Foreign students' perceptions about CaringTV

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Laurea University of Applied Sciences   Abstract
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The study was about the perceptions of the foreign students regarding the CaringTV project. It's a project initiated by Laurea University of Applied Sciences. CaringTV was a service concept where interactive programs were broadcasted online. Foreign students were involved in the programs through Laurea's curriculum.

The purpose was to gather the experiences of the foreign students. The aim was discover their perceptions regarding the CaringTV concept, in order to better understand how CaringTV played a positive role in foreign students' learning process. The theoretical framework was consisted of experiential learning theory, intercultural communication, creative methods, aging and empowerment which reflected importance of experience, communication, improving skills in CaringTV programs. The study was conducted by using qualitative research method: focused interview and content analysis approach. Nine foreign students participated in our interviews.

The four themes of findings which were unique learning experiences, empowering elderly and students, understanding of aging and limitations of CaringTV showed that foreign students had learned knowledge and improved skills from their pleasant experiences with the elderly via welfare technology. CaringTV concept had both advantages and disadvantages and need to be developed constantly. More programs about foreign cultures could be created according to the elderly active participations.

Key words: experience, intercultural communication, empowerment, aging

Laurea-ammattikorkeakoulu   **Tiivistelmä**
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Ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden näkemyksiä HyvinvointiTV:stä

Vuosi	2012		Sivumäärä	48

Lopputyö on osa HyvinvointiTV projektia Laurean Ammattikorkeakoulussa. HyvinvointiTV on palvelukonsepti, jossa interaktiiviset ohjelmat tuotetaan internetiin välityksellä. Laurean opintosuunnitelman kautta ulkomaalaiset opiskelijat osallistettiin HyvinvointiTV:n ohjelmiin.

Lopputyön tarkoitus oli koota ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden kokemuksia sekä selvittää heidän näkemykset HyvinvointiTV konseptista ymmärtääksen paremmin HyvinvointiTV:n positiivisen roolin ulkomaalaisten opiskelijoiden oppimisprosessista. Teoreettinen kehys koostui kokemus-, kulttuurienvälinenkommunikaatio-, creative methods-, ikääntymis-, ja voimmaannutaamisen teorioista, jotka korostivat kokemuksen, kommunikaation ja taitojen kehittämisen tärkeyttä HyvinvointiTV:ssä. Lopputyössä käytettiin laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää: keskitettyjä haastatteluita ja sisällönanalyysi menetelmää. Yhdeksän opiskelijaa osallistui haastatteluihimme.

Lopputyön tuloksia olivat neljä: ainutlaatuinen oppimiskokemus, iäkkäiden sekä opiskelijoiden voimaannuttaminen, ymmärrys ikääntymiseen, ja HyvinvointiTV:n rajoitukset. Tulokset näyttivät, että ulkomaalaiset opiskelijat olivat oppineet ja kehittäneet taitojaan miellyttävän kokemuksen kautta iäkkäiden kanssa käyttäen hyvinvointiteknologiaa. HyvinvointiTV:n konseptilla on etunsa sekä haittansa ja tarvitsee jatkuvaa kehittämistä. Osallistuja-aktiivisuuden mukaan lisää ohjelmia olisi hyvä lisätä vieraista kulttuureista.

Table of Contents

1   Introduction

The percentage of the elderly in the world is growing nearly as rapidly as is the number of foreigners in Finland. Finland belongs to the top three countries in the world with largest elderly population therefore there will be a demand for professionals to work with elderly in the future. There are several ways of getting introduced to living and working in Finland: CaringTV presents one channel for foreign students to work with the elderly. Through CaringTV both the elderly and most of the students experience their first cultural contact. CaringTV is the bridge connecting foreign students and Finnish society, aims to give students more understanding of Finnish elderly people's life and aging issues through intercultural communication.

The purpose of the study is to gather foreign students' experiences. What they have learned from their experiences? What are the inspirations brought out from their experiences? In addition to that, to look into the foreign students' perceptions of CaringTV concept so as to gain a better understanding of its future development and meanings for solving issues relating to interaction with the aging population. The diversity foreign students bring to the program is the key element to the successful outcome of the programs.

CaringTV is a Finnish client-driven service concept where interactive programs and chosen eServices are broadcasted on-line through videoconferencing and other technological platforms. It is developed and researched by City of Espoo, Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Turku University of Applied Sciences, Videra Company and TDC Company since 2005.

The study is the first to focus on foreign students' experiences and perceptions of CaringTV since previous studies show nothing relevant to their opinions. Nowadays, more and more foreign students are interested in creating programs. CaringTV clients have strong will to learn about subjects related to foreign cultures from foreign students' programs. The work gives answers about what foreign students' expectation for CaringTV as well.

The study is conducted using qualitative research method: focused interview and SWOT-analysis. The interviews are constructed interview, with open ended questions. The study uses SWOT-analysis technique. SWOT-analysis is a reliable and source full technique for evaluation of the study and our process during the data collection.

2   Background

2.1   CaringTV concept

CaringTV is a service concept where interactive programs and chosen e-services are broadcasted on-line through videoconferencing and other technological platforms. (CaringTV leaflet) CaringTV is a Finnish innovation developed by Laurea University of applied of sciences, the City of Espoo and some private technology companies. After the Coping at home project

we were developing CaringTV with Turku University of Applied science and cities from South-west Finland. The client-driven service concept is based on interactive programs and eservices which improves and supports clients' well-being. Caring TV enables a new way of delivering healthcare and welfare services directly to home and services through interactive TV. Service professionals working with the CaringTV concept can provide services to a single or several clients at the same time from a distance, without the services suffering any loss of interactivity. (Stahl 2011:9)

CaringTV has three main stages of development which are Coping at Home (2005-2006) focused mainly on how CaringTV can support elderly family care givers, who reside at home with the elderly in need of care. Going Home (2006-2008) was about how CaringTV can support the elderly and their significant others as friends or family members after discharge from a hospital. Safe Home (2009-2011) had two subprojects which were EHYENÄ and OMANA. EHYENÄ project focused on developing new eServices from a user driven approach to support different clients living at home more independently. OMANA project's objective was to future develop the guidance and counseling concept using an action research approach and user driven method.

2.2   Students as service providers

CaringTV concept was first created in Laurea in 2005 with the city of Espoo and some private technology companies. From 2006, Finnish students from Laurea Otaniemi unit participated in the Coping at Home project in accordance with Laurea's Learning by Developing (LbD) model. Experience showed that students increased not only the student's competence in elderly care, but also their interest in working with the elderly. (Piirainen 2008: 5) Laurea students have always been one of the core parts in developing concepts and creating contents since first Coping at Home project until now. From 2008, foreign students started to participate in creating CaringTV programs. Laurea students are a significant part in organizing and producing CaringTV programs. They have devoted great help and expertise for the elderly clients, meanwhile, students gave so many valuable advices and suggestions to evaluate CaringTV project in order to improve the services. A research shows that students from Laurea University of Applied Sciences produce almost 80% of the programs, whereas professionals produce about 20%. (Britta 2012:9)

The students of Laurea University of Applied Sciences in Otaniemi come from different majors, such as; nursing, social services, business, physiotherapist and different nationalities have participated in the development of welfare service innovations by producing programs for CaringTV as part of their degree program studies. (Lehto 2011:117) All the programs are in Finnish. Each program lasts for 30 minutes broadcast twice a day in the morning and afternoon. As the research showed Finnish degree program students had improved communication

and social skills; also expertise related to interaction, presentation and systematic action was comprehended by working with CaringTV. Chair exercises, discussions about cultures, arm-chair trips all around world were quite popular among the elderly.

Foreign students from Social Services English Degree Programs had one course called music therapy involved with CaringTV starting from 2008. Despite the Finnish student, foreign students also had opportunities taking part in organizing programs. For many foreign students, it was their first time to use welfare technology to interact with Finnish elderly people. Because of the language obstacles, their words were interpreted by Finnish classmates, though many foreign students tried to speak Finnish. Foreign students from other degree programs in Otaniemi Laurea unit had a chance to produce their own programs, such as introducing culture, elderly people's life situation in their countries. Programs made by foreign students were really popular and the Finnish elderly are willing to have more.

2.3   International cooperation

None of the participants in CaringTV were foreign students since the Safe Home project started in 2008. Because of limited scale of elderly people and language barrier, foreign students didn't have a chance to make their own programs. More and more foreign students came to study in Laurea, CaringTV started to cooperate with Music Therapy course to provide programs related to music by foreign students. CaringTV invented a brand new way called making four programs for 2 credits in order to let more and more foreign students involved in. Since then, foreign students have a second way to create programs. CaringTV did become more and more international. The international cooperation with Japan and China that two countries had the most sever aging issues in the world showed good and encouraging examples.

Perhaps nowhere in the world is this demographic transition as stark as in parts of Asia, where rapid population aging is occurring at the same time as a dramatic economic transformation. (USA national academic press 2010: 3) China and Japan both are facing serious aging issues. From 2000 to 2050, the elderly population will be more than double in China and Japan. In Asian cultures, older adults in the family should take care of the elderly. It is not the responsibility of nursing homes or society. The situation now is family has changed roles and responsibilities a lot due to the economy development, geographic locations and so on. CaringTV as a perfect tool to solve the complex problems was largely recognized when it was presented in China and Japan.

