



AKADEMIN FÖR UTBILDNING OCH EKONOMI  
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# Learning / Teaching English as a Second Language in the Information Age

A Study on the Influences of New Media on Swedish  
Students in the English Classroom

Degree Project

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**Abstract**

The tools that we have developed, namely the Internet, online games, and social networks, have drastically changed the world we live in. Furthermore, after years of studies, discussions and research, it has been concluded that English as a Second Language study is an important tool for the mediation and proliferation of information across the globe. The aim of this study is to combine the models of Sociocultural Theory, Interaction Hypothesis and Connectivism to provide insight about the use of 'new media' by English as a Second Language (ESL) students and the potential of its use in the ESL classroom in Sweden. However, its applications can also be used in countries with second language curriculums similar to Sweden.

**Keywords:** New Media, English as a Second Language, Second Language Acquisition, Sweden

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## 1. Introduction

According to organizations such as the Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) (Ellinogermaniki Agogi, 2007/09), our society embraces linguistic multiplicity as a natural course of social development in a multicultural civilization. The tools that we have invented, including the Internet, Web TV, online music, films on mobile phones, and social networks, just to name a few, have made the world a much smaller place to live in. Communication, being the key to knowledge, has always been important for individuals wanting to learn more about the world they live in and to be “able to access and use information in a number of languages” (p. 8), especially English. It is simply the natural evolution of learning. The tools we create are reflections of making knowledge dissemination more efficient, and thanks to the United States Department of Defense’s invention of the “Internet,” information has never been as accessible as it is now. This evolution comes as no surprise to many sociocultural theorists, including Lev Vygotsky, James Lantolf, Steven Thorne and Matthew Poehner, who argue that:

Human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts. Within this framework, humans are understood to utilize existing cultural artifacts and to create new ones that allow them to regulate their biological and behavioral activity. Language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. (Lantolf & Thorne, p. 197)

In other words, learning materializes while individuals partake in culturally mediated events “such as family life...peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling...” (p. 197). Practically speaking, digital media, or what is referred to as ‘new media’ in this text, was created to facilitate our communication between one another. Today’s culture is changing the pragmatism of new media. The English language, organization of technology based modes, and globalization are the principal means of mediation today. Henceforth, the acquisition of the language is an important motivator to connect with the world by using these modes of communication.

In this study, the basis for understanding how one learns a language is to embrace a Vygotskian ideology that all erudition begins as a social activity, with meaningful dialogue being produced inward and outward. Historically, language is inefficiently acquired by oneself, no matter how much input one receives. The term “Interaction Hypothesis” (IH), coined by Shaun Gallagher (2001), and later tested by Michael Long, Patricia Porter, and

others, provides important evidence that individuals learn from one another intuitively in a ‘shared world’ environment (Long & Porter, 1985). As mentioned previously, this environment has taken the form of digital interactions and will be explained in more detail in the upcoming sections.

Lastly, “Connectivism,” a term coined by George Siemens, and extrapolated by Stephen Downes, offers the hypothesis that data is distributed across a network of connections, and therefore claims “that learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks” (2012, p. 19). This theory provides an interesting perspective when considering sociocultural theory (SCT) and IH as a catalyst for learning English as a second language (ESL). Specifically, it accounts for the cognitive aspects of the socially negotiated events of SCT, the cooperative learning characteristics of IH, and does not attempt to limit knowledge to what is known by any one individual. In the simplest of definitions, Connectivism measures knowledge in terms of connections. For example, a student in Sweden who interacts with a student from America, via a social network such as Facebook, has the potential of developing more natural idiomatic English features than a student who does not have such relations, no matter what education level each one is at. In this viewpoint, it is not what you know, but who you know that affords the most benefits in the long term. Furthermore, as will be discussed in more detail later, it can assist in re-conceptualizing an increasingly archaic education system. Traditional forms of schooling are not using the invaluable information resources that new media has to offer; that is to say, its full potentials. This is relevant because, as Siemens states:

Learners as little as forty years ago would complete the required schooling and enter a career that would often last a lifetime. Information development was slow. The life of knowledge was measured in decades. Today, these foundational principles have been altered. Knowledge is growing exponentially. In many fields, the life of knowledge is now measured in months and years. (p. 1)

This change must be matched in all arenas of human development. It is time to start meeting students in the settings that they are connected with, which will arguably create positive learning elements such as self-motivation, “autonomy, diversity, openness and interactivity” (Downes, 2012, p. 9). The next section will explain how all of this relates to the current study and introduces the goals of the overall thesis.

### 1.1. Aim and purpose

Digital technology has undoubtedly influenced the way we learn. However, it is not quite clear how this affects the field of linguistics and second language acquisition (L2). The problem is, like in many other cognitive related studies, there are layers of specialists in a variety of fields attempting to decipher a puzzle which requires collaboration, not specialization. James P. Gee illustrates this best by stating:

Areas like education and communications are fields, which are composed of multiple disciplines. However, over the years there has been a good deal of controversy in the field of education regarding whether it should stay a field or whether scholars should work to configure an integrated body of knowledge that would constitute education as a discipline. For whatever reason, no such integrated body of knowledge has emerged. (2010, pp. 1 - 2)

Researchers, such as the ones mentioned previously, are attempting to do just that (see Lantolf & Thorne 2007; Gallagher 2001; Downes 2012; Siemens 2004). The aim of this study is to combine the theories of SCT, IT and Connectivism to help answer one core query:

- How does the use of new media affect English as a Second Language (ESL) students' Second Language Acquisition (SLA)?

The additional aim of this study is to identify:

- Which new media activities are most common among the sample group?
- What correlations can be made between specific new media activities and English proficiency?
- What impact does the sample group's motivation have on their English proficiency?
- How can new media be used as an advantage in the ESL classroom?

Before we get into the substance of the actual study, it is necessary to define a few terms and concepts used throughout this text. Next, Pia Sundqvist's quantitative study, *Extramural English Matters* (2009), provides evidence which supports the notion that Swedish students who participated in "extramural activities", or activities conducted outside of the classroom, such as watching films, playing video games, surfing the internet, actually had correlations to their English ability. Sundqvist's study has had a strong influence on the research shown in

the current study, as her sample groups are very similar to the ones used in this text. It has also served as an excellent reference point for cross-correlations, and ultimately, in the formulation of my methodology. The results of this study are then discussed in detail, with focus on those correlations which prove or disprove the two research questions mentioned previously. Finally, the conclusion will summarize the entire study and clarify those connections deemed relevant to move the field of language education forward into the new media driven future.

## 2. Definitions and previous research

In this section, the explanations of the terms New Media (NM), Sociocultural Theory (SCT), Interaction Hypothesis (IH) and Connectivism, are presented in the contexts in which they are applied in this study. Like many theoretical terminologies, their meanings have evolved from their original implications to suit updated concepts related to various fields. As stated by Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion, and Keith Morrison; “Scientific theories must, by their very nature, be provisional” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 11). In other words, what is known of a phenomenon now cannot be assumed to comprise a complete understanding of that phenomenon forever. Logical hypothesis is superseded by refined, more advanced theory, as new knowledge is attained.

