

A case study: Finnish ninth grade students' and their teacher's views on and experiences in using YouTube video content in English language learning and teaching

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Spring 2017

Sisällysluettelo

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1. Introduction

The views considering language learning and teaching are going through a transformation: previously the emphasis was in teaching different aspects of language such as grammar and pronunciation so that the students would be able to communicate accurately in a foreign language, whereas the current sociocultural and ecological views on language learning emphasise students' ability to interact with people in multicultural settings and take into account the larger context in which interaction occurs. Moreover, the enormous technological developments in the recent years have led schools to absorb modern technological devices and applications into teaching. Furthermore, one specific aspect in the world of Internet and technology is social media, which teachers have gradually started to use in the classroom in addition to traditional teaching tools.

This study concentrates on the use of one such Web 2.0 and social media platform, YouTube, in English language learning and teaching. More specifically, the aim of the thesis is to examine how Finnish ninth grade students and their teacher view the use of YouTube in English language learning and teaching. The reason for this kind of study is the above-mentioned link between social media and language learning: to be able to better utilise the advantages of social media in the classroom it is important to study how teachers and learners view it and that way discover its possibilities in learning and teaching. Another goal of the study is to increase knowledge regarding social media in language learning and encourage Finnish students and teachers to consider adopting it into English language classrooms. The newish phenomenon of absorbing social media into learning and teaching has also been a source of interest among researchers. There are previous studies (e.g. Zheng, Wagner, Young & Brewer (2009); Zheng, Bischoff & Gilliland (2015) and Terhune (2015)) on social media in language learning and specifically on use of YouTube in language learning (e.g. Benson (2015), Brook (2011) and Kuo (2009)), but the phenomenon has not been studied widely in Finland. Thus, I wanted to specifically examine it from the perspective of one Finnish comprehensive school class.

Section two in this thesis describes the research methods and materials used in the study, and it is followed by the theoretical framework section that introduces the sociocultural and ecological learning theories, the use of technology and Web 2.0 in language learning and teaching as well as

previous research on social media and language learning. Section four introduces the findings of the research materials and it is followed by the conclusion.

2. Research methods and materials

2.1. Methodology

The overall nature of this case study is ethnographic, and it is based on sociocultural and ecological views on language learning. The method I have chosen to use in my data gathering process is triangulation, which means that an issue of research is considered from at least two points. Including more than one method in data gathering process enables a researcher to gain a better knowledge than using one approach would make possible. (Flick, 2011, p. 5–6) The two methods I have used in gathering the data are questionnaires for one Finnish ninth grade class and their English teacher and the observation of one ninth-grader in the same class. The questionnaires provided a more general picture of the students and teacher's views and experiences on using YouTube in language learning and teaching, whereas the observation enabled me to get more exact answers and see the situations and phenomena related to using YouTube.

In addition to that, I used thematic analysis in analysing the data I have collected. According to Guest, MacQueen & Namey (2012, p. 9), thematic analyses focus on identifying and describing the themes found within the data instead of counting explicit words or phrases. Therefore, I searched for recurring and relevant themes that appeared in the questionnaire answers and field notes that I gathered from observation and then compared the results with the sociocultural and ecological views on language learning.

2.2. Research materials

In this subsection, I will introduce the research materials I used in gathering data for my study: the questionnaires for Finnish ninth grade students and their teacher and the observation of one student's use of YouTube in his free time.

2.2.1. Questionnaires

One of my data gathering methods included questionnaires (see appendices) for one ninth grade class and their English teacher in a Finnish-speaking school in Finland. The permission of the parents

was not needed as the students were 15–16 years old (Kuula, 2011, p. 101–102), but the parents were informed via the Wilma message. The survey was conducted on 24th February 2017, and I was present at the students' English lesson. All 18 students participated in the study. I decided to make the questionnaires in Finnish, because using the native language of the students enabled them to better understand the questions and express their thoughts more easily. Both questionnaires included open questions of the respondents' habits of watching YouTube videos (in English for the students' part), their experiences and views on using YouTube as a tool in English language learning and teaching, and in the end, suggestions of example tasks including YouTube and opinions on an imaginary YouTube video creating project.

2.2.2 Observation

In addition to doing a questionnaire, I observed how one person of the class used YouTube in his free time. I collected field notes of the videos he watched asking questions such as what kind of videos he has watched, what happens in them, whether something special has come to his mind during the video clips, and whether he thinks he has learned something during the video watching session. However, I noticed that it was difficult to observe the person's YouTube using habits in its entirety. Naturally it is impossible to observe the person all the time, and when I made inquiries about his YouTube using after a couple days' break, he did not always remember whether he had watched YouTube videos in English, since those activities are such a natural part of his day that it is difficult to pay special attention to them. All in all, observation provided some important insights into the role of the consumption of YouTube content in the everyday life of this student. Those insights will be discussed in more detail in section four of this study.

3. Theoretical framework

In this section, I will present the current pedagogic perspectives on learning, discuss the use of technology and Web 2.0 tools in language learning and teaching and finally present previous research on social media and language learning.

3.1. Sociocultural and ecological perspectives on learning

The current pedagogic perspectives on learning are based on sociocultural and ecological theories, the latter of which belongs to the framework of the first one. The curriculum for basic education by Finnish National Agency for Education from 2014 presents the sustainable lifestyle as a valuable part in basic education and suggests that it has ecological, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Furthermore, the curriculum emphasises that the learner is an active agent and that learning happens in the interaction with other students, teachers and adults as well as together with various communities and learning environments. The interests, appreciations, working methods, emotions, experiences and students' perceptions of themselves as learners guide their learning process and motivation. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014, p. 16–17) The basis for these kind of views lies in the sociocultural and ecological perspectives on learning, which I am now going to present as the theoretical framework of my study.