A Japan and Finland elderly care research center was founded in 2005 together with Tohoku Fukushi University, Laurea University of Applied Sciences and local government in Sendai, a middle sized city in Northern Japan. In 2010 Shanghai Expo, CaringTV was introduced and

promoted to Chinese elderly people. There was a live program made for Shanghai elderly people from Laurea Otaniemi studio. The former Finnish president Tarja Halonen visited CaringTV office in Finland pavilion which was a big moment for all the CaringTV staff. Active Life Village, a non-profit company partly owned by Laurea aimed to spread CaringTV concept all over the world. Wuhan is one of the partners of Active Life Village has already built an Active Life demo home to present CaringTV concept there. At least five Chinese delegations from governments, universities, companies have visited CaringTV studio to understand more about how it really worked. Chinese guests communicated with Finnish elderly people in the program happily and they knew more about Finnish elderly lives, how CaringTV influence them and so on. Every month, there are some guests from all over the world visited CaringTV studio. CaringTV concept will be commercialized in the future. Foreign student's participation let the administration plan a better blueprint of CaringTV's future development. It was an opportunity for foreign students as well how they can carry the concept to their countries so as to solve aging issues.

3   Theoretical framework

3.1   Experiential learning

The definition of experience is described as 'practical contact with and observation of facts or events and an event or occurrence which leaves an impression on someone.'(Online Oxford dictionary) CaringTV experience as the learning and developing experience for foreign students is stimuli and motivation. Under the Laurea Learning by Developing (LbD) model, CaringTV is a suitable and practical approach to learn about different kinds of skills for every participant.

Benjamin Disraeli said "Experience is the child of Thought, and Thought is the child of Action – we cannot learn men from books."(Beard 2006:1) The experience students learn through CaringTV has a great influence on the way students think, how they behave, future career development, and expertise and so on. A famous British educator stated that 'There is a growing consensus that experience forms the basis of all learning.' (Beard 2006:2) Through experiences foreign students discover the world as well as themselves.

Learning cannot be separated from experience. The definition of 'experiential learning' is the sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment. (Beard 2006:19) CaringTV creates a learning method for the students and in order for them to develop their skills is through experience.

Experience is tightly connected with learning. Experience and learning would thus appear to be closely intertwined and almost inseparable. In many respects, experience and learning mean the same thing and experiential learning is a tautology or repetition of the same idea.

Experience is the vital element in learning new knowledge. The whole progress started from planning a CaringTV program, discussing about details, implementing and evaluation is a learning experience. Components of creating a CaringTV program are: planning, implementing, evaluating programs and gathering feedback from participants. These components together give the student a learning experience.

Kolb is the founder of experiential learning theory. Kolb's experiential learning theory is a holistic perspective that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. The 'Experiential Learning' theory emphasizes the central role that experience plays in the learning process, an emphasis that distinguishes experiential learning theory from other learning theories. David A.Kolb explained, 'Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.' (Learing-theory.com)

Learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available to everyone. It need not be expensive, nor does it require vast amounts of technological hardware and software to support the learning process. (Beard, 2006, 15) CaringTV as a form of new welfare technology is a window to learn about people's life situations that came from different ethical background, also a bridge to connect peoples from different cultural background to communicate with each other. The interactive CaringTV which is a creative learning concept offers foreign students experiencing multiculturalism personally in order to integrate Finnish society better and easier.

Experiential learning can be divided into four stages; concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

The first stage, concrete experience, is where the learner actively experiences an activity such as a lab session or field work. Foreign students organizing CaringTV program is a concrete experience. The second stage, reflective observation, is when the learner consciously reflects back on that experience. Some of the foreign students organized more than one program. The next program was always more attractive, because students observed how CaringTV clients reacted to the previous programs so that they could make improvements. The third stage, abstract conceptualization, is where the learner attempts to conceptualize a theory or model of what is observed. CaringTV empowered elderly people's lives from different aspects. Foreign students tried to applied what they learned from Anti-oppressive theory, empowerment theory when implemented programs. The fourth stage, active experimentation, is where the learner is trying to plan how to test a model or theory or plan for a forthcoming experience. Foreign students gained a lot of experience and skills from past programs, but due to lack of chances of creating programs, they had to postpone their plans. Life is full

of circumstances. We could not always do according to our wishes. The last stage was missed in most of foreign students' experiences.

During organizing CaringTV program, foreign students have chances to communicate with Finnish students and staffs. It is an experience of improving Finnish language skills. Some foreign students change their mind of communicating with elderly is difficult. It is an experience of self-exploration as well. Experience pervades all forms of learning; however, its value is frequently not recognized or is even disregarded. Active engagement is one of the basic tenets of experiential learning: experiential learning undoubtedly involves the 'whole person', through thoughts, feelings and physical activity.

3.2   Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication is type of global communication which often is used to point out the difficulties in communication that emerge within groups with different backgrounds. Intercultural communication is related to the process of globalization, which creates interdependence among societies and cultures that were previously separate. (Baraldi 2009:10) In organizational communication it seeks to understand the differences of people with different backgrounds such as cultural, religious, social, ethnic and educational backgrounds. How people act, communicate with others and how they see the world surrounding them is connected strongly to an individual's own culture. Cross-cultural communication is a synonym for intercultural communication and both are used in many sciences for instance psychology, linguistics, cultural studies and communication studies to mention few.

The relationship between culture and communication could be analyzed from integration of two approaches. The first approach concerns the organization of specific interactive sequences, including (1) adjacency pairs and projections of actions and reactions, (2) linguistic (verbal and nonverbal) forms signaling the main cultural presuppositions (contextualization cues), and (3) ways of re-contextualizing these cultural presuppositions through specific actions. The second approach concerns the description of the cultural presuppositions which structure communication: guiding values, forms of contribution (persons and roles), forms of expectations regarding results (normative, cognitive, affective expectations). (Baraldi 2009:9) The intercultural communication between elderly people and foreign students by using verbal and non-verbal language aims to understand each other's cultural background. Through listening to music, singing, dancing, showing pictures and other creative methods, the elderly people became more interested in foreign cultures. Foreign students acted as a living library to share their experiences, stories.

Communication includes sender and receiver. Intercultural communication involves members of different cultures. Laurea has students from almost 70 countries all over the world. This

huge amount of culture resources brings fresh air to CaringTV. Communication is a two-way process and roles can change or be on-going simultaneously from being the communicator to being the audience. Compared to international communication, intercultural communication is less formal and can take place at basic level. Intercultural communication is personal and it does not involve political situations. Participants in the dialog speak each other language and it is personal i.e. talking to a friend. The process of communication includes these three behaviors of both communicator and audience: perception, retention, and expression. (Pekka Ruohotie 2006:306)

Culture is not something which we "possess"; rather cultures form an inherent part of the person, and it is culture which bestows individual and collective identity: a complex identity which is articulated across multiple social belongings. Culture is a mechanism for understanding and interpreting the world which acquires instrumental, adaptive and regulatory meaning. (Aneas 2009) In every programs organized by foreign students, what the elderly people felt strongly at first is meeting people from different cultures, may not the topic of program itself, they started to be curious and excited. Foreign students faced same kind of situation that how they can present the best part of their own cultures. That's how communication starts. They have to communicate with each other in order to know more information.

Intercultural communication is a field which requires research in order to develop. Professionals who use intercultural communication at work can develop their skills through research on this topic. Sending and receiving a message is based on mutual understanding but in intercultural communication how the message is transmitted and how the message is interpreted are both influenced by culture. Other than language intercultural communication also looks at interaction. How people from different cultures behave, what is custom to a culture and patterns and seeks to understand these aspects. This largely depends on the attitudes of foreign students, how they treat with elderly people nicely, how they react to the situation when both send and receive don't speak same language, how they react to the situation when both sender and receiver do not share the same language.

The most important objective of CaringTV is to assist people in everyday life using welfare technology. Welfare technology means to provide technical solutions to maintain and improve quality of life, health and ability to function. Welfare technology is used in public services for different groups of people but most importantly for elderly and disabled. Use of welfare technology is usually limited to a space such as homes, or other spaces for user of welfare technology. Sometimes the user can be a professional working for the elderly or a disabled person who cannot function on their own or it can be a relative assisting in use of welfare technology. Welfare technology is divided to categories such as: assisting technologies, communication and information technologies, social technologies and security, health technolo-

gies, health technologies. Different sciences use different categories for welfare technology. Categories listed above are used for example in psychology.

CaringTV method uses coast effective solution for municipalities' expenses on elderly care. Providing care for elderly in their own home or in nursing homes will cost the municipality much more. Municipalities and governments should favor coast effective solutions as the elderly care and other welfare services are increasing in cost. In the near future more technology will be used more and inevitably methods like CaringTV will take a greater part in social welfare system and service providing. To make a better future now applying services like CaringTV in elderly care and supporting elderly independent living is needed.

3.3 Creative methods

Creative methods are used to encourage creative actions in fields of arts and sciences and their focus point is on the aspects of variety in creativity, idea generating and different thinking. Also re-framing problems and making changes in the environment are aspects of creative methods. These can be used as problem solving, forms of therapy or expressing oneself in an artistic way. While some creative method practices require a group of people, others can be practiced alone. The methods that can be used in creative activities are word games, exercises and role play such as improvising or approach to solve a problem.

