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Extramural English

Engelska på Fritiden

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Abstract

In light of the staggering technological development we have witnessed over the last decade when it comes to connectivity and access to the internet, compounded by the new entertainment trends online, this study intends to examine students' consumption of English in their spare time, and their view of the benefit it brings them in their language development. Through a quantitative survey the study tries to pinpoint how much English students at a secondary school in southern Sweden consider they consume in their spare time. Furthermore, to what degree do students believe their English spare time activities have helped them in school, and in their own English development. The results showed a broad consumption of English in the spare time, and a high opinion among students regarding the help their spare time English provide them in school. However, the reversed, that school helped them in the spare time, had a much lower appreciation. The study also looked at specific spare time activities, like playing games, to see if a pattern of more fruitful activities for English development could exist, which the results and previous research seem to indicate toward. Finally, a better understanding of this subject could inspire teachers views of spare time activities, and how to tie students interests and previous experiences in to the language classroom.

Keywords: Spare time English, language acquisition, English from entertainment, natural learning, student attitudes, gaming for L2 students, English outside of school

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1. Introduction

In Sweden today we have more access than ever to a world of digital entertainment and digital spare time activities. A lot of these activities are in English, and from a very young age we gain access to this through a variety of electronic devices that didn't exist a generation ago. During my in-field teacher education (VFU) and during the years I've been working as a teacher, I've seen the development and expansion of the internet and the ways we access it and consume it. Today most Swedish students obtain a chromebook, or variant thereof, as part of their education, on top of the smartphones most of them get from home. Through these devices they consume a large variety of entertainment in the breaks at school, and in their spare time at home. They watch everything from scripted movies and TV-shows, to non scripted youtube vlogs and podcast shows. The newest and possibly most frequent thing I observe students watching in their spare time is computer games, that is, recordings or streams of other people playing the games while giving live commentary and entertainment.

This digital development was apparent already in 2003 when skolverket did a big survey of the compulsory school in Sweden. As part of the reports that followed we can read that “the access to a multitude of tv channels, internet, many new computer games and simulators, and mobile telephones have risen to a point where it encompasses almost all children of school age” (Skolverket 2005, p. 21). And that “boys and girls comes in contact with English to a large extent in their spare time, but in different contexts” (Skolverket 2004, p. 99). Considering that this report now is over 15 years old, one can imagine that the development has continued in similar fashion. All of this new outside school exposure to English intrigues me to survey how much the students feel they consume, and also if they believe it affects their language education, and if they think it has helped them with their in-school studies.

The Curriculum for compulsory school states that “pupils should be given the opportunity to develop their skills in relating content to their own experiences, living conditions and interests” (Skolverket 2018, p. 34) which then require us as teachers to have an awareness of what the

current generation finds interesting and experience in their spare time. Further the curriculum states that “Teaching of English should aim at helping the pupils to develop knowledge of the English language and of the areas and contexts where English is used” (Skolverket 2018, p. 34). Most of us have observed that English is now used in a wide variety on the internet, by a large population of both native and non native speakers. The once distinct difference between the big production companies and the consumer has been blurred by the advancement of technologies like youtube, twitch, and several more, giving the individual the power to create for massive audiences. This breeds a new dynamic in the consumption of entertainment in our spare time. Bo Lundahl refers to this shift as “Web 2.0”, he writes that “Mobile telephones, social networks, blogs, Wikipedia and possibilities to use digital tools for creation [...] indicate that the line between school and spare time is being erased” and that “especially the border between user and creator and between the classroom and the society at large” (Lundahl 2009, p. 61). With this development, and the teaching aims in mind, I would, with this study, like to illuminate some of the aspects of spare time English in a school in southern Sweden.

2. Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this study is to describe school students' consumption of English outside of the language classroom; the purpose is, furthermore, to examine secondary school students' views of the potential language learning benefits of extra-curricular English consumption.

The research questions I focused on in this study was

- How much English do students consume in their spare time, and is there a difference between the genders?
- To what extent do students consider that they learn English in their spare time?
- To what extent do students believe their spare time English habits have helped them in their in-school English education?

3. Background / Previous Research

In this section I will unpack what I identify as some of the possible English activities students engage in during their spare time. I will also give a brief overview of second language acquisition theory. And finally I will look at previous research relating to language learning and spare time activities.

3.1 Some spare time activities I have observed

When I refer to English spare time activities in my study I mean most anything a Swedish student can come across outside of the classroom that is in English. This could be watching things like youtube, netflix, twitch, television or any other types of visual communication with spoken and or written English. It can also refer to any type of verbal communication like talking to friends or strangers online, or offline, that students might have met playing games or in forums. As well as written communication through different social media, forums or other communication applications like discord where they might communicate with old friends or new friends they just met in a game or otherwise online.

3.2 Second language acquisition

Language learning and second language acquisition has its roots in behaviourism which had a strong influence on teaching in the 1940s to the 1970s. The idea was that imitation, practice, reinforcement and habit formation through mimicry, memorization, and learning things by heart, was the best way to acquire a language. Language development was viewed as formation of habits and your first language habits would transfer to your second language. This was however proven wrong through learners with the same first language not producing similar errors. And furthermore learners with totally different first languages and backgrounds producing sentence structures with similar characteristics (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 34).

Noam Chomsky did not believe the explanations B. F. Skinner and behaviourism presented, to how first language acquisition worked, so he developed new ideas and explanations that had a more innate perspective to first language acquisition. Chomsky argued that children's minds are not a blank slate but that we are born with a template containing the principles that are universal to all languages. This innate knowledge, known as universal grammar, allows the child to acquire a language by fitting it into the template and then figuring out how the target language is governed by these universal principles (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 15).

