Degree Thesis 1
Bachelor's Level
Extramural English Activities among Younger EFL Learners

A Literature Study on the Forms and Potential Benefits of Extramural English among Young EFL Learners

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Abstract: Children today encounter the English language on a wide scale, even outside the school walls. As they are exposed to various forms of English language input, they inevitably pick up a certain level of proficiency, which they can later use on their own. This study aims to more precisely research through which mediums English learners in primary school worldwide tend to encounter English the most, as well as how engaging in English activities outside the classroom might affect their English proficiency. By studying prior research on the subject through content analysis, it was found that, while there are some regional differences in terms of prevalence, children mainly encounter English through television, music, and computer games. It was also found that many children who had never before received any English training still possessed a level of English proficiency. These findings shed light on the importance of input for language acquisition as well as how children’s extramural interests can be of importance in the classroom setting.

Keywords: Extramural English (EE), English outside of the classroom, Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Primary School, Elementary School, English (Second Language), Television, Digital Games, Music, Internet
1. Introduction

Today’s global society is permeated with potential interactions with the English language. Starting from an early age, children from around the world encounter this language in their spare time through a myriad of mediums including, but not limited to, cartoons, films, music, the Internet, and video games. In the academic world, when pupils encounter English outside of their classroom environment, they encounter Extramural English (EE), which is the same terminology and definition used by Sundqvist and Sylvén (2011, p.186). However, some other researchers, for example Sayer and Ban (2014, p.321), do not refer to this as EE, but rather “English outside of the classroom”. Other variations exist as well, but generally they all discuss the same general topic. Thanks to the availability of modern day media, such as television or computer games, this phenomenon can change the playing field in the current day English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. As pupils already interact with English outside of school, many of them now participate in class with varying degrees of English proficiency, as well as an already established view on what authentic English should look like.

EE has through various studies proven to be an important asset for EFL pupils, boosting several skills such as the extent of their vocabulary (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.187 –188). Despite this positive effect, much of the research available is focused on teenagers and young adults, often neglecting the younger pupils found in primary school and the kinds of English language activities they voluntarily engage in during their spare time (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.187).

During my internship periods, I have met several younger pupils who have told me about the kinds of games and music they listen to. More often than not they consume this media entirely in English, and it appears to have a noticeable impact on their performance during the periods when English is taught. In my experience, when teaching a new class, it is often quite clear from the start which pupils tend to engage in EE activities in their spare time. One encounter in particular served as a major influence and inspiration for my decision to pick this particular topic. When given an assignment, which allowed a fairly large degree of freedom for the pupil to decide their own difficulty level, the pupil turned in something which was much more advanced than most of their peers. The content was based around this pupil’s extramural interests. When I took a few minutes to talk to them, they revealed that they played a lot of video games in their spare time. There seemed to be a relation between playing video games in English and the pupil’s language proficiency. In light of this experience, in this thesis, I expect to study more precisely which forms of EE are more common among the younger EFL pupils around the world and how EE can benefit their language acquisition. Due to the varying nature of when English education is implemented worldwide and the lack of research on the topic, this study will focus on pupils in years 1 to 6 of primary school.

1.1. Aim and Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine what forms of EE activities are most prevalent and beneficial among younger (corresponding to years 1 – 6 of the Swedish compulsory school) EFL pupils from around the world, according to previous research.

In order to efficiently reach the aim, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. Which forms of EE do younger (corresponding to years 1 – 6 of the Swedish compulsory school) EFL learners engage in?

2. How can young EFL learners benefit from EE activities?
2. Background

2.1. The Swedish Compulsory School Curriculum

In the curriculum for the Swedish compulsory school, Lgr 11, the aim of the English syllabus states that taught content should be, in some form, connected to the experiences and interests of the pupils. It also specifies the need to indulge the pupils with various forms of genuine English based on real life contexts (Skolverket, 2011, p.32).

Looking specifically at the core content listed for the younger years of compulsory school, which declare what elements should be part of class, both 1 – 3 and 4 – 6 declare one such element to be: “subject areas that are familiar to the pupils” (Skolverket, 2011, p.33). In the 1 – 3 syllabus, it is also stated how English language content the pupils might encounter in their daily life ought to be included (Skolverket, 2011, p.33). Similarly, the syllabus for 4 – 6 describes how pupils ought to be trained in receiving English language content from multiple medial forms and be tutored in how to use various resources in order to seek and evaluate information (Skolverket, 2011, pp.33-34).