As a part of Laurea curriculum foreign students are offered creative method studies during their second school year. Music therapy is one component of a large study unit and through music therapy lessons CaringTV is introduced to the foreign students. Music therapy, social drama, physical education and arts and crafts together form the four components of the creative methods. Creative methods teach students lot of useful theory, practice and techniques that benefit the foreign students. Skills attained in the course are the skills that students use when creating programs. Music therapy, physical education, and social drama together make a whole that gives the foreign students the foundation for working with elderly in CaringTV and in later stages of their lives.

Creative methods provide possibilities for foreign students to interact with the elderly. Through the programs in CaringTV, foreign students use creative methods as a source of activities. Exercises and singing with the elderly come from creative methods studies that are included in the Laurea Degree Program. Programs foreign students create for the elderly use creative techniques and involve the elderly in activities and interaction through exercise routines or other activities.

3.4 Aging

Ageing is not unique to the modern times, but it is only in the past hundred years that it has

become commonplace. (Stuart-Hamilton 2006:14) Aging is a global phenomenon. CaringTV is one of the effective methods to solve aging issues, for instance, more social contact so as to get rid of loneliness; prevent from mental illness; awake memories and so on. CaringTV offers a variety of eServices for the elderly to improve their well-being both physical health and mental health. There are many theories to explain what is process of aging and importance of interaction with others for the elderly.

The disengagement theory by Cumming and Henry was developed in 1961 and sees aging as a process in which people disengage from the rest of the society. They lose roles they used to have and do not have many social contacts anymore. (Britta 2012:15) CaringTV effectively gave the elderly chances to contact with young people, foreigners and people like their age.

Psychological theories indicate there are some interactions between aging adult and society that result in changes in relationship. (LoBo 2011:2) In our society, stereotypes unfortunately limit many people's knowledge of aging. The most frequently heard ones are, for example, the elderly are sick, not interested in learning new things, think and act slowly, has no use for the society. (Britta 2012:16) It is sad to look at the elderly from negative point of view.

Disengagement theory suggests a norm for society and aging person to withdraw from one another to allow society to continue its function without interference with youth. (LoBo 2011:2) Activity theory suggests society and aging adult continue to have an interdependent relationship, and although roles change for aging persons, they have continued importance. New roles and activities are expected to fulfill needs of the community. (LoBo 2011:2) Young people moved outside from homes and had their own family and work to take care. CaringTV played the role that elderly can live at home independently and longer. Through taking part in different kinds of activities in CaringTV, it is a process of empowering. Elderly peoples' self-esteem will increase as well.

Developmental theory can be also called continuity theory implies that there are a wide variety of relationship between aging individual and society, which is influenced by individual's previous life roles and behaviors. Erickson´s last developmental stage of integrity versus despair states that developmentally certain tasks are necessary for aging person to successfully adjust to the last years. Failure to achieve integrity results in despair, even death. These tasks include retirement, adjusting to loss and relocation, as well as maintaining generational ties. Other developmental tasks are to find new interest and hobbies while trying to find meaning to life and prepare for death. (Lobo 2011:2)

3.5 Anti-oppressive theory

The term anti oppressive practice is often used in the same contents with the term anti discriminative practice. Main separation between the two terms is in the key words, discrimination and oppression. Anti discriminative practice is narrow and aims to reduce and fight unfair and unequal treatment. Anti discriminative practice tries to eliminate barriers between service users and services accessing services. Anti oppressive practice exceeds this and aims to challenge societal structures and use of power to keep some groups in lesser position. There different opinions about these two practices, some say that anti discriminative practice is constructed of activist practice of social work and that anti oppressive practice is constructed of fundamental practice of social work.

3.5.1 Empowerment

Empowerment has spread into wide use since the beginning of its use. The word has inspired discussion and literature about marginalized groups and rights as well as women's roles and position of the poor. In social and political settings the meaning of empowerment varies and even in different languages a word may not exist to translate empowerment directly. There are how-ever several explanations for the concept of empowerment in different languages and in native terms explaining empowerment such us: self-strength, self-power, self-reliance, independence among many others. The study focuses on empowerment for the foreign students: empowerment through CaringTV programs and interaction with the elderly, and for the elderly: empowerment through interaction and activities.

Empowerment has essential value as well as influential value and it is applied on both individual and collective level. Aspects of social, political and cultural issues are embedded in the concept of empowerment. In most definitions of empowerment the emphasis lies on finding assets to improve quality of one's life, attaining power over own life and focuses on decision making. Most definitions also look into organizational inequality and rather than focusing on an individual level they look at groups of people.

Empowerment is the expansion of assets and capabilities of poor people to participate in, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives. (Worldbank 2012) Empowerment in practice is a process of guiding an individual and increasing their ability to make their own choices. In our society individuals are expected to know and understand their needs. But this does not apply to everyone. Some people are in need of empowerment because they lack to define and act upon their needs. Groups like the elderly benefit from instructions and guidance in use of services. Effective deliberation and moral reflection related to empowerment suggests that older persons and their families can benefit from support when making decisions about services. (Heumann 2000: 8) Elderly often feel unskilled with modern technology and unattached to the fast speed of society, therefore empowering the elderly and motivating them to maintain independency is important. Foreign students share

similar difficulties in new country where they are not familiar with the native language and society. Foreign student increase their own knowledge about other cultures in interaction with the elderly through CaringTV and this is what the elderly share in common with the foreign students. Empowerment, is a process and an individual increasingly gains ability to take control over their lives in aspects of their lives. For the elderly is it important to motivated them and support them in independent living.

Empowerment is a complex concept to define and sometimes, according to Gibson, is more easily understood in its absence: powerlessness, helplessness, hopelessness, paternalism, and an external locus of control and dependency. (Heumann 2000:9) The two-way interactive CaringTV concept not only focuses on empowering the elderly but also the foreign students. Feedbacks from Finnish students who had participated in CaringTV KOTIIN project reflect that student's expertise had been promoted, communication skills, social skills, personal development had been improved as well. However, the vital meaning of CaringTV is a user-driven project that every client has the right to tell organizer what they would to watch, what they would to learn and what skills they would like to improve and so on. Customer survey results gathered from CaringTV Safe Home project show that CaringTV had reduced the feeling of loneliness; it had improved the mood and made daily lives more active. (Lehto 2011:88) Thus, both the elderly people and students are empowered.

4   Study design and implementation

4.1   Previous studies

Previous studies about CaringTV are related to Finnish students. Studies have not been made about foreign student's perceptions to similar projects to CaringTV. In other countries related concepts like CaringTV are not found. Other studies internationally about foreign student's perceptions on elderly work or foreign student's working with elderly exists with large variety of titles but those do not compare with CaringTV programs and foreign student's perceptions that we focus on. CaringTV produces unique interaction concept for the elderly.

These are the publications done by Laurea University of Applied Sciences in English: INTERAVTIVE CaringTV AND USERDRIVEN eSERVICES The Safe Home Project: Final Report; Client-driven CaringTV concept for elderly family care givers living at home Final report of the Coping at Home research. There are also publications about going home project in Finnish. Two theses have been written so far related to the development of CaringTV in Japan. One Master thesis about how CaringTV creating values for elderly people in Sendai was done by a health care degree student. The other bachelor thesis about how to launch CaringTV in Japan from a cost approach was done by a business management student. Several bachelor theses from Laurea University of Applied Sciences Nursing and Social Services English Degree Programs about creative methods in planning CaringTV programs, how CaringTV promote health and

welling for the elderly living at home, in the nursing home or in the hospitals. Finnish students from Nursing and Social Services Degree Programs have written about how family care givers benefit from CaringTV, how CaringTV support different clients groups by using eServices.

4.2   Final thesis process

The final thesis process started in early autumn 2012 with interest for CaringTV concept. We both shared experience with CaringTV through creating programs since 2009. Mutual agreement with the CaringTV staff leads to our topic of choice. The initial plan of this study was how CaringTV can be implemented in Shanghai, China. Due to some factors, we had to change our study topic. We decided to focus was on the students experience in CaringTV because there is no previous thesis project about the topic. The arrangement was benefitting for this study, CaringTV would receive up to date information and new ways to develop CaringTV in the future possibly.

The focus of the study was foreign students' perceptions and several of points of views were considered in order to make this study beneficial for our working life partner. Our data was collected from nine different students to get more reliable and more relevant data.

Interviewees for this study was selected based on criteria that they were students of higher education\Laurea with foreign background and who have experience in CaringTV previously. The interviews were collected anonymously, nine interview invitations letters were sent and nine participants were in the interviews.

After deciding on the title of the study we moved on to the next stage. The study is using interviews to collect data and our next step was creating the questions. This step was complex and we had to change the questions to fit more to the purpose of our study. Data colleting and analyzing were the steps of the process that consumed most of our time.