The leading theorist and the person whose work has led to the development of approaches to human understanding is the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky, and his work has been continued by other psychologists (Liem, Walker, & McInerney, 2011, p. 4). Lave and Wenger stated that Vygotsky and those who have extended and developed his ideas suggest that learning is not an activity that happens separately for its own sake, but that it always occurs in a larger context: what is learned helps the child in enabling him/her to achieve a goal that is meaningful and socially valued to him/her (as cited in Wells, 1999, p. 294). Thus, the concerns of the sociocultural philosophy are how individual, social and contextual issues impact human activity such as learning and behaviour. The complexity in the social world alters the thoughts and behaviour of humans, and therefore it is important to understand the situated context in which the phenomenon occurs. (Liem, Walker, & McInerney, 2011, p. 12) Bronfenbrenner created a model of hierarchically nested ecosystems, which functions as a methodology for investigating contextualised learning. According to this model, a

learning context is effective if it encourages the learners to differentiated perception and response, directing their behaviour, coping under stress, acquiring knowledge and skill, establishing and maintaining relationships and finally modifying their physical, social and symbolic environment. (Van Lier, 2000, p. 254)

The sociocultural perspective suggests that language learning as well as any learning is a semiotic process that includes participation in socially-mediated activities. That is to say, people use symbolic tools in the interaction with others and themselves, which changes the nature of these relationships. (Lantolf, 2000, p. 45) Therefore, as Wertsch argued, the sociocultural theory emphasises that language learning needs to be conceptualised as a developmental process mediated by various semiotic resources such as print materials, the physical environment, gestures and classroom discourse (as cited in Lantolf, 2000, p. 45). Language not only enables people to coordinate their activities and to share their feelings and intentions, but it also allows them to be referred to different situations in which they occur, which helps people in reflections and explanations. These social means of meaning making and communication are important factors in individual intellectual development: they can gradually become a set of meaning making tools and practices which contribute to intellectual actions such as remembering and problem solving. (Wells, 1999, p. 295)

The reason for language educators' interest in ecological approaches of language learning is that nowadays learning environments are increasingly multilingual and multicultural (Kramsch, 2007, p. 389). This is a challenge for future teachers: Kramsch, Levy & Zarate stated that teachers will need to operate in a globalised space (as cited in Kramsch, 2007, p. 390), where teaching only one language or culture is not enough, but they need to be put in relation with one another. According to Kramsch and Kramsch & Whiteside, it is important to teach the students a flexible capacity to read people and situations by understanding the historical and subjective dimensions of human experience and not simply teach them to exchange information accurately and appropriately in monolingual conversations with native speakers (as cited in Kramsch, 2007, p. 391). Language learners need to master symbolic competence, which means shaping the context in which the language learning and using occurs. Furthermore, foreign language teachers must concentrate on teaching meaning in all its stylistic choices and variations and not teaching a linguistic code.

Therefore, it is important that students understand that Language is more than the syllabi of their language classes suggests. (Kramersch, 2007 p. 400, 403 and 406)

According to Van Lier (2000, p. 247), the role of interaction is essential in sociocultural theory and in the ecological perspective that suggest that the verbal and nonverbal interaction are central in understanding of learning. Learning is not only meanings inside of the learner's head, but rather the development of learning to deal with the world and its meanings. Therefore, it is important to observe the active learner in his/her environment and not the contents of his/her brain. Gass, Long and Pica have suggested that negotiation of meaning is likely to assist learning opportunities: meaning of a piece of language that has previously been unfamiliar becomes comprehensible when its meaning is negotiated with others. Furthermore, the ecological approach suggests that learning occurs when the learner receives and processes information from a person who has higher knowledge. (Van Lier, 2000, p. 246–248) Thus, guidance and assistance are important factors in learning process because they enable the learners become competent and autonomous participants in different activities (Wells, 1999, p. 295). The ecological view also highlights the role of affordances in learning. The term affordance refers to “a particular property of the environment that is relevant ... to an active, perceiving organism in that environment and affords further action to it” (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252). When the language learner is active and engaged, she/he will be able to understand linguistic affordances and use them in action (Van Lier, 2000, p. 252).

In conclusion, the ecological approach questions the common suggestions that language, cognitions, memories as well as intelligence are only contained inside the brain, and that learning should be different ways of putting them there. Thus, learning is not something happening exclusively inside a learner's head, but language and learning are seen as relationships among learners and between them and the environment. Moreover, language is connected with visual and auditory sources of meaning, which leads to the emergence of new language practice and theories. Finally, ecological perspective relates language to other semiotic systems and to the contextual world as a whole. (Van Lier, 2000, p. 257-259)

3.2. Technology and Web 2.0 tools in language learning and teaching

The constantly developing modern technology and so called Web 2.0 tools have brought new aspects and possibilities to English language learning. The term Web 2.0 refers to a read/write Web, which means that students can themselves publish and produce content in addition to reading and viewing material on the Internet (Crane, 2012, p. 2). Furthermore, O'Bannon (2008, p. 12) suggested that Web 2.0 means the users of the Internet as well as the Web program developers. According to Crane (2012, p. 4), Web 2.0 tools are "web applications that facilitate participatory information sharing, user-centred activity, and collaboration on the Internet". Some examples of Web 2.0 programs are Skype, Facebook, Wikis, podcasts and YouTube.