While the English syllabus lacks knowledge requirements for the end of year 3, the requirements for year 6 state that pupils should be able to relate their own pre-existing experiences with content taught during class and make adequate reflections (Skolverket, 2011, p.36).

2.2. Effects of Extramural English

Engaging in activities where English is used during their spare time has a noticeable effect on pupils, according to Sundqvist and Sylvén (2011, p.187). In a study from 2004 they asked 104 pupils in their fifth year of school to fill out a survey and document their EE encounters (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.189 – 190). When analyzing the results, they found certain pupils, who spent more time using English in their spare time, showed an increased proficiency compared to their peers who did not spend as much time (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.193). They elaborate how there are multiple possible form of EE and later bring up the potential benefits of video or computer games due to the way the player interacts with them, as well as how they increase motivation to learn by making it necessary to understand the instructions given on screen in order to progress (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.188). They point out how many video games are designed in such a way that mimic how humans naturally learn new content, such as through repeated interaction and making the task challenging, without being frustrating (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011).

After conducting a study in which roughly 140 fifth-graders were asked about their EE habits, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2011, p.191) found that the pupils spent an average of nine hours per week on EE activities. Using the data collected from the survey given to the pupils in order to assess their EE habits, as well as their results in the National Tests, they concluded that there was a significant connection between those who scored highly and those who spent more time on EE in their spare time (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, pp.191 – 193). Upon closer examination, they found little evidence that any specific form of EE used by the pupils had any significant impact on whether they passed the tests or not, but they did notice that the areas in which the pupils with a high rate of EE interaction excelled the most were related to reading and listening comprehension (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2011, p.193).
2.3. Theoretical Perspective
This thesis will rely on the theories of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), as well as Second Language Acquisition (SLA).

2.3.1. Content and Language Integrated Learning
Pinter (2006, p.40 – 41) describes CLIL as the act of simultaneously learning a language, in this case English, as well as another, non-language related subject. Using this method can, given the right circumstances and support, provide a more authentic language environment, challenge pupils at a greater level, and lead to an overall higher motivation. When describing the nature of CLIL, Dalton-Puffer (2007, p.7) highlights how it is connected to two other, broader, theories of learning. The first being the theory how humans best learn new content if they are able to use previously acquired knowledge in order to make sense of and process the new. The learner is thus cognitively aware of what he or she already knows in the target subject and is able to differentiate the familiar from the unfamiliar in an effective way (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, p.8). The second theory is built upon the learner’s need to immediately practice what he or she is learning, preferably in a context where social interaction is involved, in order to master it. The idea being that when the learner is allowed to take part in an environment where a topic or action is genuinely practiced, they are able to learn by observing and testing (Dalton-Puffer, 2007, pp.8 – 9).

Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012, p.116) argue that CLIL and certain types of EE have a lot in common in how English is learnt. At the core of their argument, is the fact that both provide the learner with an authentic experience for which proficiency in the target language is necessary. To further the point, a video game where the players interact with not only the game world, but also with other players is used as an example. By immersing themselves in this world, players are described as entering a world which “simulates the real-life experiences of being in a country where an L2 is spoken” (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012, p.117). Much like acquiring a target language through the use of CLIL, where pupils are motivated to learn a language not just for the sake of learning it, but also for the sake of keeping up with the rest of the class and the non-language related content; video games can have the same effect on the pupils since they want to be able to play and excel at the game (Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012, p.117).

2.3.2. Second Language Acquisition
Krashen (2009) describes SLA as the methods through which young learners acquire a new language, as well as the factors which enable a new language to be learnt. In order to further develop his view on the topic, he describes five different hypotheses related to language acquisition. The first is the distinction between acquired language and learnt language. According to Krashen (2009, pp.13 – 14) people have the ability to unconsciously acquire language without being strictly aware of what linguistic structures they are learning. On the contrary, language which is intentionally learned in a classroom requires conscious effort from the learner. This means that the learner has to actively pay attention to the content he or she is confronted with. In short, acquired content can often be used right away, while the same is not necessarily the case with learned content (Krashen, 2009, p.14).