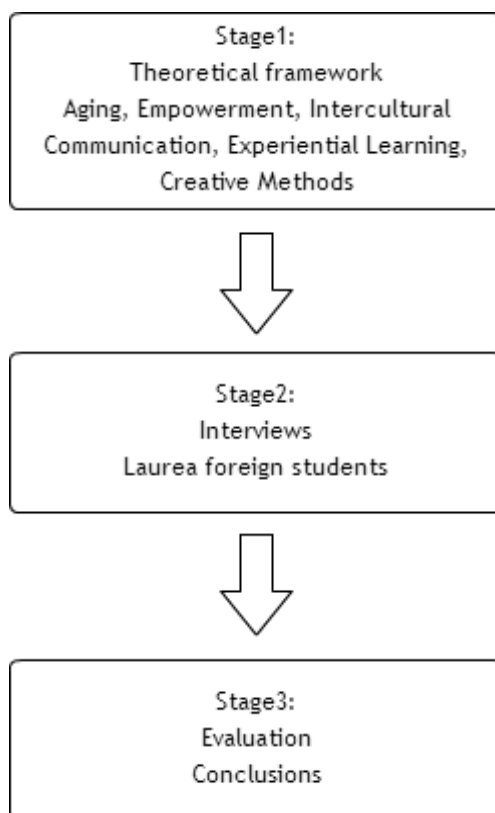Stage1:
Theoretical framework
Aging, Empowerment, Intercultural
Communication, Experiential Learning,
Creative Methods

Stage2:
Interviews
Laurea foreign students

Stage3:
Evaluation
Conclusions

Figure 1: Three stages of implementation

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│              Background:                 │
│            CaringTV concept              │
│    Laurea students as service providers  │
│         International cooperation         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Theoretical Framework          │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                 Aims:                    │
│    Find out experiences and perceptions of │
│               CaringTV                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│           Research approach:             │
│       Qualitative research method        │
│            Focused interviews            │
│             Content analysis             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               Findings:                  │
│        Unique learning experiences       │
│       Empowering elderly and student     │
│          Understanding of aging          │
│       Limitation of CaringTV concept     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────────────────────┐
│              Discussions:                │
│          Ethics and reliability          │
│               Experiences                │
│             CaringTV concept             │
│            Future development            │
│        Evaluation of thesis process      │
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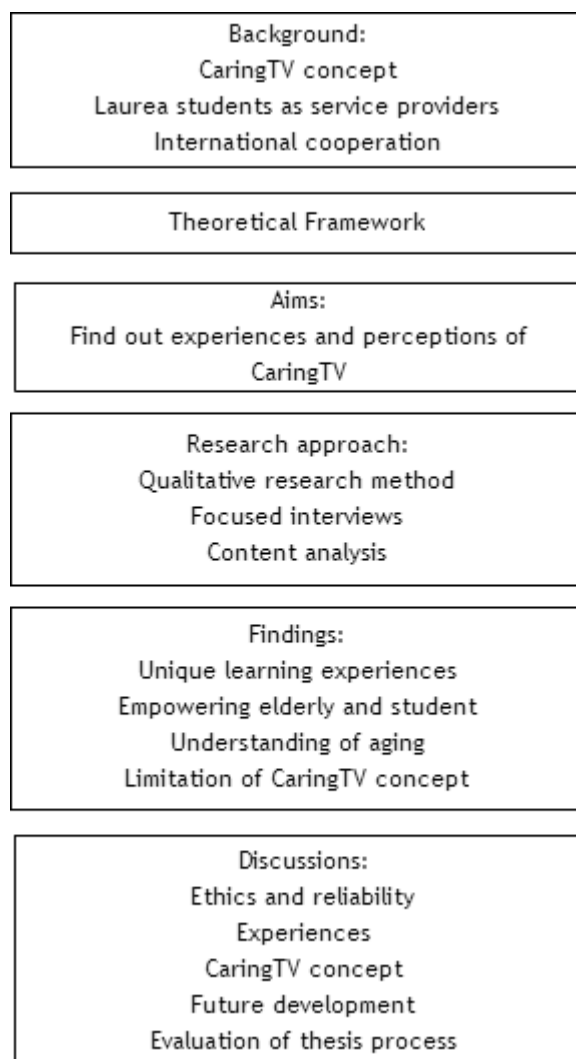
Figure 2: The framework of this thesis

4.3   Aims of the study and research questions

Our aim is to gather experiences of foreign students. Secondly, is to find out their perceptions of CaringTV concept. The research question is 'what the experiences of foreign students about CaringTV are' and 'what the opinions of foreign student about CaringTV concept.'

4.4   Qualitative study and constructive interview method

Qualitative research methods and SWOT-analysis were used in this study, focused interviews for collecting data. Qualitative research method was chosen in the beginning to present true, subjective, rich and deep data. Qualitative research method differs from quantitative research method notably. Quantitative research method is in numerical form and collected data can be used to form graphs and tables. Qualitative research method is particularly useful for students, it teaches them to think profoundly about way people feel and think. In qualitative research method study is based on words e.g. interviews, questionnaires and diaries. The

qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations. (Kvale 1996:1)

The reason why we choose qualitative research method is its focus on 'insider' perspective; we aim to find out what are the foreign students' experiences and perception about CaringTV concept. For instance, how do experiences affect their study? How do foreign student's experiences influence the elderly peoples' lives? We focus on people's voices and views. Interactive interview was conducted to gather real and deep data. We don't suppose to seek facts or causes of social phenomena. Qualitative research method tends to have a process of exploring unexpected things. Foreign students who have participated in CaringTV are the first time as a target group to be interviewed. We would find out lots of valuable data from this study.

Qualitative research method usually has been described as respondent or member categories are kept to the foreground throughout the research. (Shaw 2002:6) Qualitative research is interpretive. (Shaw 2002:7) The research method is concerned with understanding behavior from actors' own frames of reference. It provides subjective, close to the data: the 'insider' perspective, grounded, discovery oriented, exploratory, and expansionist, descriptive, inductive, process oriented, valid: real, rich, deep data. (Blaxter 2010:66)

Quantitative research tends to involve relatively large-scale and representative sets of data, and is often, falsely in our view, presented or perceived as being about the gathering of 'facts'. Qualitative research, on the other hand, is concerned with collecting and analyzing information in as many forms, chiefly non-numeric, as possible. It tends to focus on exploring, in as much detail as possible, smaller numbers of instances or examples which are seen as being interesting or illuminating, and aims to achieve 'depth' rather than 'breadth'. (Blaxter 2010:65) A qualitative approach is valuable where issues or problems are poorly understood, it is important to discover how a scheme was actually implemented, or where an evaluator wants to know about people's subjective experience of outcomes. (Fortune 2010:32)
Relate to our study

One aim of qualitative research is to ensure that voices that may otherwise be silent or obscured are heard. This means that ways of including the researchers' voices in the presentation of the work have to be found. At the same time the voices of the participants and all others involved in the research also have to be heard. (Frost 2011:161)

Analysis of data in qualitative research is more complicated than in quantitative research because of its descriptive nature which makes the data hard to analyze. We chose content analysis to get the opportunity to thoroughly look into the content, go through the interview and

analyze CaringTV concept through foreign students' interviews. For the future development of CaringTV this data will be beneficial. We use SWOT- analysis which is the most common method in qualitative research studies.

4.5   Data collecting and analysis method

4.5.1   Forming the interview questions

The process of forming interview questions for our study was complex and took quite a bit of time from our thesis process. In the beginning of forming the interview questions we came up with a list of questions quite quickly but realized at a later stage that the questions did not serve the purpose of our study in depths. Some of the questions took as further away from our study subject and therefore a lot the process was defining the questions.

During the process of forming our questions we had to change many of them. Our research title had also changed just before we finished our questions. It was more appropriate to also adjust and edit the questions so that they would serve the correct purpose for our study. Questions that we used for our participants required no personal information. We decided to keep out interviews anonymous before starting this process. Allowing participants to answer without their personal information increases openness and creates positive atmosphere for the interview sessions.

4.5.2   Implementing the interviews

For this study, altogether nine interviews were carried out. Six interviews were recorded by iPod Voice Memos App and three online interviews were recorded by Skype Power Gramo recording software. One participant didn't want her interview to be recorded. Permission to do the interview with the participants and settling time and place required notice ahead before the interviews should happen. We always asked the permission to from interviewees and explain the confidentiality issues for recording in the beginning. Only one participant didn't accept our recording requests. Interviews were implemented in school scenario, at home and via Skype.

Four interviews happened in participants' homes according to their wishes. Home is a personal space, safe and quite. Two interviews took place spontaneously as the student's and interviewer were at school. Because participants had received a letter to participate in our study and were asked to be interviewed, spontaneity was expected. School is a familiar surrounding to all our participants and that is why they chose to be interviewed there. Three online interviews were implemented through Skype according to participants' wishes.

Participants had been informed in time before the interview took place. A letter was sent to foreign students in order to explain the importance of their participation for our study. Participants were given information about our study topic as well, where and how we would keep their interview data and how we would dispose it after the study was over. Interviews were also informed that interviews and participating in our study requires no personal data and that their privacy will be secured as we collect data

Seven interviews lasted approximately twenty five minutes each and two one-hour interviews; the word by word transcription took approximately 5 hours. Since we were all foreign students, English was our common language. The language of the interviews was English. In the beginning, seven short interviews were done with fifteen questions as we planned. We realized about the length of each interview did not match the requirement of qualitative research method. We started to do another two in-depth interviews with twenty seven questions. As we all now, interviewing is not easy and many researchers have found it difficult to strike the balance between complete objectivity and trying to put the interviewee at ease. It is difficult to know how these difficulties can be overcome, though honesty about the purpose of the research and integrity in the conduct of the interview will all help. (Bell 2010:171) We had pleasant interactions with all the participants. They said interview had a relaxing and positive atmosphere. Our interviews went smoothly without any disturbance, such as, mobile phones or strangers.