The popularity of Web 2.0 tools and the use of technology increases rapidly in schools, because it provides new ways to engage technologically experienced students in computer-based educational activities. Web programs allow students to publish their work to the World Wide web and encourage them to pay more attention on the quality of their work, which is especially important to English language learners, whose English skills are only beginning to develop. (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 1) Web 2.0 tools can connect directly to TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) national standards: for example, goal 3, standard 2 is "to use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways: students will use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting" (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 6–7). Web 2.0 also facilitates networking: students and educators around the world can easily connect with each other (Crane, 2012, p. 2) Moreover, Reich and Daccord (2015, xvii) stated that technology projects and activities that put students at the centre of the learning process are useful. They also suggested that students are more likely to learn and remember when they use various methods in learning (Reich & Daccord, 2015, p. xvi), and Web 2.0 tools accomplish both of these statements.

Web 2.0 tools are an excellent addition to language learning tools, because there are not endless amounts of time to teach English at school, and therefore one needs to look for ways to extend English language acquisition beyond the school day so that learning can be maximised. That is to say, Web 2.0 tools enable students to do various language-learning tasks at home: they can for example listen to a podcast online, view a YouTube video and more importantly, develop, create and share their work online. Therefore, students can be active learners when they negotiate

meaning and create media for a worldwide audience. Furthermore, Web-based platforms can provide a safer and more anonymous space to practice English. Some students can be uncomfortable speaking in class and presenting their work to large groups, but in using Web 2.0 tools they can produce work in a controlled setting where they can practice and re-record their work. (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 2–3) It is also important to note that learning language with Web 2.0 tools is fun: the Internet does not have the tension and boredom of the traditional classroom, and that increases students' motivation (Crane, 2012, p. 185).

However, there are also some concerns that language learners and educators need to consider when using Web 2.0 tools. Teachers and students can be afraid of sharing their identities and posting personal information online, and sensationalised media reports of cyber stalkers can cause that schools decide not to use Web 2.0 tools in language learning and teaching despite their effectiveness. Therefore, before working with Web 2.0 tools, it is important to know and understand the policies that schools have regarding the use of Internet. (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 9–10) Additionally, some English language students are older adults who can have difficulties in using electronic devices, which needs to be taken into consideration when using Web 2.0 tools in language teaching (Polyudova, 2014, p. 16). Another concern is whether teachers are allowed to include online videos in their teaching. Toikkanen (2016) stated that according to the law of copyright, teachers can show published works in teaching while film works are forbidden. The Copyright Council announced that teachers themselves must evaluate whether a video is cinematic and therefore unsuitable to the classroom (Toikkanen, 2016).

As my study concentrates on using YouTube in English language learning and teaching, I will now in the end of the Web 2.0 discussion shortly introduce YouTube and how it can be used in English language classroom. YouTube is an online video host site that allows registered users to upload and share digital videos: users create their own channel where they can upload videos, viewers can comment and like them, and users can subscribe to others' channels. There are videos for grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation practice, and more importantly, YouTube videos cover an almost endless variety of content areas. Moreover, in addition to viewing and commenting videos, students can also themselves become content creators on YouTube. (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 65–66) Langer re Ramirez (2010, p. 66) stated that when creating content on YouTube, the website becomes “a means of fostering creativity in students as well as a powerful tool for active speaking

practice". In this process, students become digital storytellers and they use English to tell their stories, which can significantly assist their learning (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 66). Finally, an example of utilising Web 2.0 tools in accomplishing the previously mentioned TESOL goal 3, standard 2 is to film a video and upload it on YouTube or show it in school (Langer de Ramirez, 2010, p. 7).

3.3. Previous research on social media and language learning

The effects of using different social media platforms such as Facebook, Skype, YouTube and online chat rooms in language learning and teaching have been studied around the world (e.g. Zheng et al. (2009), Terhune (2015), Vaarala (2014) and Brook (2011)). These studies have mostly reported positive results that have supported students' learning, but some challenges have also emerged. In this section, I will shortly present some examples of studies on social media and language learning in general and then studies specifically on YouTube and language learning and teaching.

Some studies have been conducted to examine how online games contribute to English language learning. Zheng, Wagner, Young & Brewer (2009) studied how English language learning occurs in game-based virtual worlds. They applied sociocultural and ecological perspectives to English language learning and content learning in an intercultural avatar-based online environment. The participants were two pairs of one non-native English speaker and one native English speaker, who worked together toward a shared goal or target in the game world. The results showed that chat channels supported language acquisition, because interlocutors could correct, clarify, confirm or request comprehension. (Zheng, Wagner, Young & Brewer, 2009, p. 489, 494, 502) Furthermore, Zheng, Bischoff & Gilliland (2015) studied how English vocabulary learning occurs during a World of Warcraft (WOW) game session between a Japanese undergraduate student and a native speaker of English. It appeared that the undergraduate student learned vocabulary when he/she utilised the resources of WOW and the co-player helped him/her to better understand meanings and forms. (Zheng, Bischoff & Gilliland, 2015, p. 771, 786)