### 2.1. New Media

In the early 1980’s, with the creation of the Internet, media such as printed text, television and radio were gradually being supplemented by alternative media primarily based upon digital technology, or “New Media”. Although this term has been used in several different contexts, the one that suits our purposes best here is the definition proposed by Lev Manovich, which maintains New Media as a “computer technology used as a distribution platform” (Manovich, 2003, p. 9). For example, the Internet, Web sites, computer multimedia, Blu-ray disks, online gaming, et cetera, fall under this category. As Manovich (2003) observes, however, this term can be problematic on several counts:

Firstly, it has to be revised every few years, as yet another part of culture comes to rely on computing technology for distribution (for instance, the shift from analog to digital television; the shift from film-based to digital projection of feature films in movie theatres; e-books, and so on). Secondly, we may suspect that eventually most forms of culture will use computer distribution, and therefore the term “new media” defined in this way will lose any specificity. Thirdly, this definition does not tell us anything about the possible effects of computer-based distribution on the aesthetics of what is being distributed. (p.9)

However, these problems are fastidious ones, in regards to this text, as it is reasonably assumed that there will always be ‘new’ digital technology and the effects of computer-based distribution has no relevance to giving the items their identity in this study. Concurrently, all



of these media have one thing in common; they are distributed via apparatuses which use digital technology (for example, computers, cellphones, iPads, et cetera). It is deemed appropriate then to use this term in the current study, due to the fact that students today are using NM on a daily basis inside and outside of the classroom. It should also be mentioned here that when referring to NM use in this study, we are referring to NM used explicitly in English and not the user's first language (which in this case is Swedish). This leads the discussion to the next term which helps explain how NM is used and why it is so important in the formation of human cognitive develop; a theory involving interaction within social and physical settings.

## 2.2. Sociocultural Theory

As mentioned in the introduction, Sociocultural Theory (SCT) originated via the studies conducted by the Russian psychologist, Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, and his contemporaries from the 1930s to the present. SCT, in its infancy, was a theory developed:

[T]o overcome what at the time (early 20th century) he characterized as a “crisis in psychology.” This crisis arose because of the diversity of perspectives and objects of study, all of which were grouped under the general rubric of psychology.

(Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 198)

In essence, Vygotsky argued that the field of study was in need of unification in order to better understand the complexities of the human cognitive functions in learning. He believed that the human mind was comprised of a “lower-level neurobiological base” which operated instinctively, but at the same time has “the capacity for voluntary control over biology through the use of higher-level cultural tools (i.e., language, literacy, numeracy, categorization, rationality, logic.)” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 198). We create and use tools in order to control our lives and developmental activities. For instance, if we want to eat a piece of meat, we could simply do what other animals do; pick it up with our hands and take a bite. Yet, modern humans prefer to ‘mediate’ the eating of food by using utensil such as a fork, which reduces the risk of contaminating the food with dirty hands. We advance this process by mediating the use of a knife, which allows us to make more proficient use of our physical energy and to cut more precise pieces from the meat. The purpose of the activity is the same whether we use our hands or utensils, but the act of eating changes as we shift from

hands, to a fork, or a fork and knife. Moreover, in order to use tools to eat, we have to suppress the instinctual urge to use our hands. Unlike our ape cousin, who would see the meat, automatically pick it up with their hands and eat it, humans would need to select an appropriate tool. However, as Lantolf and Thorne (2007) write:

We are generally not completely free to use it in any way we like. The material form of a tool as well as the habitual patterns of its use affect the purposes to which it is put and methods we use when we employ it. (p. 199)

It is this type of mediation that distinguishes us from other species and allows us to not only change our physical environment, but also biological selves. SCT provides an interesting perspective, when focusing on the current study, as it proposes that we achieve the ability to learn through the “internalization of culturally constructed mediating artifacts” (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, p. 202) such as NM and the English language.

It should also be noted that although this philosophy may be interpreted as a social theory based on structures of practical evidence used to study and interpret social phenomena, here it is being used as a psycholinguistic theory which is “concerned with the relationship between communication and psychological processes” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 15). In other words, as in the eating of a piece of meat, communication is seen as an essential function needed to survive. The value of the use of utensils in the activity of eating the meat can be associated with the significance of using NM to interconnect with people and the world around us. Specifically, we are concerned with the correlations between NM and the English language. Contemporarily, Lantolf and Poehner eloquently identify ‘language’ as an excellent element for describing the nature of the connection between intellect, body, human real-world activities and mindfulness by stating:

Language is an appropriate unit because of its bi-directional quality; that is, it is outwardly directed as social speech at influencing other members of society and it is inwardly directed as private or inner speech (i.e. dialogue with the self) influencing one’s own psychological activity. (p. 22)

Therefore, SCT-L2 theory embraces the relationship between culture and biological processes. At the same time, although it is argued that humans inherently have, more or less, the same mental capacities, they are not allotted the same social interactions and cultural

customs of mediation. This will become more significant when the study analyzes correlations between NM and ESL proficiency.

### 2.3. Interaction Hypothesis

Another aspect of the relationship between language, and the tools we use to distribute it, is one that focuses specifically on the individual. In the late 1980s, a PhD student at the University of California named Michael Long, decided to write his dissertation on how native and non-native speakers of English overcame communication difficulties. He based his research on the work of Stephen Krashen and Evelyn Hatch who “argued that the subconscious process of ‘acquisition’ occurs when the learner is focused on meaning and obtains comprehensible input” (Ellis, 1991, p. 4) from an individual with proficient language ability. What Long found in his research was that when there were communication challenges between two individuals communicating in one of the individual’s first language (L1), “the pairs would negotiate meaning to make the conversation comprehensible” (Cornelius, 2013), and this leads to more opportunities for the L2 learner to acquire the new language. Long’s “interaction hypothesis” attributes this type of language acquisition to exposure to language (input), production of language (output), and feedback on production (through interaction) as paradigms that are important for understanding how second language learning takes place. Further studies conducted by researchers such as Rod Ellis, Susan M. Gass, Lester C. Loschky, and more, attempted to explore a closer link between interaction and L2 development by focusing on specific skills attained by the L2 learner, for example, vocabulary items and the acquisition of grammatical structures. They too found that “negotiated interaction” had a positive effect on the previously mentioned language skills. All of these cases have contributed to the advancement of this theory and have led to current studies associated with NM.

Researchers such as Regine Hampel, Mark Warschauer, Mark Peterson, and several others, have experimented on these interactions through computer aided mediations such as videos, video chats, and massive multiplayer online role-play games (MMORPGs). These technologies facilitate access to large, international, and diverse peer groups which provide L2 learners with opportunities to interact with native speakers of target languages. In this context, Peterson affirms this as a new form of understanding literacy, and states; “this research explores the enhanced opportunities for human develop made possible by the rise of Internet and associated communication tools” (Peterson, 2013, p. 41). Unlike the

psychological oriented SCT perspective described previously, the interaction hypothesis, in relation to NM draws on sociocultural accounts and challenges the traditional definitions for literateness. In other words, as Peterson writes:

In contrast to the psychological approach that emphasizes the central role of individual mental processes, researchers who adopt [this] sociocultural perspective argues for a broader conception of literacy. Literacy is conceived as a complex phenomenon that encompasses more than the ability to read and write... In this view, digital tools such as computer games possesses properties similar to language, as they provide a means to communicate meaning and enact the social relationships that are crucial in fostering literacy development. (2013, p. 42)

However, the interaction hypothesis over the last decade has predominately been researched in the L2 classroom as a process of 'face-to-face' interaction. It has only recently been considered as a tool for researching computer aided language learning (CALL). It is this trend which made it necessary to develop a thesis that connects NM, SCT, and IH together. That theory is called connectivism.