We used digital recorder and recording software means that we need only concentrate on the process of the interview. We could focus your attention on the interviewee; gave appropriate eye contact and non-verbal communication. Interviewers will have a verbatim record of the whole interview. It can be particularly helpful if you are attempting any form of content analysis and need to be able to listen several times in order to identify categories but perhaps it can be most useful because it allows you to code, summarize and to note comments which are of particular interest without having to try to write them down during the course of the interview. (Blaxter 2010:194) The recorded interviews support us to concentrate better on respondents and to analyze data details later.

4.5.3 Participants

Nine interviews were consisted of nine participants. The participants should meet the requirements as following; they had created program in CaringTV, foreign student, interest in participating in our thesis topic. Because of the schedule and availability, nine foreign students confirmed with us in the end.

The average age of the participant is 25 year-old. They came from Germany (n=2), Cameroon, USA, Romania, Russia, Japan, South Korea and Austria. Participants represented different cul-

tures. Eight participants were foreign students studying English degree programs in Laurea currently. One has just graduated from Laurea whose thesis was about creative methods used in CaringTV programs. Four participants have made more than five programs and the rest have made only one program. They all have planned and implemented programs in the form of group. CaringTV was the first time for each one to make program in public media.

4.5.4 Data collection

We used focused interview to collect our data. Interviews took place face-to-face or through software such as Skype when students are at a distance. Distant interviews will allow us to include all participants. Our interviews are structured with pre-planned questions, categories that we go through during the interview and also a letter in advance to tell the participants what to expect from the interview. Each interview was completed by one of us. We divided amount of interviews because of interviewees' busy schedules.

Focused interview method involves questioning or discussing issues with people. It can be a very useful technique for collecting data which would likely not be accessible using techniques such as observation or questionnaires. (Blaxter 2010:193) Questionnaire is not suitable for this study in order to collect detailed data about personal experience. An experience is abstract that cannot be easily explained and presented by numbers. But an individual interview offers us to talk with each interviewee carefully about each question. Moser and Kalton (1971: 271) described the survey interview as 'a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent'. (Bell 2010:161) They argued advantage of using interview that is the reason why we select focused interview not group interview.

Focused interviews suits this study needs the most. All the interviews are instructed in the beginning. Unstructured interviews centered round a topic may, and in skilled hands do, produce a wealth of valuable data but such interviews require a great deal of expertise to control and a great deal of time to analyze. Conversation about a topic may be interesting and may produce useful insights into a problem, but it has to be remembered that an interview is more than just an interesting conversation. (Bell 2010:164) Our purpose is to find people's experiences and ideas.

4.5.5 Data analysis

We used content analysis which is the most common method in qualitative research studies. Content analysis method allows the researcher to narrow down large amount of data systematically. Content analysis allows us to make links between different answers we receive from the participants. A hundred separate pieces of interesting information will mean nothing to a researcher or to a reader unless they have been categorized and interpreted. (Bell 2010: 211) The data is collected from nine participants and that brings in a lot of information to analyze.

We chose content analysis to be able to summarize the data and objectively evaluate it. Content analysis is convenient for analyzing the data systematically. Contents analysis fits also quantitative researches because the results can be given in percentages and number i.e. 27%. For qualitative research it gives the objectivity and allows linking the data. Content shows the number of times the same word or theme comes up and from this can be concluded similarities of the respondents in the study. Because the study is a small scale study we cannot make any generalizations about the findings. Further research is required before it is appropriate to draw general conclusions.

All the nine interviews are digitally recorded. Most of the interview questions are open-ended questions. We received a lot of information from the interviews. Opened-ended questions produce a mass of data which has not been pre-coded. Coding after the event is the necessary to categories the replies and to find order among what may seem like chaos. (Hall 1996) We planned three themes of data we would like to gather; experiences working in the CaringTV, perceptions of CaringTV concept and future development before the actual interviews started. All the questions were answered by every participant.

The classical content analysis comprises techniques for reducing texts to a unit-by-variable matrix and analyzing that matrix qualitatively to test hypotheses. (Norman 2000: 785) The word used most in the answers describes the highest concern that students have about CaringTV. According to Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2002: 105), content analysis produces relevant conclusions, not results. (Kotamäki 2009: 35) Firstly, all the transcribed data were hand written on the paper. We wrote everything down while listening to the records. We often paused the recording if participant's idea was controversial and never be heard about. This was what expert said qualitative research gave us unexpected data. Then, we spent a long time to analyze why participants responded in that way. How did their answers related to our study? Secondly, we started to pick up the key words mentioned by most of the participants. Summarizing data into different categories is the key part in analyzing data process.

According to what was mutually being agreed to be the most relevant data, ten sub-groups were first created and decided to keep: "Overall working experiences in CaringTV studio" and "Perceptions of CaringTV concept" belonged to "Unique learning experiences" theme. "Improved skills and self-confidence" and "Intercultural communication with the elderly" were under the theme "Empowering the elderly and students". "CaringTV as an essential tool" and "perceptions of Finnish elderly" belonged to "Understanding of aging" theme. Disadvantages of CaringTV concept were also mentioned by all the participants "Length of programs", "The cost", "Language obstacles", "Promotions and advertisements" were agreed to belong to "Limitation of CaringTV concept" theme. At its most useful, the process of establishing cate-

gories is a very close, intense conversation between a researcher and the data that has implications for ongoing method, descriptive reporting, and theory building. (Ely 1991: 87) In the end, the findings were divided into four themes in this study; unique learning experiences, empowering the elderly and students, understanding of aging and limitation of CaringTV concept.

One aim of qualitative research is to ensure that voices that may otherwise be silent or obscured are heard. This means that ways of including the researchers' voices in the presentation of the work have to be found. At the same time the voices of the participants and all others involved in the research also have to be heard. (Frost 2011:161) In the interviews foreign students had the possibility to share their views openly and give feedback or constructive criticism. Foreign students had unlimited freedom to express themselves and this is something important in a qualitative research. Giving their perceptions about CaringTV a voice was to empower them and to get the accurate data from the foreign students directly.

Analysis of data in qualitative research is different from quantitative research when it comes to the complexity during the analysis process. In content analysis of qualitative research the style used is descriptive, thus it makes the large data complex to analyze. We chose content analysis to get the opportunity to thoroughly look into the content, go through the nine interviews and analyze the data specifically. CaringTV concept through foreign students' interviews brings new insight perspectives to develop the concept. For the future development of CaringTV this data will be beneficial and can be used in various of ways: how to design curriculums for foreign students in Laurea, how to involve foreign students more in CaringTV and also how do foreign students actually see CaringTV as a concept and as part of their future. These are examples of what the content analysis will possibly find from the data.

4.5.6 Publication

The study will be published for CaringTV staff and administrators. Secondly, the study findings will be used in future development of CaringTV. Primary publication of our thesis will remain with staff and facilitators of CaringTV.

5 Findings

5.1 Themes

The study consisted of four themes generalized from nine focused interviews which were: unique learning experiences, empowering the elderly and students, and understanding of aging and limitation of CaringTV concept. Unique learning experiences showed working in CaringTV was an experiential learning process. Students had the very first learning experience with CaringTV which brought many thoughts of virtual care concept. Working with the elderly, planning and implementing CaringTV program was an anti-oppressive practice for foreign students. Elderly were also empowered by showing interest and wishes to watch more programs

about foreign cultures. CaringTV as a kind of welfare technology aimed to solve aging issues. Students gained better understanding of aging and how they could devote themselves to solve aging issues. However, there were some disadvantages of recent development for foreign students. CaringTV concept needs to be developed constantly in Finland so as to meet the needs of both internal and external cooperation.

5.2 Unique learning experiences

It was the brand new and very first experience for every foreign student to communicate with elderly by using welfare technology. All the participants felt happy and satisfied with implementation of the each program. They had new experiences and enjoyed themselves. Except one student said her experiences was OK. The rest had positive attitudes towards CaringTV experience.

> "I really enjoy my CaringTV experience. The program was a success. I feel nervous in the beginning and relaxed at last. Overall, it was quite nice, challenging experience for me."(P.1)

> "Well it was okay, not enthusiastic but from scale of 1-10 I would give a six. But it wasn't bad either. CaringTV is something very new for me. I don't have this kind of experience before."(P.7)

Not everyone felt relaxed and calm to communicate with people in a studio setting at first. It was a unique environment which no one had experienced before. One participant said her reaction facing the media.

> "I am not so into media. Having people watching me, I saw them. I was quite cautious."(P.3)

All the foreign students thought CaringTV was an interesting and inspired concept. They all liked the concept very much. Interactive virtual communication with the elderly had never be heard or seen in any of participants' countries. CaringTV was a kind of welfare technology. Welfare technology concept was also the first time they have ever known.

