Elevers skrivande på engelska på fritiden

Students' writing in English in their spare time

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this degree project is to investigate in what types of situations and to what extent some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time, what reasons they have for doing so and what text types and genres are represented in their writing. Qualitative interviews were carried out with a group of six students in year two in an upper secondary school in the southern part of Sweden, three with MVG as a final grade and three with VG as a final grade in English A.

The results show that all of the students write in English each day in instant text messages on MSN messenger. However, they mostly use English in the form of abbreviations, single words, phrases and sentences. Longer pieces of text, like poems and other literary pieces, written in English were created only by the three students with MVG.

**Key words:** English, upper secondary students, writing, genres, text types, spare time

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**Attachment 1** Interview guide

**Attachment 2** Template Text types
1 Introduction

1.1 Background

As a teacher of English I have often found myself reacting positively to my students’ use of the English language, sometimes to a single word, sometimes to an idiomatic expression or to a whole chunk of text, which is extremely well formulated. When this happens, I often sense that the language that they use has been acquired outside of school. When I have asked students about their language use, they have often mentioned that they use English outside school and on some occasions they have even referred to situations outside of school where they use English. These examples inspire me as a teacher of English and they encourage me to reflect on how I can make use of the language that students engage with in their spare time to stimulate, motivate and encourage the development of the students learning in school. This is also an area that is stressed in the syllabus for English. It follows that students’ learning of English outside of school is worth investigating, and that is what this degree project sets out to do. However, since the scope of an investigation into students’ language learning outside of school runs the risk of becoming too broad, the focus is on the writing that students engage in their spare time. I also focus on upper secondary students.

Why I investigate writing is mainly because I believe that this skill is more noticeable to students. They can therefore hopefully be more aware of when, where and how they write, and in addition of what types of text they write and in what genres. Consequently, key concepts for this investigation are text types, genres and upper secondary students’ writing in their spare time.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate to what extent and how some upper secondary students make use of written English in their spare time. By investigating
this I also have reason to reflect on the role of written English in language education and on the relationship between school English and the English that students use in their spare time.

The investigation is based on the following research questions.

- In what types of situations and to what extent do some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time?
- What text types and genres are represented in the students’ writing in English in their spare time?
- Why do the students write in English in their spare time?

1.3 Concepts and definitions

Text types and writing genres play an important role in this investigation and for this reason it is necessary to explain and define the two. Initially it can be said that the two interact with each other but it is important to know what features and functions really separate the two. Per Ledin (2001) lists the text types that are mentioned in the syllabuses for English: description, narrative, information, procedure, argument/persuasion and exposition. Different writing genres can then be novels, short stories, plays/dramas, poems, reports, letters, essays, articles, letters to the editor and reviews, and they can be divided into many sub-groups. The first four can be referred to as literature or fictional genres while the rest are discursive.

Text types and genres have several features in common (ibid.). They can e.g. be divided into categories and they appear in the form of complete texts instead of phrases and sentences. However, genres are usually defined on the basis of features outside the text, like their function, setting and according to how they are perceived whereas text types are defined based on intrinsic features such as structure and linguistic attributes (ibid.). In addition, texts belonging to a certain genre follow certain conventions which can be linked to culturally determined formats and they are used in real-life situations while text types represent an ideal representation of how
texts are constructed (Lundahl, 2009). For this investigation I will use Bo Lundahl’s definition (2009) of what a text type is: “Text types are different forms of writing representing certain characteristics, e.g. a specific purpose, a particular overall structure and special language features” (p. 230). Moreover, Lundahl (2009) provides a template which presents the main purposes and basic structures for the six text types mentioned in the syllabuses for English A and B (see attachment 2), which I have used as a foundation when structuring my interview and when analysing the results.

Furthermore, the chat forum MSN messenger is referred to several times in this degree project. For practical reasons I only write MSN through the whole text but it is the instant messaging service that I focus on.
2 Literature review

2.1 Steering documents about students’ writing in English in their spare time

In the syllabus for English A for the upper secondary school, one of the goals that students should have attained on completion of the course is to “be able to formulate themselves in writing in order to inform, instruct, argue and express feelings and values, as well as have the ability to work through and improve their own written production” (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2000). One of the criteria for pass is to “write in clear language, not only personal messages, stories and reflections, but also summaries dealing with their own interests and study orientation” (ibid.). The syllabus for English states that one of the goals that the pupils should have attained on completion of the course is to “be able to [...] in writing summarise and comment on different types of texts, especially those related to the area of interest” (ibid.). Furthermore two of the criteria for pass state that: “Pupils present and comment on the contents of information obtained from different areas of interest and competencies” as well as “present and comment on material related to their own interests and study orientation” and in addition that they “express themselves and interact in writing with coherence, structure and greater variation concerning contents obtained from a number of different areas” (ibid.). It follows that the students’ learning of English should be related to what students do outside school and it is also clear that writing in different ways should be something that students should master. Hence, the writing in school can benefit a lot if we as teachers are aware of how the students write outside school in order to be able to know in what areas they need to improve and what types of text they do not practice or do not master.

Furthermore, about the structure and nature of English as a subject in school, the Swedish National Agency for Education stresses in the curriculum for English as a subject (2000) how important it is that the English pupils meet outside school should be taken into consideration in the education.
The English language and other forms of culture from English-speaking countries are widely accessible in Swedish society. Pupils encounter today many variants of English outside school. They meet English in a variety of contexts: on TV, in films, in the world of music, via the Internet and computer games, through reading texts and via contacts with the English-speaking world. The subject of English provides both a background to and a wider perspective on the cultural and social expressions surrounding pupils in today's international society. The subject covers examining the meaning conveyed by the language and benefiting from the richness and variety of English, which children and young people meet outside the school. (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2000)

It is thus clear that the students’ writing skills should stretch over a wide range of areas and forms of writing and should also apply to the students’ areas of interest.

### 2.2 Building on students’ interests

The German educationalist Thomas Ziehe has studied how societal changes affect young people and in a study about puberty and narcissism (1975), he describes a new type of youth who does not follow the norms of the older generation. In his analysis he finds that it is important to discuss images, means of expression and symbols that are commercially broadcast by media (ibid.). Ziehe suggests that by creating new processes for learning we can support young people in managing all the input they get. He uses the term “unusual learning processes” which basically means that students shall be engaged in learning where they get to use knowledge they already possess and at the same time acquire and develop new knowledge and competence. Consequently teaching should be adapted to any cultural changes (Heith, 2006). A lot has happened since Ziehe in the 70’s wrote about “unusual learning processes” - it is not the same youth today and it is not the same spectra of means of expression and symbols that we see. The society has changed and the arenas where young people spend their spare time are to a great extent new, however, the need for “unusual learning processes” and above all, new ones, still exists. Digital media and Internet are prevalent in young people’s lives today and is certainly something, which plays an important role in their spare time. Hence it is of interest to discuss young people’s use
of Internet when talking about means of expression. In *Unga nätkulturer* (2007), the need to discuss activities which young people engage in on the Internet in school is illuminated from several perspectives. Bo Dahlbom (*Unga nätkulturer*, 2007), professor in information technology at the IT university in Gothenburg, says that the school today, when students take part in activities outside school which pedagogues know little about, must act as “the broker, advisor and intermediary” to be able to guide the young people in the flow of information, teach them how to assort, be critical and analyse. In addition, that the school must make use of the knowledge about Internet which young people have and support them in finding sound paths.