#### 2.4. Connectivism

In 2004, a researcher of 'learning' by the name of George Siemens, began challenging learning theories such as behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism as the basis of developing many instructional settings. Skeptical of using these concepts in the "Digital Age", he believed that these theories were outdated and writes:

Over the last twenty years, technology has reorganized how we live, how we communicate, and how we learn. Learning needs and theories that describe learning principles and processes should be reflective of underlying social environments. (2004)

Siemens' work was significantly influenced by the labors of Peter Vaill who emphasized that "learning must be a way of being – an ongoing set of attitudes and actions by individuals and groups that they employ to try to keep abreast" (Vail, 1996, p. 42) of the world we live in. Siemens identified this 'way of being' in tendencies of learning through seven factors:

- 1) Learners move in and out of a diverse number of disciplines in the course of a lifetime -

For example, Carl Bialik, of *The Wall Street Journal* reported that BLS economist Chuck Pierret conducted a study to “better assess U.S. workers' job stability over time, interviewing 10,000 individuals, first surveyed in 1979, when group members were between 14 and 22 years old. So far, members of the group have held 10.8 jobs, on average, between ages 18 and 42, using the latest data available” (Bialik, 2010).

2) Informal learning is a noteworthy part of our learning experience today -

Phil Benson and Hayo Reinders', *Beyond the Language Classroom*, highlights several studies which support the claim that classroom education no longer represents the bulk of our learning environment. Studies conducted by David M. Palfreyman, Leena Kuure, Pia Sundqvist (which we will look at in more detail in the next section), and others, provide empirical researches that seem to show evidence that “well-rounded communicative proficiency depends to a large extent on the learner's efforts to use and learn the language beyond the walls of the classroom” (Benson & Reinders, 2011, p. 2).

3) Learning is continuous over a lifecycle and influences every aspect of our lives -

Learning and work related events are no longer as autonomous as they were a two decade ago. On the contrary, in many circumstances, they are identical. Often a person at the workplace will need to acquire the expertise to apply services, tools and methods that were conceived very recently, and for which there is little if any documentation to reference for assistance. Naturally, a learner at the workplace will expectedly seek help from their peers, formally or informally, and these peers are likely people they do not work with. Online social networks such as *LinkedIn*, *Meetup*, and *Opportunity* (actual spelling) are prime examples of this.

4) Technology is changing our brains -

The tools we use circumscribe and influence our thinking. This category borrows from SCT in that it supports the concept of the use of mediated artifacts created to help and change how we navigate life. In the current study, this is represented by the exploitation of NM in English and ESL.

5) The institute and the individual are both learning organisms -

It has become increasingly important to manage our knowledge resources more effectively in the current information saturated environment. That is why a model that endeavors to describe the link between individual and organizational learning is needed. According to Siemens; “realizing that complete knowledge cannot exist in the mind of one person requires a different approach to creating an overview of the situation. Diverse teams of

varying viewpoints are a critical structure for completely exploring ideas” (Siemens, 2004).

- 6) Learning theories are becoming obsolete in the wake of technology -  
Several of the procedures formerly managed by learning hypotheses, namely in cognitive information processing, can now be disburdened to, or reinforced by, technology. For example, according to the cognitive information processing model which explains standard information-processing for mental development, the brain’s mechanisms include attention systems for acquiring information, working memory, and long-term memory. These systems no longer need to develop mentally. Computers calculate, analyze, and store all the knowledge we could ever need.
- 7) It is not what you know but how efficiently you can find needed information -  
“Know-how and know-what is being supplemented with know-where (the understanding of where to find knowledge needed)” (Siemens, 2004).

These factors form the base of Connectivism which Downes (2012) acknowledges is knowledge “distributed across a network of connections, and therefore...learning consists of the ability to construct and traverse those networks. ...an account of connectivism is therefore necessarily preceded by an account of networks” (p. 9).

In essence, regarding the current study, connectivism is the glue that binds NM, IH and SCT together as they are viewed as a part of a network in the acquisition of English as a second language. It argues that the learning of the English language is attained, in part, by the quality and quantity of connections between these entities. In humans, this learning consists of connections between neurons in the brain, mediated through communicative abilities; Interaction Hypothesis. In societies, this knowledge consists of connections between humans and their artifacts: Sociocultural Theory and New Media.

In the next section, Sundqvist’s study provides empirical knowledge concerning ESL students who engage in language learning outside of the classroom. As mentioned in the introduction, this quantitative study is a good starting point for putting my work into context and the formulation of the research approach used here.

## 2.5. Pia Sundqvist’s study - “Extramural English Matters”

As in countries such as Norway, the Netherlands, Estonia, Denmark, Austria, and Finland, to name a few, English is taught in schools as an obligatory language in Sweden. These students begin formally studying English as young as 9 years old. Of course, by then, many of these

students have already grasped the basics of the language “through music, television, the internet or other forms of media” (Downes, 2012, p. 9). Sundqvist argued that this “Extramural English” (EE) students are exposed to during their free-time has a direct impact upon their language ability. However, at the time, there was not much scientific evidence to support such a claim. That is to say, quantitative studies measuring every aspect of ESL learning, including writing, reading/verbal comprehension, and oral production were relatively rare. She charges this lack of research “to the fact that it is more arduous to collect, study, and assess oral rather than written production of language” (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 2). It was for this reason, and her teaching background, that inspired her to design and conduct an ‘evidence-based’ study which furthers the comprehension of “language learning beyond the classroom” (Benson & Reinders, 2011, p. 106). Specifically, her main purpose was to investigate whether EE had any bearing on students’ oral proficiency and vocabulary. Five years later, this was the same incentive behind the current study, though with more focus on certain aspects of digital technology, termed here as new media, and students’ overall English proficiency.

The study was also based upon theories of second language acquisition from an IH perspective. For instance, Sundqvist proposed that IH was associated with EE in that:

[L]earners are exposed to English input (aural and/or written) when they listen to music, watch subtitled films/TV programs, play video games, use sites on the internet...learners also need to produce output (oral and/or written) in English, for example when they play online video games or use the internet, when they comment on blogs... (Benson & Reinders, 2011, p. 108)

It should also be noted that although there are many theories available which can explain how learners acquire an L2, namely SCT, input hypothesis, monitor hypothesis, noticing hypothesis, et cetera; very few academics would dismiss the importance of interaction.

Sundqvist’s sample group consisted of eighty ninth grade students, ages 15-16, located in Western Svealand, which is the historical core region of south central Sweden. By using a mixed methodology style of research, she was able to answer the research questions mentioned previously. The material included eight different types including: questionnaires, student constructed language diaries, speaking tests, vocabulary tests, the Swedish National Test of English 2007, students’ leaving certificates, assessment data, and interviews.

This research relied heavily on works presented by Zoltán Dörnyei's, *Research Method in Applied Linguistics - Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*, which combines qualitative and quantitative methods to analyze a single phenomenon. In this case, for example, EE was investigated quantitatively through the examination of questionnaires and test results; qualitatively within the scrutiny of interviews and diaries. Furthermore, the 'triangulation' that this method provides serves as a quality control mechanism that is essential in scientific research. It is for this reason that the design example set forth by Sundqvist is used in the current study, which will be explained in more detail in the proceeding section.