This new perspective triggered a development in the ideas around second language acquisition as well. One well known idea is Stephen Krashen's Monitor Model where he describes second language acquisition in terms of five hypotheses. One, the *acquisition-learning hypothesis*, where he argues that we 'acquire' language through natural exposure much like a child with no conscious thought to rules or form, while we 'learn' through conscious consideration of rules and language form. Two, the *monitor hypothesis*, which is a two part system where spontaneous speaking and language use takes place. One component is the acquired part which produces the language, the second component is the learned part which acts as an editor to refine the language that the first part produced. Three, the *natural order hypothesis*, is what the name implies, that language acquisition has a natural order to which it unfolds. And even though some rules are easy to learn, they are not the first to be acquired and used by the student. Four, the *input hypothesis* states that for acquisition to take place, the degree of the language input needs to be within a reasonable level of the student's language skill. Krashen specifies this with the formula $a+1$, where a is the current skill level, and $+1$ is one step above it. Five, the *affective filter hypothesis*, is a type of mental block or wall that the student, consciously or subconsciously, puts up that filters out potential knowledge, making the student miss out on acquisition. This filter accounts for situations where the conditions are correct for acquisition to take place, but for different reasons does not. These reasons can be everything from attitudes and motives, to feelings and emotional needs. Krashen's hypotheses have often been criticised but his ideas came at a time when second language teaching transitioned from a focus on rules and memorization to focus more on meaning (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, pp. 36-38).

Later perspectives of second language learning have focused more on psychological theories, where they see no need for a specific innate language learning device. Cognitive psychologists “see second language acquisition as the building up of knowledge that can eventually be called on automatically for speaking and understanding” (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 39). And Connectionists argue “that learners gradually build up their knowledge of language through exposure to the thousands of instances of the linguistic features they eventually hear” developing a “network of connections between these elements” (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 41). These developmental perspectives makes no difference between acquiring a language to acquiring any other skill, it’s just an accumulative process (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, pp. 38-41).

Finally I want to touch on the sociocultural perspective where “learning is thought to occur when an individual interacts with an interlocutor within his or her zone of proximal development” (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 47). The zone of proximal development is defined as a zone where the learner can achieve a higher level of language learning than he or she could on her own, without the communication partner. Sometimes this zone is mistaken to be similar to Krashen’s *a+1* hypothesis, but the big difference is the collaboration and knowledge building with the interlocutor (Lightbrown and Spada 2006, p. 47).

3.3 English in your spare time

In Bo Lundahl’s book *Engelsk språkdidaktik* a chapter is dedicated to comparing spare time English and school English. In it he distinguish the difference between the implicit learning you do in your spare time when you are free to choose how much and when you want to be exposed to the target language, and the explicit school learning which is more structured and organized. He argues that knowledge in your spare time is built gradually based on need at the present moment and through social interaction in spoken English, while knowledge in school is built structurally by a teacher and the steering documents, and is based on more abstract and technical aspects through writing. Lundahl continues and differentiates the informal learning you obtain as procedural knowledge and the formal learning you receive as declarative knowledge, that is

knowledge how to use the language and knowledge how to explain the language structures, respectively (Lundahl 2009, pp. 38-39). Lundahl attributes the positive attitude to English and good English skills of the Swedish youth to the strong position and vast quantity of English they meet in Swedish society. He also notes that the development of digital technology in today's Sweden is starting to blur the line between school and spare time, classroom and society (Lundahl 2009, pp. 37, 61).

Another scholar that has done research on English spare time activities is Pia Sundqvist who also coined the phrase extramural English. She explains in her paper *The impact of spare time activities on students' English language skills* that she felt the need to introduce this new term in her study to have the broadest possible definition of English learning in the spare time. She includes anything and everything, that is in English, that the student comes in contact with outside of the classroom, be it deliberate or not (Sundqvist 2009, p. 66). Her longitudinal study with 74 ninth grade students were conducted at three schools in Western Svealand. Among other things, she used language diaries to obtain data about students spare time activities and then compared the results of different proficiency tests with the activities they spent their time on (Sundqvist 2009, pp. 67-68). She found that in her sample group boys spent more time on extramural English over all, and specifically, more time on the internet and way more time playing computer games, than girls. In the proficiency tests the boys had a larger passive vocabulary than the girls. Furthermore she found a significant relationship between boys oral proficiency and how much time they spent on English activities in their spare time, while the difference was not that significant for girls. Hence drawing the conclusion that it also matters what type of spare time activity you engage in when it comes to how much English you obtain (Sundqvist 2009, pp. 69-71, 75).

Further research into gaming as a spare time activity did Liss Kerstin Sylvén and Pia Sundqvist in their paper *Gaming as extramural English L2 learning and L2 proficiency among young learners*. Their study included 86 fifth graders in six classes at four schools, 39 boys and 47 girls. They used questionnaires and language diaries to collect the spare time English data, and to

measure the students English skills they used a test they designed themselves, and the national test. In the survey 82% of the students stated that they had learned most of the English they know in school, and the rest stated they had learned it outside of school. The data they collected showed that playing computer games was the biggest spare time activity, and that boys played on average more than girls in a week. They divided the students in to three groups based on the hours they spent on gaming, non-gamers, moderate gamers, and frequent gamers. In the group of frequent gamers the ratio of students that felt they learned most of their English outside of school was significantly larger than in the other two groups. They also looked at English spare time reading habits (books and newspapers) and English spare time speaking habits of the three groups and found that the more computer games you play, the less you read but the more you speak. In the tests there was a clear trend between the three groups, the frequent gamers had the best test scores, the moderate gamers second best, and the non-gamers had the worst score. The biggest jump however was between the frequent gamers and the moderate gamers, whereas between the moderate gamers and the non-gamers the jump wasn't as big, but still significant. When it came to differences between boys and girls there was a significant difference between the test results in the designed test, where boys performed better than girls. But in the national test the same difference could not be observed at any significant level. The conclusion being made is that playing English computer games have a potential for acquiring English skills and knowledge that indeed seems to transfer to the English classroom. Still keeping in mind that this was a small study with a specific group of students (Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012, pp. 308-317).

4. Methodology

In this section I will go through the method, instruments and ethical considerations for my study.