Furthermore, Elza Dunkels, youth researcher, also shed light on how children in general have more knowledge about how to use computers, however she stresses that they do not have the ethic and legal competence that adults in general possess. She also advertise for a “färdighetskartläggning” within the teachers education, where focus lies on how to find what students already know and are interested in to be able to use that as a starting point. As an example she mentions a girl who did not pass the course in English in school, however at home was using an advanced graphic computer programme where the menus are in English and she translates while working by herself (ibid.). Moreover Ann Katrine Agëbäck, office manager at Medierådet, confirms the well-known trend that what young people activate themselves with changes rapidly. Whereas Internet was quite a text-based medium during the 1990’s it is now overflowing with sound, images and movies. The ongoing speedy development also gives a lot of opportunities for the young people to be not only consumers but producers of texts and images as well. She stresses what has been said before, that young people need to discuss what they are doing (ibid.). Surveys made by Medierådet show that few young people talk to adults about what they are doing on the Internet. Jonas Linderoth, who has been researching the use of online computer games, agrees with what has been said but in addition he wants to high light the link between the activity and how it can be connected to what the student should learn, which is something that the students does not see. As an example he brings up a game where the setting is Africa and the teacher wants the student to learn about the savannah. According to Linderoth the students only see how the yellow ones eat the brown ones, what must be taught is that the yellow one is a lion and the brown one is an antelope (ibid.).
Two Australian researchers in the area of education, Jane Kenway and Elizabeth Bullen, who have studied how cultures and institutions are designed for young people conclude that the media and consumption culture influence the lives of young people greatly and that young people should learn about and understand the true meaning of this (Heith, 2006). Bringing up media and popular culture and students’ interests in school is therefore of great importance. This means encouraging discussions, putting forward perspectives of concern to the students and relating the teaching of English to the students’ experiences and interests. Hence, it is important that teachers have knowledge about popular culture and activities students encounter in their spare time such as how they engage in writing in English.

2.3 Students’ writing in English and spare time English

When investigating how, where, why and to what extent students write in English in their spare time it is natural that we assume that they do so. But this assumption must be based on evidence. What do we already know that makes a more detailed investigation like this relevant? Well, Internet naturally plays an important role in popular culture and among young people. Young people are all over the net, playing games, chatting, on forums and since the Internet is a social network for people all over the world, it is also possible and common to chat with people all over the world, and the most common language used is English. Studies show that young people alone use the Internet very frequently and according to Internetbarometer 2008 (2009), 71 per cent of the boys and 65 per cent of the girls age 9-17 use Internet at home every day. In the age group 15-24, 86 per cent used Internet every day, but then it could be both at home, at work or in school. The same study showed that the age group 15-24 spend 141 minutes per day on Internet in total, whereof 123 minutes at home, which is the highest figure of all the age groups. However, the number of participants here is low and therefore one should only use these statistics as an indication. In the previously mentioned age group 69 per cent use social media on Internet at home every day which includes messenger, social networks, communities, discussion forums, chat groups and blogs. Messenger alone is used by 60 per cent. 44 per cent use electronic mail in the same age group. Among boys in this age group 56
per cent use messenger compared to 65 per cent of the girls. 38 per cent of the boys use electronic mail where the figure for girls is 56 per cent. Discussion forums and chat groups engage 30 per cent of the boys and 42 per cent of the girls. In the top six areas of Internet usage presented, blog engage 24 per cent of the girls while boys preferred video clips. Looking at popular web sites, YouTube, Facebook and Bilddagboken are the three most favoured ones visited every day. However, twice as many girls as boys used Face book and Bilddagboken, 41 respectively 23 per cent and 47 respectively 26 per cent. Regarding YouTube 64 per cent of the boys use this web site compared to 45 per cent of the girls. The same study shows that in this age group 90 per cent also use their cell phones for text messages every day.

According to Anne Heith (2006), studies indicate those who use the Internet the most are also those who manage the net better. However managing the net is not the same as a critical understanding of the information and here we as teachers have a significant mission to guide and help students sort out and make use of the information that comes their way.

This study concerns upper secondary students. Even though the National Survey of English carried in 2003 (The Swedish National Agency for Education, 2005) targeted students in grade 9, it provides relevant information on how Swedish students use English in their spare time and how they look upon the subject of English. All in all, some 7,000 students in 120 schools were surveyed (ibid.). The summary of the survey shows that English as a school subject was the second highest ranked subject regarding how much influence the students felt they had concerning the choice of on the contents and ways of working (ibid.). Students’ writing skills were also analysed and the results showed that most of the students were capable of expressing themselves in a simple but functional way, both when it came to expressing themselves personally and informally but also somewhat more formally (ibid.). This begs the question to what extent these skills are acquired in school or outside of school?

It is also interesting to bring up two types of student groups in the survey, which in different ways did not reach the goals. The difference between the two groups was that the students in the first one did not receive a final grade in English while the
second group included students, which performed poorly on tests but received a final grade anyway. The results from the survey showed that the students who did not receive a final grade did not use any English in their spare time as much as the other group or the other students (ibid.).

The national survey also presented a discrepancy between the length of boys’ and girls’ written production. A random selection of texts showed that the girls in general wrote longer pieces of text. In a commentary on the written production in the National test for English 2002 (Äp 9), Erickson (2003) speculates that girls may write more than boys in their spare time and therefore get to practice that skill more often. The results of the national survey may be in line with this assumption. The girls expressed that they wrote letters in English much more often (ibid.).

Vocabulary was also investigated in the national survey and in the 248 essays analysed there was a great difference with regard to vocabulary range between the essays that received a higher grade and the essays that did not reach pass or only just achieved pass (ibid.).

The survey also showed that in general all the participating students used the Internet a lot to communicate (70%). One third of the students stated that they chatted in English. However, more boys used computer games, 70% compared to 35% of the girls (ibid.).

As for students who performed poorly and had not received a final grade in English, the writers of the report, mentioned the possibility that these students may find it difficult to relate classroom-based language learning to communicative activities outside the classroom (Giota, 1995; Hansen, 1990; Estling Vannestål, 2002).

One interesting finding was that many of the students who did not get a grade were very actively involved in English in their spare time activities. This is also something that coincides with results from other similar studies (Estling Vannestål, 2002). Related to this there is another group of students who did not get a final grade and this group does not seem to use English very much in their every day life, outside school. The exposure to English in itself is therefore not as crucial as the way in which one
engages in the language in combination with the type of English one comes across (Lundahl, 2009).