> "It was a very interesting concept that interacts with people all the time. Interacting with other people for the elderly was very important. I do love the concept."(P.5)

For many students, CaringTV staff was the only information provider who played a positive role in most of foreign student's program. Some participants mentioned about CaringTV

staff's positive working attitude. Students became more motivated in making programs. Foreign students who did not have many contacts with teachers were also a new experience for them to get help and encouragement.

> "The CaringTV staff is very supportive and open-minded. She gives us tips how to do a better program but not to tell us what we have to do. She is always helping me." (P.2)

Foreign students had a chance to watch the CaringTV program before they implemented their own programs. Students as observes learned from other people's experiences. Several participants who had watched CaringTV program said the importance of roles hosts played. A good leader was the key of a successful program. Students learned the communication skills to the elderly in the virtual program.

> "It is not always very good programs. She talked so flatly. It is boring for her and elderly people. Content is sometimes not as important as leader. What kind of message leader sends to them is important."(P.6)

5.3 Empowering the elderly and students

All the foreign students had developed skills through their experiences, such as, language skills, communication skills, social skills, self-esteem and self-confidence. Those students who stayed in Finland only for a short period of time only spoke English in the whole program, but they all tried to introduce themselves in Finnish. Every one mentioned making the CaringTV program was also a process of Finnish language lesson. Their interests of studying Finnish language increased a lot. They had much stronger wishes to learn the language better and realized how important to speak Finnish with the elderly. Some foreign students lacked information about how to talk with elderly; they felt nervous talking with the people much older than them in the beginning, after they worked with the elderly in CaringTV. They had learned how to communicate with the elderly in a confident tone.

> "I don't feel comfortable to talk with the elderly before. I don't know how to hold being respectful and disrespectful. The elderly are friendly and talkative. I feel more confident now to talk with them."(P.4)

> "I was a shy person, now I feel more confident to guide a group of clients. I feel relaxing to talk the elderly. Of course I improved

my Finnish a lot. It is very important to talk with them in Finnish."(P.2)

The content of the programs was not always about culture. But foreign students attracted more attention than content itself. The elderly clients always asked foreign students about their traditions, customs, and life habits and so on. Several students told that the elderly didn't know about other cultures, but they were so interested to learn more from foreign students. The elderly were eager to learn knowledge from outside world.

"Some of them are too old to move around. Maybe they don't have enough money to travel to other countries. They ask how elderly people's life in Africa. Sharing the knowledge of cultures with the elderly is important."(P.3)

All the foreign students said elderly people always showed a lot interest and wishes to learn about new knowledge. Elderly people's reaction was important message to foreign students as well. Thus, every participant looked forward to have more experiences in CaringTV with the elderly people discussing their culture issues, daily life and interesting topics. It was a two-way empowering process for both foreign students and the elderly.

"They asked us a lot questions about our cultures. For them, they don't have many opportunities to talk with young people. It was a refreshing experience for the elderly. I became so motivated after their warm reaction" (P.5)

5.4   Understanding of aging

The interaction with the Finnish elderly people has influenced everyone's perceptions about aging. None of the foreign students have created any activity for the Finnish elderly. It was their first to talk with them. Most of the foreign student did not think CaringTV clients were active and interested in their programs. After they worked in the CaringTV studio, they changed their views about the elderly peoples' degree of enthusiasm. Foreign students were all impressed about good atmosphere during the whole process.

"I don't expect elderly people are so active and positive. They are open-minded. They waited for us before the program started. They never say why it is not a Finnish student come to talk with us. They danced and singed with us. They actively participated into the program."(P.1)

Most of the participants in foreign students' programs were elderly people. They all pointed out that Finnish elderly were lonely. There did not have any family members around. Everyone here is individual. There was no collectiveness in the community.

> "Here in Finland, many elderly lived at home alone. No children took care of them. The elderly didn't get a lot of support from family members."(P.8)

> "But maybe from the aspect of networking, it is not. Elderly people are surrounded by others here and there. They may get support. People don't put their parents to nursing home easily. Finnish elderly people is bit isolated."(p.9)

Five foreign students think Finnish elderly people have better life than people in their home countries. One student mentioned from the materialism point of view. Finnish elderly people lived in a better environment and richer.

> "Elderly people's life is much, much better than my country."(P.5)

> "Pension is higher than my country, Germany. More resource is provided here for the elderly than in my country. They have more support from government. Cities provide them health care, housing and other services. " (p.1)

Eight participants said that CaringTV was a good solution for the aging issues. Most of the CaringTV programs created by the young students those people they didn't contact very often in the daily life. One participant mentioned that elderly people put on makeup and wore beautiful clothing before the programs. They met new people and integrated to society more.

> "They didn't have a lot of contacts with young people. Thus, CaringTV maybe like the only window to outside world for the elderly. Elderly were happy and talk actively with new friends they met."(P.4)

5.5   Limitation of CaringTV concept

In most of foreign students' points of view, the cost of using CaringTV as a virtual care was a problem. Most of them believed that ordinary elderly people were unable to afford by themselves. It was more beneficial to install in the place where a large number of elderly live to-

gether like nursing home. Some students mentioned that the amount of the elderly was limited for the programs. One foreign student said it was not suitable to be applied in her country. Six students agreed that there were many possibilities to apply in their countries. Finical support and social environment are two key issues to consider.

> "Yes, CaringTV can be applied in my country. I will carry the ideas back home. I wish I could have means to make programs for the family, for example, technology, money and so on. Nursing home is more suitable than private home from the cost point of view."(P.3)

> "I think money is the problem that not every elderly can use CaringTV. CaringTV is expensive for the elderly."(P.4)

Everyone emphasized that time was so limited. Time is an issue. A 30-minute talking program was such hurry. It was too short time to complete the whole program. Everyone wished to have more chances to produce programs.

> "We prepared four songs that I worried about there will be a lot of free time. Elderly people like talking and asking questions. We were run of time. We don't have enough time to say everything we want. Elderly people are more talkative than I think."(P.6)

Most of the foreign students pointed out that promotion of CaringTV were not enough. There was so little advertisement about CaringTV in Laurea. Information was not shared to the students about the possibilities of developing and producing CaringTV programs in order to earn credits.

> "I only know CaringTV through our class. I have not seen any advertisement. Laurea should let more and more students to know CaringTV. I don't get any information about making program to earn credits. We can promote CaringTV when we go to a practice placement."(P.3)

Five students had made only one program hoped that they would have more chances for creating programs. They all emphasized that a variety of programs was needed. There should be different types of programs. Everyone thought a variety of programs was needed. School could have projects for foreign students to make programs in English.

"We can make some English programs. They like our programs. They are interested in talking with foreign students. We only need to find a Finnish speaking student. Laurea could have more school projects."(P.3)

"One program is not enough. I would like to make more programs and talk with the elderly about my cultures, religions and so on. People from different countries in Laurea can present their culture."(P.9)

Finnish was the only language used in CaringTV officially. All the Foreign students found language was a barrier but not the main problem to overcome. One student mentioned the content of program and the attitudes of hosts were more important than speaking fluent Finnish. If there was one Finnish speaking person in the team, there will be no communications problems. However, some students said speaking Finnish helps them to express what they really think.

"I don't speak Finnish very well. But we have one Finnish student to translate. There is no problem. I tried to say simple Finnish. If I don't consider the language, I would involve more. Language helps me to express what I want."(P.7)

6   Ethics and reliability

Trustworthiness and reliability of a qualitative research requires knowledge, ability to interlink theories and good methodical practice. A qualitative research reflects its purpose through academic writing and knowledge centered research. Recognition of previous studies, having practiced transparency throughout the thesis and openness are the key elements of a qualitative research.

Quantitative research engages validity and reliability rather than qualitative research. In that sense unless a research shows needs of quantitative research, validity and reliability should be replaced with evaluation of trustworthiness and reliability in qualitative research. In discussing of the reliability of the thesis key aspect is: can the findings be re-discovered in a similar research? This will show if the findings of the thesis are accurate.

Evaluation of trustworthiness should involve following aspects: object and purpose of the study, data collection, participant's in the study, length of the process of the study and data analysis and submitting the findings. These aspects are the main points of the thesis thus

evaluate the trustworthiness of the thesis. Thesis should provide enough information so that the reader can evaluate the thesis work.

We evaluated our thesis following the previously mentioned aspects. We look at our thesis at a whole after looking at different aspects of the study and it is preferable to evaluate in this manner. We have been evaluating our process since the beginning and it has kept us focused in our subject. The whole duration of the study was four months. We searched many information and relevant literature before we started to write thesis. We discussed the thesis topic with CaringTV staff and she completely with what we would like to write. All the participants were informed by an informative letter before the interviews start. Locations of interviews were according to participants' preferences. The open-ended questions gave students freedom to talk. We never lead the interview or asked complicated, unnecessary questions. During the data collection, we analyzed the data together. We divided our work but we always checked what the other wrote and added new contents.

This thesis was finished in a short period of time. We all stick to the strict timetable arranged before the thesis started. Due to some external circumstances made the study delayed for some time. However, we overcame the cooperation and communication difficulties in the last phrase of the study. Finally, each of us devoted all the efforts enable our study back to normal. It was also a precious learning experience for both of us.