The results of Sundqvist's research found that there was a significant correlation between students' EE activities, "level of oral proficiency and the size of their vocabulary" (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 202). In other words, those students which engaged in activities such as MMORPGs, streaming video/TV programs, listening to music, and blogging had considerably higher English proficiency in terms of verbal skills. As Sundqvist writes; "Thus, there is convincing empirical evidence from my study to claim that it is crucial that learners such as these increase the amount of time they spend on EE activities, if only very little, since even a small increase may make an important difference" (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 202).

In summary, this section has given a background of the parts of my study which provide a theoretical base of explanation for the acquisition of ESL with focus on New Media exposure. The trifocal view of SCT, IH and Connectivism represent an example of the advanced theories referred to previously as a means of advancing our knowledge of how English is being acquired as a foreign language in the Digital Age. The next section will detail the participants involved, the material used for acquiring data and the procedures exercised in the current study.



### 3. Methodology

In this segment, a description of the participants and how they were selected provides a general picture of what demographic the sample entailed. Moreover, a presentation of the material, and procedures used throughout this study are illustrated. The material which supplied the core content for the research includes questionnaires, tests and casual discussions with individual students (which will be discussed briefly at the end of the “Supporting Material” section. It is important to note here that these individual discussions were not formatted as formal interviews, as was conducted in Sundqvist’s study. A brief account of the techniques used for analyzing the data provided by the sample group is also reviewed. Finally, specific concerns with regard to reliability and validity are considered.

#### 3.1. Participants

As illustrated in Table 1, in this study, there were a total of 139 participants, including 67 female and 72 male respondents, all of whom attended an intermediate level Independent School located in a northwest central municipality in Sweden. Their ages ranged from fourteen to sixteen years old, with the 8<sup>th</sup> Graders comprising of fourteen to fifteen year olds, and the 9<sup>th</sup> Graders, fifteen to sixteen year olds. The total number of enrolled students, which also included 7<sup>th</sup> Graders, ages thirteen to fourteen, was approximately 370 students.

| Total number of participants by grade and gender |         |       |             |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------|-------|-------------|
| Grade                                            | Females | Males | Grand Total |
| 8th Graders                                      | 39      | 39    | 78          |
| 9th Graders                                      | 28      | 33    | 61          |
| Grand Total                                      | 67      | 72    | 139         |

*Table 1* – Number of participants categorized by gender and school grade level

Originally, all 370 students were considered for the sample group. However, this proved to be an overwhelming task for the researcher, and a pilot study found that a large percentage of 7<sup>th</sup> Graders did not perform very well on the diagnostics tests, which was better suited for higher English proficiency students. These tests will be described in more detail later in this text. The number of combined 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Graders equaled approximately 250 students. Furthermore, when considering the most suitable sample size for the type of quantitative research this study attempts to depict, Louis Cohen, Lawrence Manion and Keith Morrison suggest a sample size between 80 and 149, in order to yield a 3-5% margin of error commonly used for

categorical/continuous data (2011, p. 148) studies. As a result, the 7<sup>th</sup> Graders were excluded from the study completely. In other words, when considering categorical variables between the samples given by males and females students who were able to complete the diagnostic tests (n=250), approximately 140 samples would be needed in order to verify that 90% of the total population's test results did not happen at random. Concurrently, the continuous data represented as the actual scores achieved on these tests would require 80 samples in order to verify that 97% of the population's results did not occur at random. These variables are typical of researchers suggesting that a study has ensured acceptable representativeness.

It should also be noted that although there were a slightly greater number of overall male than female respondents, this was considered negligible due to the size of the total sample group (n=139). Age and grade levels were not considered as separate categories, as a certain degree of randomness was needed in order to claim that the results of English proficiency were representative of a larger population of fourteen to sixteen year olds studying in Sweden. These factors will become more relevant in the Reliability & Validity section of this text. The next section focuses on the material used in the current study.

### 3.2. Material

At this stage in my research, it was important to reevaluate the research problem, which as mentioned previously asks:

- How does the use of New Media affect English as a Second Language (ESL) students' Second Language Acquisition (SLA)?
- Which new media activities are most common among the sample group?
- What correlations can be made between specific new media activities and English proficiency?
- How can new media be used as an advantage in the ESL classroom?

These evaluations involved identifying variables such as English proficiency and NM. However, neither one of these variables is clearly quantifiable until they have been operationally defined. This was achieved earlier in the text by defining the term NM and explaining what English proficiency is actually recognizing. Now, tools are needed to justify the proxy variables which will validate the hypothetical variable. In other words, an English listening diagnostic test is a sensible proxy to measure a student's listening ability, or a questionnaire should be a reasonable proxy for soliciting information about NM practice. The

selection of “materials” was essential in testing the hypothetical variables of this study (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 324 - 326).

The materials included seven different types including: surveys, diagnostic type tests, assessment data, and casual discussions. The primary materials were a one-page “Student New Media” survey (See Appendix 1), and three diagnostic tests measuring reading/listening comprehension and writing skills (See Appendixes 2 through 5).

### 3.2.1. Student New Media Survey

The “Student New Media” survey, which begins with some brief instructions clarifying the term “New Media” and the purpose of this study, was used to gather information related to the respondents level of NM usage. The first part of the survey was necessary to identify each individual participant, which was essential for establishing correlations between NM use and test scores. It is important to mention that although the identities’ of the participants were not anonymous, their right to privacy was respected through the ethical principles of confidentiality. This is defined as insuring the participants’ that their personal information will not be disclosed “in any way that might identify that individual or that might enable the individual to be traced...although researchers know who has provided the information or are able to identify participants from information given, they will in no way make the connection known publicly” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 92).

The next part in the survey provided specific information on the respondents NM usage, including the number of hours spent using each category. Two of five items are illustrated in Table 2, showing the categories of the NM elements used in this study. Students were tasked with ranking responses to these items using a five-point Likert-type scale. For example, item #1 shows “social networks” as being websites such as “Facebook”, “Twitter”, “Instagram”, et cetera, and solicits the respondent to rate their use of these items from 1 to 5. A response of “3” in item #1 would indicate that the respondent uses social networks from 4 to 7 hours per day.

| <i>Item</i>                                                                                                                           | Over 10 hours | 8 to 10 hours | 4 to 7 hours | 1 to 3 hours | Less than 1 hour to never |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Social networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Reddit, blogs etc.)                                                       | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |
| 2. Online gaming (i.e. World of Warcraft, Minecraft, The Sims, Second Life, Star Wars: The Old Republic, Battlefield, RuneScape etc.) | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |

*Table 2* – Sample of items used in “New Media” survey

Those who selected “5” in item #2 would be specifying that they utilize “Online gaming” such as “World of Warcraft”, “Minecraft”, “The Sims”, et cetera, less than 1 hour to never in a day. This information will later be used to group responses in five separate categories rating the frequency of NM use separately. Additionally, for descriptive reasons, responses of “1” are often described as “very frequent users”; “2” – “frequent users”; “3” – “moderate users”; “4” – “occasional users”; and “5” – “infrequent users” of the NM item. Furthermore, describing a respondent as a very frequent user of online gaming does not necessarily mean that they are an “excessive” user. As stated by David Smahel, et al., “it is not always the time spent online that makes internet use problematic and ‘excessive’, but the impact of internet use on what might be called a ‘balanced life’ (2012, p. 2). As such, the current study makes no attempt to qualify such claims, as this would require detailed research in itself. Further information will be presented in the “Results and discussion” section about how these responses were actually analyzed.

