

# Extramural English Activities

An investigation of upper secondary students' extramural English activities



Author: Anqi Huang

Supervisor: Dr. Henrik Gyllstad

Term: Fall 2016

Course: ÄENC51 English IV

Individual Research Project (15 hp)

English Teacher Education

Campus Helsingborg

## **Abstract**

English has become more accessible, thanks to globalization and advancement of technology. We are daily exposed to English in various ways, through technology and multimedia such as social media, Internet, video games, music or movies. This kind of engagement with English-related material is called “extramural English”, activities that one engages with outside of school. Previous studies have shown how children and teens engage with English activities outside of school. Sundqvist & Sylvén conducted a study on teenagers’ extramural English with focus on their computer use outside of school. In this study, the focus will be on upper secondary students’ extramural English and their attitude toward learning English from extramural English activities and in-class settings. Questionnaires were used to collect data from 74 students from 3 different classes. The result reveals that students come in contact with extramural English on a regular basis, compared to Sundqvist’s research (2014, 2008) it shows that the older they get, the more extramural English they get in contact with. The result also suggests that students are generally positive about how they are acquiring and learning English. It is important to point out that students today engage with much more English outside of school than in school, therefore English teachers should be aware of students’ extramural English, as it can help the teachers to discover students’ weaknesses and strengths in how they acquire language.

**Keywords:** Extramural English, upper secondary students, attitudes, activities

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Definition of Extramural English</i>	2
<i>English in Sweden</i>	3
<i>Learning English Outside of the Classroom</i>	5
<i>Previous Research</i>	6
<i>Research Questions</i>	9
<b>Method</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Material</i>	10
<i>Participants</i>	11
<i>Procedures</i>	11
<b>Results and Discussion</b>	<b>12</b>
<i>Students' Extramural English Activities</i>	12
Table 1. <i>Means and Standard Deviation on time student spend on extramural English</i>	13
Table 2. <i>displays extramural English activities in order of popularity</i>	14
<i>Students' Attitude toward Learning English</i>	15
Table 3. <i>shows students' answers on experience with learning English</i>	16
Table 4. <i>students on how much impact school has helped them on learning English (% of students answered)</i>	19
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
<i>Limitations of the Study</i>	20
<i>Suggestion for Further Research</i>	21
<b>References</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Appendix I</b>	<b>26</b>

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this study is to find out about upper secondary students' extramural English activities and their attitude toward learning English. Today, English is considered to be the lingua franca in many countries. The language has become more accessible and more available than before. Hult (2003) highlights Hyltenstam's point that the English language holds a strong position in the world, for instance English is used by European Union as a way of communication. English is frequently used in higher education, international business communication and high status interaction. Crystal (2003) explains that English has become a priority in many countries' foreign language teaching. It is taught in many countries and many non-native speakers choose to learn English as a foreign language in order to become more accessible on the international market. According to Hult (2003), English and Swedish have already started to settle side by side in terms of language status in Sweden. Swedish people are daily surrounded and exposed to English-related materials. Popular music, newly released movies and trending Youtube clips are all easily accessed through the Internet. One of the groups that are influenced by this is the student. Swedish Media Council presents a study that shows that 86% of children from age 9-12 have daily access to a smartphone. In the same study, it shows that 98% of teens from age 13-18 own a smartphone (2015). It is fair to assume that the children and teens that have more access to technology also have more opportunities to come in contact with extramural English. Technology has made it possible for billions of people to be connected simultaneously, which has created a fast-paced culture where new contents are uploaded every minute. Thanks to the immense exposure to English today many individuals' level of English has risen significantly. From my own experience, extramural English activities have helped me greatly in acquiring English, which further fuels my interest in this specific topic.

From the statistics presented by Swedish Media Council (2015), it shows that majority of the youths are accessing different kinds of media on a regular basis. Many youths spend hours acquiring English from playing video games, surfing the Internet or listening to music. Through early interaction with technology and different media platforms, many of youths already have a fairly good knowledge about English before even attending school, which makes it much more important for English teachers to understand students' background and interests. This may benefit the English teachers to help the students further develop their English.

## **Literature Review**

### **Definition of Extramural English**

Extramural English is one of the main focuses in this study. It is therefore important for this study that this term is defined properly. One of the definitions of extramural English by a research in this field is:

Hence, the term extramural English means 'English outside the walls' and [...] it refers to the English that learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom. (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 24)

Following this definition, I will define extramural English in this study to be all English language related activities that students come in contact with outside of school. These activities can be reading books, playing video games, communicating in English with a friend or eavesdrop on strangers talking in English. As long as the activities give the students exposure to English, I will consider it to be extramural English. Students using different social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or any websites that expose them to English, are considered as extramural English in this study as well.