The second hypothesis is, according to Krashen (2009, p.15), that both SLA and First Language Acquisition (FLA) has a tendency to be acquired in a certain order. Meaning learners generally pick up and master certain grammatical functions early on during language acquisition, while others come later.
The third hypothesis, as described by Krashen (2009, p.18), is the monitor hypothesis. This, according to him, is part of the learned language as opposed to the acquired. He defines the act of monitoring as a conscious effort to change acquired output based on the learned rules. In order for this to happen, Krashen (2009, p.19) explains how a certain number of prerequisites have to be fulfilled. As monitoring is a conscious effort, the learner must be given sufficient time to contemplate what is to be conveyed, be in an environment in which he or she can focus on this task, and have been supplied with content knowledge which is expected.

The fourth hypothesis is referred to by Krashen (2009, pp.21 – 22) as the input hypothesis, and he emphasizes this as crucial for language acquisition. Krashen explains how learners acquire new information when they are met with language input containing something new, but presented in a way in which the learner can use previously acquired skills in order to make meaning out of it. He elaborates that linguistic resources do not have to be the only ones used in order to reach an understanding, and that the context of the input material also plays a large role (Krashen, 2009, p.22). Krashen (2009, p.23 – 24) explains further how learners are able to acquire new language content essentially on their own when certain conditions are met. The content should largely match what the learner already knows, but it should also contain new information to challenge the learner. He uses the example of a parent speaking to their child to better illustrate this, as parents do not tend to keep the child’s current proficiency in mind when they speak to it and simple keep it at a level where they know they will be understood. Krashen (2009, p.24) points out that both SLA and FLA benefit from input that has not been constrained in terms of its language, but rather its topic content. This means that the listener’s ability to understand the meaning behind the message is more important than the words used to convey it.

The fifth and final hypothesis is, according to Krashen (2009, p.29), the affective filter, which is an outside influence which can somehow disturb an acquirer’s ability to take in new linguistic input. Some examples given by Krashen (2009, p.30) are the acquirer’s motivation, or lack thereof, the confidence they have in their ability to communicate, or some other form of anxiety which may prevent them. Krashen (2009, p.31) elaborates how a low filter is required in order to minimize its impact on language acquisition through input.

Despite the argument that input is the most important aspect of SLA, Krashen (2009, p.32) argues that effective classroom teaching is still essential for many learners. This is mainly due to the possibility that input alone does not provide the learners with everything they need in order to acquire or learn the target language to a satisfactory level.

3. Material & Methods

3.1. Design

This thesis will follow the design of a systematic literature study, which is described by Eriksson Barajas, Forsberg, and Wengström (2013, p.26) as the meta studies of several scientific studies around a certain topic with the ultimate goal of answering questions they do not answer on their own. Eriksson Barajas, et al. state how search methods used to procure primary sources ought to be decided upon ahead of time, the search and selection process needs to be well documented, and finally, that when the analysis is made the contents of the various sources must be compared in a way which allows them to be coded (2013, p.26).
3.2. Search Criteria & Selection
Primary sources were procured through various search engines recommended by and made available through Dalarna University. Initially, ERIC, provided by EBSC Host and specializes in English texts related to education, was used, followed by the university’s own engine, Summon, which contains articles and texts published and available through the University of Dalarna. Finally, Google Scholar, was also used to find relevant articles. The drawback of Google Scholar being that while it has access to a large number of scientific texts, it lacks the option to check for peer review, thus requiring a higher level of scrutiny when searching.

In order to find relevant articles, a number of keywords were devised. Due to the discrepancy of how various authors refer to the topic at hand, the keywords had to be changed and expanded upon as the search progressed. Certain phrases, such as Extramural English, were also not present in ERIC’s thesaurus, which meant keywords had to be chosen from the ones which were available, such as English (second language) or elementary school. In addition, the Swedish counterparts of certain terms were also contemplated, but were ultimately never used. There were two key terms present in all of the searches, then a set of optional limiters were introduced in order to narrow down the results as far as possible while remaining relevant to the topic. Extramural English was the prioritized term used first when searching. If the results were few or not relevant to the study, English outside the classroom was then used instead. A list of all the English search terms used is presented below:

Key Terms: Extramural English, English outside the classroom
Limiters: young, English (second language), elementary school, students, computer games, cartoons, music, Internet, English as a foreign language, EFL.