The last eight statements in this survey also use a 5-point Likert-type scale. Unlike the New Media survey, responses rated as “1”, represent “strong agreement”, and “5” as “strong disagreement” (with a “3” depicting an “undecided” or “no response”). These statements were designed to evaluate the students’ perceptions of how NM influenced specific English abilities. For example, Table 3 illustrates statements #6 and #7. A response of “4” to statement #6 would suggest that the student “agreed” that they “would prefer watching films in English that are dubbed in Swedish without the subtitles.”

| <i>Statement</i>                                                                              | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Neither disagree nor agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 6. I would prefer watching films in English that are dubbed in Swedish without the subtitles. | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 7. When I chat with friends in English using new media, it is usually written.                | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |

*Table 3* - Sample of statements used in "New Media" survey

In addition, a "3" response to statement #7 implies that they had no opinion or were unsure about the statement; "when I chat with friends in English using new media, it is usually written." These statements proved helpful when attempting to triangulate correlations between NM use, student perceptions, and test scores.

### 3.2.1. Diagnostics Tests

As mentioned previously, the most reasonable proxy for English proficiency was diagnostics tests. The tests used in the current study were originally developed by the National Assessment Project (NAFS), at the University of Gothenburg, authorized by The Swedish National Agency for Education to "develop all national tests and other assessment materials in English, French, German and Spanish as foreign languages that are used within the Swedish school system". According to NAFS website:

The materials are developed in close collaboration with large groups of teachers, students and researchers and are based on a set of general principles founded in extensive research. In addition to the task of producing tests and assessment materials, the members of the project are involved in teacher education, local school development, other national projects and extensive international networks. (2011)

Although the Swedish national practice tests of English for grade 9 (See Appendixes 3 through 5) in receptive skills: reading and listening, and written production provided a practical means for evaluating skill levels for individual students, it was still necessary to develop a grading scale for each test.

There were several "built-in" reliability (see discussions of "Reliability & Validity") proofs that considered what marks to award for each item in each test. For example, all of the

above mentioned tests, as written by Cohen (et al) (p. 491), benefit from awarding specific points for each item and sub-item in that most:

- enable partial completion of the task to be recognized;
- enable a student to compensate for doing badly in some parts of a test by doing well in other parts of the test;
- enable weights to be made explicit to the students;
- facilitate moderation because it is clear and specific;
- enable comparisons to be made across groups by item; and
- scores can be aggregated and converted into grades straightforwardly.

The national tests also include test conditions, sample answers with written explanations and examples from genuine students from targeted oral and written performances, cut-off scores, et cetera. In regards to converting scores into grades, a system largely based upon the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF or CEFR) was used due to its broad use in many parts of Europe and its flexibility. This grading system was originally put together by the Council of Europe as a way of standardizing the levels of language exams in different regions (Language Policy Unit, 2014). The council has made practical use of IH philosophy and claims that certain communicative competences are established by creating (output) or obtaining (input) via interactions in various contexts under various conditions and constraints. For instance, educational, occupational, public, and personal domains, all contribute to the development of a language users' degrees of competence. For these reasons, the CEFR scale was used with some minor revisions of its category level titles. The original scale is illustrated in Table 4.

|                     | <b>Can Do Statements: overall general ability</b> |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     | <b>CEFR LEVELS</b>                                | <b>Listening/Speaking</b>                                                                                                                                                     | <b>Reading</b>                                                                                                                                     | <b>Writing</b>                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Advanced</b>     | <b>C2</b>                                         | CAN advise on or talk about complex or sensitive issues, understanding colloquial references and dealing confidently with hostile questions.                                  | CAN understand documents, correspondence and reports, including the finer points of complex texts.                                                 | CAN write letters on any subject and fill notes of meetings or seminars with good expression and accuracy.                                         |
|                     | <b>C1</b>                                         | CAN contribute effectively to meetings and seminars within own area of work or keep up a casual conversation with a good degree of fluency, coping with abstract expressions. | CAN read quickly enough to cope with an academic course, to read the media for information or to understand non-standard correspondence.           | CAN prepare/draft professional correspondence, take reasonably accurate notes in meetings or write an essay which shows an ability to communicate. |
| <b>Intermediate</b> | <b>B2</b>                                         | CAN follow or give a talk on a familiar topic or keep up a conversation on a fairly wide-range of topics.                                                                     | CAN scan texts for relevant information, and understand detailed instructions or advice.                                                           | CAN make notes while someone is talking or write a letter including non-standard requests.                                                         |
|                     | <b>B1</b>                                         | CAN express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements.                  | CAN understand routine information and articles, and the general meaning of non-routine information within a familiar area.                        | CAN write letters or make notes on familiar or predictable matters.                                                                                |
| <b>Beginning</b>    | <b>A2</b>                                         | CAN express simple opinions or requirements in a familiar context.                                                                                                            | CAN understand straightforward information within a known area, such as on products and signs and simple textbooks or reports on familiar matters. | CAN complete forms and write short simple letters or postcards related to personal information.                                                    |
|                     | <b>A1</b>                                         | CAN understand basic instructions or take part in a basic factual conversation on a predictable topic.                                                                        | CAN understand basic notices, instructions or information.                                                                                         | CAN complete basic forms, and write notes including times, dates and places.                                                                       |

*Table 4 – Original CEFR Scale (Abraham Lincoln English Center, 2014)*

In the current study, those pupils falling under the “A1” level are referred to as “Novice (lower half)”; A2 = Novice (upper half); B1 = Intermediate (lower half); B2 = Intermediate (upper half); C1 = Advanced (lower half); and C2 = Advanced (upper half).

In each test (excluding the writing test), students were given points for every correct answer (or partially correct). The total number of correct answers was then aggregated against the maximum number of points which could be achieved. Final scores placed the students in one of the six CEFR levels listed in Table 5.

| <b>Listening Comprehension Diagnostic</b> | <b>Category Title</b> | <b>CEFR Scale</b> | <b>Point Scale</b> |
|-------------------------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
|                                           | Novice (lower half)   | A-                | 0 to 4             |
|                                           | Novice (upper half)   | A+                | 5 to 9             |
|                                           | Interm. (lower half)  | B-                | 10 to 11           |
|                                           | Interm. (upper half)  | B+                | 12 to 13           |
|                                           | Advanced (lower half) | C-                | 14 to 15           |
|                                           | Advanced (upper half) | C+                | 16 to 17           |
| <b>Maximum Score</b>                      |                       |                   | <b>17</b>          |

*Table 5* – Sample of grading criteria for Listening Comprehension Diagnostic Test

It should also be mentioned that raw scores are open to construal, which was a matter of the researcher’s preference rather than literalness or precision. That is to say, the tests were used to assess competency of an individual student’s English language ability in a specific skill, compared to their peers in this study, and not to make claims that these scores represent the student’s absolute competency compared to the greater population of English language learners.