Our research is first of its kind and our aim of thesis is unique. Our thesis is also small in scale and covers only an area of this topic. Researches related to ours in the future can involve more areas of this subject through coming developments. As mentioned our thesis is a small scale research therefore we can not draw any general conclusions for this subject. A lot of future research is required to get the accurate findings that will repeat again and again in similar thesis works.

It is fundamental for the qualitative research to have reliable sources because it supports the trustworthiness of the study. Our study was a small scale study and it involved seven participants. Our mission was to find out the experiences foreign students had about CaringTV and how they would develop CaringTV concept. Our mission was accomplished and the information we looked to find is in our data. This shows that our study is reliable as our data matches our initial mission.

7   Discussions

7.1   Experiences of working in CaringTV

All the interviews were anonymous providing maximum freedom of speech and open atmosphere. Purpose of the thesis was to gather the experiences that foreign students have about

CaringTV and how they would develop CaringTV concept in the future. Foreign students in Laurea create programs for CaringTV as a part of their study program. Foreign students in Laurea were given a turn to speak about their experiences openly in our interviews for the first time therefore our thesis is the unique. Students were supported by CaringTV staff. All of our interviewees were satisfied with the help CaringTV staff provided. Although initially students were reserved about the CaringTV concept, the program and interaction with the elderly, after the first program they were much more positive and wanted to create more programs. All our interviewees had positive experience with CaringTV and creating programs for the elderly.

Students had a learning experience through CaringTV in which they developed many of their own personal skills. Students also changed attitudes towards the elderly. Before they created programs for the elderly they felt intimidated to approach an elderly. Many of the foreign students did not know how to address and interact with the elderly but they had a change of attitude after the first program. Beard (2006) said "Experience is the child of Thought, and Thought is the child of Action – we cannot learn men from books." This is similar to how foreign student changed their attitude after first interaction with the elderly. Elderly were interested in the foreign students and their programs and atmosphere was positive.

All our interviewees represented another culture that was unfamiliar to the elderly in CaringTV. This was a great deal of interest for the elderly and they expressed their satisfaction towards the programs that foreign student created for them. Interaction between the elderly and the foreign students was good regardless the lack of common language. Intercultural differences were the key to success of the programs by the foreign students: diversity and livelihood of the programs awoke the elderly's attention. Elderly and the student exchanged information, experiences and support both ways. It is not always language that combines people and we agree to what Pekka Ruohotie (2006) said "The process of communication includes these three behaviors of both communicator and audience: perception, retention, and expression." Elderly in CaringTV enjoyed learning about different cultures and CaringTV provided a window to the outside world for the elderly.

Through the intercultural communication in CaringTV program, foreign students had much deeper impression about aging in Finland. Other than language intercultural communication also looks at interaction. How people from different cultures behave, what is custom to a culture and patterns and seeks to understand these aspects. The study get a conclusion that a lot of Finnish elderly people are disconnected and family relationship is relatively loose compared with Germany, Austria, Romania, etc. In fact, CaringTV is an effective method to solve the aging issues mentioned above.

Population is aging all over the world. Aging is already a global issue. On the 90th anniversary of her independence Finland has the world's fastest ageing population. The Baby Boomers are retiring, and the lengthened life expectancy will increase the size of the elderly population in the coming years. (Statistics Finland 2007) This year, the number of persons aged 65 or over in Finland exceeded one million in July. (Statistics Finland 2012) Finland faced a harsh reality that who will take care of such a large of elderly. CaringTV as a form of welfare technology provides virtual care for the elderly living at home longer and safer. We should use more and more advanced welfare technology to solve aging issues due to lack of staff and growing aging population, meanwhile, we cannot only depends on technology and neglect face to face contacts.

Beard (2006) said learning from experience is one of the most fundamental and natural means of learning available to everyone. The entire participants of our interview are deeply impressed about their experience. Laurea foreign students are introduced to CaringTV concept through a course in one study program during the second year of their studies. The ideology behind the concept arouses their interests towards CaringTV program and working with the elderly by creating programs for them and empowering them.

7.2   Perceptions about CaringTV concept

Foreign students shared their attitude towards CaringTV concept in the interviews and all of them said that CaringTV as a concept is interesting. Students learned from the elderly and were empowered by them as much the elderly learned from the students and were empowered as well. Our findings support theories of empowerment such as Heumann (2000) who wrote that "Effective deliberation and moral reflection related to empowerment suggests that older persons and their families can benefit from support when making decisions about services.

Because most of the foreign students do not speak Finnish language fluently a Finn student or staff is needed during the broadcast of the program. Language however was not a main problem for the foreign students whilst creating the programs. Naturally a common language would have given students more opportunities for creativeness and interaction with the elderly. What was positive was the feedback elderly gave about the foreign students. Most of the students shared the positive attitude of the elderly with us in the interviews. Students were able to create programs for the elderly without the common language because the programs included body language, expressions, action and music. Like Pekka Ruohotie (2006) said, "The process of communication includes these three behaviors of both communicator and audience: perception, retention, and expression."

During the programs that students provided for the elderly, students noticed that it takes time for the elderly to process the questions they have been asked or to share their own experiences with the students. We discussed that elderly need time more then they get at the moment for the CaringTV programs. In many occasions time was not sufficient to give each elderly an opportunity to participate in the interaction. Instead of the empowerment and support that elderly were meant to get from CaringTv program, insufficient time prevents the maximum benefits from the programs with the students.

We discussed Laurea's role in involving foreign students into CaringTV concept. All of the students in our interviews showed a great deal unawareness about CaringTV in Laurea and how they can take more part in it. The staff of CaringTV share same concerns but they would like more advertise about CaringTV so that students would get more information. Teachers who teach foreign students of Laurea hold an important position in developing this part of CaringTV. Teachers have the position to inform and involve students and to include creating programs for CaringTV in the curriculum. However, Finn students participate more in CaringTV and create more programs for the elderly, because it is in their curriculum. As a part of Laurea, CaringTV will benefit from future development that will come from foreign students of Laurea, if designed better.

Despite the aspects of experiential learning, empowerment and intercultural communication, perception of aging from foreign students 'experiences, we also get conclusions that the cost of having CaringTV as virtual care is high for ordinary family. Promotion of CaringTV is so little that it should be spread more by Laurea. Foreign students would like to carry the ideas back to their countries to develop CaringTV concept so as to be localized.

7.3   Future development of CaringTV

Foreign students shared similar experiences with one another but there were differences between students from different countries when we discussed views for future development of CaringTV. In our thesis we discussed what students learned through experiencing CaringTV. Students had common opinions about several of factors that need to be considered in the future development of CaringTV. Main factor was time. All the students discussed about the short time they had for the programs and how much difference it would have made to have twice as much time. Students felt that they could not go through their full program for the elderly but had to leave many parts out because of lack of time. Time was a topic that came up in the interviews many times with each student.

Time is also an important key of development for CaringTV because the elderly only get limited amount of programs. Therefore if the programs are short, the elderly will not be benefitting from the method of CaringTV as much as they could. Piirainen and Sarikoski (2008) said

"Experience showed that students increased not only the student's competence in elderly care, but also their interest in working with the elderly. Our thesis concludes the along the same lines. Using technology with the elderly i.e. through CaringTV program provides support, empowerment, activities and interaction for the elderly. By increasing the duration of each program the elderly would benefit more and enjoy CaringTV more also.

Elderly in Finland were suffered from loneliness and lack of family surrounding them. Our interviewees saw the differences between their home country and elderly there compared to elderly in Finland. All of our foreign interviewees saw elderly in Finland as isolated and disconnected members of the society. In their country i.e. in Germany, Canada, Russia and Cameron all said that elderly are attached with the family. Family concept in other countries varied. In Cameron i.e. family includes extended family and is therefore very large and can include the nearby community member. In Canada and Germany family concept is quite similar to family concept in Finland. In Russia one interesting aspect of elderly and families came up. Our interviewee said that due to financial expenses it is preferable to live with family rather than alone; elderly living with their family members.

General knowledge about welfare, what is welfare technology and quality of life for elderly in student's home country played a significant role in their input to our thesis. Students who gained a lot experience and held great deal of knowledge already before our interview about welfare technology, what it means and information about their home country, gave us informative interview. Students who lacked depth in their information about their home country could only inform as little but they were familiar with welfare technology concept. There were students in our interview who came from welfare states, in which welfare technology is being used, but they lacked the general knowledge about their home country. As a conclusion we found out that the level of knowledge about a student's home country plays a significant part in their ability to develop CaringTV concept.

Client groups who use welfare technology which CaringTV is based on are two groups: elderly and disabled. Those two are the largest today. Elderly who also have limitations to their physical movements can be future clients of CaringTV because it will provide the assistance they need to be more active. CaringTV as a method can be used in many ways and by taking the concept and adapting to another country, city. All over the world, the elderly and the disable as well as other client groups to whom CaringTV concept can be applied to can benefit from the methods of CaringTV. Like any other concept CaringTV can also be applied elsewhere. In China and Japan it is already being applied.