Some other studies have investigated how language learning occurs via Skype, Facebook and Twitter. The study conducted by Terhune (2015) prepared English language students at a private Japanese university for overseas study by arranging Skype-based learning sessions in English. The

results showed that most students were not enthusiastic about the speaking project possibly because there were few specific tasks and goals, but they still had valuable practice that prepared them for their overseas study and introduced them what kind of possibilities for language learning computer-mediated communication can offer. (Terhune, 2015, p. 1071, 1075, 1087) Additionally, Monica-Ariana and Anamaria-Mirabela (2014) investigated the impact of Facebook in improving students' English language vocabulary in the University of Oradea. The study showed that students' vocabulary performance and confidence improved at least slightly after they had been exposed to vocabulary via Facebook as their results were compared to students who had not used Facebook. (Monica-Ariana & Anamaria-Mirabela, 2014, p. 124, 128) Vaarala (2014) studied students' use of microblogs as a learning tool during two university-level Finnish as a second language courses and her focus was on Twitter tweets. The students experienced that tweeting mainly supported their learning but it was also challenging, because Twitter was unfamiliar to some and because they were worried of their privacy and considered that writing was difficult. (Vaarala, 2014, p. 133, 149-150)

Finally, some studies have specifically investigated the effects of using YouTube in language learning and teaching, which is also the focus of the current study. Benson (2015) studied how discourse analysis tools can be used to uncover evidence of language and intercultural learning in YouTube comment section involving Chinese-English translanguaging. The study provided some evidence that videos involving translanguaging create environments where interactional language and intercultural learning can likely be observed. (Benson, 2015, p. 88, 99) In Brook's (2011) study, university ESL students in the US wrote, shot and edited short videos that were shared on YouTube. The benefits of the study were peer-to-peer interaction and collaboration, authenticity and interaction with native and non-native speakers, while the challenges were that these kinds of projects are time-consuming and schools may not have access to the necessary technical equipment. Brook's study was used in planning the questionnaire questions of this study, and the question seven (see appendices) was formulated based on it. The project Brook carried out utilised YouTube in a diverse and modern way, and therefore I wanted to ask the ninth grade students and their teacher's views on possibly doing the similar project. Moreover, Kuo (2009) examined how the use of YouTube video clips contributed to the listening comprehension of EFL Taiwanese students. The results showed significant effects on the students' listening comprehension performance. However, the number of YouTube video clips did not produce significantly greater effects and did

not affect students' attitudes toward YouTube video instruction, which could be caused by their limited English skills. (Kuo, 2009, p. ii, 118-120)

4. Analysis

In this section, the results of the questionnaires and observation will be analysed and divided in different themes that have arisen from the data. The results will also be compared to the sociocultural and ecological views on language learning to see, whether the views and experiences of the students and the teacher follow and suit to those learning theories. The direct citations from the questionnaires will be free translations from Finnish to English.

4.1. YouTube videos outside the normative school context

The questionnaires revealed that all 18 out of 18 students watch YouTube videos in English at least occasionally. To the open question “evaluate how much do you watch YouTube videos in English during one week on average” nine students answered that they spend at least one hour in a week watching English YouTube videos, and the longest time spent on them was 40 hours in a week. On the other hand, seven respondents evaluated that they spend less than one hour in a week on English YouTube videos. Some of the students mentioned that they watch more YouTube videos in Finnish than in English. It is important to acknowledge that this kind of self-evaluation might have been quite difficult to students and the time spent on videos may vary quite a lot. However, it was positive to notice that many students have a habit of watching YouTube videos in English. Therefore, the first part of the analysis will concentrate on examining the students’ use of YouTube outside the normative school context and the phenomena related to it.

I asked students to describe what kind of videos they watch in their free time and mention some YouTube channels, and it appeared that the range of different videos they watch is wide. Several students answered that they watch gaming videos and the channels examples were PewDiePie and Jelly. Another popular video type in the answers was vlogs with the channel examples PewDiePie and NigaHiga. Some students watch challenge videos, sketches and stunt videos from channels such as PewDiePie, Dudesons, Lele Pons and Dude Perfect. Dude Perfect was described as a channel where “they [YouTubers] do all kinds of crazy things”. One student mentioned that he watches sports video compilations and another student told that he watches motosports videos, where people escape the police by moped or motorcycle and motovlogs from the YouTube user MotoBroo. Some other video types students watch are make-up videos, reaction videos, Do It Yourself videos

and music videos, and some example channels were wthmille // SwogliciousPuppysaurus and JREKML. The teacher of the class also answered that she watches mostly music videos in her free time. Finally, one student mentioned that he watches science videos and news giving the channel examples EnterElysium, TheXPGamers and The Know.

In addition to the overview of the type of YouTube videos that was discovered with the help of questionnaires, it was also necessary to examine the use of YouTube more specifically by observing what kind of videos does an individual student watch in his free time. The observation revealed the clear uniformity in the YouTube videos he watches: gaming videos and the sports compilations from the NHL games. During the observation, the student watched gaming videos from three different games that were *Minecraft Story Mode*, *Age of Empires 2* and *NHL 17*. *Minecraft Story Mode* was played by CaptainSparklez, and the student described that *Minecraft* characters adventure in the episodes: for example, they defeat the Wither Storm and find the wonders of Sky City. In these episodes, the gamer plays the English game and comments the course of events at the same time. The student watched the *NHL* gaming video from the channel 2BCProductions2BC, where the user played one player in the team and commentated the game. In the game *Age of Empires 2*, the player creates own villages and countries and fights other villages trying to destroy their rulers. The NHL game compilations from actual games were highlights such as goals and saves from the games completed by the English commentary. The student told that he is interested especially in the ice hockey leagues Washington Capitals and Dallas Stars and therefore he watches regularly the compilations of the games where those leagues play.

