations, it is relevant to consider organisational and employees' personal factors that might have an impact on employees' workplace learning and supposedly also on HR training learning. In other words, employers should aim to understand these factors in order to successfully implement such information to the HRD strategy.

According to Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 30), literature concerning workplace learning factors focuses often either on specific learning factors or on the overall culture of the chosen unit of analysis. Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 30) further explain that specific factors refer, for instance, to communications and feedback, work design, industrial relations, participation, continuity and training in an organisation. Cultures at work that affect learning, on the other hand, refer, for

instance, to leadership or management styles and to general organisational culture (Eraut and Hirsh 2007, 30).

Hall et al. (1986, as quoted by Hall 1990) state that there are four broad main concepts; (1) society, (2) organisation, (3) work role, and (4) individual, which not only create the need for but also affect employees' workplace learning. Nokelainen and Ruohotie (2009) support the idea of Hall et al. (1986) and explain further how society, organisation and an individual's work role as well as personal characteristics have an effect on one's way of adapting, understanding and developing new information and skills at work.

Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 2-3) have also extensively studied workplace learning factors. They have found, for instance, that employees' individual capabilities, which they use to refer to employees' personal attributes, skills, knowledge and experience, contribute to an employees' workplace learning. Second, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) discovered that an individual's own as well as others' perception of his or her performance at work affects how one learns. Third, the types of formal and informal learning processes which take place for an individual and which are not always planned or conscious have an impact on employees' workplace learning. Fourth and last, they explain how the contexts; *individual, team, line management*, and *organisation*; where employees work play a role in their workplace learning processes.

Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 82-83) illustrate that the four above-mentioned contexts consist of different factors that can either further or hinder employees' workplace learning. First, they mention *individual factors* that include employees' perceptions of the work's challenge, frequent and constructive feedback on job performance and the amount of time given to learn at work. Second, with *team-level factors* Eraut and Hirsh (2007) refer to supportive relationships with one's colleagues that are based on mutual respect, frequent informal discussions of work and on formal team processes (e.g. team meetings and project reviews) which include discussion of skills and learning. Third, they explain that *line manager factors* consist of factors such as managers' support and tolerance of diversity. Finally, *organisational context factors* include factors such as organisations' general performance as well as its leaders' behaviour and attitude towards problems.

Based on another study regarding mid-career learning, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) created a Two Triangle model (see Figure 2) in which they distinguish in more detail factors affecting employees' long-term workplace learning. As the model supports adult education theories as well as humanistic approaches to learning and HRD, it also serves the purpose of the present study for which reason it will be partly adapted to the empirical part of the present research.
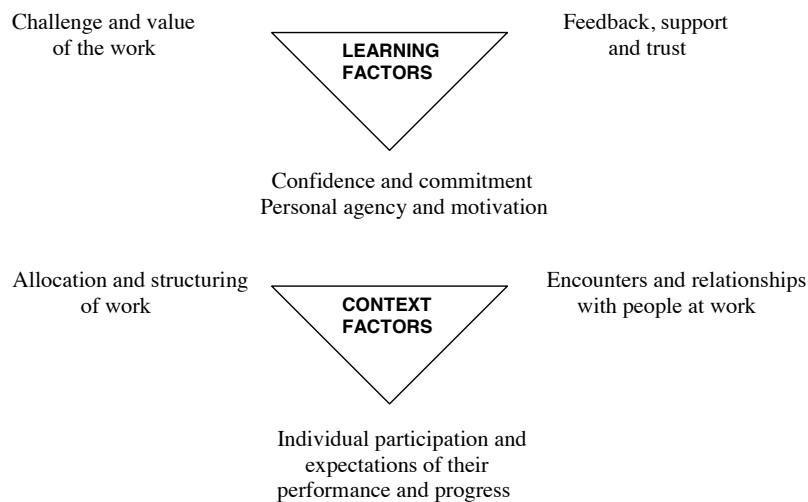
FIGURE 2 Factors affecting learning at work: the Two Triangle Model (Eraut & Hirsh 2007, 31)

The model suggests that work's challenge, support of the community and work confidence affect not only each other but also employees' personal agency and work motivation and together, with certain context factors, employees' workplace learning (Eraut & Hirsh 2007, 30). Next, the three learning factor dimensions are briefly explained.

First, Eraut and Hirsh (2007, 30) explain that as much of workplace learning "occurs through doing things and being proactive in seeking learning opportunities", employees are required to have a great deal of confidence and courage to actively engage themselves in new learning-furthering situations. In addition, in accord with theories regarding adult learners' characteristics, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) found that an employee's level of work confidence had a great impact on his or her workplace learning; low work confidence hindered workplace learning whilst great confidence furthered it. With the term *work confidence* Eraut and Hirsh (2007) refer to an employee's perception of his or her capability of carrying out his or her job tasks.

Second, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) found out that work confidence was strongly tied with how challenging an employee perceived his or her job to be. Equally important for developing work confidence was how employees valued their profession and work. In other words, Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) findings suggest that an employee who finds his or her work very challenging learns less efficiently in comparison to those who do not consider their work as challenging. Similarly, valuing one's work was to found to correlate positively with an employee's workplace learning (Eraut & Hirsh 2007).

Third, supporting the humanistic leadership and learning approaches, Eraut and Hirsh 2007 observed that an employee's work confidence was dependent on the extent to which he or she felt supported by his or her colleagues (Eraut & Hirsh 2007). Similarly, Järvinen et al. (2002) explain how support works as a key factor in enhancing employees' instinct work motivation. Furthermore, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) noticed that feedback as well as meeting organisational expectations played an important role in employees'

learning processes especially during the first few months after starting a new job.

4.5.2   Affective factors and foreign language learning

In the previous section, literature concerning factors affecting workplace learning was reviewed. However, in the case of the present study in which the core concept is English language HR training, issues related to foreign language learning are relevant, too. Thus, next, factors affecting foreign language learning in the context of adult education are discussed.

Shoebottom (1996-2003) states that learners' internal (*age, aptitude, learning strategies, motivation, attitude, personality*) and external factors (*learning and teaching contexts, teaching methods*) affect an individual's foreign language learning processes. However, Shoebottom's (1996-2003) rather general viewpoint represents just one of the many foreign language learning theories; that is, a commonly agreed theory to explain the phenomenon has not yet been found (Jaakkola 1997, 48; Mitchell & Myles 2004, 2). Thus, this study approaches the topic from one specific viewpoint; the learner's personal emotion-based foreign language factors, which are also known as *affective factors* (Pihko 2007).

Learners' personal emotion-based foreign language factors have been named, as stated above, *affective factors.* According to Pihko (2007, 23) and Ehrman, Leaver and Oxford (2003, 319), they consist of factors such as learners' *motivation, attitude, self-concept, language anxiety, efficiency, tolerance of uncertainty* and *linguistic confidence.* Pihko (2007) adds that these factors have an impact not only on an individual's foreign language learning process but also on his or her communicative functioning, that is, how willing one is to use his or her language skills in action.

In accord with workplace learning and adult education literature, a learner's motivation to learn has been proved to have a great impact also on his or her foreign language learning process (Shoebottom 1996-2003). As motivation in the context of employees and adult learners has already been discussed in Section 4.1, it will not be covered more in detail here in the context of foreign language learning.

As Gardner, Tremblay, and Masgoret (1997) state, being motivated to learn relates closely to one's attitude toward his or her capabilities to learn, the taught topic as well as toward one's general willingness to learn. Ruohotie (1998, 143) further explains that the term *attitude* itself means a context-related way of responding to certain things. Through attitudes, one thus expresses his or her preferences also regarding the use of the English language at work (Ruohotie 1998, 42.). The type and strength of an attitude toward a certain subject depends on an individual's previous first-hand or second-hand, that is, passed on by a third party, experiences (Kaikkonen 1994, 5; Gardner 1985). For instance, if an employee has very positive memories from English classes and teachers from school, he or she is more likely to have a positive attitude toward participating and making an effort to learn in English language HR training (Ruohotie 1998, 42; Masgoret & Gardner 2003, 127). In addition, as Väärämäki (2014) writes, employees who have very limited English skills can feel

embarrassed of their lack of knowledge at work and therefore also, although seeing English skills in general as a desirable talent, have a negative attitude toward the need to use or learn it.

Gardner (1985, 146-153) explains that employees' attitudes toward learning a foreign language derive not only from their personal experiences and beliefs about it but also from their work community's general attitude regarding the foreign language use and HR training. Gardner (1985) specifies that an organisation's culture has a strong impact on its individual employees' attitude formation processes in general. This statement supports the humanistic viewpoint to learning and HRD which emphasise the role of work community in employees' workplace learning. To illustrate this in the context of English language HR training; if one's attitude toward the English language was very positive and one was very eager to participate in a voluntary English language HR training, he or she might later change his mind about participating if his or her colleagues considered such training a waste of time. That is, as Masgoret and Gardner (2003, 127) explain, it can even come down to very small things such as the name of HR training that might affect a whole group of employees' attitude toward training.

Ehrman et al. (2003, 319) describe how an individual's *self-concept,* which refers to the general perception that one holds of oneself, has an impact on his or her foreign language learning processes. Ehrman's et al. (2003) way of understanding the concept of self-concept is, however, rather limited; as stated earlier in Section 4.2, one has many various self-concepts related to different contexts such as work or home. Hence, one might also have a separate foreign language self-concept related to a certain language, for instance English (Burns 1982, 26; Laine & Pihko 1991, 9–12; Pihko 2007). A foreign language self-concept consists of one's perception of one's foreign language capabilities, expectations, attitudes and skills as well as of all the characteristics that one relates to her or himself as a user of a foreign language (Ruohotie 1998, 144; Laine & Pihko 1991, 15).

Although a relatively permanent concept, employers should be aware of the fact that one's self-concepts develop over time (Ruohotie 1998). In this process, the role of the people surrounding an individual is significant (Ruohotie 1998; Pihko 2007, 35). For instance, Räisänen (2013) has discovered that although Finnish employees' English language self-concepts often lack confidence, they develop more courage when they recognise that their non-Finnish external stakeholders' representatives with noticeably lower English communicative skills do not struggle with similar confidence issues. In contrast, situations where an employee feels inferior to his or her colleagues whose English communicative skills are native-like might affect negatively his or her English langue self-concept's confidence (Pihko 2007, 36–37).

One's *linguistic confidence, tolerance of uncertainty* as well as *language anxiety* are classified as affective foreign language factors, too. They are also strongly related to one's foreign language self-concept. For instance, linguistic confidence refers to one's general confidence in using a foreign language in different situations such as work whilst tolerance of uncertainty indicates one's tolerance of his or her lack of foreign language skills. Language anxiety, on the

other hand, refers to one's foreign language self-concept's feelings of insufficiency and anxiety triggered by, for instance, being very cautions of possible communication misunderstandings (Laine & Pihko 1991, 19-20; Pihko 1987, 4-5). Finally, one's general *efficiency* to learn is also named as an affective foreign language learning factor.

Next, the *Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training* is presented. The model combines and summarises theory that has so far been covered in the present research report. In addition, it sets the final scene for the empirical part of the present study.