In order for a text to be deemed relevant for this study, it had to meet certain criteria. First and foremost, it must be related to EE in the sense that pupils’ English activities outside the classroom should be discussed, as well as give the reader some examples of which forms are prominent among the target group. Secondly, it cannot focus on pupils above the age of 13 or any school year corresponding to year 6 of the Swedish compulsory school. Thirdly, it should focus on pupils who learn EFL and thus come from a country in which English is not the dominant spoken language. When possible, studies which had not been peer-reviewed were automatically excluded through the use of search engine functions in order to ensure the final selection met a satisfactory standard of quality. To further ensure the data was relevant to present-day pupils, the university put forth a recommendation to only rely on primary sources published in the year 2010 and onwards, which this thesis adheres to.

3.2.1. Database Search Results
Finding relevant articles on the subject of Extramural English proved to be hard at first, as many studies from countries abroad seemed to use the term “English outside of the classroom” instead. Seeing how they both refer to the same thing, it had to be included as one of the search terms in order to broaden the findings. Table 1 highlights the search process and how a selection was eventually made. Operators are distinguished with upper case cursive letters. All in all, seven articles were determined to be relevant for the study. Thanks to the tools available through modern academic search engines, only one article found through Google Scholar had to be excluded from use due to concerns in regards to its quality, as the journal it was published in was not considered reputable.

In addition, while reading through an article found through Google Scholar, as highlighted in Table 1, two further articles of relevant nature were found in its references. These were both considered and ultimately selected for analysis after ensuring they fulfilled the criteria for selection.
Table 1: Documentation of the database search process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Keyword(s)</th>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Number of hits</th>
<th>Relevant titles</th>
<th>Relevant texts</th>
<th>To be used</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extramural English AND Young</td>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Relevant to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (Second Language) AND Elementary school students AND computer games OR cartoons OR Internet</td>
<td>ERIC</td>
<td>20,821</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Duplicate of text already used in the background. Search cut short after page 3 of results due to increasingly irrelevant results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extramural English AND Young</td>
<td>Summon (University of Dalarna)</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Articles and authors already represented in selection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English outside the classroom AND young</td>
<td>Summon (University of Dalarna)</td>
<td>86,586</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Relevant to the topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extramural English AND young AND EFL</td>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Many texts focusing on pupils older than those intended for subject. Multiple of them written by the same author and were excluded to avoid bias. Two further sources found through references.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Analysis

The primary method of analysis to be used in this thesis will be that of a content analysis as described by Eriksson Barajas, et al. (2013, p.147). Where the process is described as the systematic processing of the studies in order to highlight key factors which may or may not show patterns or differences. Through this method, it is possible to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. Ultimately, what determines whether the analysis will primarily be done through the means of quantitative or qualitative analysis will be the data presented in the primary sources. The selected articles have been thoroughly read and sorted into categories depending on whether they were relevant to the topics of EE forms used by young EFL learners or the benefits of EE. Table 2 gives a brief summary of each article and highlights in which way the content was relevant to the research questions.

3.4. Ethical Aspects

As the studies which make up the primary sources for this study have already been conducted by others, the ethical aspects will only impact this thesis in the sense that only articles which abide by the ethical guidelines published by the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002) have been selected for analysis. These guidelines include the need for all participants to have been informed about the scope of the study ahead of time, their full ability to consent to participating, and the reassurance they are able to cease participation at any time without risking
repercussions (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, p.7 – 10). The studies also cannot relay any information which makes it possible for a third party to identify any of the participants (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, p.12). Finally, the data collected throughout the study cannot have been passed along to a third party for use which may affect the participants and can only be used in the context of the original research (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002, p.14). Furthermore, in order to avoid a potential bias, some relevant results were excluded from the final selection as they shared common authors which were already represented.

4. Results
This section will contain the results gathered from the analysis of the primary sources. It has been divided into different sections based on the research questions, starting with the forms of EE used by pupils, and followed by the benefits of EE to EFL pupils.