The observation revealed that the personal interests of the student had an impact on the videos he watched. He also plays *NHL*, *Minecraft* and *Age of Empires* games and is therefore interested in watching other people play them as well. The student is also interest in ice hockey and therefore likes to watch ice hockey game compilations. To the question why does he watch ice hockey compilations he answered that he likes sports and watching it, and he is also interested in sports in general. Similarly, it can be assumed that the YouTube videos the other students watch reflect their interests. The observation of the link between the students' interests and the content of English YouTube videos they watch is important, because the current pedagogic views emphasise that the interests of the students guide their study process and motivation. That way the students can accomplish the goals that are important to them; for instance, by watching gaming videos they can

improve their gaming skills and by watching game compilations they keep up to date with the sports season.

4.2. Students' perceptions on the use of YouTube in English classes

The questionnaires revealed that YouTube videos have been used both in a traditional and modern way in the English lessons of the ninth-grade class. The categorisation into traditional and modern is my own and it is based on my interpretation of the answers. To the question whether the teacher has used YouTube in English lessons she answered that she has used YouTube almost daily in the lessons of different classes and often in extempore situations. She considered YouTube to be a good addition to language lessons and that it stimulates and activates students. However, she experienced that the interest of the students might suffer if the platform was used too frequently. She also mentioned that they have not produced any material to YouTube themselves. The teacher was asked to name some concrete examples of how YouTube can be used in English lessons and/or as homework. The examination of her examples of utilising YouTube in the classroom can be divided into traditional and modern categories. The checking of the pronunciation of words together with students, videos of small talk practising, the famous speeches and music videos can be regarded as a traditional way of utilising YouTube videos in teaching, because similar exercises can be found in traditional English textbooks. That is to say, textbooks often have songs, pronunciation instructions and small talk exercises, so the answers of the teacher revealed that the traditional teaching methods have been extended from textbooks to YouTube. It is interesting to notice that new platforms have started to gain ground in the English classroom. Furthermore, the moving picture in YouTube videos adds a visual modality to the exercises, and therefore seeing the context can assist the learning of the students.

In addition to the traditional way of using YouTube videos in the English classroom, one specific exercise example the teacher gave could be regarded as a modern and innovative way of utilising YouTube videos. The teacher has showed students tourist videos from the United States, Great Britain and from other English speaking countries, and after that the students have written a post card or a travelogue based on those videos. This kind of exercise provides a realistic context to the students, because the tourist videos on YouTube are real: the students can see the real locations and encounters with tourists and locals and experience the events via the YouTube videos.

Sociocultural and ecological views on language learning acknowledge the importance of context in language learning process, and the realistic videos of the English language use can help students to understand the situations where the English skills are needed and used. Additionally, the tourist videos also promote multiculturalism, which sociocultural and ecological theories emphasise. The tourists, who may or may not be native English speakers, can interact with other tourists or with people from the destination country, and therefore the conversations are likely to be multilingual and multicultural. The tourist videos can even help students in learning symbolic competence, as the videos show the context where English using occurs.

To the questions whether YouTube has been used in English classroom twelve students answered that it has been used at least to some extent. The examples the students gave were documents, news, music videos, movies, programs, videos related to birthday if it is someone's birthday, and videos that are related to the topics of the lessons in general. However, the answers had a contradiction, because six respondents answered that YouTube has not been used in English lessons or they did not remember whether it has been used in the classroom. Moreover, sixteen out of eighteen respondents experienced that YouTube should be used more in English lessons. They explained their opinion by answering that YouTube videos bring variation to the "normal studying", that it is "a nicer way to study", that "studying becomes more interesting and fun" and that "students would be more interested in following the teaching if they watched a video". The answers that emphasised the benefits of YouTube videos in language learning will be discussed in the following subsection. However, one student considered that YouTube should not be used more in teaching, as "it does not teach that much anyway" and one student considered that she likes studying on paper but she did not reject the use of YouTube in the classroom.

4.3. English language learning via YouTube videos

Both the questionnaire answers and observation revealed that students consider YouTube videos to assist their English language learning and that language learning is likely to occur even though the students themselves may not always notice it. Sixteen out of eighteen students reported that English YouTube videos have assisted their English language learning at least a little. The results also revealed that some students who watch diverse content from YouTube have specifically noticed the benefits of English YouTube videos in their language learning process. The students who answered

that they spend 10-20 minutes per week watching YouTube videos mentioned that they have learned some words and therefore do not experience that the more extensive learning would have occurred. Some of the students who spend more time watching YouTube videos, mostly more than one hour in a week, have discovered more learning benefits from English YouTube videos.

The students mentioned several effects on language learning from watching YouTube videos in English. Five students answered that videos have helped in learning the English pronunciation, for example one student answered that by listening to English one learns pronunciation and therefore understands and is able to speak English better. Furthermore, it was mentioned that YouTube videos assist in learning accents and that by watching YouTube videos from English speaking YouTubers one hears how native English speakers speak. Even though the students' questionnaire answers did not directly mention that the students' listening comprehension has improved from English YouTube videos, the previously mentioned answers indicate that it probably has occurred as well. However, the most common answer to the question three "Do you experience that YouTube videos have assisted English language learning? How?" was that the students' vocabulary has improved, as twelve students considered that they have learned new words from YouTube videos. One student considered that it is easy to remember new words from YouTube videos and another student answered that when she encounters new words in YouTube videos she always wants to check their meaning.