In a recent study by Swedish Media Council (2015), statistics show that Swedish youths from age 9-18 engage with different media platforms much more than before. Approximately 95% of young teens have daily access to a computer or a tablet, with many of them using it for more than 3 hours per day. However, it is important to mention that these figures only illustrate to us the amount of time Swedish young teens interact with different media. It is therefore impossible to know from these statistics, how much English these teens encounter during the time on different media. Olsson (2016) points out that many young people spend considerable time using different media platforms in their spare time. One of the most popular activities is using the Internet and it is immensely popular among all peers. Through the Internet, students gain the opportunities to come in contact with different people from all over the world and English becomes the medium of communication. However, Dörnyei states that students do not engage with extramural English activity to learn English, instead they find interest in the activity itself (2005).

### **English in Sweden**

English is used frequently in higher education, international business meetings and enjoys having a high language status in Sweden (Hyltenstam, 2004). In Sweden, English replaced German as the first compulsory foreign language in school in 1962 and has since 2011 become a compulsory subject introduced in the first grade (Skolverket, 2011b). All children are expected to start learning English at the age of 8-9 until the end of compulsory school, when they are at the age of 16. Many schools in Sweden have started to offer English profile study, which means that the entire education is taught in English. Regarding higher education, Swedish universities offer English courses in order to attract more exchange students, international partnerships and using English as a way to communicate with other universities (Söderlundh, 2010). An international test has shown that Swedish students have a higher level of proficiency in English compared to other countries that participated in the same test (Skolverket, 2015).

In contemporary Sweden, the exposure to English is immense and accessibility to English language related materials are easy to come by. Everything from latest music hits, newly released video games or popular movies get exported faster to Sweden. Popular TV-shows from The United States and The United Kingdom are shown with Swedish subtitles. It is therefore fair to say that English language has a strong influence on the Swedish population. According to Bolton and Meierkord, there have been debates in recent years about English being a threat to Swedish as an official language in Sweden (2013). Other have claimed that English should not be considered as a foreign language in Sweden, but instead as a second language, based on the amount of English that young people use and are surrounded by every day (Hyltenstam 2004).

The Swedish syllabus for English (Skolverket, 2011a) strongly emphasizes that students should be given the opportunity to explore different cultures and discuss social issues. It is essential that teachers can provide these opportunities to students through various activities in class. Technology has become a useful tool for many teachers to inform their students about different social issues in the world. A student, who uses the Internet to play video games or listens to music, will more likely gain a wider range of perception and culture influence from these media. Skolverket further suggests that:

[...] students should [...] relate the content to their own experience and knowledge. Students should be given the opportunity to interact in speech and writing, [...] using different aids and media. Teaching should make use of the surrounding world as a resource for contacts, information and learning, and help students develop an understanding to how to search for, evaluate, select and assimilate content from multiple sources of information, knowledge and experiences. (Skolverket, 2011a, pp.1-2)

English teachers should introduce the students to the different ways of working with English. By integrating new technology and new tools into the English lessons, students will be able to gain a wider access of information. Apperley & Walsh (2012) propose that video games

have a great number of common grounds with novels. They explain that while a novel is a great tool for learning English, video games can provide more opportunities for the students to practice what they have learned. By listening to narrations, reading in-game texts or talking to team members, the player is given the chance to develop his or hers receptive and productive skill. In addition to this, different video games will also put the player in different situations where a player sometimes will be given a choice to choose between different moral choices. Gee (2007) concludes that in digital games, learners can immerse themselves in their new active identity in the game where they are able to have their own inputs and outputs throughout the storyline. In the syllabus for English (Skolverket, 2011a), it is also mentioned that students should have the opportunity to develop their communication skills, receptive skills and productive skills, and video games can to some extent facilitate this.

### **Learning English Outside of the Classroom**

English language learning has been researched from different aspects; learning styles and strategies (Wong & Nunan, 2011, Dörnyei, 2005), learning autonomy (Benson, 2001) and learning motivation (Dörnyei, 2009) are a few areas to mention. In recent years, more studies have shown that language learning is starting to take place outside of schools and classrooms. Richards (2015) notes that there are “two important dimensions to successful second language learning: what goes on in the classroom and what goes on outside of the classroom” (p.5). Benson (2001) states that out-of-class learning refers to “any kind of learning taking place outside of the classroom and involves self-instruction, naturalistic learning or self-directed naturalistic learning” (p.62). The Swedish National Agency for Education expects English to be taught to students for future communication purposes outside of the classroom, but the focus in language teaching has instead been a classroom-based language teaching (Richards, 2015). With the limitation of classroom based language learning, schools have for the past few years started to implement educational applications in language study, in order to help students learn outside of the classroom. With the increasing



amount of technology and media platforms available, many of the interactions via social networks provide a more authentic and meaningful experience to students than what a classroom can provide them with. Benson (2001) calls this concept *naturalistic learning*, which means learning through direct interaction with text or through direct spoken interaction with target language. Chik (2012) agrees that much of autonomous language learning comes from the interaction with technology, e.g. digital video games. She suggests that schools are no longer the only option for learners to learn English. She explains that learners are instead more willing to put time and effort into English-related activities that they enjoy and are interested in.