4.1 Method

When selecting my research method I looked at what questions I wanted to answer. I wanted to get a good description of students spare time English consumption and I wanted to know how much they consumed. To get a fair description I believed it was imperative to have a large sample body, not to risk just getting a few students interests represented, but rather a wholesome picture of a school's spare time habits. I wanted to know how many of the students took part in certain activities and to what extent. Muijs (2004) mentions several questions that quantitative research is particularly well suited to answer. Among them is, when we want to find out how many students choose to do something, and when we want a numerical value to study (p. 7). Further I also wanted to cross tabulate data points to see if there was any relationship between certain spare time activities and students' English habits. For this Muijs (2004) also consider quantitative research well suited since we can look at how different factors are related to each other (p. 7).

4.2 Participants

The survey was conducted at a secondary school in a big city in the southern part of Sweden. The school has around 650 students from school year 6 to school year 9 with a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds. Some of the teachers did not feel they had time to help facilitate the distribution of the questionnaire in this study. In total 267 students responded to the questionnaire, 151 girls and 106 boys. 10 students chose not to disclose their gender.

4.3 Procedure

I informed the teachers about my project and asked those who had time to conduct the survey at a time that worked with their class. I asked the teachers to inform the students about my project

and to supply them with the link to the questionnaire. The students used their personal chromebooks to complete the questions at their own pace.

Because of the time restrictions of this project I only gave the teachers a few days to complete the survey. I could have gotten more answers if the teachers had more time to execute the task, but I felt 267 participants had to suffice. I then locked the the questionnaire to preserve the online form as it is and exported the data to excel, and then on to SPSS, for further analysis. After I learned how the SPSS software worked I started to compare different data points against one another to look for interesting relations. Guided by previous research, and by my own curiosity, I looked for patterns that would aid me in my research and give me insight into students' language acquisition.

4.4 Instruments

I chose to collect my data through an online questionnaire. My intention was to learn about 21st century students' spare time activities in relation to English consumption, and doing a quantitative survey like this is a good way to get a great overview. Muijs (2004, p. 36) states that "Survey research is well suited to descriptive studies, or where researchers want to look at relationships between variables occurring in particular real-life contexts", and since my aim was to describe the extent of students' consumption of English in their spare time, and their view of the benefit it brought them, it felt like an ample instrument.

I created the questionnaire in google forms for many reasons. Chiefly for the ease of which one can distribute the link to the students at my school. But also because the user friendly interface and the compatibility to exporting the raw data to other analytic tools like SPSS.

I used SPSS software because it would be incredible hard to compute this many data points by hand, and because of the ease of which the program can create comparisons and overviews between selected data points.

The questionnaire was conducted in Swedish and most questions had the option of four answers relating to what extent they took part in the activity. Never indicates that they don't take part in the activity at all. Seldom indicates that they very rarely take part, but they try it from time to time. Often indicates that they take part in the activity and it has a natural role in their spare time. Very often indicates that it's a major part of their life, a personal hobby or interest that they spend a big portion of their spare time engaged in.

4.5 Ethical considerations

This study followed the ethical consideration stipulated in Vetenskapsrådet (2002). The questionnaire started with this information text:

Hello my name is Mikael Wendt and I'm currently writing my thesis at Malmö University. The questionnaire below concerns your spare time activities in English. The questionnaire is totally anonymous and voluntary. You can stop at any time if you feel like you don't want to answer more questions. Your answers will be used to gain insight into your generations spare time habits. If you have any questions feel free to ask your teacher. Thanks for your participation. (see appendix 1: Enkät).

The survey was anonymous and done on a voluntary basis. Their teacher informed them what it was about and students who felt comfortable sharing their spare time English habits were asked to follow a link in their google classroom directing them to the questionnaire. They could quit the survey without consequence at any time if they felt uneasy with any question.

5. Results

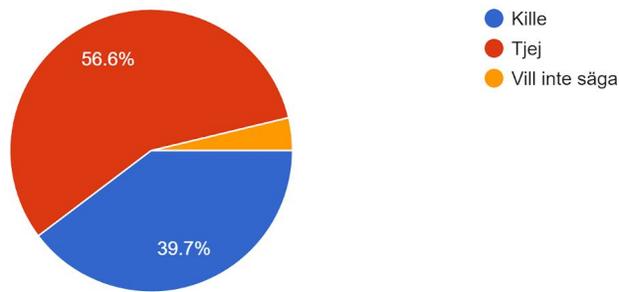
In this section I will present the data collected in the questionnaire. I will present each question as a pie chart with the correlating number of students noted.

1. Gender.

267 students answered. 151 girls and 106 boys. 10 students didn't want to specify their gender.

1. Kön:

267 responses

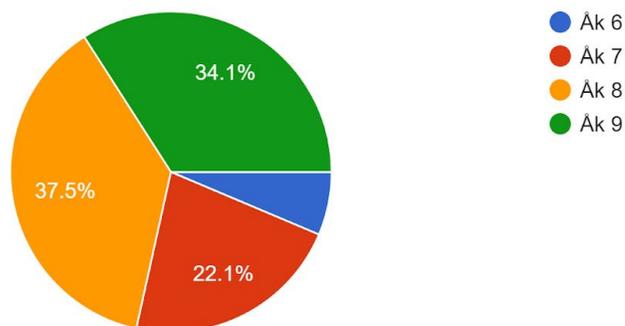


2. What school year are you in?

In total 267 students answered the question. 91 students said they were currently in year 9, 100 students year 8, 59 students year 7, and 17 students year 6.