All in all, it is fair to say that the English that students encounter outside of school is of great importance. In 2002 The Swedish National Agency of Education (2004) carried out another survey into young people’s knowledge of and conceptions of English in year 9 in comparison to students from seven other European countries. The ninth graders were asked about the importance of the English they use in their spare time, in comparison to the English that they meet in school. Here academically strong students attached a relatively limited role to their school-based language learning, while weaker students, on the other hand, believed that they learned more in school. This suggests that the more proficient students approached their spare time English more actively.
3 Methodology

To investigate how upper secondary students use the English language to write texts in their spare time, I chose to use qualitative interviews. Literature was also used to give a background to the investigated area but also to help creating questions for the interviews and analysing the results. In this section, sampling and research ethics, data collection methods, procedure and data analysis are presented.

3.1 Sampling and research ethics

Six students were interviewed, four boys and two girls, attending their second year at an upper secondary school in one of the bigger cities in the south of Sweden. Two of the girls and one of the boys had received the final grade MVG in English A and three of the boys had achieved VG in the same course in the previous year. Since the students’ school uses a concentrated approach in most subjects, the students had not had any English during the semester when they were interviewed. However, some of them were going to study English B in the upcoming semester.

Their school has one programme, which is a specially designed sports programme that has similarities with the Social Science programme but also offers some courses that are more in line with the Natural Science Programme. Guiding themes in the profile of the school are health, sports, leadership and communication. In total the school has approximately 60 students in years one to three.

Since this study uses qualitative interviews as the only source of data collection, I used Hatch’s (2002) guidelines regarding sampling strategies. For this study I chose to interview students that were in a class in my proximity because it then became easy to schedule time for interviews. I then wanted to interview stronger students of English and asked all the students in the class who had received an MVG or a VG if they in any way wrote in English in their spare time and could consider being interviewed about this. Since three out of three possible students with an MVG felt up to it, they were selected. Regarding the students with VG, only three out of four
possible wrote in English in their spare time and was keen on participating. These
were therefore selected for the study. Hence criterion sampling, based on students
writing in their spare time and being able students, was used (ibid.). However,
convenience sampling was also used since I selected students from a class in my
proximity (ibid.).

The literature used for this study to give a background to the topic and to help
formulate and model the study was recommended to me by my supervisor and used
because it is up to date. The surveys, which I have used, were chosen because they are
the latest nation wide studies regarding the investigated area.

Within all types of data collections when informants are involved research ethics is an
area that must be considered and applied fastidiously. In order to perform a good
qualitative interview and obtain useful data, there are a number of factors to consider.
The informants must be well aware of the research methods and the purpose of the
investigation, have the possibility to ask questions about the investigation and receive
truthful answers. They should also know that they can deny to participate and
interrupt the interview without any negative consequences and know that their
participation is totally anonymous and that they cannot be identified in any way
(Johansson & Svedner, 2006). For this investigation the mentioned factors above were
used and are accounted for in procedure.

3.2 Data collection methods

To fulfil the purpose with this investigation – to explore and find out how students’
use written English in their spare time, qualitative interviewing became the tool.
However, to get the most of out these interviews, to create good and useful research
questions and to get a sound background for the selected investigation area, literature
was used as well.

According to Elliot G. Mishler (1986) and James P. Spradley (1979) qualitative
interviews are unique kinds of conversation or speech procedures that are used by
researchers to investigate informants’ experiences and interpretations. However there are different ways of performing qualitative interviews, and they are described differently by scientists, but three distinct types can be presented, the informal, the formal and the standardized (Hatch, 2002). The informal interview is recommended to use when interviews will not be the head source in the study (ibid.). A standardized interview has predetermined questions and does not leave much space for follow-up questions (ibid.). Therefore the formal interview is the most suitable type for this investigation. The formal interview, which is also called the “structured”, “semi-structured” or “in-depth” can be recognized by the following features. The researcher leads the interview, the interview has a time limit and it is recorded. Concerning questions, the researcher brings guiding questions to the interview, however there is room for the researcher to pick up on what the informants say, going in new directions which the informants’ point out and enlighten (ibid.). Moreover, Hatch (2002) explains that formal interviews can be used when interviewing is the solitary data for a study. In this study literature is used, however only for background knowledge. Therefore I am convinced that the formal interview is the most suitable type for this investigation. Additionally formal interviews “are in-depth in that they are designed to go deeply into the understandings of the informants” (ibid.).

For this study the three investigation questions were used as main questions. To cover the three areas thoroughly sub questions were formulated with help from what Ledin and Lundahl write about genres and text types, which I have accounted for earlier in the section called “Terms and definitions”. A template explaining different text types (see attachment 2) was also used in the planning of the interviews. The interview guide is found in attachment 1.

3.3 Procedure

As for the interviews, the informants were initially asked if they could participate in an investigation about how they use English outside of school. When they volunteered to do so, they were given further information before giving a final yes. I explained the purpose of the investigation, how the interview would be made and that they at any
time could ask me any question they had. In addition they were told that they at any
time could interrupt their participation without negative consequences and that their
anonymity would be protected in the investigation. Written consent forms (see
attachment 3) were then handed out for the parents to sign. In the consent form I
presented the purpose of my investigation, the method I would use and finally
guaranteed the anonymity of the students. I also gave the same information about
research ethics that I presented orally to the informants. This document also included
my contact information including e-mail and phone number if the parents had any
questions or wanted their student to interrupt his or her participation.

When the consent forms had been signed, times for the interviews were scheduled
with each informant. Each of the six interviews was carried out individually under the
same conditions and had a time limit of thirty minutes. The interviews were
performed in a separate room on the school. They were tape-recorded. The students
were asked predetermined guiding questions and follow-up questions.

Even though the informants could have answered in English, this language is not their
mother tongue. The interviews were therefore carried out in Swedish and I have
translated the students’ answers into English.