## **Previous Research**

There are many studies on second language acquisition, but only a handful of these studies focus on extramural English. One of the reasons for this might be that extramural English is not as relevant in some countries where English does not hold the same status as in Sweden. Another reason is that extramural English is still a fairly new term, which is why not many studies exist for this topic. In the following paragraph I will present prior studies conducted in the field of extramural English, in order to examine different variables and results presented in these studies. This will help in developing an understanding on what has already been researched and may contribute to more discussion on this topic. This section will also discuss studies that are relevant to extramural English activities.

Olsson (2011, 2015, 2016) and Sundqvist (2008, 2009, 2011) are experts in the field of extramural English in Sweden. Olsson (2016) has discussed in her doctoral dissertation about her two previous studies. One of the studies is about the impact of extramural English (2011) and in the other one she looked into what kind of effect content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (2015) has on students' written proficiency. In one of the studies, Olsson (2011) focuses on finding out what kind of effect extramural English activities have on high school students' written proficiency. After analyzing and inspecting written works

from 37 students, Olsson notices that the students with more exposure to English tend to use a more varied and informal form of English in their writing. In the same study Olsson also points out that students with more exposure to English tend to adapt their language to different contexts.

Sundqvist (2008, 2011) has worked many years with extramural English. In recent years she has worked together with Sylvén (2012, 2014 & 2016) to further develop extramural English studies. Together they studied young English learners in Sweden and their engagement with language-related activities outside of school. In one study (2014), they have investigated 112 students around the age of 10-11 from different schools. Sundqvist and Sylvén concluded that the learners spend more time watching TV and playing digital games than reading books or newspapers. They further suggested that gender plays a huge role in how learners are engaging with different extramural English activities. Boys greatly favor gaming while girls enjoy watching movies. Sundqvist (2009) points out that there is a clear difference between the types of games the boys and girls would play. Boys generally prefer first person shooter games (FPS), massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) or sports games, while girls enjoy games about fashion and romance, such as The Sims or Nintendogs.

Batluk (2015) investigates whether music can motivate students into more extramural English. She interviewed 15 students about their perception of music. Her reflection on the data suggests that there might be a positive relation between the two variables. She also indicates that the participants sought out lyrics out of curiosity and they believe that by listening to music, it can motivate them into learning more English.

Digital games have become a hobby that manages to capture people's interest. With the emerging interest in digital games for both young and old, various studies have been done on gaming's effect on learning. Gee (2007) develops 36 principles for connecting digital games and literacy work. He argues that digital games are great tools for language learners

and offer an ideal circumstance and opportunity for students to learn. In Gee's 36 principles, he explains that digital games are able to offer learners a new identity, in which they can immerse themselves and be fully committed into the virtual world. In digital games, learners are put into the active role, where they will be able to have their own input as well as output through gaming. Zhang and Shang (2015) further elaborate on Gee's idea of gaming identity and experience. They state that "human learning is not just a result of brain working, but it is fully rooted in the material, social, and cultural context soil" (p.405). Zhang and Shang further point out that the process of learning through video games can give you the sense of participation and students will likely benefit more from learning from video games than from learning in class. Video games are usually played outside of school, only a handful of educational games find its way into the classroom. Chik (2012) concludes that autonomous language learning comes from engaging with language-related activities, for example playing digital video games. She suggests that classrooms no longer offer the sole opportunity for English exposure. Instead, students are more willing to put time and effort in activities they enjoy and can relate to. Chik (2012) presents an example about a student who is unfamiliar with English. He was told to play basketball video games to pick up jargon, jokes and instructions, because he enjoys playing basketball in his free time. In the same study, Chik also points out the fact that many English teachers in Hong Kong have an unconvinced stance towards digital games as a language-learning tool. Some English teachers have claimed that digital games bring too much violence, while other have suggested that in-game text is inferior to print-text material.

A study done by Butcht & Harrie (2013) reveals that 96% of children from age 9-14 have access to a computer, while 99% of the youths from age 15-24 have daily access to computer. Further on, for youths the popular activity is the Internet, where they spend on average 182 minutes daily using the Internet. It shows clearly in a statistic that the amount of time youths spend on different media have increased enormously. Speedy advancement of

technology nowadays, our educational systems are in dire need of advancing along with it. In many countries, schools have already started to incorporate technology into the classroom. In Sweden, computers and tablets are handed-out to high school students and majority of their homework is handed in via the Internet. Recently, debates on whether to implement more IT into the classroom have been an on-going topic in Sweden (Skolverket, 2016). Like The United States for example, have recently started to face the challenge of how to effectively incorporate technology into the classroom (Shaltry et al., 2013). In a study by Meskill & Quah(2013), they mention the importance for teachers to advantage of using social media when working with teenagers. This can be done through adding small technology-bases assignments or homework. An example could be a class blog, where the learners can feel a sense of participation through contributing in blog writing.