### 3.2.3. Supporting Material

In the assessment of the participants’ speaking proficiencies, 82 of the 139 involved in the study were rated by the researcher of this study. Students were observed by the researcher, who is a native speaker of English, for a period of four months during a variety of verbal activities. Furthermore, the participants were under the direct mentorship of the researcher for approximately three school semester before the study was conducted. The verbal exercises, included individual/group presentations, classroom drills, discussions and one-on-one dialogues. They were graded using the same scale presented in Table 4 in the preceding section.

It was deemed prudent to include an additional analysis that investigated variables of causation outside the focus on NM which could possibly explain (or skew) any results of proficiency testing. One such variable is arguably the pupils “motivation” to learn the language. In a study conducted by the EACEA (2007), responses to an online questionnaire suggested that:



...motivation for language learning is not exclusively located around a passion for languages and learning. Importantly, practical needs in a person's life, employment and mobility, and the desire or need to get to know and understand other cultures tend to be strong motivators, too. (p.30)

Unfortunately, motivation is far too complex a concept to detail here, as it concerns matters involved with the drive, incentive or energy to do something. Likewise, it cannot be studied as a single entity because it comprises, for example, "effort, self-efficacy, self-regulation, interest, locus of control, self-esteem, goal orientation and learning disposition" (Harlen & Deakin Crick, 2002, pp. 1 - 2). Nonetheless, efforts were made to include this category in the present study. With the help of Harlen and Deakin-Crick's study, all the variables included in the concept of motivation for learning were grouped into three outcomes; expressed from a learner's perspective:

1. What I feel and think about myself as a learner (related to self-esteem, self-concept, sense of self as a learner, and attitude to assessment)
2. The energy I have for the task (related to effort, interest in and attitude to subject, and self-regulation)
3. How I perceive my capacity to undertake the task (related to locus of control, goal orientation, and self-efficacy)

The "Student's Motivation to Learn English" survey (see Appendix 2) was created with these three motivational viewpoints. The twelve statement survey, comparable to the "New Media" survey, solicited personal information from the respondents and rated responses on a 5-point Likert-type scale. However, four statements for every "motivational viewpoint" were presented in an effort to measure the student's motivation level in each category. For example, Table 6 illustrates statements 1 through 6 of the survey. Each statement was designed to rate the level of agreement with one of the three categories believed to be central to the motivation of learning. Item #1, "I think of myself as a good English language learner," should grant a response rating, "what I feel and think about myself as a learner"; Item #3, "when I start an assignment it's difficult for me to stop," rates "the energy I have for the task"; and Item# 6, "generally, I believe that I am in control of what grade I receive," evaluates "how I perceive my capacity to undertake the task".

| <i>Statement</i>                                                                    | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Neither disagree nor agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I think of myself as a good English language learner.                            | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 2. When I talk to my friends in English, I'm <i>not</i> afraid of sounding foolish. | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 3. When I start an assignment it's difficult for me to stop.                        | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 4. I could spend an hour just thinking about what to write in an assignment.        | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 5. When I set a goal, I'm confident that I'll reach that goal.                      | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 6. Generally, I believe that I am in control of what grade I receive.               | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |

*Table 6.* – Sample of “Student Motivation” Survey

By principle, this survey provided an essential sub-variable for the causation of results by distinguishing indications that causation is taking place or has taken place in the presence of counterfactuals such as motivation.

Gender was also a variable that was considered in this study due to the fact that in many studies, females have outperformed their male counterparts in most school subjects including English. This has been especially true in Sweden where the Swedish National Agency for Education reported, after their latest school inspections, results of the writing portion of the national test revealed just over 4 percent of girls and nearly 7 percent of boys did not achieve a passing grade (Skolverket, 2014). Historically, the girls on average receive higher grades than boys in all subjects except physical education and health, where the boys' ratings were marginally higher than girls'. Although the researcher was curious to see if this would reflect in the current study's results, not much focus was placed on this category.

Lastly, the phrase “casual discussions” with students can be regarded as a form of interview in this text. However, the term should be interpreted literally as an informal conversation with pupils used primarily to solicit information that the surveys did not provide. The quantitative nature of this study risks portraying the pupils as entities producing simple predictable data that is somehow external to the individual. Individual casual discussions were used with this in mind, regarding knowledge as a sharing of information between humans, often through conversations. It was also used to clarify and support much of the information provided by the surveys. For instance, one

disadvantage that the “Student’s New Media” survey contained was that although the participants were able to indicate that they used “Online gaming” for a certain number of hours per day, they were unable to express what specific games were being played. After some brief discussions with the participants, it was discovered, for example, that the MMORPG, *World of Warcraft* was extensively used by a significant amount of those students claiming to use online gaming. This information offered yet another variable to consider when analyzing the results. In the next section, the procedures used for survey administration and data analysis will be discussed in more detail.

### 3.3. Methods & Procedures

At the core of the research it should be mentioned that a “mixed method” style forms the foundation of the study. The motivation behind using the mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative research methods was inspired by T.L. Brink, who argues that the solution for social science research is to make a commitment to using both methods (1995). These two fundamentally different techniques give both a “subjectivist”, or qualitative, and a “positivist”, or quantitative, perspective to the study.

The surveys/tests were administered by the author of this discussion and three additional English language teachers, during several scheduled classroom lessons. Teachers were given explicit instructions about the study and how each exercise was to be conducted. This was beneficial to the administration of the material due to the fact that any questions about the questionnaire could be answered accurately and without disrupting the integrity of the respondents’ answers. For example, due to the complex nature of some of the statements pertaining to NM (such as, what category a specific NM should be placed in), teachers were able to assist the students as problems arose. Likewise, it was essential that the respondents understood that it was their perceptions which mattered most in their responses. For example, most students would not be expected to know exactly how much time was spent using a specific NM, or whether its use had any definitive influence on English proficiency, however, most would be able say how they ‘perceived’ it.

As stated previously, this study can be regarded mostly as a quantitative one, because it “involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analyzed primarily by statistical methods” (Dörnyei, 2011, p. 24). It is quantitative in the sense that through the use of a 5-point Liker-type scale, students’ responses are counted, rated and converted into percentages. However, these percentages were then used as “descriptive

statistics”, which not only count, but also describe frequencies, measure dispersals (standard deviation), measure central tendencies (means, mode, medians), cross-tabulate, and interpret standardized scores. They were then grouped in blocks which attempted to identify relationships between them. Although descriptive statistics are not technically considered to be completely quantitative, because they are not advanced on the premise of probability theory (Dörnyei, 2011, pp. 213-215), results are still based heavily on the analysis of numerical data. Hence, many would regard this study as heavily qualitative in nature though represented numerically. It should also be mentioned here that chi-square tests ( $\chi^2$ ) were used to compare the responses of all samples (refer to Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, pp. 661–654 for more information about chi-squared tests). Graphs were created so that “trends” could be seen more easily and making the data more accessible for the reader (see Figure 1).