3.4 Data analysis

To make sense of the data collected, typological analysis was initially used.
According to Hatch (2002) it is a very suitable method for post-positivist
assumptions. Bruce L. Berg (1998) and James P. Spradley (1980) explains the work
of post-positivist researchers, which is to set out to discover the patterns of
understanding that informants use to make sense of their worlds. The post-positivist
researchers see themselves as data-gathering instruments and need participants who
are willing to talk with them about their activities and intentions. Hence they require
close relationships with informants in order to collect data (ibid.). In post-positivist
studies solely the researcher generally accomplishes analysis and precise methods are
used that ensure that findings are empirically supported by the data (Hatch, 2002).
Although typological analysis was used initially, I decided along the way to use the research questions when presenting the results instead of creating typologies. Hatch’s basic typological model was therefore solely used as a stepping-stone when trying to make sense of the collected data. The steps Hatch (2002) advises are as follows:

Steps in Typological Analysis

1. Identify typologies to be analysed
2. Read the data, marking entries related to your typologies
3. Read entries by typology, recording the main ideas in entries on a summary sheet
4. Look for patterns, relationships, themes within typologies
5. Read data, coding entries according to patterns identified and keeping a record of what entries go with which elements of your patterns
6. Decide if your patterns are supported by the data, and search the data for nonexamples of your patterns
7. Look for relationships among the patterns identified
8. Write your patterns as one-sentence generalizations
9. Select data excerpts that supports your generalizations (p. 153)

To identify typologies to be analysed I focused on each of my research questions one at a time and looked for all information in the students’ answers, interview by interview, that could answer the research question at hand or in any way be associated with it. The information linked to a specific question was highlighted with a certain colour. Then the information from each interview belonging to a certain research question, typology, was compiled. To be able to look for patterns and follow trends when analysing I marked each piece of information with the name of the informant since it is naturally important to be able to follow chain of thoughts from one question to another. When going through the collected information to each question and similar answers were found to a specific phenomenon a quotation from one of the students was selected that illuminated the answer in a clear way.
4 Results and analysis

4.1 Results

In this chapter I account for the results of the interviews. The typologies used to divide up my interview questions in connection to my research questions are used. Since I have used my research questions when developing the interview guide and when structuring the results, the students’ answers have been rearranged into a narrative text that follows these. The results of each typology/research question are followed by a brief summary. All the answers from the students have been translated into English. To secure the students’ anonymity, their names have been altered. The students interviewed with the final grade MVG in English A are here called Teresia, Joel and Julia, while the VG students are referred to as Anders, Per and Johan.

I would like to emphasize that when I discussed the students’ writing in English with them, it included everything from using abbreviations in English when writing in Swedish to writing completely in English and a mix in between. Before conducting the interviews, I informed the students that I was interested in their use of writing in this very wide sense.

4.1.1 In what types of situations and to what extent do some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time?

To what extent the students write in English in their spare time turned out to be quite difficult for the students to answer since the students could only offer estimates. However, I decided to keep this part of the question although the results have to be looked at carefully. The types of situations when they write in English in their spare time relate to everything from using chat forums or cell phones.

Teresia explained that she writes in English on the chat forum MSN and has her own Internet blog. In addition, she writes texts by hand at home and on her cell phone. She estimated that she writes “pretty much” in English. Since she is logged on to MSN approximately seven hours each day, single descriptive words and swear words are
used every day. Some days she can sit by the computer chatting almost all those hours but sometimes she is logged on and writes now and then but does other things at the same time. Regarding texts like her poems and short stories, the amount of writing depends on her mood.

Sometimes you’re in a real writing spirit and then you write a great deal during a week or a month. It can be that you write [those kind of texts] three times one week and then I write until I’m finished. Is it a poem it can take fifteen minutes but is it a short story I can sit for a few hours. I never leave it unfinished because then I know that I never will finish it.

She also mentioned that she sends a lot of text messages each day on her cell phone and the majority of them contain some English.

Joel writes in English when he texts messages on his cell phone to a specific friend from another country. In addition he uses the chat forum MSN to post longer messages on different forums and when he writes what he refers to as “philosophical reflections” on the computer. Joel answered that the amount of writing in English is hard to estimate and that it varies, but some weeks he posts several messages on forums and writes philosophical reflections. Concerning text messages on MSN and on the cell phone he said: “I chat in Swedish but then I like use English, that must be like a couple of times each week, often a couple of hours each time.” He also texts on his cell phone completely in English a couple of times each month.

Julia explained that she writes in English on MSN. She also posts written comments on an international forum where lyrics are posted and discussed and in addition she writes small literary texts and lyrics on the computer. She also writes in English in text messages on the cell phone. Julia writes actively on MSN at least about two hours per day. Regarding writing text messages on her cell phone she immediately said that she sends approximately 2,500 text messages a month. Furthermore she in general writes a poem once a week but sometimes she writes three in one week and the next week none.

Anders explained that he writes in English on the chat forum MSN on the computer
and when he is texting on the cell phone. He answered that he does not write that much in English since his English is mixed in with the Swedish. He is logged on to MSN every day, but this does not mean that he always writes anything. He estimated that in total in a week he writes for two to three hours and that on each occasion he writes anything in Swedish, English is included in almost every message. He sends text messages on his cell phone every day and in a majority of them English abbreviations are included.

Per told me that he writes in English on MSN on the computer and text messages on the cell phone. He explained that he chats two to three times a month completely in English. When he chats in Swedish on MSN but uses English abbreviations he estimated that he chats actively three hours per week. Concerning texting on the cell phone, he answered that he texts a huge amount of messages each day but it is just those to his girlfriend, which contain phrases in English. However, that happens many times per day.

Johan writes in English on MSN and text messages on the cell phone. He estimated that he chats completely in English once or twice a month. Chatting actively on MSN in Swedish but using English words and abbreviations can be one and a half hour to two hours each day. Sending text messages completely in English on his cell phone did not happen that often but at least a couple of times each month. Texting in Swedish but using single words or phrases in English can happen many times each day since he explained that the sent; “many, many messages each day”. At the end of the interview Johan said: “But I think I write less in English now, like in text messages and such because we don’t have it [as a subject] this semester in school”.

**Summary**

All six students write in English on MSN on the computer and in text messages on their cell phones. In addition the three MVG students write in English in other contexts such as debating forums on the Internet, in a blog, other literary texts by hand at home and on the computer.

One of the VG students and the two girls with MVG chat every day on MSN. The
other students estimated that they write actively a couple of hours each week, but not 
always every day. Since they at least use words in English but sometimes phrases and 
complete sentences it can be said that at least three of them write in English to some 
amount each day on MSN.

All of the students except the boy with MVG use English in forms of words, phrases 
and sentences many times each day when sending text messages on the cell phone.

Both of the girls gave quite similar answers concerning how often they write poems 
and short stories, i.e. three times a week but depending on their mood. One of them 
writing short stories said that she often writes for a few hours when she writes stories.

4.1.2 What text types and genres are represented in the students’ writing?

Some traditional genres and text types were represented in the students’ writing. The 
genres found were short story, play/drama, and poetry. Text types mentioned by the 
students were description, narrative, information and argument/persuasion. In 
addition, I discovered that single words, phrases and sentences in English were very 
often used when the students wrote in Swedish. This use is therefore also included in 
the following results.

Teresia writes poems and short stories in English. She explained that her poems are 
mostly descriptions of how she feels at the time. In her poems and short stories she 
explained her choice of topics as follows:

In the poems it has been sorrow and death and stuff like that but in the short 
stories I can write about something really fun and really nice, oftentimes it is 
about love and friends because that’s something I know and can relate to. I have 
such a bad imagination that if I would write about horror in my short stories I 
would just go over the top and it would just be really wrong.

She also mentioned that in general her main topic would concern feelings. Her poems 
consist of very short sentences, three to four words and can vary in length from three 
to four lines and up to almost a whole page written by hand. In her short stories, on
the other hand, the length of the sentences can vary a lot and the stories can be up to a few pages.