2. Vilken årskurs går du i?

267 responses

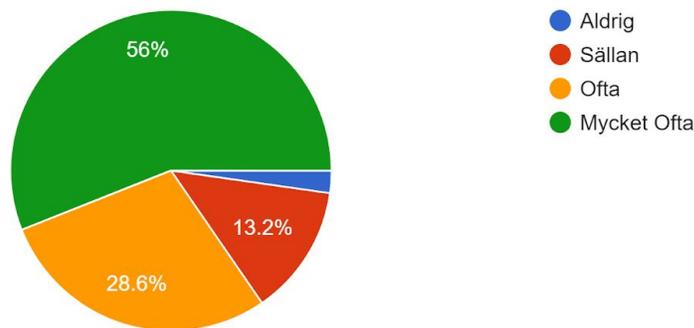


3. In your spare time, how often do you watch English speaking entertainment without Swedish subtitles?

Only 266 students answered this question leaving one student who didn't click any answer to this question. 6 Students reported that they never watch English speaking entertainment without Swedish subtitles, 35 students seldom, 76 often, and 149 very often. Adding up 'often' and 'very often' we see that 84.6% of the students frequently consume English speaking entertainment without Swedish subtitles.

3. På din fritid, hur ofta tittar du på engelsk-talande underhållning utan svenska undertexter? (tex youtube, twitch, netflix, streams, TV, med mera)

266 responses

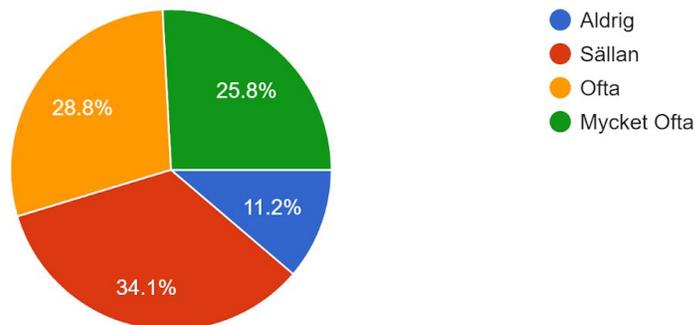


4. In your spare time, how often do you watch English speaking entertainment with Swedish subtitles?

In total 267 students answered. 30 students reported that they never watch English speaking entertainment with Swedish subtitles, 91 seldom, 77 often, and 69 very often. Adding up the categories of 'often' and 'very often' we get 54.6% of the sample group that watch English speaking entertainment with Swedish subtitles frequently. A rather noticeable difference of 30% fewer students than in the previous question watching without subtitles.

4. På din fritid, hur ofta tittar du på engelsk-talande underhållning med svenska undertexter? (tex youtube, twitch, netflix, streams, TV, med mera)

267 responses

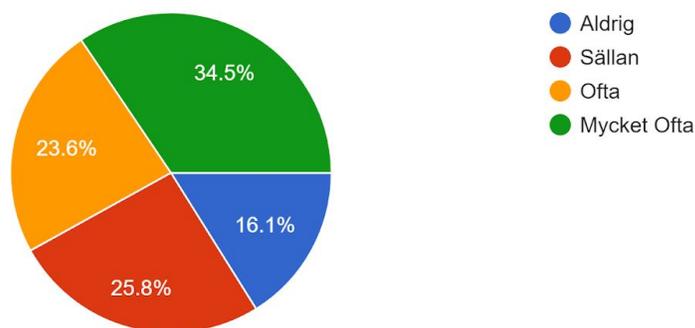


5. In your spare time, how often do you play games in English?

I chose to leave the question open to all forms of games, from computer games and video games, to board games and family games. In total 267 students answered the question. 43 of them reported never playing games in English, 69 seldom, 63 often, and 92 very often. Adding up the categories of 'often' and 'very often' we get 58.1% frequent gamers.

5. På din fritid, hur ofta spelar du spel på engelska? (tex datorspel, xbox, playstation, nintendo, sällskapsspel, brädspel, mobilspel, med mera)

267 responses

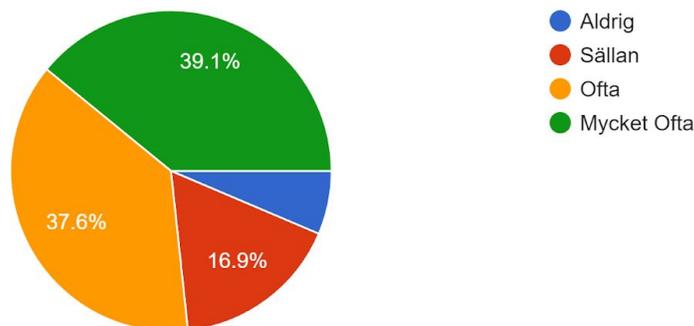


6. In your spare time, how often do you read in English?

Again I tried to keep the question open to all types of reading, whether it is shorter texts scrolling through facebook, or longer text in books. In total 266 students answered the question, again one student did not answer, which also happens to be the same student who didn't answer question number 3. If this was just a miss-click or if the student felt uncomfortable with the questions I don't know, but these were the only two questions in the entire survey that did not have the full 267 answers. 17 students reported to never read English in their spare time, 45 students seldomly read, 100 often, and 104 very often. Adding up the categories of 'often' and 'very often' we get 76.7% frequent readers.

6. På din fritid, hur ofta läser du på engelska? (tex instagram, facebook, hemsidor, forum, tidningar, böcker, med mera)

266 responses

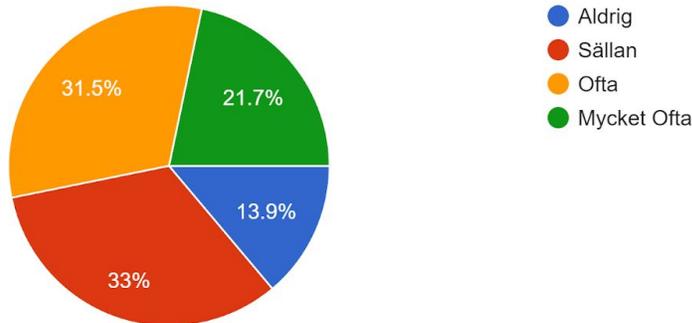


7. In your spare time, how often do you write in English?

In total 267 students answered the question. 34 students reported that they never write in English in their spare time, 88 seldomly write, 84 often, and 58 very often. Adding up the the categories of 'often' and 'very often' we find that 53.2% are frequent writers in the sample group.