The observation of one student revealed similar effects on learning as in the questionnaire answers. The student considered that he learns new terminology, words, and phrases from watching YouTube videos in English. English gaming videos contain a lot of special terminology, and for instance in *Minecraft* gaming videos he has been able to understand some new terms from the context, but he has also watched some game episodes with the Finnish subtitles and the new terminology has that way become familiar. Moreover, the student believed that he absorbs new words unconsciously for example when he watches ice hockey gaming videos and he also considered that he understands ice hockey terminology almost completely. He gave some examples of the words and phrases he has learned, which were "icing" and "after video review". The student also considered that his listening comprehension has improved from English YouTube videos: he has noticed that he can understand the English talk to some extent, even though he experiences that listening comprehension is difficult to him. However, the student emphasised that he does not

watch English YouTube videos to learn language but as a free time activity, but still he was able to notice effects on English language learning. The notion of “a free time activity” fits well with ecological views on language learning, because they suggest that language learning occurs everywhere and therefore also in free time. Another interesting phenomenon that occurred during the observation was negotiation of meaning. The student checked the meaning of the word “corner” and also asked the meaning of the phrase “at the corner of the world”. The sociocultural and ecological theories emphasise that negotiation of meaning is likely to assist learning opportunities, and that happened during the observation when the student pondered and checked the meaning of the words.

Another interesting finding from the questionnaires and observation was that students considered that YouTube videos are authentic and they also understood the significance of context. For example, one student answered that in English YouTube videos one can hear and see in what kind of situations the certain words and phrases are used. Some other answers suggested that “it is easier to learn English in more casual circumstances” and that “in many videos (such as in vlogs) English is every day English, and in those videos one hears how English is used in practice”. The teacher also emphasised the authenticity of YouTube and that students are interested in real persons and situations. One student also mentioned that “English is an important language and that the whole world uses it”. The sociocultural and ecological views suggest that the understanding of the context is essential in language learning, and therefore this finding of the students’ understanding of the context is very important.

The results showed that English language learning occurs also outside the classroom, and that learning occurs naturally and even unconsciously along with the free time interests of the students. An example of that is the familiarity of the ice hockey terminology for the student I observed as the result of playing *NHL*, watching gaming videos and *NHL* game compilations. One could also suggest that YouTube videos are affordances especially if they reflect the interests of the students: the active students who view diverse YouTube videos will learn new linguistic affordances and use them themselves. Furthermore, YouTube videos can be regarded as new language practice that have emerged as the result of the suggestion that language is connected with visual and auditory sources of meaning. Finally, both the questionnaire answers and the observation of the students’ use of

YouTube proved the suggestion of the sociocultural and ecological views that learning does not occur only inside the learner's head but as relationships between learners and the environment.

4.4. Students' traditional views on language learning

An interesting phenomenon that I discovered from the students' questionnaire answers was that students still have quite traditional views and opinions on English language learning. Again, I want to note that the concept 'traditional' is my interpretation of the questionnaire answers and the observation. The finding was strongly related to the questionnaire question six: "Mention some concrete examples of how YouTube could be used in English lessons and/or as homework." That is to say, several answers suggested traditional exercises such as listening comprehension exercises, pronunciation exercises, watching videos and answering some questions and translating difficult words from videos. Some answers suggested learning grammar through YouTube videos by watching videos from word order or watching language learning channels in general. One student also suggested viewing a video in English as homework and translating it into Finnish. The above-mentioned exercise examples can be considered as traditional, because similar exercises have been traditional in school, where grammar and vocabulary exercises as well as listening comprehension, pronunciation and translation exercises have been an essential part of course text books. Therefore, it is understandable that students have difficulties in thinking outside the traditional exercises, because they are so used to them. However, the meaning of this finding is not to argue that language could not be learned from traditional exercises, and even though they often are quite teacher-centred, some interaction occurs nonetheless.

In addition to the various traditional examples students gave, there were also more innovative exercise suggestions. One student suggested an exercise where "if the topic is New York, we would watch a video in English where New York is introduced." Another student suggested watching videos from English YouTubers and analysing them together or telling others about the videos in English. Some other suggestions were a presentation from an English video and writing notes from a document. I consider these exercise examples to be innovative, because all the suggestions emphasise interaction and/or context. For example, the suggestion of watching video from New York would probably offer a more realistic image of New York and set the city in a better context than pictures in text books could do. Moreover, these kinds of videos would probably promote

multiculturalism and multilingualism that were discussed before, and students could see how they occur in realistic situations. On the other hand, exercise examples where videos were analysed together or presented in front of the class would emphasise interaction and discussion in the class and the student participation would be in an essential role. Thus, it was interesting to discover that some students suggested exercises where the emphasis was in students' activity, in interaction with others and in linking context into learning. The finding promotes the sociocultural and ecological views that learning occurs also outside the learner's head and that when students interact with each other they deal with the world and its meanings.

However, some other answers in the questionnaires also promoted the students' traditional views on English language learning. To the question three "Do you experience that English YouTube videos have assisted you in English language learning? How?" one student answered "Not really. Maybe sometimes some word. But helps more in talking 'free time' English." The student's view is interesting, because he has clearly divided English language into school English and free time English and therefore does not seem to consider learning to speak English at free time as proper learning. However, the sociocultural and ecological learning theories emphasise that learning occurs also outside the classroom and in various environments and that it is important to learn to use language in different situations. It seems that the student uses English in different situations but still is not able to see the English language learning as a whole but divides learning into different sections. This view promotes the traditional school-centred view of language learning, which suggests that the most valuable learning occurs in school.