### **Research Questions**

I am working on investigating students' extramural English activities, because I am trying to learn more about upper secondary students' connection and engagement with English outside of school. Additionally, I want to find out more about students' attitudes toward extramural English and their thoughts on learning English from extramural English activities and from English lessons. The aim for this study is to help English teachers understand and learn more about the students' extramural English, and use this knowledge to further develop the students' English.

This study focuses on answering the following two questions:

- What kind of extramural English activities do learners engage in and to what extent do they engage in these activities?
- What are learners' attitude towards language learning from extramural English activities and in-class teaching?

# Method

## Material

The aim of this study is to investigate and examine upper secondary students' extramural activities. Questionnaires were the main means data collection for this thesis. According to Nunan (1992), questionnaires are more suitable for quantitative data collection because it is short and concise in comparison to other methods.

Based on issues discussed in the books *Questionnaires in Second Language Research* (Dörnyei, 2010) and *Research Methods in Language Learning* (Nunan, 1992), I created a set of questions related to extramural English activities. The questions were aimed to identify participants' activities related to English language that they meet in their free time, and their views on extramural English activities as a tool for learning English. Most of the questions in the questionnaires were straightforward and required only short answers except for the two final questions.

These two questions were about their personal opinions on learning English from extramural English and from in-class settings. The intention behind the two open-ended questions was for the participants to be able to explain further on their own thoughts and personal experiences. As I wanted them to have the freedom to explain and elaborate their thoughts, so instead of giving pre-made answers, open questions were applied instead (Nunan, 1992).

In the questionnaires, I chose to focus on three different categories: music, social media and video games. Extramural English is a broad topic to explore, in order to narrow down the data, I have chosen to focus on three different categories mentioned above. The result from these three categories would be presented in the result and discussion section. Considerations were taken to make the questions as neutral as possible, in order to avoid

misleading questions or questions that could be regarded as offensive toward any race or culture (Nunan, 1992).

## **Participants**

The sample of this study was drawn from three classes at two different schools in the central area of Malmö. Due to ethical regulation and privacy reasons, the names of the schools, classes or students will not be disclosed. The classes participating in this study will from this point on be called “Class A”, “Class B” and “Class C”. The inclusion criteria for this study were first year students between the age of 15-16, who were attending upper secondary school. There were in total 74 students: 33 boys and 41 girls excluding the eight students that were absent and two students who declined to participate in this study. While teachers were contacted in advance, participants were invited to complete the survey voluntarily in class and were given general information about the study on-site. Among the three classes, two classes specialized in social studies, while the last class specialized in science study.

There were several reasons behind choosing first year of upper secondary school to be the sample group for this study. The main reason being that they are at an age where they are free to choose their own activities outside of school. One might also argue that they are at an age where their parents have a lesser influence on what, when and how the children plan their activities during their free time.

## **Procedures**

I started with sending out emails to different upper secondary schools’ principals and English teachers, asked about the possibilities and permission to come and conduct a study with their first year students. 11 schools were asked, but only four schools replied and granted permission. There were several issues with planning and schedule conflicts that resulted in that only three classes from two different schools were covered in this study.

The meetings with the three classes were during their scheduled English lessons. I was given 15-20 minutes to present my study and let them answer my questionnaire. The main language used in presenting my research topic and the questionnaires was English, since it was agreed from the start that with the English teachers that English should be used in the classroom. However, permission was given by the English teacher to use Swedish if the students had difficulty understanding. The first few minutes were used to introduce my study, after that I explained to them specifically about issues of anonymity and asked for their consent in participating in this study. They were told to take their time in filling out the questionnaires and I mentioned twice during the 20 minutes that were given, that I would greatly appreciate if they could put more effort in answering the last two questions in the questionnaires. The questionnaires were handed out between English teachers that were in charge of the class and the main researcher. The rest of the time was used in filling out the questionnaires. While the students filled out the questionnaires, I made sure I was available to answer any questions that the students had. The students had the option to either hand in the filled-out questionnaire to the researcher or to put it into an envelope on the teacher's desk when they had finished.

## **Results and Discussion**

In this section, the results from the questionnaire data will be presented in relation to other similar empirical studies. This section will be divided into two smaller parts in order to answer the two research questions presented in this study. Each class' results were included into the tables to provide a more in-depth understanding of the statistics and detailed overview on the final result.