7. På din fritid, hur ofta skriver du på engelska? (tex med kompisar, på facebook, forum, discord, sms, med mera)

267 responses

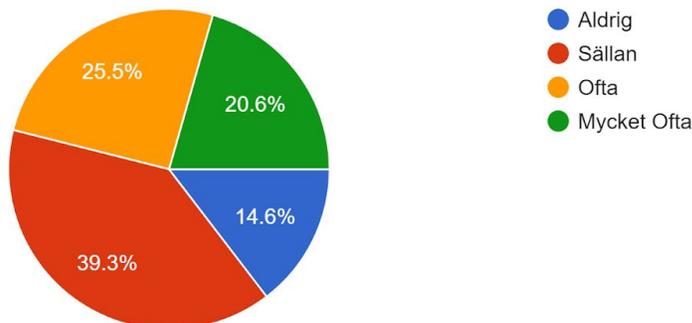


8. In your spare time, how often do you speak English?

In total 267 students answered the question. 39 students reported they never spoke English in their spare time, 105 spoke seldomly, 68 often, and 55 very often. Adding up the categories 'often' and 'very often' we get 46.1% frequent speakers.

8. På din fritid, hur ofta pratar du på engelska? (tex med kompisar online, med kompisar i riktiga livet, med randoms du spelar med online, med mera)

267 responses

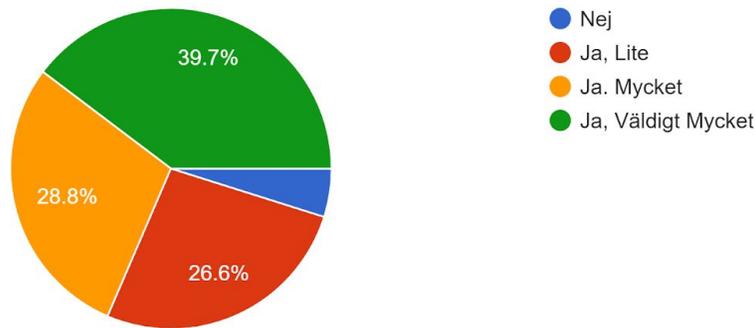


9. Do you feel that your English skills have improved as a result of your spare time activities?

In total 267 students answered the question. 13 students answered that they did not consider that they had improved as a result of their spare time activities, 71 students reported a small improvement, 77 a large improvement, and 106 a very large improvement. Adding up the categories of 'yes, large' and 'yes, very large' we get 68.5% of students that consider their improvement to be substantial.

9. Känner du att du blivit bättre på engelska till följd av det du gör på din fritid?

267 responses

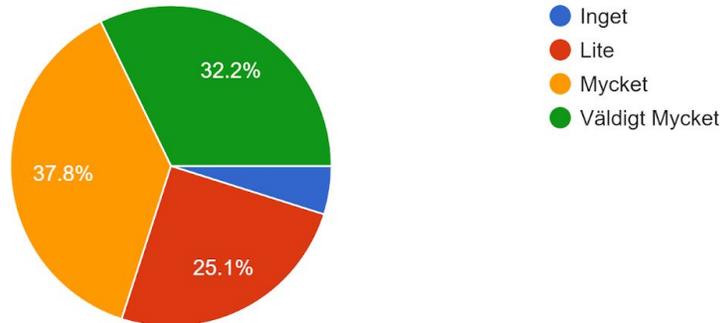


10. How much do you believe that English from your spare time activities helped you in school?

In total 267 students answered the question. 13 of them believe that English from the spare time has not helped them at all in school, 67 believe it has helped a little bit, 101 believe it has helped a good deal, and 86 believe it has helped a great deal. Adding up the categories of 'a good deal' and 'a great deal' we get 70% of the sample body believing that their spare time English have helped them a lot in school.

10. Hur mycket känner du att engelskan från fritiden har hjälpt dig i skolan?

267 responses

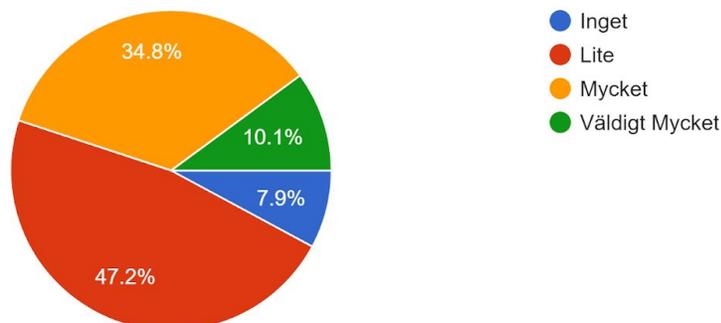


11. How much do you believe that English from school helped you in your spare time activities?

In total 267 students answered. 21 students reported that it has not helped at all, 126 students believed it has helped them a little, 93 a good deal, and 27 a great deal. Adding up the categories of 'a good deal' and 'a great deal' we get 44.9% believing English from their school education helping them in their spare time English activities. Not the best approval ratings sadly.

11. Hur mycket känner du att engelskan från skolan har hjälpt dig på fritiden?

267 responses



6. Discussion

In this section I will discuss, compare and present the results from my study. I will relate the data to previous research and theory hoping to illuminate our current perception of spare time English. I will focus on how extensive the consumption of spare time English is among students, as well as differences between the genders. I will look at gaming as a spare time activity. And finally how the students feel about the benefit of English in their spare time.