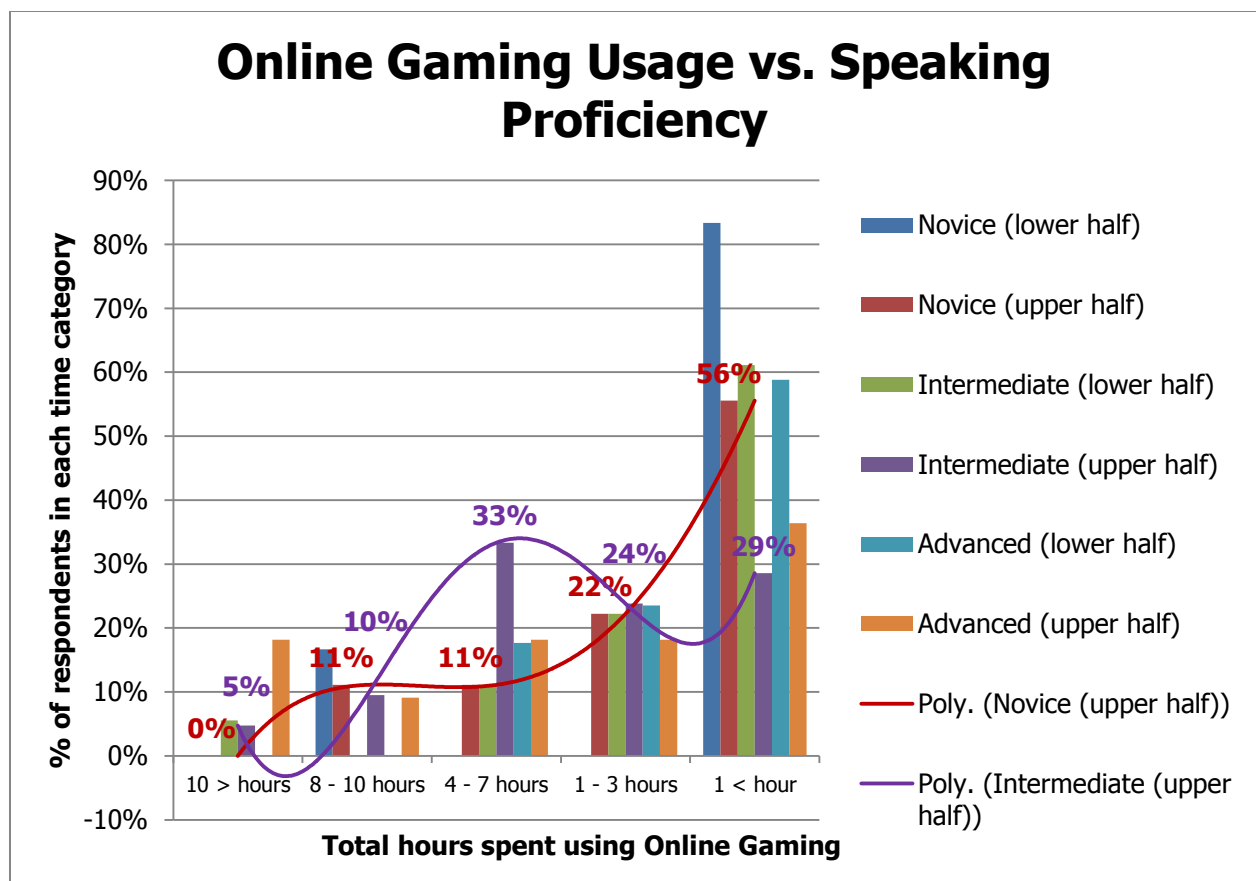


Figure 1 – Graph showing correlations between Online gaming and Speaking skills

The Figure 1 shows an example of how the data is presented in the “Results & Discussion” section of this text. It is important to note here that the purple and red lines in the graph illustrate polynomial “trend lines” which represent the respondents with ability levels rated as Intermediate (upper half) in purple, and Novice (upper half) in red. It should be mentioned

also that most of the students' proficiency scores fell between these ranges and their values are compared predominately throughout the discussion. The entire graph will be described in more detail as each correlation is discussed later in the text.

These correlations were grouped into the blocks mentioned previously, for instance, as Figure 1 shows: the respondents' of all skill levels were grouped regarding the number of hours they spent using online gaming. The percentages of responses for those categories are illustrated on the left, while the respondents' speaking skill levels are color coded on the right for each group. In this study, correlation analysis is used to survey the relationship between NM and language ability. According to Dörnyei, a correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) is computed between the variables and it can range between -1 and 1 (2011). A high value of  $r$  is an indication of a strong relationship. The current study illustrates these values as trend lines where  $r^2=1$ , meaning simply that the illustration is a "good fit" to the data being presented.

Grouping them in this fashion affords a clearer picture when making an effort to illustrate what degree of NM activity correlates to which English proficiency. Again, the study measured differences between the specific variables of English proficiency of students and their NM habits. The results could then be analyzed to identify if these habits could reasonably be regarded as advantages or disadvantages in the acquisition of the English language. Potentially, the results can aid in the development of NM based activities which positively influence learning in the ESL classroom. Nevertheless, all of this information would be worthless if measures of reliability and validity were not addressed. The next section explains how the current study handled these issues.

### 3.4. Reliability & Validity

In short, the theory of reliability is defined as "yielding the same or compatible results in different clinical experiments or statistical trials" (Farlex, 2013). In other words, it refers to the reliability of data, ratings and observation in a specific study compared with another. In this case, the study discussed earlier conducted by Sundqvist, had very similar characteristics as the current study. For example, geographical location, age and number of participants, et cetera, are all items in which a reasonable degree of generalizability of results can be assumed of both studies. In other words, results shown in one study should hold true in another study with similar features.

Validity refers to "the entire experimental concept and establishes whether the results obtained meet all of the requirements of the scientific research method" (Shuttleworth, 2008),

which insures that not only the right measuring tools are used, but also that they are being used properly (Bailey, 1994, p. 67). Furthermore, it is the “quality of the interpretations and not of the test or the test scores” (Dörnyei, 2011, p. 50) which is most important here. This discussion focuses primarily on two types of validity: Internal and External. Dörnyei describes Internal Validity as the ‘approximate truth’ about conclusions one comes to in the causes of certain outcomes. For instance, the use of the chi-squared test to examine the significance of statistical data is a reliable tool used by many researchers to prove the accuracy of their data, and the certified national English tests, are strong specimens of internal validity in this study. External Validity examines the extent to which we can generalize our findings to a larger group, to other contexts or different times (p. 52). This proved to be challenging, as Cohen, et al write; “The issue of generalization is problematical. For positivist researchers generalizability is a sine qua non, whilst this is far less the case in naturalistic research” (p. 186). In this research, it was challenging to substantiate the circumstances in which the use of NM was a material cause of higher scores on diagnostic tests, because there were no conditions created to confirm that, for example, the results were not the product of some bilateral circumstance. That is to say, those students who possess higher proficiencies of English may also be inclined to use NM more often and even the variable of motivation mentioned previously has the potential to skew the given results. The issue at hand is much more complicated than this discussion can address, and further empirical studies are needed to verify external validity.

Now that the material and methods used in this study have been accounted for, the following sections discuss the results, beginning with the results for the overall usage of NM in each classification.

## 4. Results and discussion

In this section, the results of the surveys, tests and discussions are presented along with an analysis of the data using the methods mentioned previously. Certain correlations were more relevant to the goal of this study than others and are discussed in more detail. First, Section 4.1 discusses the possible influences of NM on English proficiency. Subsequently, the connections containing the most meaningful results of the study will be discussed at the end of that section. Lastly, Section 4.2 debates the relevance of these results to classroom learning. As mentioned in Section 3, the correlations have been grouped into separate categories and will be analyzed in their respective blocks.