### **Students' Extramural English Activities**

Based on the questionnaire data, Table 1 illustrates the average hour the students spend on extramural English activities. The result reveals that the 74 students spend on

average 33 hours per week (SD=16) on extramural English activities. It is worth pointing out that on an individual scale, there was some great variations on how much time they spend on extramural English. Among the 74 students, there were 3 students (4%) who answered that they would spend less than 5 hours per week on extramural English, while there were 16 students (21%) who would spend more than 50 hours per week on extramural English.

**Table 1.** Means and Standard Deviation on time student spend on extramural English

Class	Participants	Mean (hours/week)	SD
A	28	34	22
B	24	37	20
C	22	29	16
Total	74	33	20

When asked about how much time they would spend on playing video games, listening to music or using social media, playing video games got ranked the highest among these three activities in terms of average hour. The students would in average spend 12 hours per week (SD=13) on video games while they would approximately spend 10 hours per week (SD=6) on social media and 11 hours (SD=7) on music. It would seem that playing video games is the most popular activity among the students, but compared with the other two activities, playing video games also have a much higher standard deviation. This means that there is a greater deviation on how much students would spend time on playing video games compared to the other two activities. Furthermore, Table 2 suggests that video games are not the most popular among the three activities, despite students spending more time on it on average. In Table 2, it shows the order of popularity of each extramural English activity. Ranked on top is social media, while playing video games is ranked on fifth place. This means that there were more students who engage with social media than play video games. Additionally it is worth highlighting the significant difference between the standard deviation for social media and the standard deviation for video games (See Table 1). It reveals that there are clearly more students who do not play video games as much as other, while some are more engaged in this activity. The 3 top activities answered by more than 60 students (81%) were social media, music and TV/films. All the activities that received less than five



times written down were listed in “other”. Ranked slightly above “other” is reading and writing fan fictions, which received seven votes (9.4%), a notable difference in number of times answered between first place and ninth place. This also demonstrates that many students do engage in similar type of extramural English activities. In comparison with Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2014) study, the types of activities that learners come in contact with are mostly similar. Despite the age difference between the learners, the popular activities are social media, music and TV, where they would spend hours. There were many different answers given in the questionnaires, some answers were grouped together into a larger category. An example of such category is social media, which contain answers like Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat. However, while some activities such as Youtube and Comic/Manga that appeared more frequently were given a spot on the table by itself.

**Table 2.** *displays extramural English activities in order of popularity*

Order	Activity	Number of time(s) answered
1	Social media (Facebook, Instagram, Chatting)	68
2	Music	65
3	TV/Film	62
4	Youtube	48
5	Video games (Phone, console & PC)	44
6	Newspaper (paper & web)	28
7	Comic/manga	25
8	Books	20
9	Fan fiction	7
10	Other*	>5

*\*writing diary, streaming video games, translating, writing lyrics*

There is a great difference in the amount of time spent on extramural English between 4<sup>th</sup> graders (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014), 9<sup>th</sup> graders (Sundqvist, 2008) and first year upper secondary students. It is revealed in our result that upper secondary students spend considerably more time on extramural English than 9<sup>th</sup> graders and 4<sup>th</sup> graders outside of school. Additionally Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) state that the younger students would spend less time on video games in English and prefer games in native language. Swedish Media Council (2015) presented a statistic, which demonstrated that this might be the case, as

youths have more access to media than compared to children. In our study, the first year upper secondary students spend on average 12 hours (SD=13) on playing video games. Comparing the result of 4<sup>th</sup> graders (M=1.4 hours/ week; SD=2.4) and 9<sup>th</sup> graders (M=3.95 hours/week; SD=7.3), we can notice that the amount of time spend on gaming goes up with age.

### **Students' Attitude toward Learning English**

One of the research questions was about learners' attitude toward learning English from extramural English activities and in-class teaching. This research question is connected directly with the last two questions in the questionnaire. Both questions focus on asking about the students' experience with learning English. The first question, "*What is your experience with learning English in class?*" focuses on asking about students' own experience with learning English in class. Second question, "*What is your experience with learning English from language related activities?*" gives the students the opportunity to share about their own experience with learning English from extramural English activities. Despite telling the students beforehand about the importance of the last two questions in the questionnaire, more than 20 students skipped the questions. Among the rest of the students, approximately 35 students answered these questions with short answers, for example "*I don't know*", "*good*", "*it's ok*" or "*bad*", without any other comments to support their answer. In the end, there were only about 15-20 students that gave longer answers. The reason for the low amount of answers on these last two questions might be that the questions are unclear and too broad, which makes it difficult for the students to answer.

The answers given by the students were divided into four different subcategories: positive, neutral, negative and blank. In the positive category, answers with positive tone were put there, answer such as "*good*" and "*great*". Answers with neutral tone were organized into the neutral category. In this category, short answers like "*it's ok*" and "*not sure*" can be found. In the negative category, all the answers that hold a negative tone, for

instance answers like “*bad*” or “*I don’t like it*” were put into this category. The last category is blank with all the blank answers.