6.1 Students' consumption

From my data I can not gauge the consumption in hours. By choice I decided not to try to measure that since it requires a more longitudinal research approach. However we can see that a big portion of the sample body watches English entertainment without subtitles 'often' and 'very often', at a combined rate of 84.6% (see pie chart 3). And that 76.7% reads English 'often' or 'very often' (see pie chart 6). Now that is a big portion of the student body that frequently consumes English in their spare time. This supports what skolverket's big survey in 2003 noted, that students from a young age have extensive access to English entertainment in their spare time (Skolverket 2005, p. 21). Pia Sundqvist's 2009 longitudinal study where she tracked English consumption in students spare time through activity diaries also corroborates this. She measured the average time students in her sampling group reported to be "Watching TV" and "Watching films". The two categories combined amounted to six and a half hours per week (Sundqvist 2009, p. 69). At the time of her study ten years ago our consumption in Sweden looked different of course, this we can observe through the fact that she does not have a category for watching entertainment elsewhere than on TV and films. She does not have a category for streaming services like twitch nor video platforms like youtube. However, her study still gives us an insight into the students' consumption in her sampling group, and how they chose to spend their spare time.

Another similar category both me and Sundqvist shared is the category she calls "playing video games", I left my category a bit more broad and included mobile phone games and more. Again

the technology have advanced quite a lot over the last decade. The students in my study reported playing games in English 58.1% ‘often’ and ‘very often’ combined. Sundqvist calculates her sample group to average 3.95 hours per week (Sundqvist 2009, p. 69). A perfect comparison can of course not be made since we use different ways of measuring the time spent on the activity, and since we have different sample groups, yet we can note that playing video games is second highest on her list of activities that students chose to spend most of their spare time on. All these data points also confirms Lundahl’s notion that we meet vast amount of English outside of the classroom (Lundahl 2009, p. 37). And, we meet this English on our own terms through our own interests, setting us up for great opportunities to attain procedural knowledge.

6.2 Consumption and gender

When comparing the data between boys and girls we notice something of interest. In my study boys who report playing games ‘often’ and ‘very often’ is at almost 90%, while girls in the same two categories only added up to 33% (see Table 1 below). That is a significant difference between the genders. Sundqvist got a similar result when she combined the categories of ‘Video games’ and ‘surfing the internet’, boys spent 44% of their total spare time hours on these activities, while girls spent only 6% of their total spare time hours on these same categories (Sundqvist 2009, p. 69). This contrast is also established in skolverkets survey in 2003 where they note that “boys and girls comes in contact with English to a large extent in their spare time, but in different contexts” (Skolverket 2004, p. 99).

Table 1. *Gender and gaming crosstabulation.*

		Gaming				Total
		1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Often	4. Very often	
Gender	Boy	2,8% (3)	7,6% (8)	30,2% (32)	59,5% (63)	106
	Girl	26,5% (40)	40,4% (61)	17,9% (27)	15,2% (23)	151

Did not want to say	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (4)	60% (6)	10
All students	16,1% (43)	25,8% (69)	23,6% (63)	34,5% (92)	267

A consequence, of this difference between boys and girls, is what they bring to the classroom in terms of previous experiences and interest. Our aim, as stipulated by the curriculum, is to relate our teaching to the students' interests (Skolverket 2018, p. 34), which will be challenging on a group level especially when it comes to gaming and gender. A possible solution for this problem could be to find tasks that can suit both beginners and advanced players, or to have tasks where you can pick from several themes where gaming is just one among many.

Continuing comparing the genders we see a difference in speaking habits in their spare time too. Boys report that they speak 'often' and 'very often' at a rate of 62%, while girls report a rate of 34% (see Table 2). That is a considerable difference in frequency of speaking in the spare time, in my sample group, between the genders. My study did not include any tests so I can not conclude if this difference in frequency effects the students confidence, skill or knowledge. Neither can Sundqvist's study since she did not measure speaking habits, she did however included oral proficiency tests. In these tests girls outperform boys slightly, challenging the argument that more exposure would lead to better proficiency. However when Sundqvist analysed the test score and compared it the amount of spare time English consumed she saw that 27% of the variation in boys score could be accounted for by the amount of spare time English consumed, while for girls the amount was statistically non-significant (Sundqvist 2009, p. 70). This consequently could suggest a lot of things, maybe boys and girls attain procedural knowledge differently, or the different spare time activities have varying teaching value. The finding also spotlights the fact that girls still match the performance of boys in the test, suggesting they make up for this knowledge loss somewhere else.

Table 2. *Gender compared to speaking habits*

		Speaking				Total
		1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Often	4. Very often	
Gender	Boy	6,6% (7)	31,1% (33)	32,1% (34)	30,2% (32)	106
	Girl	20,5% (31)	45% (68)	20,5% (31)	14% (21)	151
	Did not want to say	10% (1)	40% (4)	30% (3)	20% (2)	10
All students		14,6% (39)	39,3% (105)	25,5% (68)	20,6% (55)	267

One final data point to note when looking at gender, is how much English speaking entertainment they watch without Swedish subtitles. In table 3 below we can see that there is a difference between the genders when it comes to this consumption habit too. Over 93% of the boys watch English speaking entertainment without Swedish subtitles ‘often’ and ‘very often’, while the girls come in at just under 77%. It’s not as big as the difference in computer games, but looking over several categories it starts to add up. Sundqvist calculated in her study that boys spend 21 hours per week on English outside of school, while girls spend 16,4 hours (Sundqvist 2009, p. 69). Over a year these hours add up, and the girls in these two sample groups would get way less English exposure in their spare time compared to the boys in the sample groups. If this in turn means they acquire less English is hard to say. The study Sundqvist carried out compared test results from vocabulary tests between boys and girls, and boys did outperform the girls in those. The more detailed analysis also showed the same trend as in the oral proficiency test, 35% of the variation in boys test scores could be accounted for by spare time English habits, while again the girls amount was statistically non-significant (Sundqvist 2009, pp. 70-71). This trend would suggest that spare time english activities can indeed influence English skills. However at the same time the 2003 national evaluation report states that “English is one of the subjects where gender differences in terms of performance and grades are the least pronounced” (Statens

skolverk 2004, p. 112). Again questioning the idea that since boys spare time English exposure is higher they also automatically can translate that exposure into acquisition, or at least into grades in school. The obvious question to ask is if it could be possible that the girls make up the difference somewhere else, that they can compensate their lack of spare time exposure through an unknown factor, possibly through more study hours. Regrettably my survey did not look at time spent studying English outside of school as an alternate success factor.