4.6 Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training

The present research aims to make inferences of factors that make employees perceive English language HR training successful. In order to do so, the present study will test the validity of the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training (see Figure 3 below) in the context of English language HR training. The theoretical model is based on an assumption that factors affecting employees' workplace and foreign language learning processes have also an effect on the possibility of employees perceiving English language HR training a significant learning experience.
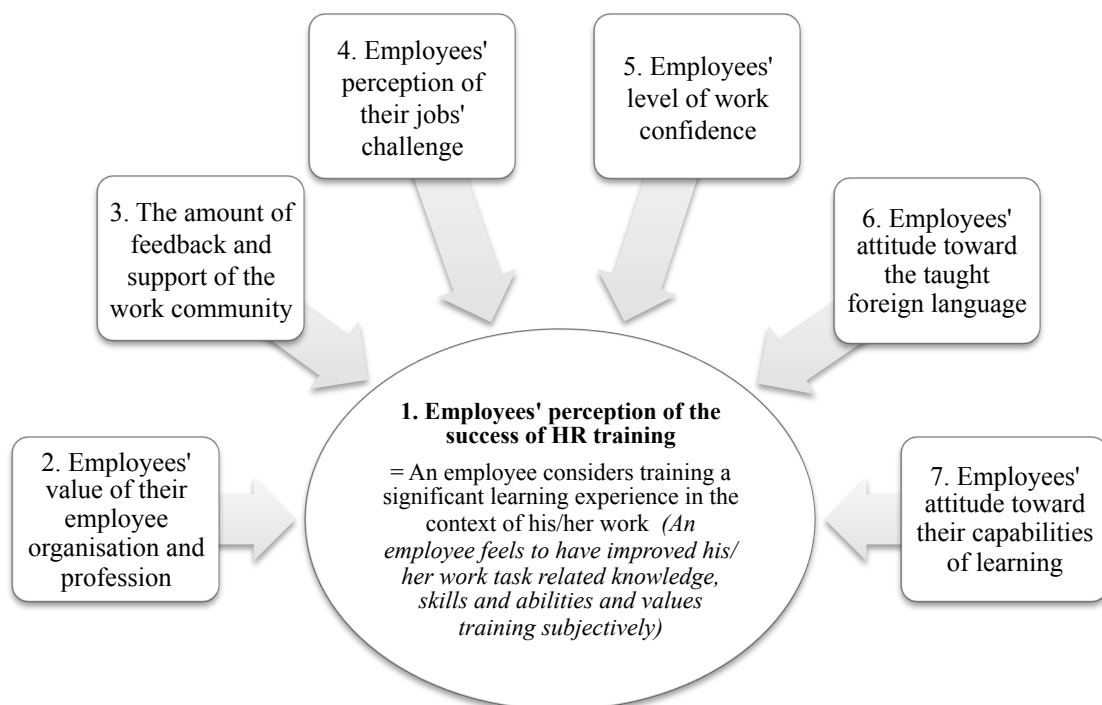

FIGURE 3 Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training

The model has been created by developing Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) workplace learning related Two Triangle model (see Figure 2, p. 43) further for it to become more adaptable to the context of foreign language HR training. In addition, in order to get a more holistic understanding of factors that might have an effect on employees' perception of the success of English language HR training, the model also adapts foreign language learning theory regarding affective foreign language factors.

The six main themes (Themes 2-7) of the model represent factors previously discovered to affect either a learner's workplace or foreign language learning. These factors under observation are all selected with adult learners' characteristics in mind; only employees' experience-based factors are taken into account.

1. Employees' perception of the success of HR training: In the model, successful HR training is understood as training that employees consider having been a significant learning experience or otherwise beneficial for them in the context of their work. To evaluate whether the HR training under observation was considered successful, the present study adopts Merriam and Clark's (1993) way of defining significant learning experiences: an employee needs to be able to explain how HR training under observation has expanded his or her work-related skills and name its importance for their work. More precisely, as the present study focuses on English language HR training, work-related skills are considered to refer merely to short-term task-based learning that relates to enhancing employees' work task related knowledge, skills and abilities. This definition was first introduced by Hall et al. (1986 as quoted by Hall 1990).

2. Employees' value of their employee organisation and profession: This theme is based on Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) conclusions regarding employees' workplace learning processes. As discussed earlier, Eraut and Hirsh (2007) have discovered that an employee who values his or her work and employer organisation learns more efficiently.

3. The amount of feedback and support of the work community: This theme is, yet again, based on Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) findings regarding employees' long-term workplace learning. It also supports the humanistic approaches to HRD and learning that emphasise the effect of work communities and organisation cultures on employees' learning.

4. Employees' perception of their jobs' challenge: This theme is also based on Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) findings regarding that one's workplace learning is linked to how challenging one considers his or her job to be: if one finds his or her work very challenging, he or she learns less efficiently in comparison to those who do not consider their work as challenging. According to Eraut and Hirsh (2007), the challenges considering one's job can be related to any aspect of his or her work tasks. In the present study, however, the focus is on the challenges that relate to the use of English language at work.

5. Employees' level of work confidence: This theme also derives from Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) studies in which they found out that an employee's low work confidence affected his or her workplace learning process negatively whilst high confidence furthered it. In the present study, the focus is, yet again, on employees' work confidence that relates to their perception of their

capabilities of overcoming challenges of the English language communicative situations at work. This theme is also strongly tied to employees' foreign language learning affective factors such as linguistic confidence, language anxiety and tolerance of uncertainty.

6. Employees' attitude toward the taught foreign language: This theme is based on adult education as well as on foreign language learning theories. With this theme, I aim to get an understanding of employees' past experiences with English and how they have shaped their attitude towards it. That is, as discussed in Section 4.4, adult learners' past experiences with the topic of HR training affect greatly their attitude and thus motivation to learn.

7. Employees' attitude toward their capabilities of learning: This theme, similar to the previously explained one, derives from adult education and foreign language learning theories that emphasise the effect of adult learners' personal biographies on their learning. With this theme, I aim to examine the participants' past experiences with learning in general to see, for instance, how they have shaped the participants' perceptions of their capabilities of being able to learn in English language HR training.

5   METHODOLOGY

This chapter focuses on explaining how the present study was carried out. First, the research gap, the aim of the study and propositions are explained. Second, the research question is defined. Third, the participants of the study and the English language HR training that was under observation are introduced. Finally, the data gathering and analysis methods are described.

5.1   Approach and aim of the study

A lot of research concerned with measuring the effectiveness of HR training from the point of view of employees and organisations' functioning has been previously conducted (see e.g. Kantanen 1996; Huuhka 2002; Peltonen, Laitinen & Juuti 1992). In addition, a great deal of literature discussing the role of English in Finland or in businesses general can be found (see e.g. Bartlett & Davidsson 2003). Workplace learning, organisational learning and employees' personal growth have caught the interest of researchers in the field of HRM studies, too. However, not only studies dealing with HR language training in general but also recent studies that concentrate on factors affecting employees' learning in HR training are rare. Hence, by approaching the research topic from both workplace learning and foreign language learning theories' viewpoints with a general humanistic theoretical framework, the present study aims to fill the existing research gap and examine factors that might have an effect on employees gaining a significant learning experience in English language HR training.

　　The decision to use a multi-disciplinary approach in the study derives from one of its goals: to offer a comprehensive viewpoint to employers planning to organise HR language training for their employees on how to ensure the HR training could be ensured to succeed. Consequently, in accordance with humanistic approaches to HRD and learning, the present study assumes that for HR training to make its participants consider it successful, that is, a significant learning experience, it needs to satisfy the

participants' true learning needs regarding its topic. Hence, taking factors that contribute to employees' perceiving HR training as a significant learning experience into account in the HR training design process is expected to contribute to its success. Deriving from these assumptions, the foremost research question of the present study has come to be:

> *What different kinds of factors affect employees' perceptions of English language HR training's success and how do they do so?*

In the context of the present research, successful training is considered as HR training that employees perceive as a significant learning experience for them in the context of their work. More precisely, as already explained, the present study defines the concept *significant learning experience* as follows: an employee feels that the HR training under observation has expanded his or her work-related skills and can name its importance for their work. To avoid interpretation differences affecting results, this definition was also made clear to each participant. In addition, cases in which participants name training to have been beneficial for their work in other ways were also considered to refer to successful training.

In order to answer its research question, the present empirical study adopts a qualitative research strategy as it serves the purpose of the study by offering a flexible, in-depth way of examining the main phenomenon under observation, that is, English language HR training. More precisely, the present study's main aim is to reveal information about factors that affect employees' perception of the success of HR training by testing the validity of and reworking the theoretical Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training (presented in Section 4.6). According to this model, factors furthering or hindering employees' workplace and foreign language learning have an effect on the possibility of employees' perceiving English language HR training as successful. The factors presented in the model are as follows: employees' value of their employer organisation and profession, employees' perception of the amount of support and feedback in their work community, employees' perception of their job's challenge, employees' level of work confidence, employees' attitude toward the topic of the training, and finally, employees' attitude toward their capabilities of learning in general. By studying these factors in depth, the present study also aims to examine how they should be taken into account in the design process of English language HR training in order to ensure its success.

Next, the detailed steps of conducting the present study are described.

5.2 Participants

Nine customer-service employees working in health care were interviewed for the study. All of the participants worked in the same public organisation, yet in different locations. In addition, they had all participated in the same non-

compulsory English language HR training during Spring 2014. Altogether 30 employees, who all were women, of the organisation under observation participated in the training. The ones who participated in the study were randomly appointed by their employer. The organisation under observation served as a fascinating target for the present study as its field of operation, health care, is traditionally regarded as a very Finnish work environment that does not have much to deal with international stakeholders. Hence, the issues related to the employees' need to use English language at work were considered as a rather recent issue.

Due to the limited scope of the study and the small number of participants, the reason for choosing participants from the same organisation who had also taken part in the same HR training was to be able to interview participants with as similar starting points as possible. In other words, factors affecting participants' perception of successful English training could differ greatly between, for instance, employees who participate in compulsory English language training and between those who participate in non-compulsory English language training. To make valid conclusions of factors affecting the success of HR training in such a case would require a larger-scale study than the present one or a totally different research approach.

The weekly work tasks of the participants included assisting doctors in their work as well nursing their own patients. The main work task for most of the participants was, however, appointment booking and running advising service both on phone and behind a desk. In addition, one of the participants had an additional role of updating the operating times of the appointment booking services in the organisation's website (participant A) and another one cleaning the devices used in the health care procedures (participant H). As these tasks did not require any English language usage, they are not taken into account in the analysis.

Depending on the location of their work, the participants reported that they encountered the need to use English at work mainly in the appointment booking services from daily to weekly occasions. In addition, some of the participants had some non-Finnish speaking patients of their own. The participants also told that the need to use English in their work had increased a great deal during the last decade, especially in town areas where the number of immigrants has been increasing noticeably.

Table 2 below illustrates the participants' ages, course group level and whether they had requested for the training. In addition, Table 1 indicates how many years each participant had worked in health care.

Participant (age)	Course level (1=advanced, 2=intermediate, 3=beginner)	Had requested for the training	Years of work experience in health care
A (49)	1	yes	25
B (28)	1	no	1
C (54)	1	yes	30
D (61)	2	yes	35
E (35)	2	yes	12

D (60)	2	yes	35
G (61)	3	yes	25
H (34)	3	no	13
I (54)	3	yes	30

TABLE 2 The participants

As seen in Table 2, three of the participants were in their thirties with less than 15 years of work experience whilst three of the participants were in their fifties with 25-30 years of work experience in health care. Finally, three of the participants were in their sixties and were soon to retire. They had 30-35 years of work experience in health care.