**Table 3.** *shows students’ answers on experience with learning English*

Experience with learning English in class				
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Total
Positive	10	6	4	20
Neutral	8	3	5	16
Negative	3	5	5	13
Blank	7	10	8	25

  

Experience with learning English from extramural English				
	Class A	Class B	Class C	Total
Positive	14	9	8	31
Neutral	6	6	3	15
Negative	1	0	3	4
Blank	7	9	8	24

A total of 20 students wrote down longer answers, mentioning both positive and negative experiences with learning English from extramural English or from in-class teaching. Among the 20 students, 13 students answered both questions with more than a few words, 5 students answered only on their experience with extramural English, while 1 student answered only on his or her own experience with learning English in class. Although the number of these answers is low, they are still valuable data that can give us an insight into students’ experience with learning English. Below I will present few positive and negative answers.

The following are the answers to the question: *What is your experience with learning English in class?*

Answers with positive comments:

- (1) *I like our English class, the English teacher has done a good job* [Student 1]
- (2) *It is good, I think when we only use English in classroom, it help my English* [Student 2]

- (3) *English is fun and I enjoy it very much. I learn a lot from teacher and all the homework.* [Student 3]
- (4) *I think I learned a lot of English from school, new words and grammar. What I really enjoy with English classes is that it changes every time, you never know what you gonna do in the class.* [Student 4]

Answers with negative comments:

- (1) *I can get pretty dull, sometimes we spend weeks and have not learned anything new.*  
[Student 1]
- (2) *I dunno what we do in class.* [Student 2]

In total, there were 12 answers with positive comments. Majority of these comments pinpoint students' interest in English and the English teacher as the source of positives from learning in class. On the other hand, there were only two answers that had a negative tone. These two answers both stressed about uncertainties in English lessons.

The following are the answers to the question: *What is your experience with learning English from language-related activities?*

Answers with positive comments:

- (1) *I play a lot of games online and I think it has helped my English improve a lot.*  
[Student 1]
- (2) *I watch movies and listening to music, it helps my English very much* [Student 2]
- (3) *I feel like the English in movies, Youtube and music are more real and natural. Much better than English in school.* [Student 3]
- (4) *I learned a lot from playing games, sometimes when we are writing essay, words that I never used before pops up.* [Student 4]

Answers with negative comments:

(1) *I learned a new word from a movie, but my teacher says the word is incorrect.*

[Student 1]

These answers showed a common point: the students were mostly aware of how extramural English had influenced them. They shared a same belief and acknowledged that extramural English has helped them in getting better at English. Additionally, the answers also showed that the students' own interest can become a way for them to come into contact with English related material. This certainly highlights Chik's (2009) claim that school are no longer the only place for students to learn English, as many students acquire better English skills through extramural English activity. There were many activities that the students engage with on a regular basis, which can increase the exposure to English outside of school (see table 2).

In general, all the answers contained a positive tone, except for one of the answers. The content itself specifies how the student had the ability to learn from extramural English, but unfortunately in this case teacher said it was an incorrect word. However, we do not know what was incorrect about this word. If the word was spelled grammatically incorrect or if the word itself is does not exist in English. This also highlights a problematic side of learning from extramural English, where learners can learn the wrong language. Naturalistic learning is what Benson (2001) describes as any kind of learning taking place outside of the classroom. This kind of learning usually involve a risk, where learners can accidentally pick up the wrong language. For example, modern video games use a great number of self-invented words together with English. A learner with sufficient proficiency in English might be able to tell the difference between English and non-English word, but a beginner will have a hard time telling them apart. Furthermore, puns, slangs and foreign language are frequently added in the in-game text as well as character with broken English. This type of problems does not only exist in the world of video games, but occurs regularly in films, music and the Internet

as well. I will not draw any conclusions on students' reasons for learning English or how extramural English activities affect their English, since a more detailed study is needed for that matter. Nevertheless, these answers add to highlight the different attitudes students have toward learning English in different settings. It reveals that some students have the understanding on how their daily activities and hobbies can improve their English.

**Table 4.** *students on how much impact school has helped them on learning English (% of students answered)*

Class	I learned everything from school	I learned most of my English from school	I only learned a few things from school	Almost nothing at all
A	29	46	18	4
B	17	54	25	4
C	5	21	9	14
Total	17	56	17	7

Overall the general attitude toward learning in class and learning from extramural English is positive, as Table 3 illustrates. Furthermore, when asked where the students learned their English from, 13 out of 74(17%) answered that they learned everything from school, while 42 students (56%) answered that they learned most of their English from school (see Table 4). It shows that 53 students (74%) still consider school as a large influence on where they learned their English, which adds to the evidence that most of the students have a positive attitude toward learning English in class.