Table 3. *Gender cross tabulated with watching entertainment without Swedish subtitles .*

		Without subtitles					Total
		Did not answer	1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Often	4. Very often	
Gender	Boy	0% (0)	0,9% (1)	5,7% (6)	22,6% (24)	70,8% (75)	106
	Girl	0,7% (1)	3,3% (5)	19,2% (29)	31,8% (48)	45% (68)	151
	Did not want to say	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	40% (4)	60% (6)	10
All students		0,4% (1)	2,2% (6)	13,1% (35)	28,5% (76)	55,8% (149)	267

6.3 Gaming in the spare time

If we cross tabulate the students' gaming habits with how often the students speak English in their spare time we see an interesting set of data (see Table 4). Students who play more are also inclined to speak more in their spare time. If we isolate the students who report that they speak 'often' or 'very often' and compare how many of them who report they play games 'often' or 'very often', we find that 74% of them are frequent gamers (see Table 5). Similar results were observed by Sylvén and Sundqvist in their study where 51% of their frequent gamers said they spoke English in the spare time, while only 21% of the non gamers said the same (Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012, pp. 312-313). How speaking habits and gaming is related to one another is

something that could be explored in further research. Is it because there is ample opportunity to speak in the games, or is it that the games are giving the students more confidence to speak? Regardless the reason, the outcome is still that these students get more speaking time. If we can convert this extra English exposure to actionable knowledge and skill in school, we would have a possible formula for teachers to take advantage of. I would also be interested to learn where the last 26% of the frequent speakers find opportunities to speak, especially since only 46% of the sample body are frequent speakers to begin with. If we can find and duplicate these speaking opportunities, and project it toward the 54% less frequent speakers, that would be a huge improvement in exposure for that group of students.

Table 4. *Students playing computer games compared to speaking habits*

		Speaking				Total
		1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Often	4. Very often	
Gaming	1. Never	6% (16)	7,9% (21)	1,9% (5)	0,4% (1)	16,2% (43)
	2. Seldom	3,4% (9)	12,7% (34)	6% (16)	3,7% (10)	25,8% (69)
	3. Often	3,4% (9)	11,2% (30)	7,5% (20)	1,5% (4)	23,6% (63)
	4. Very often	1,9% (5)	7,5% (20)	10,1% (27)	14,9% (40)	34,4% (92)
Total		14,7% (39)	39,3% (105)	25,5% (68)	20,5% (55)	100% (267)

Table 5. *Frequent speakers compared to gaming habits*

Gaming	Total
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	1. Never	2. Seldom	3. Often	4. Very often	
Speaking often and very often	4,9% (6)	21,1% (26)	19,5% (24)	54,5% (67)	123

Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) also compared the students' results from a variety of language tests with the the groups they had divided the students into based on frequency of gaming. Their conclusion, for their sample body, supported the notion that frequent gamers did acquire a lot of the exposed English, and in turn were able to convert it to actionable skills for school. Yet Sylvén and Sundqvist also point out that there are other possible explanations for the results of the study, like socioeconomic backgrounds of the students, aptitude and so on (Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012, pp. 314-316). However if it turns out to be true that computer games have a strong beneficial effect on language development, then we as teachers have to consider the consequences of that. Maybe incorporating games into our education as a language development tool. Or as an effective homework assignment for students who struggle with the conventional route.

6.4 Benefits of spare time English

If acquisition indeed takes place in the spare time then there can be huge benefits to spending your spare time consuming entertainment in a foreign language. Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) showed positive results in their study. And there is nothing in language theory that would suggest otherwise, rather to the contrary, Krashen's Monitor Model would fully support acquisition in the spare time. The *acquisition-learning hypothesis* would suggest that the natural English that students are exposed to during their spare time should be acquired. All we need to do as teachers in school, is to make sure that the students utilize all this *acquired* spare time English as a foundation to then *learn* the language. We would save time, not having to use valuable classroom time to expose our students to natural English, but rather we could just jump straight in to the *learning* aspect of the hypothesis. Further the *input hypothesis* would naturally occur in

the spare time, assuming a student organically would choose his or her spare time activity out of interest. The student would most likely not watch an in depth documentary in English about a subject he or she has no pre-knowledge about, but rather naturally find a suitable level of entertainment. For example finding easier and shorter summaries in the L1 or L2 to build his pre-knowledge before diving into a complex documentary. We do the same thing naturally with computer games, as a young child you don't start with the most advanced game on the market. You start small and progress from there, slowly you learn the culture and technology skills needed to move on to the harder stuff. This way you naturally, through your own instinct to have fun in your spare time, advance yourself with $a+1$. Finally I would argue that the *affective filter* most of the time is down when you can choose your own activities in the safety of your own leisure time. And even if you are not acquiring one hundred percent of the time, the thing with spare time is that we have so much of it that you would still get a lot of exposure over a year.

In my study the students were asked if they themselves felt an improvement in their skills in English from their spare time English activities, and 68.5% of the students answered that they felt a 'large' or 'very large' improvement as a consequence of their spare time consumption (see pie chart 9). The national survey in 2003 echoes this, they write in their report "the students are aware of this; it is noticeable that their contact with the language outside of school is growing in importance. We judge the informal learning that takes place there as rather comprehensive" (Skolverket 2005, p. 218). Furthermore, 70% the students in my sample group also felt that the English they learn in their spare time have helped them 'a good deal' and 'a great deal' in school (see pie chart 10). Which supports the notion in the 2003 national survey and emphasizes the importance and possible utilization of spare time English, in our classroom, for us teachers.