To guarantee participants' anonymity, which is essential in order to follow the ethical principles of the study, each participant was assigned with a different capital letter that is used throughout the present research report to refer to particular participants. In addition, the participants were informed about the academic purpose of the study and that its data will not be used for any other purposes than for the use of the present study.

5.3   English language HR training under observation

As mentioned earlier, all of the participants had participated in the same English language HR training in Spring 2014. The training was conducted because the employees of the organisation under observation had themselves requested their employer to organise specified English language HR training when noticing that English was needed more regularly in their work. The organisation of the training was outsourced to a special English language training company, and with its four weekly two-hour meetings, it lasted for a month. The training was not compulsory for the organisation's employees, yet it was organised during their working hours.

Before the training commenced, the training company organised a starting level pre-test based on which three training groups were formed: one group for participants with the most advanced English skills, one group for intermediate skills and one for almost beginners. These groups were scheduled to meet at different times, and each of them consisted of 9-10 participants. It is noteworthy that since many of the participants worked in different locations most of them did know each other beforehand. To be able see whether the participants' group level affected their perceptions of the success of the training, three participants of each group were selected for interviews.

The contents of the training followed the participants' request; its primary goal was to improve their work-task related knowledge, skills and abilities. Hence, the training consisted of practising vocabulary and phrases with different types of exercises that employees working in appointment booking service in the field of health care would benefit most from. In addition, language usage strategies in situations where employees could easily fail to

make themselves understood with customers were discussed. The general structure of the training followed a course book that the trainer had designed and created for the participants.

5.4   Data gathering method

The data was gathered with semi-structured thematic interviews the design of which followed the thematic interview guidelines created by Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001). The interviews were carried out individually face to face after a week or two the training under observation had come to an end. The interviews were held during the participants' working hours at their workplace and the average length of an interview was 45 minutes. The interviews were all recorded and transcribed.

All of the interviews covered seven themes that derived from the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training. As discussed earlier, these main themes represent factors that were assumed to affect employees' perception of the training's success. To get a holistic picture of the themes' possible effect, they were all approached from various different viewpoints in the interviews (see Appendix for some predetermined questions regarding each theme). The main themes under the present study's observation were as follows: (1) participants' perceptions of the success of the organised HR training, (2) participants' value of their employee organisation and profession, (3) participants' perception of the amount of support and value in their work community, (4), participants' perception of their job's challenge, (5) participants' level of work confidence, (6) participants' attitude toward the topic of the training, and finally (7) participants' attitude toward their capabilities of learning in general.

The main reason to choose the semi-structured thematic interview method for data gathering was the fact that it supported the best the qualitative goal of the present study. That is, as Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1956, 3-4) describe, thematic interviews are very useful when interviewees are known to have been involved in a particular situation, in the present study's case English language HR training, of which significant elements and processes should be analysed. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 47) add that thematic interviews give a great opportunity for an interviewer to focus comprehensively on the subjective experiences of participants exposed to a certain situation. Moreover, using a semi-structured interview method for data gathering enables interviews to process flexibly by allowing, for instance, the interviewer to ask further, more focused questions if needed in addition to the predetermined questions.

5.5   Data analysis method

The data of the present study was analysed with qualitative content analysis which is "a method describing the meaning of qualitative material in a systematic way" (Schreier 2012, 1). Depending on the main purpose of the research, one can approach the method, for instance, from impressionistic, intuitive or interpretive perspective (Hsieh & Shannon 2005). This study adapts the interpretive approach that aims to understand the studied phenomenon in depth through the meanings participants give to it.

Unlike other qualitative data analysis methods, qualitative content analysis is guided thoroughly by pre-defined research questions (Schreier 2012, 4). More precisely, the research questions specify the angle from which one examines his or her data (Schreier 2012, 4). For instance, in the study, employees' body language during the interviews was ignored although some other type of a study could have used such approach as a starting point for its analysis. Thus, qualitative content analysis cannot be said to give a holistic picture of a studied data. Instead, it gives researchers a great opportunity to study chosen themes more in depth for which reason the method was also adapted to the present study.

In qualitative content analysis, *reductive coding*, which was used in the present analysis, refers to the process in which bits and pieces of data (such as words, word combinations or even full phrases) addressing the same theme, *code*, are labelled and grouped together (Schreier 2012, 38). Schereier (2012, 38) further explains that this type of coding helps researchers to create links between different pieces of data as it reduces large amounts of material to a few general terms. In addition, as Schereier (2012, 38) continues, such condensed way of presenting data works as an excellent basis for a more in-depth analysis.

Schreier (2012, 5) describes a qualitative content analysis as a systematic process; this was the case in the present study, too. First, the transcribed data was read through several times to get a holistic picture of the material. Second, to make the actual coding process easier, the interview transcriptions were restructured in a way that they all followed the same question order. During this process, the data that was not relevant at all to the research question was removed. Third, the data was uploaded for coding purposes to Atlas.ti which is a program specifically designed for qualitative data analysis. Some codes (such as *descriptions of participants' language skills* or *words/phrases that are to describe the training*) related to the themes of the interviews were created before the coding process whilst some codes became apparent only when reviewing the data in depth (such as *descriptions of employees' work self-concepts* or *English language self-concepts*). In order not to miss anything relevant, the coding process was done three times.

After the coding process was done, the material linked to the relevant codes were condensed and categorised under sub-themes. To illustrate the analysis process, the participants' word choices describing the HR training such as *excellent*, *the best*, *great* and *awesome* were categorised under one code. Furthermore, as all of the words in this code were very positive, the results

indicated that the participants' general opinion of the training was extremely positive.

Although the present study applied qualitative content analysis, some simple quantifications were carried out using Excel to make inferences about certain variables' (such as age and the group level) impact on the main studied themes described earlier in Section 5.4. Lastly, differences and similarities between codes concerning each main theme were looked at in depth. The final analyses of the results were based on these observations, and they are described in greater detail in the next chapter. Although the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the participants' answers have been translated into English for the present research report.

6   RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented and analysed. Firstly, the participants' perceptions and descriptions of the training's success are reviewed and compared. Next, results related to a theme that became evident only in the analysis process, that is, the differences and contradictions between the participants' work self-concept and English language self-concept are presented. Thirdly, to test the validity of the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training, Sections 6.3-6.8 review results regarding the main studied themes of the present research. These themes, which were explained more in detail in Section 4.6, represent also the factors that were assumed to affect the participants' perception of the success of English language HR training. Finally, some other findings regarding factors that contributed to the participants' views of the success of the training are presented.

6.1   A significant learning experience

Overall, all of the participants seemed to have had a very positive HR training experience. For instance, the participants used phrases such as "it was the best training I have ever been to", "it was just so awesome and fun" and "great, everything was just great" to describe their general feelings after the training. In addition, all of the participants mentioned that they would recommend the training to their colleagues, and participate in the same training themselves again in the future.

Participant	Significant learn-ing experience	Beneficial for their work	Successful training in general
A	yes	yes	yes
B	yes	yes	yes
C	yes	yes	yes
D	yes	yes	yes
E	yes	yes	yes

D	yes	yes	yes
G	no	yes	yes
H	no	yes	yes
I	yes	yes	yes

TABLE 3 The participants' descriptions of the training

Table 2 above indicates that two (G and H) of the nine participants did not name the training a significant learning experience for them. Yet, interestingly, similar to rest of the participants, they considered it generally successful HR training that was also beneficial for their work. Hence, their answers are taken into account similarly to rest of the participants who named the training a significant learning experience. In other words, their answers are taken into account in considering possible factors affecting the participants' perception of the success of the training. As will be analysed more in detail in Section 6.6, it seems likely that the deviating answers of participants G and H derive from them having lower confidence in relation to their English language self-concept than the other participants.

The other seven participants who named the training a significant learning experience were asked to give more detailed reasons for why they felt so:

"It was just what we had needed." – C

"In general, I felt very good about the training." - E

"The training gave me a spark to start studying English independently." – D

"I feel that I am now, after the training, more encouraged to speak English. In fact, in a way, I am looking forward to putting my new skills into practise. … The training helped me to understand that I do not need to always speak English grammatically correctly, as it is more important just to try one's best." – A

"It was the best HR training I have ever participated in. It is a real pity it came to an end so soon." – I

Many of the participants expressed that the main reason for them to consider the training a significant learning experience was that it encouraged them to speak English more in general. That is, they explained how it helped them to realise that in order to communicate efficiently in English and make themselves understood at work, they do not need to always speak grammatically correctly or pronounce everything right. For instance, participant D explained how she finally was able to comprehend that "the most important thing is to have the courage to open my mouth and try to speak English no matter what. That is the only way to learn." When the participants were asked to clarify what aspects of the training specifically made them feel so positive about it, they emphasised the overall positive atmosphere of the training group as well as the easily-approachable trainer. The role of the training group and the trainer in the success of the training is discussed in more detail in Section 6.4.

Second, some of the participants explained that the training was a significant learning experience for them because it triggered a spark in them to study English independently at home. Furthermore, all of the participants explained how important the course book, which they got to keep after the training, was for them and also one of the main reasons why they felt that the training was beneficial for their work. The role of the course book and the content of the training in the success of the training are discussed more in detail in Section 6.9.

In the data analysis process, a clear distinction between the characteristics of the participants' work self-concept and English language self-concept became evident. As the differences between these two self-concepts help to explain the participants' contradicting answers related to some of the main themes under observation, the results related to them will be covered next.

6.2 Work self-concept and English language self-concept

The results of the present study support Pihko's (1991), Laine and Pihko's (1991) as well as Burns' (1982) ideas of an individual being able to have many self-concepts that explain his or her behaviour in different context. For instance, in accord with Tuominen and Pohjakallio's (2012) statements regarding work self-concept and home self-concept, many of the participants emphasised wanting to separate their work from their free-time. This finding is illustrated clearly in the following quotations:

> "Work is work, free time is free time. I like my work but it is still work. I have a different life at home." - B

> "I do not see my colleagues during free time. Although they are great – do not take me wrong - but I like to separate work from my free time." - H

> "…I have my own different environment at home. It would be hard to take work there for which reason I do not do that." - D

> "It takes me two hours every day after work for me to be able to relax properly and get rid of the work role I have had on for the whole day; during that time, I do not want to talk to anyone. I mean, only after this little relaxing session I can fully be myself at home and enjoy spending time, for example, with my children." - A

> "I once used to tell everything at work to my customers but then my previous employer started to mock me about it. After this, I have created a certain work personality and I never reveal anything about myself to customers again, even if they ask." - C

> "One should not talk too much about one's free time in the work community; otherwise people tend to label one selfish. Thus, it is better just to talk about work at work." - C

The examples above show how the participants found it important to separate their work self-concept form their home self-concept. As this could be

a result from the participants finding their work overall very stressful, it is something that employers and HR managers should pay attention for various reasons. This topic is pondered more in depth in Section 7.2.