4.1. Presentation of the Articles
In the end, six articles were selected for analysis. They all present data collected from thirteen different countries, as one of them, Sougari and Hovhannisyan (2013) collected data from two different regions and Lindgren and Muñoz (2013) collected from seven. Multiple forms of data collection are represented, including surveys, interviews, and proficiency tests, as detailed in Table 2.

Table 2: Analysis overview of the selected articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author and Title of Article</th>
<th>Summary</th>
<th>Research on EE forms</th>
<th>Research on EE benefits</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kuppens, A. H. (2010). Incidental foreign language acquisition from media exposure. Learning, Media and Technology, 35(1), 65-85.</td>
<td>This study aims to investigate the potential impact EE has on young EFL learners’ ability to translate and communicate between their mother tongue and English. In order to achieve this, Kuppens conducted a study on over 300 Belgian eleven-year-olds, documented their EE habits, and tested their abilities to communicate in English. Data was collected through the use of surveys and tests.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lefever, S. C. (2010). English skills of young learners in Iceland: “I started talking English when I was 4 years old. It just bang... just fall into me.”.</td>
<td>This study aims to research how young Icelandic pupils pick up English vocabulary and communicative skills outside the school setting before formal education has even begun. The study assessed the English proficiency levels of the participants as well as their EE habits. Data was collected through tests and simple interviews with 182 pupils aged seven to eight, along with interviews with their parents.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lindgren, E., &amp; Muñoz, C. (2013). The influence of exposure, parents, and linguistic distance on young European learners’ foreign language comprehension. International Journal of Multilingualism, 10(1), 105-129.</td>
<td>This study aims to research which EE activities, as well as other factors, influence young Foreign Language (FL) learners’ language acquisition. The intent of this study is to analyse whether or not it is possible to accurately predict ahead of time how well pupils will do in the subject language. The pupils who took part in this study were spread out between seven different countries. This study is not limited to EFL students, since native English speakers are also included. The data was gathered through tests and surveys given to 865 participants aged ten to eleven.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Sayer, P., & Ban, R. (2014). Young EFL students’ engagements with English outside the classroom. *ELT Journal, 68*(3), 321-329. This study aims to research how Mexican EFL students actually use English in their daily life. Their focus was on pupils in the fifth and sixth years of primary school and both teachers’ pupils’, and parents’ perspectives were gathered. 61 pupils aged eleven to twelve took part in this study and data was gathered through semi-structured focus group interviews. Yes Yes

Sougari, A. M., & Hovhannisyan, I. (2013). Delving into young learners’ attitudes and motivation to learn English: comparing the Armenian and the Greek classroom. *Research Papers in Language Teaching and Learning, 4*(1), 120. This paper aims to research which external factors contribute to young Armenian and Greek EFL learners’ motivation, as well as which elements in their day-to-day life have an impact on the development of their English proficiency. 107 pupils aged eleven to twelve participated in the study and data was gathered through a survey. Yes No

Sundqvist, P., & Sylvén, L. K. (2014). Language-related computer use: Focus on young L2 English learners in Sweden. *ReCALL, 26*(01), 3-20. This study aims to determine the EE habits of EFL learners, with a particular focus on digital gaming. With the help of the gathered data, conducted research on how various forms of EE plays a role in the pupils’ EFL acquisition. The study was conducted with 112 participants aged ten to eleven in the Swedish primary school and used a survey, as well as a special language diary, to gather data. Yes Yes