## Conclusion

This present study aimed to investigate upper secondary first year students' extramural English activity. Two research questions were asked specifically for this study. The first question dealt with finding out more about students' engagement with extramural English. The second question asked about students' attitudes toward learning English in class and from extramural English activities. A general overview of students' extramural English activity was given by the data collected from questionnaires, which suggest that students

today are widely exposed to extramural English and interact with different kind of media on a regular basis. Social media, movies, TV and music are few of the activities students engage with the most. Nearly all the students spend on average 33 hours (SD=16) on extramural English activities every week. This brings out the fact that many students spend considerably more time with English language outside of school than in school.

In many ways this study confirms what previous studies have already highlighted. What need to be stressed is that with the advancement of technology, the amount of time students are spending on the extramural English activities have gone up significantly the past few years. Our results also suggest that students generally have a positive attitude toward learning English from extramural English activities and from in-class settings.

Furthermore, this study is developed with focus to giving insight and knowledge to English teachers about students' extramural English activities. Gaining more knowledge about one's students, such as their interests and hobbies, may be crucial for any teaching professions. With this project, teachers can discover factors that might affect their students' learning of English.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This study shows several results related to learners' extramural English, but I want to stress the importance of not overgeneralizing my findings, because of the small sample group investigated in this study. Furthermore, some limitations were made in order to find the answers to our research questions. The initial plan was to have a larger sample group and a follow-up in the form of interviews with the participants. One of the reasons I chose to exclude this was due to the course being only 12 weeks long. Despite the limitations, it is worth mentioning that the data is drawn from three different classes in order to provide an understanding about extramural English in Sweden.

After the study, I discovered that some of the questions used in the questionnaire could have been made clearer and more specific. Relying on Dörnyei (2010) and Nunan (1992) for creating the questionnaire was a good choice, but many of the questions could have been phrased to be more specific. By phrasing the questions better, it might have resulted in gathering more valuable data from the participants. In the end, this project was only a short study on extramural English. Due to the small sample group and short time limit this study cannot present a clear picture of extramural English in Sweden. However, given more time and a larger sample group, there are clearly more to analyze in this field.

### **Suggestion for Further Research**

A larger scale of this type of research would be optimal, stretching over a longer period of time. Adding a sizable sample group, the results will definitely yield a more significant result and possibly reveal patterns that cannot be found in a small-scale study. It is highly relevant to continue to investigate different age groups' extramural English, as it might contribute into finding similarities or differences between the different age groups.

I believe another target group that can bring interesting data to this research field is the English teachers. By finding out more about English teachers' extramural English, we can further expand into other relevant topics, for example what influence does extramural English have in teachers' planning process or studies that show differences between teachers' extramural English and students' extramural English.



## References

- Apperley, T., & Walsh, C. (2012). What digital games and literacy have in common: a heuristic for understanding pupils' gaming literacy. *Literacy*, 46(3), 115-122.
- Benson, P. (2001). *Teaching and researching autonomy in language learning (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)*. London: Longman.
- Bolton, K., & Meierkord, C. (2013). English in contemporary Sweden: Perceptions, policies, and narrated practices. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 17(1), 93-117.
- Bucht, C. & Harrie, E. (Eds.). (2013). *Young people in the Nordic media culture*. Gothenburg: Nordicom.
- Chik, A. (2012). Digital gameplay for autonomous foreign language learning: Gamers' and language teachers' perspectives. In H. Reinders (Ed.), *Digital gamers in language learning and teaching* (pp. 95-114). Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2003). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2005). *Psychology of the language learner: Individual differences in second language acquisition*. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Dörnyei, Z., & Ushioda, E. (2009). Motivation, language identities and the L2 self: A theoretical overview. In Z. Dörnyei & E. Ushioda (Eds.), *Motivation, language identity and the L2 self* (pp. 1–8). Buffalo: Multilingual Matters.
- Gee, J. P. (2007). *What video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Hult, F. M. (2003). English on the streets of Sweden: An ecolinguistic view of two cities and a language policy. *Working Papers in Educational Linguistics*, 19(1), 43-63.
- Hyltenstam, K. (2004). Engelskan, skolans språkundervisning och svensk språkpolitik. In O. Josephson (Ed.). *Engelskan i Sverige: Språkval i utbildning, arbete och kulturliv* (pp. 36-110). Stockholm: Norstedts ordbok.
- Meskill, C., & Quah, J. (2013) Researching language learning in the age of social media. In M. Thomas., H. Reinders & M. Warschauer (Eds.). *Contemporary Computer-Assisted Language Learning*. (pp. 39-54). London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Olsson, E. (2011). "Everything I read on the Internet is English" – On the impact of extramural English on Swedish 16 year old pupils' writing proficiency. (Licentiate's thesis). University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Olsson, E. (2015). Progress in English academic vocabulary use in writing among CLIL and non-CLIL students in Sweden. *Moderna Språk*, 109(2), 51-74.
- Olsson, E. (2016). *On the impact of extramural English and CLIL on productive vocabulary*. (Doctoral dissertation). University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Richards, J. C. (2015). The changing face of language learning: Learning beyond the classroom. *RELC Journal*, 46(1), 5-22.
- Shaltry, C., Henriksen, D., Wu, M. L. et al. (2013). Teaching pre-service teachers to integrate technology: Situated learning with online portfolios, classroom websites and Facebook. *TechTrends*, 57(3), 20-25.