A truly interesting finding became apparent every time participants described themselves at work in general and as users of English at work. To illustrate this, almost all of the participants described their feelings and attitudes related to their general work differently to their feelings and attitudes related to the use of English at work. The quotations below give an example of a situation in which the participants' descriptions of themselves at work contradict. In the following quotations, number 1 represents the participants' descriptions of themselves at work in general whilst number 2 the same participants' descriptions of themselves in situations that relate to the English language use at work.

1.) "I do not think that anything here at work is challenging for me anymore; I have been here for so long." – D

2.) "When somebody asks if I speak English at work, I start panicking." – D

1.) "…in general, I feel very confident at work." - B

2.) "I prefer to speak English with customers if none of my colleagues are around. I mean, the situation feels more stressful when I know that some of my colleagues will hear how bad my English skills are." – B

As the above quotations prove, the results of the present study support the notion of employees' work self-concept consisting of many work task-related self-concepts the characteristics' of which, according to Burns (1982), are not necessarily always in consensus with each other. More precisely, the possibility of the participants having, in addition to their general work self-concept, a specific English language self-concept, as Laine and Pihko (1991) and Pihko (2007) have suggested, explains the contradicting descriptions of participants' D and B in above examples.

As it can be analysed, participants' D and B work self-concepts seemed to be, in fact, very confident whilst their English language self-concepts were in lack of it. The differences between the characteristics of the participants' work self-concept and English language self-concept became especially clear when analysing results regarding themes such as the participants' work confidence, relationships with their work community and perceptions of their work's challenge. Thus, the participants' work self-concepts and English language self-concepts will also be taken into account in the analysis of the results regarding these themes.

6.3 Employees' value of their employer organisation and profession

The present study proposed that certain factors that affect either workplace or foreign language learning affect one finding English language HR training successful. One of these themes was concerned with the participants' value of their employer organisation and profession that Eraut and Hirsh (2007) had already found to correlate positively with employees' workplace learning.

First, the following examples show how all of the participants highly valued their profession.

"There are so many people here who need our help. For this reason, I do not even like to have breaks during my work time even if I am entitled to have them." - C

"I know that some of our customers are having hard times at home so I am very understanding when it comes to forgetting their appointments."- E

"I am a very empathetic person. I want to help others. That is the main reason I value my job." - A

"I think our profession is very important; people need our help." - D

"Knowing that people need us helps to keep me going and doing my best at work." - G

As the above quotations illustrate, the participants found it important to be able to help others. In fact, it seemed that recognising the importance of their work furthered the participants' value and commitment to their work. Some of the participants also mentioned how their commitment to their work helped them to cope with stress in their daily work. Moreover, all except one of the participants had never worked in any other profession but heath care. Yet, the participants were not able to imagine a more suitable profession for themselves.

In order to get a more holistic picture of the participants' value of their work, they were asked to describe how and why they had ended up working in the profession.

"I saw this one advertisement for the nursing school in the local newspaper and the picture looked so tempting. I mean, to be fair, I did not know anything about the job beforehand for which reason that advertisement played a great role in my career choosing process." - D

"My single mother did not have much money so I had to quit school early. Nursing school just seemed like a handy option." - C

"I just thought that it would be a fun and interesting job." – B

Interestingly, the above quotations depict how the participants, precisely seven of the nine, had not initially chosen the health care career because of their value of it. Instead, they emphasised rather practical, or even superficial, reasons to

do so. Consequently, it can be concluded that the participants had developed the value of their job only after started working in the field of health care.

The participants were also asked whether they valued their employer organisation; all of the participants' answers were positive. However, when they were asked to describe the organisation in more detail and give reasons for their thoughts, they began to hesitate.

> "Yes, I do value it (=the employer organisation) but it is so big that I feel it is not very friendly toward individual employees." - D

> "Yes (as valuing the employer organisation)… I just think the communications never work making things confusing and disorganised... The whole organisation is a real mess." - A

> "Whilst the employer pays me my wages on time, I value it. This is very important because I need the money to pay my mortgage and feed my kids. … I do not think the leaders really understand what it is going on here in our level. The organisation is just too big." – G

These quotations show how the participants' descriptions of their employer organisations focused mainly on issues that they had found to have room for improvement. For instance, most of the participants referred to the big size of the organisation, poor communications and the uncertainty of the future being issues that bothered them.

Based on the above-described observations, it seems likely that the main reason for the participants to say that they valued their employer organisation had something to do with its field of operation, which they highly valued, rather than them feeling it being a great place to work. Consequently, it could be also assumed that if an employee is intrinsically motivated to pursue her profession that she values, one is also likely to be more committed to do her best in HR training, even organised by a quarter that she is not involved with emotionally, in order to enhance her skills related to her profession. Such commitment most likely furthers her learning in HR training, too. That is, as previous studies regarding adult education have concluded, the most effective motivator to further an adult's learning is developed intrinsically. In the case of the present study, one factor that thus possibly affected the participants' perceptions of the success of the training under observation was the fact that the participants felt that the training gave them tools to develop their professional skills.

The possibility of the participants perceiving their employer organisation as an environment with which they are involved as employees in name only might also contribute to their lack of value of it. The possible problems that this could create are pondered from employers' point of view more extensively in Section 7.2. In addition, the participants' lack of value might have something to do with why they emphasised the distinction between the employer organisation and their immediate work community to which the participants referred to with the word *us*.

> "I do not think that the employer organisation really understands us." – I

"Maybe the leaders of our employer organisation out there do not listen to us enough." – H

"The whole organisation feels so impersonal." – E

In sum, based on the results explained in this section, it can be concluded that valuing one's employer organisation does not have much of an effect on one's perception of the success of HR training if one values her profession in general. Instead, the participants' value of their profession was found to affect positively their perception of the training's success.

6.4   Support and feedback of the community

Another theme that the present study assumed to have an effect on the participants' perceptions of the HR training's success was the amount of support and feedback the participants considered to receive in their work community. This theme derived not only from Eraut and Hirsh's (2007) findings regarding the role of feedback and support in workplace learning but also from the humanistic approaches to HRD and learning that emphasise the sosiopsychological aspect in all learning processes at work. The present study distinguished two work-related communities relevant to its research of which effect on the participants' perceptions of the English language HR training's success was examined. First, the participants' immediate work community in which they worked daily and possibly encountered the need to use English, and second, the training group with which they met once a week for a month during the HR training under observation.

When the participants were asked to define what they understood as their immediate work community, they all referred to the people who worked in the same position as them in the same location. That is, the people they met and had contact with daily. As it became evident in the results, the participants described their work communities, which consisted of five to ten employees depending on the location of the participant, very positively.

"I very much enjoy working with my colleagues." - A

"I cannot imagine having a better work community. " - C

"We are very close together here at work." - G

The participants also highlighted the communal spirit of their immediate work community.

"We always help each other; that is the common spirit." - C

"We do things together. I can always ask help from others." – B

"We solve the problems that we encounter at work together." - D

As discussed in the previous section, the participants emphasised the distinction between their immediate work community and the rest of their employer organisation. Similarly, the participants emphasised the distinction between them and the other work communities that those employees who worked in other positions in the organisation formed.

> "I do not even know their (= other employees who are not considered to belong to the same work community) names." - C

> "We never spend time with them (= other employees who are not considered to belong to the same work community)." - A

> "They (= other employees who are not considered to belong to the same work community) represent a totally different group at work, we are us and they are they; we eat lunches together and they eat theirs together." -H

However, a straightforward conclusion on the work community's positive effect on the participants' perceptions of the success of HR training cannot be drawn as the participants also described some negative characteristics of the community. That is, these characteristics have previously been found to hinder learning in general and thus they might also explain why the participants' English language self-concepts lacked, for instance, confidence.

First, the participants explained how they felt not receiving enough support or positive feedback at work in general.

> "One only gets help if one asks for it." - G

> "It is not very common here that people come and offer support." – D

> "Feedback? *laughs* Never." - A

> "When I get feedback from my employer, it is mostly only negative…" - I

> "I get some feedback yes, but I would like to receive more of it especially when I am appointed to new tasks." – B

> "Our employer has not really paid much attention to the issue of us needing to use English at work at all. That is, apart from the annual development discussions where we brought the issue up ourselves." - E

Second, eight of the nine participants told that they did not spend free time with their colleagues even from their immediate work community although they had earlier described how they are very close with them. This supports the earlier finding of the participants wanting to separate their free-time self-concept from their work self-concept. Hence, it is possible that whilst not feeling emotionally connected to their employer organisation, the participants have ended up emphasising a wishful idea of having a great work community. This might explain the previously presented positive descriptions of the participants' work community.

The other relevant community for the present study was the participants' training community, that is, the training group. All of the participants described these communities extremely positively.

"I miss our training group already. We had so much fun. Because of the group, it was always so nice to go to the training meetings." - C

"The training group was so supportive and generally just awesome. We got along so well." - E

"The general atmosphere in the training was very positive; everyone wanted to learn and thus mistakes were seen only as opportunities to learn." - F

It became clear from the results that the participants enjoyed their training groups very much not only because they got along so well with the other participants but also because they felt as the participants in each group had similar English language skills. This feeling of equivalence, as the participants explained, gave them courage to try to speak English in front of others as well as to do their best at all times during the HR training. In addition, the participants emphasised how they enjoyed the relaxed and humorous atmosphere of the training group.

The participants also praised the trainer for her supportive and cheerful way of teaching.

"I think the trainer was easy to approach." - D

"I do not have enough words to praise our trainer" - C

"I liked that she (=the trainer) gave us very good feedback in a very positive manner."- H

As it becomes evident from the above examples, the participants described the trainer very positively. For instance, they felt that she was equally part of the training community with rest of the participants for which reason the participants considered that she was easy to approach. In addition, the trainer was praised because she gave the participants constructive feedback, for instance, on the participants' pronunciation.

In sum, it can be concluded that unlike the participants' work community, the training community's overall positive, communal atmosphere as well as the support and feedback the participants reported to have received during the training contributed to their perception of the success of HR training.

6.5 Employees' perception of their work's challenge

This section presents results regarding the participants' perceptions of their work's challenge and its possible effect on their perception of the success of the training. Because the participants' answers regarding this theme represented

clearly the contradiction between the participants' work self-concepts and English language self-concepts, the results are analysed from their points of view.

First, the participants described their work's general challenge as follows:

"Challenges belong to work." – A

"Some work days can be challenging, of course, but it is just part of that day. I do not really even care about it, I mean, if work gets challenging it is not that big of a deal for me in the end." – C

"Problems are made to be solved." – G

As it can be seen from the quotations, the participants described the challenges they encountered at work in a rather positive manner. In addition, the participants explained how they were aware that most of the challenges, such as the lack of appointment times they can give out to customers, existed not because of their inadequate capabilities as employees but because of the lack of their employer organisation's resources. Knowing this made them perceive their job less challenging.

As it was suggested in the previous section, the participants' work community was not as learning-supportive, coherent and faultless as the participants made it first sound. This idea is also supported in the results regarding the participants' descriptions of the causes of their work challenges. That is, they mentioned how some issues related to the relationships with their colleagues made their work challenging sometimes.