4.2. Common Forms of Extramural English
Keeping in mind that the various studies were all carried out at different times and in different countries, the results of which forms of EE were common among pupils varied slightly between studies. When Kuppens (2010, pp.73 – 74, 79) conducted a survey with 374 Belgian eleven-year-olds to study their extramural habits and the frequency they engaged in various activities, a clear majority responded that they listen to English music several times per week and all respondents said they listened to English music at least once per week. Thus, in this study music proved to be more popular than all the other presented pastime activities, which were television (both with and without subtitles), digital games, and the Internet; the latter providing multiple medial forms such as videos on Youtube. Watching television with subtitles was the second most popular activity, with around 30% of the respondents saying that they watched TV between one and five times per week on average. Following that was browsing the Internet, which was done on a frequent basis by nearly 60% of the respondents, surpassing video games by almost 5%. Lindgren and Muñoz (2013, p.115) received similar results when they studied the habits of 865 young foreign language learners in seven different countries. Like Kuppens’ study, they also found subtitled television to be the second most prominent form of interaction with the English language. However, in this study digital gaming proved to be more prominent than use of the Internet. Sayer and Ban’s (2014, p.325) study of Mexican children’s informal English acquisition also supports the notion of music being a very prominent form of EE. Among these pupils, movies in English and video games turned out to be tied as the second most common forms.
In contrast, Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2014, p.10) study on the EE habits of 112 EFL learners in Sweden yielded contradictory results to those above. They found television to be the most common form of EE, and the pupils spent, on average, nearly two and a half hours each day watching English language programs. Digital games and music, while less popular than watching television, were found to be the second most common form of EE with an average of 1.4 hours spent on each respective activity each day.

While the aim of Sougari and Hovhannisyan’s (2013, p.129) study was not directly focused on forms of EE that pupils in Greece and Armenia encountered, the results still give an insight into EE forms that the pupils find important and those that they like to engage with in their daily lives. When asked to convey their attitudes towards why they thought that English proficiency was important, a number of students answered that English is a common language in a lot of consumer media such as music and television. Others observed how important English was in order to be able to play games or operate computers in general.

Lefever’s (2010, pp.12 – 14) study uses interviews to find out which English activities the pupils engage in at home. When proficient Icelandic pupils were asked about where the Icelandic pupils had acquired their English skills, the answers revealed that television and films had played an important role. When asked, the parents of the subjects revealed further insight into the habits of their children when not at school. Again, listening to music in English turned out to be a common activity among all the pupils. Several parents also backed up their children’s claims of watching a lot of English language programs on TV. They also confirmed how their children often played video or computer games in English. One additional form of EE identified by Lefever (2010, p.12) was semi-frequent interactions with native English speakers who were friends of the Icelandic pupils’ families, however it is not stated how often or how much the pupils interacted with these people in English.

4.3. Benefits of Extramural English

Kuppens (2009, pp.75 – 78) tested the ability of 374 eleven-year-olds, who had not received any English training as part of their school life, to translate texts between English and Dutch and vice versa. When their test results were compared to the amount of time they spent on EE activities, a general correlation between spending a long time with EE activities, such as watching television programs or listening to music, and high test results was found. The highest test results were achieved by those who reported that they watched a significant amount of English television programs with subtitles in their first language. In several cases, it was found that while both genders benefited from a high EE exposure, girls in particular excelled at a faster rate than boys. Kuppens (2009, p.78) offers a potential explanation speculating similarities between the contents of the given test and the contents of the forms of EE girls tended to prefer, but stresses this is not scientifically sound and would require further research. Lindgren & Muñoz (2013, p.119) also found a significant correlation between achieving a high score in both reading and listening comprehension tests with pupils spending a significant amount of time watching English television content, either with or without subtitles.

When Lefever (2010, pp.6 – 8) presents how the participants of his study performed in a series of tests meant to test their English proficiency in a number of areas, he found that, despite none of them having undergone any form of formal education in the subject, the ratio of correct answers was fairly high. When assessing their ability to communicate using spoken English, at least 50% of the selected pupils could do so with only a little help from the supervising researcher, and half of those, i.e. about 25%, could participate in proper dialogue with the researchers (Lefever, 2010, p.8). The pupils in this high-performing quarter were able to point
out the sources of their apparent English proficiency as various extramural activities. Out of the examples given in the article, is that of two of the interviewed children cite television and films as sources, with a third referring to English-speaking acquaintances (Lefever, 2010, pp.10 – 13). When interviewed, the parents of the pupils back up their claims that extramural exposure to the language, particularly in the form of multimedia, is the root cause of their children’s English proficiency (Lefever, 2010, pp.13 – 14). Sayer and Ban’s (2014, pp.326 – 327) interviews with parents of pupils in Mexico yielded similar responses, with multiple parents witnessing improvements in their children’s overall English proficiency, as they spent more and more time on EE activities.