On her own blog, which is about everything in her daily life, she only writes words and phrases in English. On MSN, she uses abbreviations, swear words and single descriptive words and on her cell phone she writes single words, phrases and sentences.

Joel writes complete text messages in English on his cell phone. On MSN he puts in single words, swear words and phrases, but he also writes whole messages to create sketches. Moreover he posts longer messages on different forums. These are often related to politics. By hand he writes philosophical reflections about things going on in the world and political theories.

Julia writes English in messages on MSN, in text messages on her cell phone, poems, small literary texts, lyrics and comments on an Internet forum. On MSN she uses single words, abbreviations, phrases and sentences in English when she chats in Swedish. “It can be like by the way, like btw and be right back [brb].”

On the cell phone in text messages, she uses both words and phrases, not that many abbreviations.

Regarding her lyrics and poems she explained as follows:

I write lyrics about my own feelings and about certain things that happen and my poems can be like small poems or like some sentences, which describe how I feel maybe if something has happened.

Her poems can vary in length, from three lines to ten and her lyrics are most often a whole page. “If I write like a poem or a text, or a lyric then it’s not abbreviations then it’s like ordinary words.”

The comments she posts on the international forum where lyrics are discussed are most often just a couple of sentences expressing her opinion about a lyric.
Anders often writes abbreviations, words and phrases on MSN, sometimes whole sentences as well. When he texts on his cell phone he uses abbreviations in English. Since he uses English in the mentioned situations, his topics concern every-day matters: “everything between heaven and earth”. However, he also pointed out that abbreviations are not that common for him because he feels that he learns English better if he writes correctly i.e. whole phrase or words.

Per explained that he writes text messages on MSN solely in English, abbreviations when chatting on MSN in Swedish and phrases in text messages on his cell phone.

Johan explained that he writes text messages on MSN solely in English and uses abbreviations and single words when chatting on MSN in Swedish. He also writes complete text messages in English on his cell phone and uses words or phrases in English when writing text messages in Swedish on his cell phone.

**Summary**

All of the students write instant text messages on MSN where they use English when chatting in Swedish. Two of the VG students sometimes write instant text messages on MSN completely in English. The boy with MVG creates sketches on MSN writing improvised lines in messages completely in English. All students use English when they text in Swedish on their cell phone and two of the boys, one from each category, also write text messages on the cell phone completely in English. The two girls with MVG both write poems about feelings and one of them does so to express her emotions. She also writes short stories and in both genres her chosen topics are sorrow, death, love and friends. The other girl writes small literary texts in just a few lines to describe feelings and express lyrics. Furthermore the boy with MVG and one of the girls with MVG post messages on forums. The boy posts longer argumentative messages and the girl shorter reviewing messages. One of the MVG girls also uses English on her blog in Swedish. The boy with MVG writes philosophical reflections.
4.1.3 Why do the students write in English?

Teresia writes in English if she just wants something to do or if she is sad or happy and feels the need to get things off her shoulders, to be occupied by something, or because she just wants to write, but most often when she feels a bit down. She also explained that she can express herself better in English and she thinks that English is a more beautiful language than Swedish: “Sometimes I use English because I think a certain word sounds better in English.” In general she feels that English is a better sounding language than Swedish. “Certain Swedish words, it’s like, I don’t like them really, or actually I don’t think that they fit the situation, they sound strange. Something is different with the English language.” She also said that; “it can feel like I have a better vocabulary in English.” In addition she writes longer texts when she is in a very emotional period, whether it is bad or good, she writes about it.

Furthermore she explained that when she writes poems in English she often does so because she wants to confirm to herself that “ok, right now I am feeling this bad and I have to do so in order to feel good again.” It is also a way for her to get occupied and think of something else than how she feels. “Because then I get to sit with the pen and really focus on what I’m doing, since I often write to deal with feelings or to get away from feelings, and I don’t like writing on the computer.”

She also writes in English on her own blog in Swedish, but only because she wants to explain something in a better way. She said: “It is oftentimes easier to use an English word or phrase to explain what you mean.”

On MSN she uses abbreviations, swear words and single descriptive words in English even though she chats in Swedish. She uses abbreviations for practical reasons, it is faster to write. “You throw in an abbreviation in English, like brb, it is easier to write than be right back [in Swedish], and like afk [away from keyboard], there are no abbreviations for them in Swedish as far as I know and it goes faster.” She uses swear words, like fuck: “I see fuck like stronger than fan in Swedish, so then it shows that you have become extra moody or that you react really strong upon something.” Single words are used to explain something:
When I put in a single word it is more to like describe, you know like, she really was for example weird. Then you know that she really was weird, it would not be the same if I wrote the word weird in Swedish, it is more expressive [in English].

On her cell phone she writes single words, phrases and sentences in English because she feels that some words sound better in English and some phrases or sentences are just better in English.

Joel writes text messages completely in English on his cell phone to a specific friend from another country, strictly for communicative purposes. On MSN he chats in Swedish but writes single words in English to clarify, enhance and give more weight to certain words. He also explained that when chatting with a certain friend they often spontaneously start writing completely in English for fun on MSN. “Often we start writing like theatrical lines to each other back and forth on MSN and in the end we manage to perform a whole sketch.” He also posts longer pieces of text completely in English on message boards on different forums because he wants to give his opinion about a certain topic. He does so because he feels that the text seems to be looked upon more seriously, like it has a higher status than the Swedish texts. Joel also explained that he writes what he calls philosophical reflections by hand completely in English. “I think a lot about things and what is going on in the world and then I can feel a strong urge to just write about it and it is just more suitable to do that by hand when it is that kind of text.” When I asked him why he uses English for these texts he explained that “longer political words or like long special words sound more fancy in English and like academic words, they just sound better in English.”

Julia explained her use of abbreviations in English on MSN when chatting in Swedish as follows: “Like if I’m going to the bathroom, you have like learnt that, you write brb, it’s much easier than writing I’ll be back soon I just need to do something. There are no abbreviations in Swedish for that.” She then explained why she uses single words in English as well on MSN when chatting in Swedish:

Sometimes you don’t find the right Swedish word and you don’t know how to express yourself and then it’s like you maybe have intercepted phrases from
movies and such and you feel like that was spot on, then you write that for example. So like if you’re discussing something you can express how you feel about that.

After being quiet for a while she continued:

I think that English has special words. If like I’m really angry with a person and then my favourite sit-com is OC, they say many spot on lines and then I can easily use words and phrases they have said. But that’s mostly with my best friend because we both adore OC and then it’s like we use English from that sit-com.

Concerning Julia’s use of English words when texting in Swedish on her cell phone she referred to the same reasons as for MSN, for practical uses and to reach a greater effect with a word.