"Well of course there are always some little issues going on in the work community, such as talking behind someone's back, but I guess that is just normal." – A

"It is just natural that there is always something happening in the work community, especially when there are only women around." - F

"I reckon that some of my work challenges relate to the bad relationships with my colleagues because any type of an conflict with someone makes me feel awful for quite a long time." – E

"Some of my colleagues might hate me as I am such a bitch sometimes about cleaning the fridge, for instance. But come on, we are all women, we should be able to keep the place clean and I hate it when others do not do that." – G

"It annoys me that some of the girls here in the community are so quiet and they do not open their mouths at all when they should. Every week when we have the work group meetings, which offer a great chance to discuss issues that bother them, I am the only one who talks." - C

Fascinatedly, as can be seen from the quotations above, some of the participants stated that the issues in the work community existed because of the community consisted only of women. In fact, they even seemed to consider such issues normal and acceptable because of the majority of the women in the work community. However, as analysing the gender image in the organisation

under observation does not serve purpose for the goal of the present study, the issue will not be dealt with further.

In order to get a comprehensive image of the participants' perceptions of their work's challenge, they were also asked to describe how they felt about the possible challenges that they could confront in the future.

> "It is very distressing to think that in the future us employees are strained even more." – I

> "I am lucky that I do not have that many years left to work anymore as I think it will not get any better. I mean, we have already learned that our employer will limit our resources more and more in the future." – F

> "The future scares me a little bit; I cannot even know for sure whether I will get to keep my job. I used to think that once one got a job from an employer like mine one would not need to worry about these kinds of issues. It seems as I was wrong." - D

It became clear from the results that the participants considered the organisation's way of operating as a major contributor in creating work challenges for them in the future. However, the participants' rather negative feelings about the future did not seem to affect their current perception of their work's challenge.

If the participants' general work self-concepts did not find their work remarkably challenging, the case was the opposite with their English language self-concepts. This is illustrated clearly in the participants' answers regarding their descriptions of their feelings about work challenges related to the English language use.

> "The biggest challenge caused by the need to use English language at work is answering to the phone in English during an appointment service shift." – A

> "It is a big challenge for me when I need to change the language from Finnish to English so fast without warning." - B

> "I find it very challenging when someone who does not speak Finnish comes to book an appointment here." - H

The above quotations illustrate how the participants found the situations in which they had to use English at work challenging. In addition, they repetitively used the word *survive* to describe the situations in which they had to use English. Such word choice, illustrated below, emphasises how very challenging the participants' English language self-concepts found their work.

> "So far I have somehow managed to survive the situations when I have had to use English with customers." - A

> "Although I do not like using English at work, I cannot avoid it. Sometimes I survive such situations with drawings"- B

> "There is no other way than to try to survive. I hate it (= using English at work), but I have managed to cope so far." - D

When asked to explain more in detail why the participants found the challenges related to the English language use at work challenging, most of them blamed their inadequate language skills. Hence, unlike the challenges related to the participants' every-day work, which mainly originated from their employer organisation's lack of resources and way of operating, the challenges deriving from the need to use English related to their own individual competences. Consequently, it could be assumed that the participants thus considered the challenges related to the English language as a more personal and upsetting issue. Although the participants seemed to be aware of the fact that being able to communicate in English was not a basic requirement in their position, it was something they considered an ideal competence to possess. Whether this might result from the participants wanting to be as good as possible in their profession, which they highly valued, is something that can only be speculated. This issue will be pondered more in Sections 6.6 and 6.9.

The participants were also asked to describe how they found the training's overall challenge level. Most of them replied that they considered it challenging enough, yet accomplishable. As this goes in accord with the findings of Ruohotie's (1998) study regarding the connection between employees finding their work reasonably challenging and their intrinsic motivation to learn, it is likely that the challenge level of the HR training also affected the participants' perception of the success of the training.

> "Well, sometimes the exercises felt a little bit too challenging for me, but in a good way." - G

> "The challenge level of the training was good, I think. We did some very challenging tasks there, too, but I think that, in the end, they helped me to learn the most." - H

> "The exercises that we did during the training were designed well as they challenged me enough without making feel like I was back at school and a total loser." - I

In conclusion, although Eraut and Hirsh (2007) have found that employees who do not find their work too challenging learn more efficiently, the present study concludes that the participants' perceptions of their everyday work's challenge do not affect their perception of the success of HR training. However, the adequate level of the HR training's challenge could be linked to the fact that the participants found the training successful.

6.6 Employees' work confidence

As it was pointed out in the previous section, the participants did not find their general work very challenging apart from the situations in which they confronted the need to use the English language for communication. As will be discussed in the present section, this finding goes in accord with the results regarding the participants' work confidence. In addition, the results regarding the participants' level of work confidence illustrate most clearly the contrast

between the characteristics of their work self-concept and English language self-concept.

The following quotations demonstrate how the participants perceived themselves as very confident at their work in general:

> "Sure, I am very confident in my work; I have been here so long" - H

> "If there is a challenge, I usually manage to handle it without any unnecessary dealings." - B

> "I feel I am quite good at my job." - I

> "We have these meetings once a week where we deal openly with challenges that we have confronted at work." - C

The participants' descriptions of their feelings regarding the challenges caused by the possible instability of their employer organisation in the future (as discussed in Section 6.5) also exemplified their level of work-confidence.

> "I do not like to think about the future problems. Sure, because of our employer organisation there is this common unpleasant feeling about the future, but I do not let it bother me now." - D

> "I like to live day by day, so I am not too concerned about the future." - I

> "I would go crazy and not be able to do my job well at all if I constantly kept worrying about the future." - C

In sum, all of the participants seemed to have a very confident work self-concept. It seems possible that this derives from the participants' high value of their profession and a drive to work in it.

When the interviews progressed on to discussing the participants' feelings about themselves as English language users at work, it came very apparent that their English language self-concepts' levels of confidence were substantially lower in comparison to their work self-concepts'.

> "I have never been a so-called genius in foreign languages. The need of using English at work makes thus my work challenging." - D

> "English is not my strength at all." - E

When the participants were asked to describe how they would react to a situation where a customer begins a phone call, for instance, with a phrase *do you speak English*, the participants used words such as *panic*, *cold sweat* and *distress* to describe initial feelings. Another example that illustrated the participants', expect C's, English language self-concepts' lack of confidence was the fact that many of the participants emphasised humour as a way to cope with tricky situations that demanded English usage at work.

> "I usually start laughing when I need to speak English." - G

"I think having a sense of humour helps a lot in these situations." - H

Using humour in situations that cause anxiousness and distress might reflect an attempt to hide such feelings from others, that is, not to reveal one's nervousness and lack of confidence. In addition, by using humour one could also aim to show openly to others that her English skills are not very good in order to avoid end up being in a situation where others would consider her 'showing off' her skills. That is, this is something that is generally disapproved in Finnish culture. In a way, this assumption supports, yet again, the great effect of the work community on the participants' behaviour at work. Furthermore, the low confidence of the participants' English language self-concept was reflected in their descriptions of their feelings regarding needing to use English around their colleagues.

"I do not want to use English with customers when my colleagues are around. Of course, I cannot do anything about it but it makes the situation even worse than it already is." - A

"If Lisa (*name changed*), who speaks very good English, is next to me when I have to deal with foreign customers, I feel awful." - F

"When I meet new colleagues and they speak very good English it makes me feel unsure whether I want to talk to non-Finnish customers around them." - B

The quotations above show how the participants explained to feel very anxious in situations where they had to speak English with customers when their colleagues were around. Interestingly, the participants felt so even though they seemed to understand that the others would not be bothered or amused if they, for instance, pronounced a difficult word in English incorrectly. In addition, although some of the participants had explained earlier how they helped each other with dealing with challenges at work, none of the participants reported of a situation in which they had together tried to serve a foreign customer which they had earlier described as a challenging work task. However, it has to pointed out that due to the fast nature of the participants' work, the participants might not in general have time to serve non-Finnish customers together.

Previous studies (see e.g. Järvinen et al. (2002; Eraut & Hirsh 2007) have emphasised the role of employers in employees' workplace learning. Thus, it could be also assumed that the employers' way of behaving might have had an effect on the participants' English language self-concept's lack of confidence. For instance, by ignoring the participants' needs to use English at work and the problems that such demands cause for them, the participants' employers might have left the participants believing that English skills are, in fact, a basic requirement for their work. Thus, if an employee does not consider herself as filling the language requirements and thus not being competent enough for her current work role, it might affect her English language self-concept's confidence negatively.

As it was noted and reasoned in Section 6.1, the present study takes all of the participants' answers into account when analysing possible contributors to

their perceptions of the success of the English language HR training under observation. However, it is noteworthy that the results indicated a slight difference between the level of English language self-concepts' confidence of those who described the training as a significant learning experience and those who did not name the training as such. That is, as the quotations below illustrate, participants G and H used more negative phrases to describe their capabilities to use or to learn English than the other participants.

> "I have never ever been good in English; even at school I could not remember anything." –H

> "I do not feel confident with my English skills at all because I just simply cannot speak it." – G

> "I will be ok here at work unless I am expected to speak English. I just simple cannot speak or write it. It is a fact. " - H

> "I do not have any English skills." – G

> "I know I have some English skills. I have even gone to a special foreign language class in primary school. However, speaking English just makes me so nervous. I know I do not need to speak it perfectly but yet using it makes me feel frightened especially here at work because I cannot prepare myself for such situations; it all happens so fast." - A

> "I must be ok in English as my colleagues have asked for my help before. Nevertheless, I still feel a little panic when I need to speak it." - B

As showed above, the ones who named the training a significant learning experience for them, such as participants A and B, seemed to acknowledge their English skills but felt nervous about using it. On the other hand, using much more negative phrases to describe their English language skills and capabilities to learn it might represent participants' G and H very low level of confidence in regard of their English language self-concepts. Moreover, when participants G and H were asked to give reasons for perceiving the English language HR training under observation successful but not a significant learning experience, they both referred to the short time of the training, as the following quotations illustrate.

> "Well, yeah, I guess it (= English language HR training) was beneficial for me but I did not learn there so much as it was so short." – H

> "The training was a great experience and I am grateful that our employer organised is for us. However, it did not last enough long for me to learn anything." – G

In accord with Räisänen's (2013) findings, the only one who had a confident English language self-concept was participant C. That is, as Räisänen (2013) has discovered, the more Finnish employees were exposed to the use of English langue with other non-native English and non-Finnish speakers, the more encouraged they became in using English in different situations. Similarly, participant C explained how she had had a great deal of experience in using

English during her life and thus openly admitted to be very confident about using English.

> "I do not feel nervous at all when I need to use English at work. I just speak English the way I can. I know it is not perfect, but the most important thing is just to get understood anyways." – C

In sum, although Eraut and Hirsh (2007) have previously discovered that an employee's low work confidence hinders her learning at work whilst great confidence furthers it, the results of the present study show that one's confident general work self-concept does not affect notably her perception of the HR training's success. Similarly, the participants' low level of their English language self-concepts did not have much of an effect on their perception of the training's success either. Hence, the assumption of the present study regarding the effect of the participants' work confidence on the success of HR training was refuted.

6.7   Employees' attitude toward the topic of the training

Based on the findings of previously conducted adult education as well as foreign language learning theories, the present study proposed that the participants' attitude toward the English language would have an effect on their perception of the success of the training. As the results presented in this section will illustrate, this assumption was confirmed to be valid.

As the training was voluntary, the initial supposition was that the participants' attitude toward the English language would be rather positive. This was proved to be true; all of the participants had a very positive, even admiring attitude toward the English language in general.