Based on the survey results gathered by Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014, p.13), they found that the attitudes towards the English language as a whole, as well as pupils’ confidence in their own abilities, rose depending on how much time they spent playing digital games. When asked to answer whether they found English interesting on a Likert scale ranging from “disagree strongly” to “agree strongly”, all of the pupils who spent more than four hours per week playing reported that they either agreed or agreed strongly. The percentage then dropped by 7.4% for those playing four hours or less, and further by 19.4% for those who did not play any games at all. Those who did not play games were also found to be less enthusiastic about the English language at a higher compared to the two groups of pupils who played games. Similarly, the pupils who were categorized as frequent players displayed an overall higher-rate of confidence in regards to their English proficiency, as none of them had expressed any doubt. That said, the pupils who played for four hours or less considered themselves lacking in proficiency more than the non-gamer group. The four hours or less group also contained the highest number of pupils who were positive towards their proficiency level (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014, p.13).

While the data is not as clear on this point, the pupils in the frequent gaming-group reported a higher reliance on their own skills to get their point across when their English proficiency was not enough. Responses showed how they possessed a larger vocabulary and were thus able to convey their thoughts more efficiently. In contrast, the less frequent gamer groups were more likely to either default back to Swedish, or ask an adult for help (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014 p.14).

5. Discussion
5.1. Results Discussion
In this section, the results will be compared to the thesis’ aim, which was to examine what forms of EE activities are most prevalent and beneficial among lower and upper-primary school EFL pupils from around the world, according to previous findings. The discussion will be divided into sections based on the research questions: Which forms of EE do younger EFL learners engage in and how can young EFL learners benefit from EE activities? The findings will then be compared to the theoretical background of SLA and CLIL.

5.1.1. Forms of EE used by young EFL students
When reviewing the results of this study, it would seem that while young EFL learners engage with multiple forms of EE, certain forms are more or less common and frequently brought up, according to previous research. Lefever (2010, p.12) and Sayer and Ban (2014, p.327) both bring up pupils who reported learning English through native English speaking acquaintances. While interesting, it is seemingly a rare source of EE and will not be available to a majority of pupils.
From the background reading of Sundqvist and Sylvén (2011), the first impression was that video games would have been the most prominent EE activity practiced by ten to twelve-year olds. While video games have certainly been heavily featured throughout this study and were often cited as a strong factor for language acquisition through EE. Kuppens (2009, p.74), for example, found them to be played by more than half of the subjects of her research, while Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014, p.10) placed it as the second most widely encountered EE activity. Contrary to this, Lindgren and Muñoz (2013, p.116) found that, between all the countries they studied, music turned out to be the most common form of extramural language exposure. Even Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2014, p.10) study placed music high on the list of EE activities, with the same level of popularity as video games. Use of the Internet to access English media and the watching of television was also fairly frequent in Kuppens’ (2009, p.73) study. Internet use in particular was much more prominent there compared to Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2014, p.10) results, which revealed that Swedish pupils accessed English content at a fairly low frequency.

One problem with treating the Internet as its own separate entity in these sorts of studies is the way it can be used to access multiple forms of multimedia. Kuppens (2009, p.79), Lefever (2010, p.14), and others do bring up how the Internet can be used to access multiple things such as videos, computer games, or music. However, it is never discussed how the Internet is treated compared to traditional forms of media. To further clarify this point, if a pupil uses the Internet for the sake of watching videos, arguably this would have the same effect as watching television, and the time spent watching videos might be more significant if counted towards the television statistics. The same goes for categories such as playing digital games or listening to music. It is understandable that broadening the surveys to document pupils’ Internet habits in detail might have proved to be a large endeavor. But the fact that the studies acknowledge that there are multiple forms of media available on the Internet and pupils use it for different things, yet they still pool their internet use into one category, risks creating statistical flaws and causes a limitation.

5.1.2. How young EFL students benefit from EE

While the results detailing which forms of EE are utilized by young EFL learners in terms of their frequency, have been limited, the topic of potential benefits has been more fruitful. Sayer and Ban’s (2014, pp. 324 – 325) findings and conclusions regarding how video games provide the player with a direct indicator of whether or not the instructions have been fully understood serves as a good example. This aligns with the discussion of CLIL by Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012, p.117) where a need for a certain level of proficiency is created alongside a challenge. The pupils will, when engaging with games which require some level of English proficiency, first need to overcome the language barrier in order to learn the aim and rules of the game. If they are then able to progress it will inform them that their assessment was correct in the situation. As such, it becomes indicative that certain forms of EE are able to lower the learner’s affective filter significantly and thus allow for effective input (Krashen, 2009, p.30).