Julia also writes poems, small literary texts and lyrics completely in English:

You’ve heard many songs in English, or like I only listen to songs in English and in some ways you’ve learnt when listening to them on your mp3 for example, you hear what words they rhyme on and like what words they use and then it’s like easier to write lyrics in English than in Swedish.

She then explained: “I’ve noticed that it’s good to write to get things off your shoulders in that way. Like I write those texts to describe how I feel, like if something has happened. It can be both if I’m sad and happy.”

The comments that she posts on a forum are written completely in English simply for communicative reasons because it is an international forum.

Julia also explained that she thinks that Swedish is not always that great to use and that she thinks that since we don’t use English that much it becomes special when we do so. “There are certain words I say or write when I’m moody, like whatever, it’s like, no I can’t be bothered to say anything more and you can say that with one word. It can have a greater impact to use English words, it can be more strong.”
Anders explained that he writes in English at home when he chats in Swedish on MSN. He uses English words, phrases and sentences when he cracks a joke with his friends, wants to enhance something in a message and because it is fun to write in English. According to him “certain words are more expressive in English and have a higher status than the exact same word in Swedish.” On his cell phone he only uses abbreviations and does so for practical reasons and because there are no useful ones in Swedish.

Per explained that he chats completely in English with friends from Denmark and England for communicative purposes. Concerning his use of abbreviations in English when chatting in Swedish he said: “You can like write omg, oh my god, because I don’t know how that would be said, or like short in Swedish.” Per also told me that he often writes phrases and sentences in English when texting in Swedish on the cell phone. When I asked why he answered: “Yeah, I do that to my girlfriend, like you’re beautiful, because it’s more romantic.” He explained that he often expresses himself in English when he wants to express romantic feelings to his girlfriend.

Johan writes completely in English on MSN with his friends in America for communicative purposes. But he also uses English when he chats on MSN in Swedish. He brought up brb as an example, which means be right back and the reason he gave for doing so was that the Swedish language does not have those kinds of abbreviations. He also talked about how he used single words in English on MSN. “If I like talk to a friend I can suddenly just write what instead of va [in Swedish]. It just pops up in my head!” I asked him if he used single words in English to emphasize something in a message but he meant that that is not the reason. His view is that it just comes naturally to put in single words in English here and there. Regarding text messages on the cell phone, Johan told me that he sometimes writes whole messages solely in English, most often to his mum or girlfriend. “Yeah, but it’s just fun to do that sometimes.” Concerning text messages in Swedish Johan said: “I can like write Hello or What's up, but for no reason, I just do so. Maybe I do it because we are so influenced by the English language.”
Summary
Using English when writing on MSN can be for different reasons depending on the English used. The two girls with MVG and two of the boys with VG said that they use abbreviations in English for practical reasons and explained that it is because there are no abbreviations in Swedish for be right back, brb and similar. The three MVG students and one of the VG students use single words in English because they feel that the English words can be more expressive and descriptive and two of them mentioned that writing a word in English can give more weight to the word or enhance the whole message. In addition one of the MVG students said that she does so when she lacks the word in Swedish or when she feels that the English word is more spot on than the Swedish counterpart and one of the boys with VG explained that some words just pop up in English and said that the reason can be the influence of English. One of the VG students also explained that he writes in English on MSN when he makes a joke. He and the boy with MVG both said that they use English for fun.

All of the students use English when writing text messages on the cell phone. The boy with MVG does it for communicative reasons when texting completely in English to a friend from the Netherlands. One of the boys with VG use English most of the time to be romantic, to express romantic feelings when texting his girlfriend. The other four students use words, phrases and sentences because it is fun, sounds better and just because it seems better. Two of the VG students sometimes chat completely in English and then for communicative purposes. The boy and one of the MVG girls added that they post messages on forums to give an opinion, to increase the status of the message respectively because the forum is international. One of the girls with MVG also writes in English on her own blog when she wants to explain something in a better way. The two MVG girls explained that they write poems and one of them short stories to express feelings and for therapeutic reasons, to feel better. One of them also said that she does so just because she wants something to do and because English is a more beautiful language than Swedish and sounds better and that she may have a better vocabulary in English. The boy with MVG writes philosophical reflections because he finds an urge to express himself concerning something and he thinks that English has more suitable words for these texts. One of the MVG girls writes lyrics because she listens to music in English and therefore knows what words to use and what words that rhymes.
5 Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Discussion

In this concluding chapter I discuss the trustworthiness of the results, how the results agree or disagree with previous research and finally to what extent this degree project may provide any new insights in the area of students’ spare-time English. I also discuss the usefulness of my results for me as a language teacher.

It is clear that I cannot draw any general conclusions based on my findings. The small amount of informants and the special type of upper secondary school that they study at explain why. However, the results from the interviews nevertheless provide an interesting insight into the six students’ use of written English in their spare time. It is also possible to distinguish patterns among the students’ answers and find similarities with results presented in previous studies.

In what types of situations and to what extent do some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time?

To make the discussion easy to follow concerning this question I initially focus on the types of situations where the students make use of written English to then continue with the second part of the question which deals with to what extent they write in English.

The latest nation-wide survey of English made by the National Agency for Education (2005) shows that the Internet plays an important role among young people and that the participating students communicated a lot via the Internet (70%) and one third said that they chatted in English. What chatting in English means can be a matter for discussion since all six students in this study do so, however they explain that they use English in their Swedish messages when chatting. The Swedish study Internetbarometer 2008 (2009), also confirms the great use of Internet among young people and shows that 71 per cent of the boys and 65 per cent of the girls age 9-17 use Internet at home every day, respectively 86 per cent in total in the age group 15-24. In
the latter age group, 60 per cent spend time on MSN each day. With this high figure of Internet usage in mind it is not surprising that all the students in this study answer that they write in English when chatting on MSN on the Internet. However, only the three students with MVG as a final grade in English A in addition write in other contexts such as debating forums on the Internet, on a blog and literary texts by hand at home. The figure in Internetbarometer 2008 (2009) is also lower. In the age group 15-24, discussion forums and chat groups only engage 30 per cent of the boys and 42 per cent of the girls and in the top six areas of Internet usage presented, blog engage 24 per cent of the girls while boys preferred video clips. This can be compared to this study, which shows that none of the boys write on a blog, but one of the girls with MVG.

It is obvious that Internet plays a significant role for young people and as we can see in this study it is not a passive usage but an active. The students communicate in different ways and for different reasons.

All of the students in this study write in English when sending text messages on their cell phones and they all write a large amount of messages each day. This is in line with the statistics in the previously mentioned study (ibid.), which show that in the age group 15-24, a high majority, 90 per cent use their cell phones for text messages every day. This leads us to the second part of the question, dealing with to what extent the students write in English in their spare, which became a thorny area to cover and where the results can only be appreciative. I did however decide to keep this area in my investigation and the results to offer some thoughts on the matter. What can be said is that all the students chat on MSN more or less each day and since we now know that they all to some amount write in English on MSN it is also possible to say that they write in English every day. Still, active writing hours spent on MSN can vary from a couple of minutes to several hours per day. This is in line with Internetbarometer 2008 (2009), which shows that the age group 15-24 spend 141 minutes per day on Internet in total, whereof 123 minutes at home, which is the highest figure of all the age groups. However, the number of participants here is low and therefore one should only use these statistics as an indication.