> "I have always loved the English language so much." - C

> "I find it ok that we see English everywhere in Finland nowadays." - D

> "It (= the developing role of the English language in Finland) is fine, at least then we would learn to speak it." - H

None of the participants seemed to have anything against the English language acquiring a bigger status in Finland in the future; instead, it was seen as an opportunity to study and learn it more. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, the participants' admiration of the English language and the culture of English-speaking countries became very evident in their answers. In addition, many of the participants explained how they wished to be able to speak English better.

> "I think it would be great if I knew English better." - B

> "English is just such a beautiful language. If I was able to choose my mother tongue, it would be British English. It is just so beautiful." – E

"I have always dreamed about being able to speak English fluently so that I would not need to always freeze totally, for instance, on the streets when a foreigner comes and asks advice." – H

"It would be so great to be able to speak it (= English) fluently, especially on holidays." – I

"I wish I was more confident in speaking English." – A

"I just really love the language for which reason I wanted to participate in this training, too." – C

Three of the participants also explained how they had even studied English themselves at home in hoping to improve their communication skills. Self-directed learning has, in fact, proved to be a common characteristic of adult learners (Knowles et al. 2002).

"I have studied English at home by myself with some C-cassettes. In addition, I once even took part in this course organised by the local adult education centre." -D

"I once bought this book "Learn English at home" which I read through by myself couple of times." -E

"I have tried to learn English by reading children's books and comics in English, such as Garfield." – F

The examples above exemplify the participants' extremely positive attitudes toward the English language. They also reflect the participants' intrinsic motivation to learn English, which has, as discussed earlier, been proved to be the most effective motivation type for adult learners (Knowles et al. 2005). In addition, as the participants named their work as a motivator to learn English and participate in the voluntary HR training, the results also support Edmondson and House's (2003) findings. That is, as explained earlier, they had discovered that understanding how learning a foreign language could benefit one's every-day work functioned as a major motivator for an employee to participate and make an effort to learn in foreign language HR training. The participants' intrinsic motivation to learn English could also have an effect on why all of the participants found the training under observation successful. In other words, if the participants were willing to learn the language so much, they might have been satisfied with any type of training that involved something related to the English language or English-speaking countries' culture.

In order to make more profound inferences of the participants' attitude toward the English language, they were asked to describe their past experiences with the English language in their free-time as well as at school. Interestingly, all except two of the participants (C and B) explained how they had had negative experiences regarding learning English at school.

"The school English was just horrible. It was so distressing as everyone was so scared of making mistakes in front of the others. " - A

"It (= the school) had such a nit-picker atmosphere." - H

"The school emphasised the correctness of the language. It was so scary, especially when I had to speak in front of other students and they laughed at me if I made mistakes." - D

"It was so scary at school when we had to practise pronunciation in front of others and the teacher got really mad if we said the word wrong." - E

"I hated it when we had to gather around this small table at school and to practise our English skills by trying to have casual conversations in English. Well, okay, it sounds fine, but for me, who was really bad at it, such a task was a nightmare because making mistakes in such a situation was emphasised." -I

As the examples above show, the participants found the English classes intimidating. They reported that their teachers teased and laughed at the ones who made mistakes and provoked the other students to do the same. Hence, it is very likely that such behaviour of the teachers created an assumption among the participants that in order to, or even to be allowed to, use English in front of others one should not make mistakes at all. Such belief might explain why the participants felt extremely intimidated when needing to use English with customers in front of their colleagues.

In contrast to the rest of the participants, participants C and B explained how they had had positive experiences with English at school. For instance, participant C told of her inspiring English teacher who encouraged his students to speak English without caring about grammar mistakes and practise English in the contexts they enjoyed the most. Thus, participant C's extremely positive school experiences regarding school English most likely contributed also to her English language self-concept's high confidence.

Finally, all of the participants described how they had encountered the need to use the English language during their free-time, for instance, in the context of traveling, films, non-Finnish speaking friends and hobbies. In fact, these experiences had been so positive for them that although the participants had had some negative school experiences, which had even affected negatively their English language self-concepts' confidence, their inspiration to learn English was not deflated. In other words, the positive experiences regarding the English language could be seen to have contributed to their positive attitude toward it and thus furthered also their intrinsic motivation to learn English in the first place. Hence, in sum, the participants' attitude towards the topic of the HR training affected their perception of its success.

6.8   Employees' attitude toward their capabilities to learn

In addition to the participants' attitude toward the English language, their attitude toward their capabilities to learn in general was studied. That is, studies regarding adult education and foreign language learning have earlier concluded it to have a great effect on an adult's learning. As the following

results indicate, the present study supported this view by discovering that the participants' positive attitude toward their capabilities of learning in general affected positively their perception of the success of the English language HR training under observation.

The following quotations illustrate the participants' descriptions of their attitude and willingness to engage in any type of learning or studying in the future.

> "If I think hypothetically, that is, if I did not have any children and had the time, I could possibly find myself studying something more intensively. I just do not know now what it could be." - H

> "It is a possibility, of course, that due to our employer organisation's rearrangements or the development of modern technology I will be without a job in the future. Then, if really needed, I would of course educate myself for a new profession to get a job." - B

> "I imagine that even as an old grandma I will like learning new things, especially related to handicrafts." - G

Accordingly, all of the participants seemed to hold a very positive image of their capabilities to learn in general, which might also have contributed to their willingness to participate in the voluntary HR training in the first place. In addition, even participants G and H, who had earlier described their capabilities to learn English very negatively (as was discussed in Section 6.6) perceived their general learning capabilities positively. Thus, it can be assumed that the participants' positive attitude towards their capabilities to learn in general contributed to their perception of the success of the training, too.

Related to the participants' attitude towards learning, it is noteworthy that some of the participants, as briefly discussed earlier in Section 6.6, seemed to hold a rather pessimistic view of them being able to improve their English communication skills in a month's time. Instead, they emphasised how the short-term English language HR training inspired them to begin to study English independently and to have more courage to use English at work.

> "I do not think it would have even been possible for me to learn English in such a short time as the training lasted but it definitely gave me some interest to keep practising myself during my free time as well courage to speak." - A

> "Maybe I did not learn that much about the English language use during the HR training; instead, I got courage to try to study more myself." – D

> "Of course I learned something during the training but the most important thing in such short-time HR training for me was to get some courage to try to speak English even though I would make mistakes." -H

6.9   Other findings

In the study, it also became apparent that the participants highlighted the importance of the training material for the success of the training.

> "The book was absolutely brilliant as it was designed just for us." -A

> "I really think it is important for women to have books that have pretty pictures and nice colours in it. I mean, it really made, at least me, enjoy learning more."- D

> "I carry the book around with me almost at all times at work now. It helps me to remember and revise the material that we learned during the training and check some words' translations quickly if necessary." - F

> "The book was good because we could make notes in it and our teacher had wrote down clearly how to pronounce some tricky words related to our work. In addition, it was good that it really was aimed for people working in our role and that we got to keep the book after the training finished. I also liked the fact that we used the book a lot during the training." -G

As the quotations illustrate, the participants appreciated the fact that the training, with its carefully designed learning material, was targeted directly to them. This fact was also one of the main contributors, according to the participants, why the training was perceived successful. Consequently, supporting Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) statements regarding factors making HR training result in efficiency, the present study found that the participants' perception of the training's success was also dependent on the HR training's training material.

7   DISCUSSION

The present study has examined what makes English language HR training successful. This was done by interviewing nine employees who had recently participated in a voluntary English language HR training in order to find out how different types of factors affected their perception of its success.

This chapter concentrates on answering the study's research question; w*hat different kinds of factors affect employees' perceptions of English language HR training's success and how do they do so?* In addition, some other issues related to HRD that arose from the data are discussed, as they are also considered issues to which employers should pay attention when designing ways to implement HRD strategy, and more precisely, HR training.

The present chapter consists of five sections. First, different types of employee-orientated factors' possible impact on employees' perceptions of English language HR training's success are discussed. Second, more general HRD-related findings of the present study are considered. Third, the study's contributions to the field of Applied Linguistics are presented. Fourth, suggestions for future research, and fifth and finally, the limitations of the present study are discussed.

7.1   Factors affecting the success of English language HR training

The research concentrated initially on six themes that derived from the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training. It was proposed that these themes would also have an effect on the participants' perception of the HR training's success. Whether they, in the end, had an effect or not is first discussed. In addition, the validity of the model is considered and an updated version presented. Second, other noteworthy factors', which arose from the data, possible impact on the participant's perceptions of the success of the HR training under observation are discussed.

7.1.1 Factors deriving from the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training

In the present study, successful HR training was defined as training that employees, who take part in the training, consider having been successful, that is, perceived it to have been a significant learning experience for them and/or beneficial in some other ways for their work. Keeping this definition in mind, the study aimed to find out what made the participants to consider the training successful by testing the validity of the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training. The theoretical model was based on an idea that factors previously found to impact workplace or foreign language learning would also affect employees' perceiving English language HR training successful. The factors present in the model were as follows: employees' level of valuing their employee organisation and profession, the amount of feedback and support in a work community, employees' perception of their work's challenge, employees' work confidence, employees' attitudes toward the taught foreign language, and finally, employees' attitude toward their capabilities to learn in general.

First, the results showed that the participants of the present study, who all found the HR training under observation successful, valued their profession highly. In contrast, naming a number of issues that bothered them regarding their employer organisation's functioning, it became clear the their level of valuing their employer organisation was not as great. Based on the results of this study, it therefore seems that an employee's level of valuing his or her employer organisation does not straightforwardly make him or her consider HR training successful. On the other hand, however, it can be assumed that an employee's high value of his or her profession affects such perception positively. This might be a result from an employee considering it positive to be offered a chance to develop his or her professional skills for a job that he or she thinks highly of.

Second, it has been previously discovered that a work community that gives support and feedback to its employees furthers learning. In the present study, the participants reported that this was not the case in their organisation. That is, although they hoped it to be otherwise, the participants explained how they felt that they received feedback and general support extremely rarely in the all aspects of their everyday-work. On the contrary, they emphasised how much they enjoyed the fact that they were given a great deal of feedback and support during the HR training under observation, not just from the trainer but also from the other participants of their training group. Hence, based on these observations, it can be assumed that receiving feedback and support from their training community was one of the reasons why the participants found the HR training overall successful. On the other hand, the impact of support and feedback, or more precisely the lack of it, of the participants' every-day work community did not contribute to their perception of the training's success. The lack of support and feedback in their work community could, however, affect negatively the participants' English language self-concepts' level of confidence.

Third, the participants reported that they did not find their everyday-work generally challenging apart from the difficulties that originated from the limited availability of appointment times to give to customers. Nevertheless, they explained how the need of using English at work had created new challenges for their every-day work. The participants also reacted differently to these challenges. That is, the challenges related to their general work that existed because of their employer organisation's lack of resources were considered unfortunate, yet not insurmountable. Instead, the participants found the challenges that related to the English language use barely survivable. Consequently, because of the results regarding the participants' perceptions of their work's challenge contradict it is not possible to establish a connection between one's perception of his or her work's challenge and successful HR training. However, it could be speculated that a positive image of one's work challenges affects positively his or her attitude toward one's general work confidence, capabilities to learn and thus willingness to participate in HR training.