In our interviews we discussed about the elderly chosen for CaringTV. Student's shared the same opinion about the elderly and said they were energetic and active. Elderly were inter-

ested in the programs which foreign student's created. One student said that the elderly who participate in CaringTV programs are well and happy. Is this positive attitude among the elderly in CaringTV programs something they always had? Or is it development progress that came from activities that elderly enjoyed in CaringTV? In case of the elderly being in this state of happiness and wellbeing we question whether these elderly clients need CaringTV or not. There are those who would benefit more from support and activities that CaringTV provides such as clients who cannot manage or move around by themselves. CaringTV is suitable for clients who would benefit from the use of CaringTV method to assist them more in daily activities.

There are many elderly who live in poor conditions and have much less help provided for them. Elderly who manage much less on their own and for example have limitations in moving inside their own homes. Participants of CaringTV are active and happy therefore we question if they are those who need CaringTV most? CaringTV method and empowerment and support it provides for the elderly can be used for elderly who are in worse conditions to recover them. Elderly who are in good condition should come after those who really need more support and interaction from others. Selecting clients more broadly is something that CaringTV can develop in the future.

From the findings we get the conclusions that students are enthusiastic about creating programs, CaringTV is a good and interesting concept. They have been empowered by the elderly that foreign students are motivated and eager to plan another program as soon as one is finished. Students have improved their social, Language and communication skills.

Empowerment in practice is a process of guiding an individual and increasing their ability to make their own choices. In our society individuals are expected to know and understand their needs. But this does not apply to everyone. Some people are in need of empowerment because they lack to define and act upon their needs. The elderly people are empowered as well that they are willing to learn more new knowledge, such as, different cultures, ethnicities and traditions and so on. They wish to take active part in the CaringTV programs. They expressed wishes to the foreign students.

The language barrier prevented them from most activities with the elderly. Language is always the obstacle in creating international concepts and involving foreign students to take part like in CaringTV in Finland. Time is another shortcoming. Time is always limited and 30-minute program is so short. Since Finnish elderly were very eager to ask questions, foreign students didn't have enough time to finish the original plan. Students feel that they should have more than one program in CaringTV. More opportunities are desperately requested.

We are the first to focus on foreign students' perceptions about their CaringTV experience and its future development; how foreign students can participate in developing CaringTV more. Their voices and perceptions about CaringTV concept was first heard also. All the findings cannot be absolutely show every aspect of experiences in CaringTV programs, perception of CaringTV concept, aging and future development. More participants should be included in this study. We can add more interview questions, for instance, how to solve the high cost of CaringTV? How would you make CaringTV concept localized in your country?

This is only a small scale of study. In order to get more reliable findings and information, more studies can be conducted relate to experiences and perceptions; what foreign students want to learn most from CaringTV, how CaringTV experience influenced on the foreign students' future development, how CaringTV create more English programs? Despite the inadequacies of this study, we proved the CaringTV concept was good, foreign students have pleasant experiences, the concept can be applied to other countries, Finnish elderly are eager to know students from other cultures, more advertisements, a longer program time.

Our thesis reached its aim. We found the experiences of foreign students and we found out what they would do to develop CaringTV in the future. During our interviews our participants increased knowledge about CaringTV and Laurea, i.e. how to be more involved and create programs for CaringTV. Staff in CaringTV were interested to hear about our findings and to hear what foreign students had experienced and how they liked CaringTV.

We learned many things during our thesis project about students and different perceptions that they had. What was most important lesson was the key to successful CaringTV experience and that atmosphere. A positive atmosphere where each party involved can have a good experience. For future recommendation this kind of study should involve more students. Since this was the first thesis about foreign student's experiences, in the next researches more can be included about the development of CaringTV since our research.

7.4   Evaluation of the research process

We began our final thesis process in early autumn with interest for CaringTV concept. We both shared experience with CaringTV through creating programs since 2009. The initial plan of this study was how CaringTV can be implemented in Shanghai, China. Due to some factors, we had to change our study topic. Focus was on the students experience in CaringTV because there is no previous thesis project about the topic. We both have worked with elderly in previous stages of my life and we have found it valuable. Elderly are group of people in our society that sometimes is neglected or unappreciated. We believe in equal rights for all age groups and respect towards humanity. Unfortunately the elderly feel stripped from their dignity in many occasions. For example depression among the elderly is increasing and more el-

ders suffer from depression among other old age illnesses but are left to struggle alone. We prefer supporting independent living for elderly individuals but when we compare it to elderly care homes we found good qualities in shared facilities.

When an elder is sharing living with other elderly in care homes the advantages are company, supported living and professionals who work with the elderly. This does not mean every old person should be put to a care home because there are many who manage independently in their own homes. That type of elderly group would benefits from programs such as CaringTV. It is important to invest in tools to work with the elderly people such as CaringTV concept but unfortunately it is also a matter of financial which the municipalities have to decide on. Although less money is spent on providing one elderly with CaringTV set than money spent on other assistant instead, the municipalities fail to recognize the value of CaringTV.

All in all, this bachelor thesis was able to find out some foreign students' experiences about CaringTV, how CaringTV concept can be developed in the future in their point of view, how they see CaringTV as a concept, what are their common and different perception. This study was also able to reflect findings to the aim of CaringTV concept and to some theories of empowerment, intercultural communication and experiential learning. Our study is only consisted of nine participants and CaringTV programs are only produced in Laurea University of applied science by Laurea foreign students. The conclusions can't be generalized from limited amount of data, but content analysis approach supported us to find out some commonalities from the highest amount of duplicates.

We have devoted new information to the future development of CaringTV for staffs from seven critical and trustful interviews. The administration of CaringTV can get some valuable advices and suggestions to provide more opportunities for all the students, especially foreign students. Under the operating model learning by developing (LbD), Laurea has organized many events, such as, annual international conferences, Kampii Show Room, Breaking the Ice and World Design Capital innovative service design activities and so on. There will be more and more foreign students studying in Laurea. Nowadays, CaringTV is actively in looking for cooperation opportunities outside Finland so as to spread the influence of Finnish welfare technology in elderly care field. In 2010 Shanghai world Expo, CaringTV has been successfully created a live program between Shanghai and Finland. CaringTV was warmly welcome by Shanghai elderly people. Thus, CaringTV concept will be internationalized and commercialized in the future.

It is the first time that foreign students' experiences and perceptions related to CaringTV are presented to the public. This study acts the role as cornerstone for other students' studies

and brings out more interesting topics to write about. It also gives firm answers to administration of CaringTV that business plans can be developed in many foreign countries.

To sum up, we had a productive pair work process together. The pleasant working atmosphere and punctuality are the keys to the pair work. Also, being part of an intensive pair studying and supporting each other despite of our differences taught us a great deal about ourselves as professional study partners and about team work skills needed later on in our work places. It is a precious learning experience for both of us. We have learned how to conduct a serious and academic study and realized the importance of a well-organized thesis plan from such a small scale of study. It would be great if we have much more time to have more participants for our interviews and to analyze findings. We would better to enhance our interviewing skills, academic wiring skills, research skills and so on in the future. Besides teaching us about research process, this study has taught us aging is definitely a complicated issue all over the world, elderly people need more support and care from family, community and society, which gives us more motivations when entering the working life in elderly care work field. CaringTV concept should be promoted worldwide so that every elderly can stay at home longer and safer.

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Figures

Appendices
Appendix 1 Letter to the participants

Dear students,

We are students from Social Services Degree Program. We are working on our thesis called foreign students' perceptions about CaringTV. We would like to hear about your experience, views on CaringTV concept and how did the experience impact on your study? We are the first group to gather thoughts from foreign students and that is why we would like to hear your opinions on CaringTV, future development of CaringTV and how it can be used in foreign countries. CaringTV has been presented in China and Japan before; do you see possibilities to apply it in your home country?

Thank you for your part taking and sharing your valuable thoughts with us. This will be a great resource for the future development of CaringTV. We look forward to hearing your experience.

Best wishes,
Safia & Chao

Appendix 2 Questions for participants

Three main themes:

Foreign students' experiences

Foreign students' perceptions about CaringTV concept and future development

Foreign students' understanding of aging in Finland compared with their country

Did you enjoy your CaringTV experience?

Can you describe your experience of creating the programs?

What do you remember most about your experience with CaringTV; about elderly, about the staff or about the creating the programs?

What were your initial expectations from the elderly?

Did the elderly surprise or disappoint you?

Were the elderly hard to work with?

What did the elderly like about your program?

Did you get the help and information that you needed or were you left alone with the programs?

How were your feelings towards the staff in CaringTV studio and the teachers?

Would you like to do the programs differently?

What would you change now looking back at your programs?

What do you think about CaringTV concept before you make the program?

What is your view on CaringTV concept now?

Did your experience influence your opinion on CaringTV concept?

The CaringTV staff, teachers or working with elderly; which had the strongest influence on your thoughts about CaringTV concept and why?

What have you learned most from the CaringTV experience?

How do you describe the elderly people's life in Finland?

How do you compare the Finnish elderly people's life with the elderly in your country?

As a foreign student, what would you like to do to develop CaringTV?

How can CaringTV create more possibilities for foreign students?

Is CaringTV suitable to be applied in your country?

How would CaringTV be applied in your country?

What other experiences do you have about CaringTV?

Have you heard about welfare technology?

If yes, can you describe more about welfare technology in your country?

What are the difference and similarities compared with Finnish welfare technology?

Would like to add anything else?