- Skolverket. (2011a). Syllabus for English(in English). Stockholm: Skolverket. Retrieved from [http://www.skolverket.se/polopoly\\_fs/1.174542!/English%20120912.pdf](http://www.skolverket.se/polopoly_fs/1.174542!/English%20120912.pdf) (2016-12-03).
- Skolverket. (2011b). Curriculum for the compulsory school, preschool class and leisure-time centre 2011. Stockholm: Skolverket. Retrieved from [http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?\\_xurl\\_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FBlob%2Fpdf2687.pdf%3Fk%3D2687](http://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FBlob%2Fpdf2687.pdf%3Fk%3D2687) (2016-12-05).
- Skolverket. (2015). *Språkstudien ESLC*. Stockholm: Skolverket. Retrieved from <http://www.skolverket.se/statistik-och-utvardering/internationella-studier/sprakstudien-eslc> (2016-11-30).
- Skolverket. (2016) Forskning om IT i skolan. Stockholm: Skolverket. Retrieved from <http://www.skolverket.se/skolutveckling/forskning/amnen-omraden/it-i-skolan> (2016-12-03).
- Sundqvist, P. (2008). Extramural input: 9th graders' exposure to English outside the classroom. In S. Granath, B. Bihl & E. Wennö (Eds.), *Fönster mot språk och litteratur* (pp. 95-108). Karlstad: Karlstad University Press.
- Sundqvist, P. (2009). *Extramural English matters: Out-of-school English and its impact on Swedish ninth graders' oral proficiency and vocabulary*. (Doctoral dissertation). Karlstad University, Karlstad, Sweden.
- Sundqvist, P. (2011). A possible path to progress: Out-of-school English language learners in Sweden. In P. Benson & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Beyond the language classroom* (pp. 106-118). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Sundqvist, P., & Sylvén, K. L. (2012). World of VocCraft: Computer games and Swedish learners' L2 English vocabulary. In H. Reinders (Ed.), *Digital gamers in language learning and teaching* (pp.189-208). Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sundqvist, P., & Sylvén, K. L. (2014). Language-related computer use: Focus on young L2 English learners in Sweden. *ReCALL*, 26(1), 3-20.
- Sundqvist, P., & Sylvén, K. L. (2016). *Extramural English in teaching and learning: From theory and research to practice*. H. Reinders (Ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Swedish Media Council. (2015). *Ungar och medier*. (Children and media). Retrieved from <http://www.statensmedierad.se/download/18.7a953dba14fef1148cf3b32/1442841939189/Ungar-och-medier-2015.pdf> (2016-12-03).
- Söderlundh, H. (2010) *Internationella universitet – lokala språkval: Om bruket av talad svenska i engelskspråkiga kursmiljöer*. (Doctoral dissertation). Uppsala University, Uppsala, Sweden.
- Wong, L. L. C., & Nunan, D. (2011). The learning styles and strategies of effective language learners. *System*, 39(2), 144-163.
- Zhang, L., & Shang, J. (2015). *How video games enhance learning: A discussion of James Paul Gee's views in his book what video games have to teach us about learning and literacy*. Springer Verlag.

# Appendix I

## Study about extramural English

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out more about your language related activities outside of school. The participation for this questionnaire is voluntary and the data gathered will be handled responsibly.

---

1. How old are you? \_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your gender?    Male        Female

3. How would you rate yourself in English proficiency (English skills)?

1 Bad	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10 Good

4. How much influence did school have on your English (Please choose only ONE of the following choices.)

I learned everything from school

I learned most of my English from school

I only learned a few new things from school

Almost nothing

5. What English-related activities do you do outside of school?

---

---

---

---

6. How many hours per week do you **use English outside of school**? (Try to count on top of you head of much English you encounter and use everyday and give an estimate number)

---

7. How many of those hours do you spend on **listening to music**?

---

8. How many of those hours do you spend on **playing video games**?

---

9. How many of those hours do you spend on **using social media**?

---

10. Please rank from the order 1-3 on which category has a bigger impact on you learning English? (1= strong impact, 3= less impact)

\_\_\_ Music

\_\_\_ Video Games

\_\_\_ Social Media

11. What is your experience with learning English in class?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

12. What is your experience with learning English from language-related activities?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Thank you for your help! ☺