Fourth, the results showed that the participants felt very confident in their general work. On the other hand, when it came down to describing their feelings in situations that required using English at work, it became apparent that they lacked confidence. In fact, their level of confidence in such situations was so low that they failed to acknowledge their already existing language skills and capabilities to cope with non-Finnish speaking customers. In addition, the participants who considered the HR training under observation overall successful but not a significant learning experience for them seemed to have even lower level of confidence than rest of the participants who named the training a significant learning experience. Consequently, based on these findings, it could be assumed that the participants' general positive work confidence affected their perceptions of their capabilities to learn optimistically and thus willingness to participate in the voluntary HR training. In addition, the participants' low confidence in regard of their English language self-concepts seemed to have similar effects when combined together with their positive attitude toward the English language. Hence, the present study supports the idea that an employee's work confidence contributes indirectly to his or her perception of the success of HR training.

Fifth, as already mentioned earlier, the results showed that all of the participants held of a very positive attitude toward the English language in general. This was reflected, for instance, through their interest in using and learning English during their free time. In addition, none of the participants seemed to mind that the role of English in Finland has been changing which has also caused them to encounter non-Finnish speaking customers more often at work. Interestingly, they reported this although they had earlier described such situations very distressing. The participants' attitudes toward the English language were, in fact, so positive that despite the negative experiences they had from school related to English classes, which could, based on Chao's (2009) statements, be blamed for their English language self-concepts' lack of confidence, they were willing to participate in the voluntary English language HR training. Thus, in accord with other foreign language learning and adult

education theories (see e.g. Chao 2009), it can be concluded that the attitude toward the topic of HR training plays an important role in employees' perceptions of the success of HR training because, as the participants in the present study reported, it furthered their intrinsic motivation to learn.

Finally, adult education and foreign language learning theories have concluded that a learner's positive attitude towards his or her capabilities to learn in general furthers learning. Similarly, the results of the present study indicated that the participants had a very positive attitude toward their capabilities of learning in general. It is thus likely that such attitudes of theirs had also an effect on their perceptions of the success of the HR training. To further illustrate this conclusion, the participants who did not name the training a significant learning experience held also of a more negative image of their capabilities to learn English. In other words, it seems as the more negative attitude one has toward his or her learning capabilities regarding the topic of HR training the less likely one is able to recognise his or her learning during the training. On the other hand, as these participants also were less confident as English language users, their negative attitude toward their capabilities of learning English might have also originated from self-criticism. That is, self-criticism and low self-confidence often go hand in hand.

In conclusion, it became apparent in the study that the factors presented in the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training which derived from foreign language theories (employees' attitudes towards the English language and their capabilities to learn) had similar learning-furthering impacts on the participants' perception of the training's success as on foreign language learning. This is no wonder as the training under observation resembled a very traditional type of a foreign language learning environment. However, the same did not apply to all of the factors that have been proved to affect employees' workplace learning (employees' value of their employer organisation and profession, the support and feedback in the work community, employees' perception of their work challenge, and work confidence). That is, the present study showed how the participants' value of their profession and the support and feedback of the training community were the main contributors to why the participants perceived the training successful. On the other hand, by contributing to the participants' general positive attitude toward their capabilities to learn, the participants' general work confidence and a positive perception of their work's challenge could be said to have an indirect effect on their positive perception of the training's success. It is likely that the reason for the workplace learning factors' non-adaptability to the context of HR training derives from the fact that one's every work environment with its goals, people and physical surroundings differs, in the end, a great deal from the foreign language HR training environment.

To sum it all up, one cannot assume that all of the same factors that either further or hinder work-place or foreign language learning have similar effects on one perceiving English language HR training as a significant learning experience. Hence, the Model of significant learning experiences in English language HR training needs further developing. Consequently, an updated version of the model is presented in Section 7.1.3.

7.1.2   Other factors

The previous section concentrated on discussing the results of the present study from the viewpoint of the Model of significant learning experiences in English language HR training. However, as the present research aimed to gain information about factors that might have an effect on employees' perception of the success of English language HR training, it would be erroneous to leave other noteworthy findings related to the theme without attention. Thus, this section focuses on discussing factors which were not initially assumed to have an impact on successful HR training but surfaced as significant in the present study.

First, all of the participants celebrated the great spirit of their training community; they, for instance, explained how all of the group members got along very well without even knowing each other beforehand. In addition, when asked to reason further why considering their training group great, the participants emphasised the very positive, relaxed and learning-favourable atmosphere of the group as well as the fact that all of the group members had a similar starting points regarding their level of English skills. This finding supports the humanistic approach to HRD and learning which emphasise the importance of the good interactions and social relationships with the surrounding people in one's learning processes (Järvinen et al. 2002; Eraut & Hirsh 2007).

It is well-known in the field of education and organisation studies that the group or/and community in which employees are engaged affect their perceptions of themselves, their capabilities and even attitudes and opinions about different matters both subconsciously and consciously (see e.g. Kramlinger & Huberty 1990; Gardner 1985). Hence, it is likely that the supportive spirit (discussed in Section 7.1.1) and the overall positive atmosphere of the training group enhanced the participants' already positive attitudes toward the English language as well as learning. Similarly, it might be that the general culture in the organisation where the participants worked emphasised finding the use of English intimidating and thus enforcing the participants' English language self concepts' low confidence. Consequently, these findings highlight the importance of employers being aware of the HR training groups' as well as the organisation culture's characteristics and their possible effects on the behaviour and thoughts of the employees and hence also on the employees' perceptions of HR trainings' success.

Second, as mentioned above, the participants praised the general atmosphere of the training groups when explaining why they found the training under observation successful. This finding supports Kramlinger and Huberty's (1990) notions regarding employees needing to feel comfortable with their work environment for any HRD implications to be successful. Hence, employers should make sure to pay attention to the chemistry between the training groups' participants. In other words, the participants in the present study explained how relationship issues at work made them perceive their work challenging at times. Similarly, some severe conflicts among the training

group might not only affect the general spirit of the training but also some employees' will to attend to the training in the first place.

Third, the participants reported how important of a role the material, that is, the course book, played for them during the training. This notion supports Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) statements regarding how the training materials affect HR training's effectiveness in general. In addition, the participants explained how they felt that the training was a significant learning experience for them because all of the exercises that they did during the training as well as the training material provided for them corresponded with what they needed to learn for their work. In other words, they praised the fact that the training was designed directly for their learning needs. This finding supports humanistic learning theories according to which learning can only happen if one's true learning needs are fulfilled. In addition, it might be that one of the other reasons why the participants found the HR training under observation successful was that they found it challenging enough for them. That is, Ruohotie (1998) has found that for employees to have intrinsic motivation, which has been proven to further adult learners' learning the most, to develop their work-related skills they need to find their work challenging yet manageable enough.

Fourth and finally, the participants praised the trainer for her supportive way of teaching as well as her approachability. In addition, they perceived her as an equal member of the training community. Hence, based on the findings of the present study and Järvinen et al (2002), it could assumed that the trainer's behaviour affected the participants' positive perceptions of the training's success. To illustrate this conclusion further, Järvinen, et al. (2002, 82) have argued that an employer who wishes to further employees' learning at work needs to show authenticity, empathy and respect toward his or her employees as well as to act as an equal member of the learning community.

7.1.3   A revised version of the Model of significant learning experiences in English language HR training

The results of the present study indicated that one cannot assume that the same factors that either further or hinder workplace or foreign language learning have similar effects on one perceiving English language HR training successful. For this reason, the theoretical Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training needs further developing. Consequently, an updated version of the model is represented below (See Figure 4).
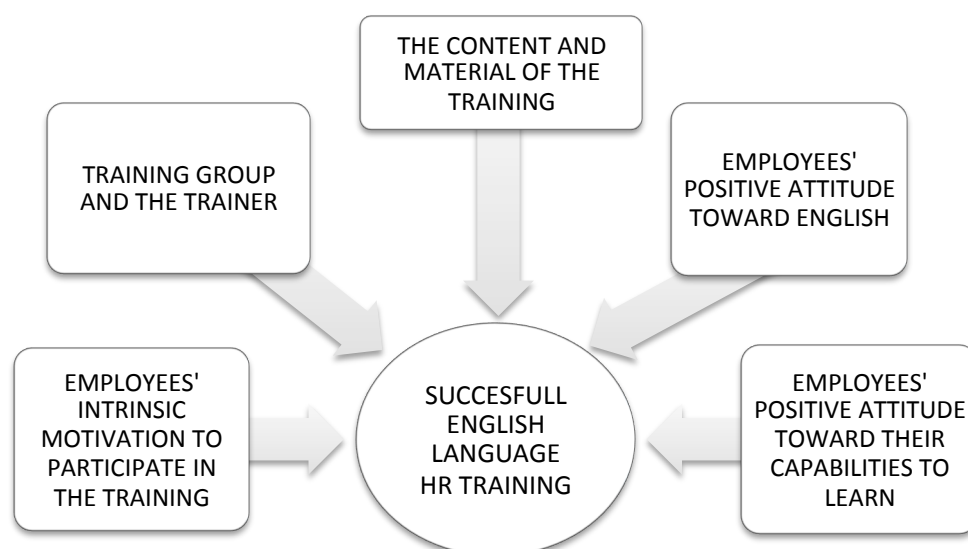
FIGURE 4 The Model of Successful English Language HR Training Factors

The model above (Figure 4) illustrates an updated version of the Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training. In other words, it represents factors that the present study has proved to have an effect on employees' perceptions of successful English language HR training. The model suggests that the same factors should also be taken into account if aiming to conduct successful English language, or alternatively some other foreign language with a similar status than English, HR training. Together with previously conducted HR training research, the model offers practical help for anybody working in a position where one is responsible for designing and conducting foreign language HR training.

The model defines *successful English language HR training* as training that its participants feel to have been a significant learning experience or/and beneficial in general for them in the context of their work. Employees' *intrinsic motivation to participate in the training*, on the other hand, derives from employees' different positive experiences, preferences and values in life that are in some ways related to the English language or their profession. In the present study's case, the participants' intrinsic motivation to learn English for their work was formed through the value of their profession and positive attitude toward the English language. In the model, *training group and the trainer* reflect the learning-supportive characteristics of the training community. In addition, for the training to be successful, *the content and material of the training* should correspond with its participants' true learning needs related to the English language use at work. Finally, it was shown that *employees' attitude towards their learning capabilities* and/or *the English language* might either hinder or further employees' perceptions of the training's success.

7.2   Other noteworthy findings in relation to HRD

The present study revealed also some other interesting issues that do not necessary have an effect on employees' perception of successful HR training but relate to HRD management in general.

First, due to the limited scope of the present study, it did not take the impact of HR training's evaluation process and employee-support after the training on the participants' perceptions of the training's success into account. Yet, it does not deny the importance of them. That is, for instance, Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick (2006) emphasise the role of conducting a throughout evaluation process of a training program in aiming to make it as efficient as possible. In addition, by letting employees reflect their HR experiences openly after the training, employers would help their employees to identify the learning that the training triggered in them (Eraut & Hirsh 2007; Järvinen et al. 2002). In addition, in the present study's case, the participants' general excitement and positivity toward using English at work after the training might diminish very quickly if the organisation's culture does not comply with such attitudes. Bu referring repetitively to the short length of the training under observation, the participants also stressed how they acknowledged that learning a foreign language is process that does not happen over night. For these reasons, organisations which are committed to supporting comprehensively their employees' English language usage at work should recognise the importance of conducting long-term English language HR training and support programs.