Finally 55.1% of the students reported that they felt like the English they got from school only had helped them 'a little' or 'nothing' in their spare time (see pie chart 11). If this feeling really reflects the true help they got from their education is of course very hard to say. But it gives insight into how poorly the sample students value their English in-school education for use in their spare time activities. There could of course be many reasons why a student would feel this

way. The spare time activities might be so simple that the student feels like he doesn't need the advanced English we teach at school, or the teenage student might not yet value education as a whole and therefore accredits less importance to it. On the other side of the spectrum, a more grim conclusion could be that the 'school book English' we teach today is too far removed from the reality students see in their spare time English at home, making them unable to transfer the school knowledge to the outside world. Additional research into these attitudes would be very valuable to get a better understanding of this, before it manifests itself too deep into our culture.

7. Conclusion

In this section I will summarize the results and look at the conclusions of the study. Additionally I will look at the limitations that restricted me and suggest further research to expand the topic.

My aim for this study was to shine a light on spare time activities in English and how students viewed the possible benefit it brings them. This insight to spare time activities would then be useful for teachers when approaching students' interests and previous experiences for the purpose of language education. The results of my survey showed that a large portion of the students frequently consume English in their spare time in many different mediums. Watching English entertainment without Swedish subtitles was the most popular category, followed by reading. Also playing games is very popular, but heavily tilted toward boys. Similarly we found in most categories, that girls on average consume less than boys. The same was seen in previous research where overall time spent on English in the spare time was lower for girls compared to boys (Sundqvist 2009, p. 69). This consumption, however large for the individual, provides great opportunities for procedural knowledge building through the exposure to natural language on the personal terms of the student. This language exposure can then be utilized by teachers as a foundation to build on in the language classroom. Furthermore we see a strong link between playing games and speaking habits, where 74% of the frequent gamers also were frequent speakers. In previous research we could also see a link between frequent gamers and higher test scores in school (Sylvén and Sundqvist 2012, pp. 313-314). Suggesting a great path for future education strategies in language development. Finally, the benefits of spare time English from a theoretical perspective suggested no reason why acquisition wouldn't take place outside of school. Students echoed this in their answers where 68.5% felt they advanced their English skills on the back of their spare time activities and 70% felt they benefited in school from it. Confirming a momentum teacher could take advantage of in the classroom.

7.1 Limitations

The quantitative approach have many advantages, and for the time constraint on this project a questionnaire was really a perfect instrument. However, one limitation is the lack of depth you can achieve in a questionnaire. If I could have added a dozen qualitative interviews, with selected students of special interest from the questionnaire, a deeper understanding for the sample group could have been established. A further possible limitation is the question of reliability when it comes to self reporting (Muijs 2004, p. 45). The questionnaire was anonymous, but it was conducted in school and distributed by a teacher, students might feel inclined to overestimate their use of English in their spare time to impress their surrounding. Or the opposite could also be true, students might want to impress their peers by diminishing their answers depending on the culture of the friend circle. Other limitations I faced in my study was that I had no test results tied to the sample body to compare the students answers to. It would have been very interesting to observe if there was a correlation between students spare time activities and their achievements in school. Also I would have wanted to measure other factors for success like, socioeconomic background and homework study hours, to name a few. Finally, the sample body of my study is too isolated to draw generalized conclusions about consumption. My study offers a picture of one school in one part of Sweden, and even if many Swedish students today have access to the same technology, the cultures of consumption could be vastly divergent in different regions of the country.

7.2 Further research

In this project I saw many opportunities for further research, chief among them was speaking habits in connection to gaming habits and if there is a strong relation between the two. If a correlation could be found, would it then be possible to introduce these supporting activities, in an attractive way, to less speaking inclined students? Another important avenue for further research is students' attitudes toward their education, and further also the relationship between spare time or self taught skills, versus in school education. The same technologies that provide the possibility to consume English for entertainment purposes, also provide great opportunities to learn and teach oneself at home. However, since the line between producer and consumer is blurred, there are also risks. The exploration of further research into how the Swedish school

system prepares the next generation of students in critical thinking and criticism of sources, for this new information age, might be of paramount importance.

8. References

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10. Appendices

Bilaga Enkät:

Engelska på din fritid

Hej mitt namn är Mikael Wendt och jag skriver för tillfället mitt examensarbete vid Malmö Universitet. Enkäten nedan handlar om era fritidsvanor i förhållande till engelska. Enkät är helt anonym och frivillig. Du kan avsluta enkäten när som helst om du känner att du inte vill svara på fler frågor. Dina svar kommer användas för att få en inblick i din generations fritidsvanor. Har du några frågor kan du fråga din lärare. Tack för din medverkan :)

1. Kön:

- Kille
- Tjej
- Vill inte säga

2. Vilken årskurs går du i?

- Åk 6
- Åk 7
- Åk 8
- Åk 9

3. På din fritid, hur ofta tittar du på engelsk-talande underhållning utan svenska undertexter? (tex youtube, twitch, netflix, streams, TV, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

4. På din fritid, hur ofta tittar du på engelsk-talande underhållning med svenska undertexter? (tex youtube, twitch, netflix, streams, TV, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

5. På din fritid, hur ofta spelar du spel på engelska? (tex datorspel, xbox, playstation, nintendo, sällskapsspel, brädspel, mobilspel, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

6. På din fritid, hur ofta läser du på engelska? (tex instagram, facebook, hemsidor, forum, tidningar, böcker, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

7. På din fritid, hur ofta skriver du på engelska? (tex med kompisar, på facebook, forum, discord, sms, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

8. På din fritid, hur ofta pratar du på engelska? (tex med kompisar online, med kompisar i riktiga livet, med randoms du spelar med online, med mera)

- Aldrig
- Sällan
- Ofta
- Mycket Ofta

9. Känner du att du blivit bättre på engelska till följd av det du gör på din fritid?

- Nej
- Ja, Lite
- Ja. Mycket
- Ja, Våldigt Mycket

10. Hur mycket känner du att engelskan från fritiden har hjälpt dig i skolan?

- Inget
- Lite
- Mycket
- Våldigt Mycket

11. Hur mycket känner du att engelskan från skolan har hjälpt dig på fritiden?

- Inget
- Lite
- Mycket
- Våldigt Mycket