Overall, there has been a noticeable correlation between frequent engagement with EE activities and performing well during English assessments. Lefever’s (2010) study in particular showed interesting results in which the pupils had no prior formal education in English, but had naturally picked up the language through the use of media. Both Kuppens (2009, pp.75 – 78) and Lindgren & Muñoz (2013, p.119) showed how the participants managed to produce good results when confronted with tests measuring their spoken, as well as written proficiency, alongside their ability to translate texts. Lefever (2010, pp.6 – 8) and Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2014, p.14) findings in regards to how pupils were able to efficiently communicate with the
adult researchers without having to rely on their help, point towards an increased vocabulary, which correlates to Sundqvist and Sylvén’s (2011, p.187) prior findings regarding EE reading and a resulting higher vocabulary. This shows that, to some extent, the benefits apply to more than written media. This fits well with Krashen’s (2009) theory on the importance of input for SLA, as these pupils had been able to acquire language through simply observing and listening to various forms of English media. But it should be pointed out that while the research showed that pupils had acquired a high level of English proficiency, it could only be considered high for pupils who had not yet received formal education in the English language. Studies like Sundqvist and Sylvén (2014) or Lefever (2010) showed that pupils were still lacking in some areas, indicating that the input they received through EE was not enough to become fluent. Thus, Krashen’s (2009, p.32) remarks on the need for further education in the classroom still stand.

5.2. Method discussion

Due to the nature of the literature study, there is a definite margin for error. The lack of a universally agreed upon term for EE made searching for relevant articles a challenging task and it is fully possible that there are other relevant articles out there using terminology that were not found during this study. The short time period provided to carry out this study, a total of ten weeks, with even less dedicated to finding and analyzing sources, may also have had an influence on the result. Perhaps above all, there does not seem to exist much empirical research on the topic of EE in relation to pupils below the age of thirteen, and even less below the age of ten. Had such data been present, it might have provided a different insight into how young pupils develop their English proficiency while they consume media in English. This means the ability for this thesis to generalize whether its findings are broadly applicable or not is somewhat diminished. Furthermore, the general lack of research resulted in an overreliance on certain sources, primarily those written by Sundqvist and Sylvén. While many of their texts were already excluded from use in order to avoid a potential bias as best as possible, further attempts to keep the sources as diverse as possible could certainly benefit future studies.

While processing the background literature, as well as the primary sources, the focus of existing studies on EE seem to focus largely on how pupils benefit from EE, with little, if any, time being spent researching potential negative effects. The fact that this study chose to focus on the positive aspects is not to say negative effects do not exist, but is rather a byproduct of the data available at this time.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, this study has mostly been able to answer the research questions, however, there is still room for improvement and achieving a greater understanding of the topic.

On the topic of which forms of EE young EFL learners encounter, research has shown that video games, television, films, music and Internet-use are the most common forms, as they have been central to all of the studies. While there were some similarities in regards to the time pupils spent on various EE activities, the frequency of which they reported engaging with them varied from study to study. This, combined with the nature of utilizing international research means it is likely impossible to conclude which form of EE is the most popular among young learners.

When researching how engaging in EE activities could benefit pupils, the results indicated that those who spend more time engaging with English activities outside the classroom have a better developed vocabulary than those who do not. That is, however, only one of the potential
benefits, as EE also proved to increase pupils’ motivation, confidence, written and spoken proficiency.

6.1. Further research
The research on the EE habits of younger pupils and how they benefit, shows there is a need for further research in this area, as what is currently available only focuses on how pupils may benefit from EE and is therefore quite one-sided. Most pressingly, however, is how all but one of the collected sources focused on pupils aged ten and upwards. This signals the need for further studies of how younger pupils, below the age of ten, experience EE.
7. References


Lefever, S. C. (2010). English skills of young learners in Iceland: “I started talking English when I was 4 years old. It just bang… just fall into me.”. [http://skemman.is/handle/1946/7811](http://skemman.is/handle/1946/7811)