The present study supported Pihko's (2007) and Laine and Pihko's (1991) notions of employees' having a separate English language self-concept as part of their more general work self-concept. That is, the results of the present study illustrated, also in accord with Burns' (1982) findings, that one's different self-concepts' characteristics related to different contexts at work might contradict with each other creating various types of learning needs for employees. Hence, if an employer does not understand that employees can have, in fact, many task-related self-concepts that direct and explain their behaviour, he or she might draw wrong conclusions, for instance, on the type of needed HR training. Thus, to be able to create a realistic, employee-orientated HRD strategy that supports employees' learning at work and in HR training, employers should not only encourage employees themselves to analyse and reflect the characteristics of their different work-related self-concepts but also make an effort to observe employees' behaviour holistically themselves.

In regard of the different learning needs that employees might have in relation to their English language skills, employers should acknowledge that these needs might not only refer to enhancing practical skills related to a certain work task such as business cultural knowledge but also to helping employees to get rid of their negative attitude toward a certain topic (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick 2006). In addition, Holopainen (2007) emphasises how an employer should be aware of his or her employees' individual differences and life

experiences that call for different types of training, for instance feel-good or task-focused training (Hughey & Mussnung 1997).

There were some other themes that the present study suggests, based on its findings, the organisation under observation pay attention to. First, it became evident in the study that the participants felt that they did not get enough support and feedback in their daily work. In addition, the participants explained how they felt intimidated around their colleagues when needing to speak English. Moreover, the participants emphasised wanting to make a clear distinction between their work and home self-concept. As these findings might be a result of a non-coherent work community, the organisation is recommended to further investigate the matter. That is, as discussed earlier, all of the above-mentioned characteristics of a work environment have previously been found to have an effect not only on employees' workplace learning (Eraut & Hirsh 2007) but also on their general wellbeing at work (Järvinen et al. 2002). Furthermore, the possible issues of the work community might also affect how HRD strategy and its implications work in practice.

Another issue that the organisation under observation is suggested to consider relates to the participants' value of it. In other words, the participants seemed to lack the same respect and value toward their employer organisation as they had toward their profession. As the level of valuing one's employer organisations might have an impact on one's workplace learning (Eraut & Hirsh 2007), it is a matter that should not be left ignored when designing a HRD strategy.

Finally, the findings of the present study highlighted the role of employees' intrinsic motivation to learn English in employees' perceiving English language HR training successful. That is, it seemed to explain, for instance, why the participants were willing to participate in the voluntary English language HR training in the first place. Hence, the organisation under observation is suggested to consider those employees, too, who in the organisation are still in need of English language HR training because of their work role but who lacked intrinsic motivation to participate in the training. For instance, employers could, for instance, discuss together with such employees what could be done to support the development of their English language communication skills and/or attitude toward it at work.

7.3 Contributions to the field of Applied Linguistics and foreign language learning theories

The present study has approached its theme from two main fields of research; HR as well as applied linguistics. Whilst Sections 7.1 and 7.2 have mainly concentrated on discussing the findings of the present study from the HR management point of view, it is relevant to consider how the present study has contributed to the field of applied linguistics and foreign language learning theories.

First, the present research has contributed to the studies regarding foreign language self-concepts. More precisely, it has proved not only their existence but also shown how strong the effect of one's foreign language self-concept can be, for instance, on one's work behaviour.

Second, the Model of successful English language HR training factors that was created based on the present study's findings contributes to the field of English teaching. That is, especially teachers of adult learners could use the model as help in planning certain course structures and contents.

Third, the present study has complemented existing foreign language learning literature by supporting the idea of other people, in the present study's case the participants' work and training communities, affecting employees' attitude toward the English language usage at work. In addition, the present study illustrated how the positive and supportive atmosphere of the training communities furthered employees' learning in English language HR training.

Fourth and finally, the findings of the present study supported the notion of adults' intrinsic motivation functioning as a more effective motivator for them to learn than extrinsic motivation. The participants' intrinsic motivation to learn English affected also their positive perception of the HR training's success. Hence, this is information that especially teachers of adult learners could benefit from.

7.4   Limitations and suggestions for future research

The present research had some limitations of which the most significant one was not having any participants who had found the training neither a significant learning experience nor beneficial. That is, being able to compare the answers of such employees and the present study's participants, who all found the training successful, could have provided more generalizable and profound results of the background factors that might have had an effect on employees' perception of the success of the HR training. Similarly, the fact that the training was voluntary could be seen as a limitation to the present study.

Another limitation of the present study was that all of the participants were women. More precisely, as the profession of health-care in Finland is female-dominated, it would have been fascinating to focus also on studying how the employees' gender perceptions affected their answers. That is, the answers of the participants in the study reflected at times some very strong, even stereotyped gender associations. However, without having any male participants, conclusions of the topic would have been difficult to make.

The present study's findings create some possibilities for further research, too. For instance, the adaptation possibilities of the Model of successful English language HR training factors to other HR training types in different types of organisations could be studied.

The effects of employees' role conflicts created by contradicting demands of different environments on their well-being have been studied, for instance, by Tuominen and Pohjakallio (2012) and Burns (1982). However, as the present

study found, the different self-concepts that employees relate to at work might also be in contrast with each other. Hence, it would be worthwhile to study whether the conflicts between the different work task-related self-concepts could have similar effects, for instance, on employees' well-being at work and what could be done to bridge the gap between them. Findings that such studies could provide would be very beneficial for HR managers in trying to get a deeper understanding of their employees' behaviour, well-being and development needs at work.

8   SUMMARY

The present qualitative study has aimed to make inferences about employee-orientated factors that contribute to the success of English language HR training. In the study, successful training was defined from employees' point of view. More precisely, it was considered as training that employees found to be a significant learning experience for them or/and otherwise beneficial for their work.

To collect data, nine customer-service employees working in health care were interviewed individually with semi-structured interviews. All of the participants had participated in the same non-compulsory English language HR training during Spring 2014.

Six pre-determined themes were chosen to be under observation to analyse their possible impacts on the participants' perceptions of the success of the English language HR training. These themes were *employees' value of their employer organisation and profession, the support and feedback in the work community, employees' perception of their work challenge, employees' work confidence, employees' attitude toward the English language* and *employees' attitude toward their capabilities of learning*. These themes derived from previous studies that had found them to have an effect on employees' workplace or foreign language learning.

The results of the empirical study showed that the same factors that affect either workplace or foreign language learning do not necessary affect similarly one's learning in English language HR training. Based on the results of the study, the theoretical Model of significant learning experiences in foreign language HR training was further developed and suggestions regarding the factors affecting employees' perceptions of the success of English language HR training rewritten. That is, employees' intrinsic motivation to participate in the HR training, training group and the trainer, the content and material of the training as well as employees' attitude toward the English language and toward their learning capabilities were found to play the most significant and direct role in making the participants consider the training as successful.

The findings of the present study have revealed information about factors that affect employees' perception of the success English language HR training. Together with previously conducted research, these findings contribute not

only to HR management, adult education and foreign language learning literature but they also offer practical viewpoints for anybody working in a position where one is responsible for designing and conducting English language, or alternatively some other foreign language, HR training.

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APPENDICE

TEEMAHAASTATTTELURUNKO

Taustatiedot

1. Pääteema: Merkittävä oppimiskokemus
- Minkälaisia tuntemuksia ja ajatuksia sinulla oli koulutuksesta ennen sen alkamista?
- Olitko toivonut tai kokenut tarvetta koulutuksen järjestämisestä?
- Näin koulutuksen päätyttyä, mikä oli yleinen tuntemuksesi koulutuksesta?
- Miten kuvailisit koulutuksen sisältöä? Millaisia tuntemuksia sisältö ja menetelmät herättivät?
- Koitko koulutuksessa tehdyt tehtävät/harjoitukset helpoiksi vai vaikeiksi?
- Koitko koulutuksen onnistuneeksi työtehtäviesi kannalta?
- Koitko koulutuksen onnistuneeksi jonkun muun asian kannalta?
- Nimeäisitkö koulutusta itsellesi merkittäväksi oppimiskokemukseksi työsi kannalta?
- Osallistuisitko uudestaan samanlaiseen koulutukseen?
- Suosittelisitko koulutusta muille samassa asemassa töitä tekevälle?

2. Teema: Työn ja työnantajaorganisaation arvostus
- Miten päädyit tämänhetkiselle työnantajalle töihin ja tämänhetkiseen työrooliin?
- Miten arvioisit työsi tärkeyttä?
- Miten koet työsi arvostamisen vaikuttavan työsi tekemiseen?
- Miten kuvailisit työnantajaorganisaatiostasi?

3. Teema: Työn haastavuus
- Miten kuvailisit jokapäiväisiä työtehtäviäsi?
- Minkälaisia haasteita töissäsi kohtaat ja kuinka usein?
- Minkälaisissa tilanteissa kohtaat englannin kieltä töissäsi ja kuinka usein?
- Minkälainen rooli englannin kielellä on mahdollisissa työhaasteissa?

4. Teema: Itsevarmuus
- Miten reagoit töissäsi erilaisiin haastaviin tilanteisiin?
- Miten kykeneväinen koet olemaan suoriutumaan tämänhetkisistä työsi asettamista haasteista?
- Miten kykeneväinen koet olemaan suoriutumaan tulevaisuuden työsi asettamista haasteista?
- Minkälaisia tuntemuksia englannin kielen haasteet töissä synnyttävät? Miten reagoit niihin?
- Miten koet haasteiden vaikuttavan omaan työskentelyysi ja asenteisiin työtäsi kohtaan?
- Miten itsevarmaksi ihmiseksi koet itsesi?

5. Teema: Työyhteisö
- Miten kuvailisit työyhteisöäsi?
- Kuinka paljon vietät vapaa-aikaa työkavereidesi kanssa?
- Miten paljon koet saavasi tukea muilta työyhteisön jäseniltä?
- Miten paljon koet saavasi palautetta työstäsi muilta työyhteisön jäseniltä?

- Minkälainen ryhmähenki teillä oli koulutuksessa?
- Miten kuvailisit koulutuksen ohjaajan roolia työyhteisössä?

6. Teema: Asenne englannin kieltä kohtaan
- Minkälaisia tuntemuksia englannin kieli yleisesti sinussa herättää?
- Minkälaisia kokemuksia englannin kielestä sinulla on koulussa, vapaa-ajalla ja töissä?
Miten kuvailisit näitä kokemuksia?
- Miten koit pärjääväsi englannin kielen käytössä aikoinaan ja nyt?

7. Teema: Asenne omia oppimismahdollisuuksia kohtaan
- Pidätkö uusien asioiden oppimisesta?
- Koetko oppivasi helposti uusia asioita?
- Minkälaisia tuntemuksia oppimisprosessit töissä ja vapaa-ajalla sinussa herättävät?
- Olisitko, ja missä määrin, valmis kouluttamaan itseään tulevaisuudessa vielä lisää?

Jotain muuta/lisättävää/kommentoitavaa/kysyttävää?