Another student answer that promoted the traditional view on language learning was also the answer to the question three (see above): "Yes, one always learns some separate words from there, which can then be useful for example in exams." This view is interesting because it leads to the question of the aim of language learning. The student's answer seems to suggest that the essential point of learning language in school is to pass exams. This kind of view probably is common specifically among the students who are still in comprehensive school and therefore need to study subjects that may not meet their interest. However, the sociocultural and ecological views on learning emphasise that the aim of studying in school is not simply to learn to interact flawlessly in English with other people and pass the exams that test grammar and special vocabulary, but to learn language so that one is able to communicate with people in multicultural and multilingual

environments. Therefore, the aim of learning English in school should be to learn to communicate in the multicultural world where mistakes are allowed and where they can be negotiated with other people and where learning can be a continuous process.

4.5. Attitudes towards an imaginary video creating project

Finally, I wanted to discover students and the teacher's attitudes towards an imaginary video creating project in the questionnaire question seven: "Describe the possible benefits and/or challenges of the following project: the students would film a video in English in small groups, upload it on YouTube and then comment each other's videos." As mentioned before, Brook's (2011) study, that was presented in the section 3.3., inspired me in formulating this question, because the study utilised YouTube in a diverse and modern way and provided learning outcomes. Sociocultural and ecological views on language learning consider interaction and student participation as essential parts of language lessons and note that those activities are needed to reduce the amount of teacher-centred activities. Therefore, the question seven enabled me to discover how the students and the teacher would view the project and whether it could be carried out in the future.

The students found both challenges and benefits in the imaginary video creating project. The challenges they mentioned were talking English and especially talking the foreign language in front of the camera. Some answers suggested that "pronunciation would be difficult", "for some (like for myself) it can be difficult to be in front of the camera (if we created a video where one should be in front of the camera)", "the challenge would be whether the English skills would be sufficient" and that "it would be a challenge to speak in English." Another challenges the students mentioned were the difficulties of filming and editing, the amount of time the project would require and actually carrying out the project. For example, one answer suggested that "making a 'good' video requires time and good equipment".

In addition to the possible challenges, the students mentioned several benefits that the video project could provide. The students thought that their pronunciation would improve and they would learn to speak and use the language better. Furthermore, the answers suggested that the project "would be something different and variation to conventional studying", "the team spirit of the class could improve" and that "someone could get new motivation from making a video". It was also

suggested that the project could teach students the camera industry as well as editing and filming. Moreover, the teacher answered that she could imagine doing this kind of project with students. She mentioned that it is important that students themselves do and create in the lessons, because they usually consider it to be interesting. However, the teacher noted that some students, whose English skills are not particularly good, would feel anxious about this kind of project and therefore it would require assistants. It is therefore important to acknowledge that this kind of ethnographic project always influences at least to some extent the community that is being studied and that their feelings and suggestions need to be considered.

All in all, it was important that the students and the teacher could find both challenges and benefits in the imaginary video creating project, because they can be helpful if the project is carried out in the future. One interesting note based on the answers is that even though the students found several possible learning outcomes, the suggestions were quite restricted and narrow covering only some specific areas such as improvement of pronunciation. Therefore, the finding supports the phenomenon discussed in the section 4.4. that discussed the students' traditional views on language learning. It also appeared that the students suggested the same things both as challenges and benefits, which then promotes that they could review the project from different angles.

5. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to discover what kind of views and experiences Finnish ninth grade students and their teacher have on using YouTube in English language learning and teaching and compare the results with the sociocultural and ecological views on language learning to see whether the answers match the theory. The questionnaire answers and observation revealed that all students watch YouTube videos in English and most students consider that watching YouTube videos has assisted their English language learning at least a little. Most students viewed using YouTube in the English classroom as a positive thing that brings variation to traditional studying methods and suggested that YouTube could be used more in English lessons. However, the results revealed that the students' understanding of language learning is more restricted and traditional than the current pedagogic theories view it. The students were able to understand the significance of the context and interaction to some extent, but they could not see the overall picture of language learning. The sociocultural and ecological theories suggest that language learning occurs everywhere and that learning that happens outside the classroom is as valuable as language learning that occurs in school. Furthermore, it was difficult for the students to understand that language learning is more than learning new words and ways to pronounce, because the sociocultural and ecological views on learning suggest that learning language means that one learns to communicate with people in multicultural and multilingual situations where the aim is to become understood and not to talk as flawlessly as possible.

I consider using triangulation in the data gathering process as the strength of this study, because using both questionnaires and observation provided a more diverse picture of the YouTube usage than one of them could have done alone. For example, the questionnaires did not reveal the finding that emerged from the observation. That is to say, observing the student revealed that language learning occurs when YouTube is used in English in free time as well as when other free time activities involving English are conducted, even though the student could not evaluate his learning very broadly. Observing him revealed that he has learned to communicate in English in different online environments as a result of active English usage in free time, which did not emerge from the questionnaires. However, to get even more profound and exact YouTube using experiences and possible learning outcomes one would need more time to observe students both in school and in

free time, probably arrange interviews and use some other methods in addition to the ones used in this study.