If students engage in an area of interest, the Internet, this much and regularly in their
spare time, should not we as teachers benefit from knowing more about what the students are doing during this time? What is it that catches their interest? Ingrid Carlgren and Ference Marton (2004) assert that children are in need of a certain structure in their world of experience to be able to develop different abilities. They conclude that it is this world that should be the professional scene for the teacher. It should also be added that we need to have great respect when we cross the threshold and step into students’ “spare time world” and bring up their media usage in the classroom. Magnus Persson (2000) illuminates this and asks the questions: “Is it possible to criticize the students’ culture without it being perceived as an attack on the students themselves? Can you as a teacher show respect and criticize at the same time?” (p. 50). He continues and says that all education that use the students’ own reality as a starting point can adopt two different approaches (ibid.). In both, problems and questions perceived as of concern and interest for the students are brought up (Malmgren & Thavenius, 1977). But then the similarities stop whereas one approach looks upon students’ interests as predetermined themes, which are brought into the education to encourage the students to work more engaged with practicing skills. However the other perspective adopt a more open minded stand point and looks upon students’ interests as complex with many layers and the goal here is to create a broader understanding of these experiences by placing them in greater social and historical contexts (Persson, 2000).

Education based on students’ experiences have a main thought which is to use students’ old experiences to encourage them to experience new ones and to change the world of imagining and thinking in a way which themselves find relevant (ibid.). Researchers in a Danish study which set out to investigate how young people, age 15-18 use media and popular culture, came to the conclusion that the media usage really withholds complicated processes like signalling a lifestyle, marking stand points and attitudes and finding cultural communities (Fridberg et al, 1997). This also gives us an indication that true feelings are investigated, which we should consider when creating learning processes in school dealing with students’ interests.
As it has been showed in this study the students write in English in their spare time a lot on the Internet. Therefore media education, “mediepedagogik”, is finally something that I would like to mention briefly. It basically means that students shall acquire both theoretical and practical knowledge about media and culture. They shall learn to understand the technical part and use media for their own production as well as get guidance to evaluate and critically examine media products (Heith, 2006). With this study in mind a relevant way of teaching to keep in mind while balancing the students’ feelings and emotions.

What text types and genres are represented in the students’ writing?

The national survey of English (2003) concluded that there was a discrepancy between the length of boys’ and girls’ written production in the writing part, which had been part of a national test. A random selection of texts showed that the girls in general wrote longer pieces of text. Only half of the amount of boys compared to girls said that they wrote letters in English. Out of the six students interviewed the boy with MVG and the two girls as well use English for other types of writing which is in line with the results of the national study, namely that twice as many girls compared to boys write letters in English (ibid.). The girls, who write poems respectively short stories in general three times a week, depending on their mood, represent other writing activities in English. The students who I interviewed did not mention any letter writing. However the girls and the boy with MVG write longer pieces of text, like short stories, poems and reflections. One can speculate if the absence of letter writing can be linked to age?

In this study it is also clear that only the students with MVG in English A write longer pieces of text compared to the students with VG in English A who write short messages, most often only including single words in English and abbreviations. One can speculate if longer pieces of text are more challenging and help develop a broader vocabulary. In the nation wide survey (2005) which I referred to earlier vocabulary is one theme that is illuminated and of the 248 essays that were analysed there is a great difference between the essays that got a higher grade and the essays that did not reach pass or did reach pass but the lower limit for pass, namely the range of the vocabulary.
The Swedish National Agency for Education emphasizes in the syllabus for English as a topic (2000) how important it is that we as pedagogues and teachers take into consideration the English pupils meet outside school. After analysing the results of these interviews one can speculate if work and discussions about other types of texts and genres than the traditional ones need to be implemented in the education to give the students the ability to improve their written English over a broader spectra. This is also supported by the German scientist Thomas Ziehe’s study about puberty and narcissism (1975) where he finds a new type of youth, which is not at all following the norms of the older generation. He emphasizes the importance of discussing for instance means of expression and symbols which are commercially broadcasted by media to guide young people when it comes to sorting out all the input they get. In this study we both find new types of genres but also the feature of mixing the Swedish language with the English. From the results in this study this seems very common. How do this way of using English affect the students’ knowledge of English and the development of their language acquisition? Are these new trends that need to be addressed in school?

Why do the students write in English?
In the National Survey (2005), results show when analysing students’ writing skills that most of the students are capable of expressing themselves both when it comes to dealing with their private environment but also their environment in a wider context. As presented, the students in this study especially used English when they wanted to express something and enhance something. Since they seem to use English when dealing with feelings this can be a reason why the nation wide study shows that a majority of the students are capable of expressing themselves in English. In this study the interviews also revealed that the students feel that they can express themselves better in English, that they can describe how they feel better in English. Is it really because they seem to practice this area a lot or can it possibly be because they encounter English in their spare time which deals a lot with emotions? E.g. soap operas and lyrics?

Another reason given for using English was because the students mean that words in English can have more weight or bring more status to the communication. One student suggested that this could be the case because if the word or expression is used
regularly by e.g. a character that you love in a TV series you tend to adapt that word or expression and incorporate it in your own communication. Hence, this can possibly be a matter of imitation, just as when a child looks up to a parent or older sister or brother and imitate them because they want to be like him or her. However, I believe that using English because it provides more weight to the communication can occur because of the simple fact that it is something different, something that adds another or a new dimension. Maybe it is easier to replace the Swedish word with an English instead of coming up with a synonym in Swedish that can add that extra nuance?

The students also agree on that they use English because the language sounds better. However they cannot seem to explain why. Of course it is possible that they like the sound of the language. But I immediately want to refer to stimulus and response and how we can associate. As seen in this investigation they are in a pleasant and voluntary situation when writing English, and music, sitcoms and friends with English as a mother tongue are mentioned. Can it be that the students on the majority of the occasions when they hear English are in a situation that is pleasant or are in a situation that they like, e.g. listening to their favourite music, watching one of all the sitcoms on TV while relaxing from their homework or talking to a new friend on their vacation, which enhances their positive view on the sound of the language?

5.2 Conclusions

The purpose of this dissertation was to investigate to what extent and how some upper secondary students who have received VG and MVG in English A write in English in their spare time. The following research questions were used as a starting point for the investigation:

- In what types of situations and to what extent do some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time?
- What text types and genres are represented in the students’ writing?
- Why do the students write in English?
My conclusions are based on the results from the six interviews that were conducted with the six students.

The results of the interviews made it very clear that all of the students make use of English in writing when chatting on MSN and when sending text messages on their cell phones. However, when the students write in English on MSN and on their cell phone it mostly concerns abbreviations, single words, phrases and sentences, which are used in messages in Swedish.