Some alternative methods that might have worked as a good addition into the methods I used in the study could have been videoing the student when he watched the YouTube videos, capturing the screens of devices he used or asking the student to write a YouTube video watching diary, where he could have described the videos and thoughts they aroused after he watched them. The observation experience taught me that the process takes time and effort and to get sufficient and accurate results the set up for research needs to be carefully planned. It is therefore important to acknowledge the challenges of this kind of ethnographic study. Miall, Pawluch & Shaffir (2005, p. 25–26) stated that researchers need to learn themselves how to carry out ethnographic observation. Various things, for instance the researcher's relationship to the setting and its people and the characteristics of the setting itself, need to be considered. Furthermore, it can be difficult to gain an accurate or true impression of the phenomenon that is being studied (Miall, Pawluch & Shaffir, 2005, p. 26).

Further research on the topic could include studying the process where YouTube or some other social media platform is used in the English classroom or in some other language learning environment to see what kind of learning effects they have. Personally, I would be interested in continuing with the same topic in my Master's Thesis by doing a video creating project discussed in section 4.5. with Finnish secondary school class students and their teacher. The results from this study and several positive reactions to the questionnaire question seven (see appendices) revealed that the project could be carried out in the future.

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Appendices

Questionnaires

Oppilaiden ja opettajien näkemykset ja kokemukset YouTube:n käytöstä englannin kielen oppimisessa ja opetuksessa

KYSELY YHDEKSÄNNEN LUOKAN OPPILAILLE

Hei! Olen Eveliina Pigg ja opiskelen englantilaista filologiaa Oulun yliopistossa. Teen kandidaatintutkielmaa aiheesta ”oppilaiden ja opettajien näkemykset ja kokemukset YouTube:n käytöstä englannin kielen oppimisessa ja opetuksessa” ja käytän tämän kyselyn vastauksia tutkimusaineistoni. Vastaamalla kyselyyn hyväksyt sen käytön tutkimuksessa. Kaikkia kyselyn vastauksia käsitellään anonyymisti ja luottamuksellisesti.

Yhteystiedot

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Sukupuoli: _____

1. Katsotko YouTube-videoita englanniksi vapaa-ajallasi? Kuvaile, minkälaisia videoita katsot ja kerro niiden sisällöstä. Mainitse myös esimerkkikanavia. (esim. vlogit, haastevideot, pelivideot)

2. Arvioi, kuinka kauan keskimäärin katsot englanninkielisiä YouTube-videoita viikon aikana.

3. Koetko englanninkielisten YouTube-videoiden auttaneen englannin kielen oppimisessa? Millä tavalla?

4. Onko koulun englannin kielen opetuksessa käytetty YouTubea? Millä tavoin?

5. Pitäisikö mielestäsi YouTubea käyttää opetuksessa enemmän vai vähemmän? Miksi?

6. Mainitse joitakin konkreettisia esimerkkejä YouTubeen mahdollisesta käytöstä englannin kielen tunneilla tai/ja kotitehtävissä.

7. Kuvaile seuraavan projektin mahdollisia hyötyjä ja/tai haasteita: englannin tunnilla tehtäisiin pienryhmissä video englanniksi YouTubeen (video näkyisi vain luokkatovereille ja opettajalle), ja kommentoitaisiin englanniksi toisten videoita.

8. Mahdollisia muita omia ajatuksia/kommentteja aiheeseen liittyen?

Kiitos!

Oppilaiden ja opettajien näkemykset ja kokemukset YouTube:n käytöstä englannin kielen oppimisessa ja opetuksessa

KYSELY ENGLANNIN KIELEN OPETTAJALLE

Hei! Olen Eveliina Pigg ja opiskelen englantilaista filologiaa Oulun yliopistossa. Teen kandidaatintutkielmaa aiheesta ”oppilaiden ja opettajien näkemykset ja kokemukset YouTube:n käytöstä englannin kielen oppimisessa ja opetuksessa” ja käytän tämän kyselyn vastauksia tutkimusaineistonani. Vastaamalla kyselyyn hyväksyt sen käytön tutkimuksessa. Kaikkia kyselyn vastauksia käsitellään anonyymisti ja luottamuksellisesti.

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1. Millaisia käyttökokemuksia sinulla on YouTube:stä?

2. Mitä mieltä olet YouTube:n käytöstä englannin kielen opetuksessa ja oppimisessa? Pitäisikö sitä mielestäsi käyttää koulussanne nykyistä enemmän vai vähemmän?

3. Oletko itse käyttänyt YouTubea koulussa englannin kielen opettamisessa? Minkä verran ja millä tavoin?

4. Uskotko, että YouTube:n käyttö opetuksessa aktivoi oppilaita perinteisiä oppimismenetelmiä tehokkaammin?

5. Mainitse joitakin konkreettisia esimerkkejä YouTube:n mahdollisesta käytöstä englannin kielen tunneilla tai/ja kotitehtävissä.

6. Kuvaile seuraavan projektin mahdollisia hyötyjä ja/tai haasteita: englannin tunnilla tehtäisiin pienryhmissä video englanniksi YouTubeen (video näkyisi vain luokkatovereille ja opettajalle), ja kommentoitaisiin englanniksi toisten videoita. Voisitko kuvitella tekeväsi tällaisen projektin oppilaitesi kanssa? Arvioi projektin onnistumisen mahdollisuuksia.

7. Onko sinulla käyttökokemuksia TeacherTubesta? Millaisia?

8. Mahdollisia muita ajatuksia/kommentteja aiheeseen liittyen?

Kiitos!