To what extent the students write in English turned out to be a difficult question to answer since the results cannot be expressed with any precision. However, all the students chat on MSN more or less each day. Since they revealed that they use English words, phrases and complete sentences when they write in Swedish it is possible to say that they write something in English each day. But active writing hours spent on MSN can vary from a couple of minutes to several hours a day.

Using English when writing text messages in Swedish on the cell phone occurs several times each day since all the students write a great amount of messages each day.

The girls write poems or short stories three times a week, depending on their mood. Whenever she writes stories, one of the girls writes for a few hours.

Why do the students use English in messages in Swedish? Four of the six students explained that they use abbreviations in English such as “brb”, “be right back” on MSN because they found it time-saving and they all agrees that Swedish has no corresponding ones. Four of the students include single words in English when chatting in Swedish because they feel that English words can be more expressive and descriptive. Two mentioned that writing a word in English can give more weight to the word or enhance the whole message. Other reasons mentioned were because it is fun, the English word is more spot on and because Swedish words can be lacking. When using single words or phrases in English the reason in general was the same for all students, because they find it more expressive. One girl used single words on her Swedish blog for a similar reason: she wanted to describe something in a better way.
Three of the students chatted completely in English only occasionally. All students except one use English when they text in Swedish on their cell phone. One boy from each category also writes text messages on the cell phone completely in English. The use of text messages completely in English is for communicative reasons. It either concerned texting a friend with another mother tongue or a Swedish friend because it was fun.

An interesting discovery is that only the three students with MVG as a final grade in English A also write in English in other contexts such as debating forums on the Internet, on a blog and literary texts by hand at home.

Regarding genres, short story, play/drama, poetry and lyrics were mentioned by the students. The text types mentioned were description, narrative, information and argument/persuasion. However, single words and individual phrases and sentences in English were very also frequently used when writing in Swedish. According to the students, a single word in English can be an effective means of expressing something that otherwise would require several words. Moreover new or not traditional text types are very common, like text messages on MSN and cell phones.

Writing poems, short stories, philosophical reflections and lyrics serves the purpose of expressing feelings. According to some of the students, English is also a more beautiful language than Swedish. It sounds better and has more suitable words.

The genre play/drama was represented by the boy with MVG who creates sketches on MSN writing improvised lines in messages completely in English. Poems about feelings are very common to write for the girls and one of them said that poems can enable her to express her feelings. Short stories are only common for one of the girls, who said that common topics are sorrow, death, love and friends. The other girl writes small literary texts and lyrics but they also focus on personal feelings. Regarding literary texts the boy with MVG on the other hand writes philosophical reflections focusing on his view of things in the world. Two of the MVG students also post argumentative or reviewing messages on Internet forums. One of the girls uses some English on her blog in Swedish to describe things better.
After investigating how six upper secondary students’ write in English in their spare time, many new thoughts and questions have started to take form in my mind as a teacher of English. How the students seem to mix English with Swedish is an interesting feature that I think is important to bear in mind and especially how is this contributing positively or negatively to the students’ language learning and language acquisition? How important the students find it to express themselves in certain ways also struck me as very exciting - the amount of emotions, which seem to be invested in their written communication in English. If they really do feel a need to express certain things in specific ways and want some things to be communicated with exact feelings in the message, this can be a strong motivating factor to use in the education and when giving shape to certain exercises and assignments. I am also going to pick up on the text types and genres, which may not be the traditional ones to use as a stepping-stone when teaching about traditional genres and text types. Naturally everything that I have found is valuable information when wanting to start from what the students already know to then be able to join them on a journey which hopefully will develop their knowledge. In a balanced way. With respect.
References

Written sources


**Oral sources**

Six interviews conducted at an upper secondary school in the southern part of Sweden, 2009-11-25, 2009-11-26, 2009-11-27, 2009-12-01 and 2009-12-02.
Appendix 1

Interview guide

1. När är du född? Vilken årskurs går du i?

2. Berätta fritt om ditt användande av engelska, intressen, intresseområden, hobbies. (För att få en bra fortsatt flyt i samtalet och liten bakgrund till eleven innan jag går in på specifika detaljfrågor.)

3. In what types of situations do some upper secondary students write in English in their spare time?

   a) I vilka situationer/när/var skriver du på engelska på din fritid? Berätta, ge exempel.
   b) På dator eller för hand?

4. What reasons do they have for doing so?

   a) Varför skriver du på engelska när du gör det? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   b) Vad är viktigt för dig när du skriver på engelska? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   c) Skriver du för att underhålla? På vilket sätt? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   d) Skriver du för att ge information till någon? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   e) Skriver du för att förklara något? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   f) Skriver du för att övertyga någon eller övertyga om något?
      (Berätta, ge exempel.)
   g) Skriver du för att presentera något/ge en presentation? (Berätta, ge exempel.)

5. What text types and genres are represented in the students’ writing?

   c) Skriver du berättelser? (Berätta, ge exempel.)
d) Skriver du informerande text? (Berätta, ge exempel.)

e) Skriver du förklarande text? (Berätta, ge exempel.)

f) Skriver du argumenterande text? (Berätta, ge exempel.)

g) Skriver du presentationer? (Berätta, ge exempel.)

h) Har du skrivit någon av följande genrer: novell, dikt, brev, uppsats, artikel, insändare, recension eller annan på engelska på din fritid?

i) Vilka ämnen skriver du om? Vad handlar dina texter om?

j) Skiljer texterna du skriver på engelska sig åt från de du skriver på svenska? Ämnesmässigt? Språkligt?


a) Till största delen rättstavad? Många stavfel?

b) Långa meningar? Korta meningar?

c) Fraser?

d) Förkortningar?

e) Slang?

f) Andra återkommande drag?

g) Typ av text?

h) Rätt grammatiskt?

6. To what extent do the students write in English in their spare time?

a) Hur mycket skriver du på engelska på din fritid? (Låta eleven berätta fritt för att inte styra det första svaret.)

b) Hur många minuter, timmar om dagen, i veckan tror du att du skriver på engelska på din fritid?
c) Hur många minuter, timmar i taget tror du att du skriver på engelska på din fritid?

d) Hur mycket text tror du att du skriver på engelska på din fritid om dagen, i veckan?

e) Hur mycket text tror du att du skriver i taget? Ord, meningar, rader, sidor?

f) Hur mycket skriver du på engelska i förhållande till på svenska på din fritid, ej skolrelaterad text?
### Appendix 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Texttype</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Basic structure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>convey information</td>
<td>spatial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative</td>
<td>entertain, create meaning,</td>
<td>chronological (along a time line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>convey knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>inform</td>
<td>spatial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>explain</td>
<td>gradual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument/Persuasion</td>
<td>persuade</td>
<td>for-against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>explain, account for,</td>
<td>causal effect; problem-solution;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>present a position</td>
<td>similarities-differences</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>