### 4.1. Influences of New Media on English proficiency

Table 7 illustrates the overall usage of NM in each category and separates the responses by gender. The responses were grouped, tallied and given percentage ratings dependent upon the students' answers to the surveys.

| Social Media Use   |             |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Female      | Male        | Grand Total |
| >10 hours          | 12%         | 1%          | 6%          |
| 8 to 10 hours      | 18%         | 7%          | 12%         |
| 4 to 7 hours       | 33%         | 38%         | 35%         |
| 1 to 3 hours       | 24%         | 35%         | 29%         |
| <1 hour to never   | 13%         | 19%         | 17%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| Digital Texts Use  |             |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Female      | Male        | Grand Total |
| >10 hours          | 1%          | 0%          | 1%          |
| 8 to 10 hours      | 6%          | 1%          | 4%          |
| 4 to 7 hours       | 10%         | 4%          | 7%          |
| 1 to 3 hours       | 30%         | 21%         | 25%         |
| <1 hour to never   | 52%         | 74%         | 63%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| Online Gaming Use  |             |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Female      | Male        | Grand Total |
| >10 hours          | 3%          | 7%          | 5%          |
| 8 to 10 hours      | 1%          | 8%          | 5%          |
| 4 to 7 hours       | 4%          | 35%         | 20%         |
| 1 to 3 hours       | 15%         | 26%         | 21%         |
| <1 hour to never   | 76%         | 24%         | 49%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

| Recorded Audio Use |             |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Female      | Male        | Grand Total |
| >10 hours          | 15%         | 3%          | 9%          |
| 8 to 10 hours      | 19%         | 17%         | 18%         |
| 4 to 7 hours       | 30%         | 28%         | 29%         |
| 1 to 3 hours       | 27%         | 39%         | 33%         |
| <1 hour to never   | 9%          | 14%         | 12%         |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

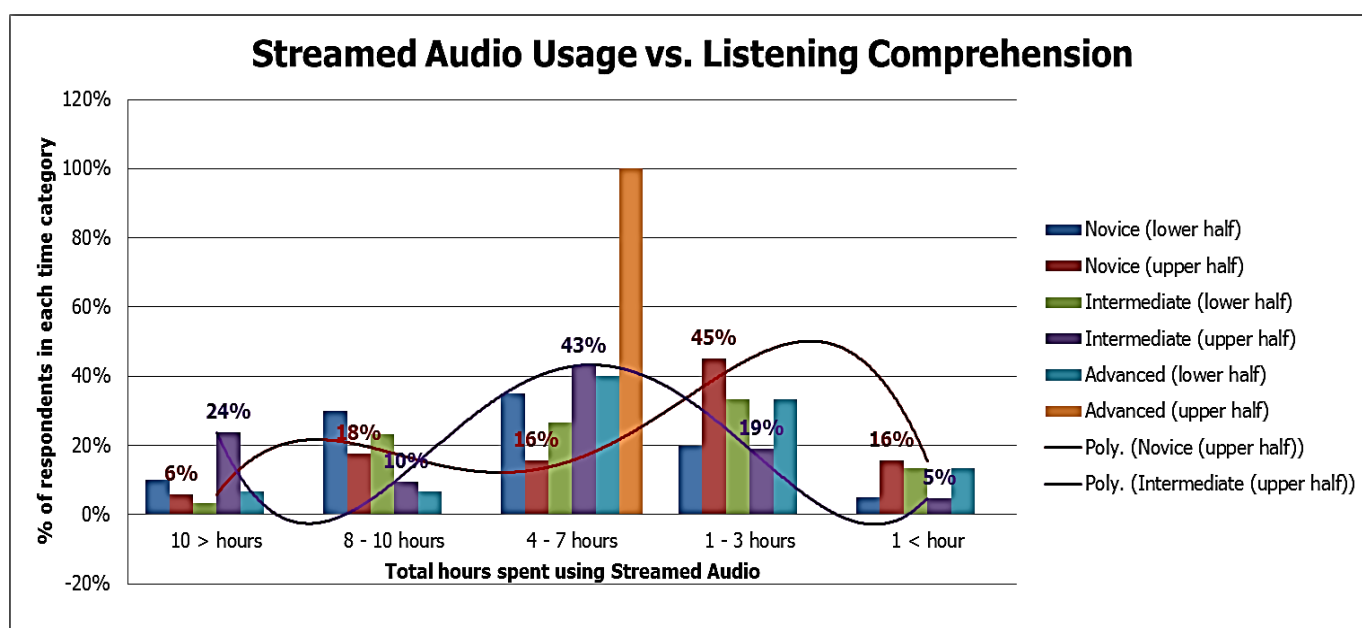
| Recorded Video Use |             |             |             |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                    | Female      | Male        | Grand Total |
| >10 hours          | 7%          | 4%          | 6%          |
| 8 to 10 hours      | 13%         | 10%         | 12%         |
| 4 to 7 hours       | 25%         | 25%         | 25%         |
| 1 to 3 hours       | 43%         | 56%         | 50%         |
| <1 hour to never   | 10%         | 6%          | 8%          |
| <b>Grand Total</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> | <b>100%</b> |

Table 7– Study Results of Overall New Media Usage

For instance, when analyzing the table titled “Social Media Use”, we see that 12% of the female and 1% of the male respondents claim that they use a form of social media ten hours or more per day. However, this group represents only 6% of the total responses given (n=139). In other words, 9 of the 139 students made this claim; 8 of which were female and 1 was male. Moreover, in descriptive terms, this text would state that 6% of the pupils were considered “very frequent” users of social media.

After reviewing the data, it was deemed relevant to first identify those NM categories that were used most frequently by the participants in English. That is to say, identify the largest percentage of respondents who claimed to be moderate to very frequent users of any specific NM. It was determined that the most widely used was streamed/recorded audio with 56% of the students claiming moderate to very frequent use of this item. Naturally, an interest was placed on seeing if these individuals showed any correlations to better listening skills.

The first block, illustrated in Figure 2, compares the use of streamed/recorded audio to listening comprehension. As mentioned previously, most of the students’ test scores placed them between the Novice and Intermediate ranges and these values were focused on, as shown by the trend lines in the figure. This data showed some interesting results.



*Figure 2 - Graph showing correlations between Audio usage and Listening Comprehension*

The figures reveal that the number of hours spent using streamed/recorded audio up to seven hours per day (moderate users) has a noticeable effect on those Intermediate (upper half) students’ listening comprehension. Sundqvist’s study also showed this trend of students reporting the highest number of hours overall in this category, however both studies had no



statistical significance ( $p = 0,097$ ). This means, although there was a noticeable trend seen in one group, as a whole (all participants), differences between all the groups had no meaningful relationship with one another (that is to say, no scientific significance). Additionally, these percentages decreased drastically after seven hours of use were reported. Therefore, a claim that the more one listens to NM in English, the better their listening skills, is unproven in this study. Streamed/recorded audio use was also correlated against all the other English skills, including reading comprehension, writing ability, speaking skills, and gender differences with similar yet less impressive results. Notably, males in this category used this form of NM 16% more frequently than females. In essence, Long's interaction hypothesis is supported here with the principle that simply listening to the target language is not an adequate means of acquiring an L2, as the "production of language (output), and feedback on production (through interaction)" also need to take place.

The second block represents the second most frequently used NM; Social Media. Figure 3 demonstrates the results of another possible correlation between social media, reading comprehension, and motivation.

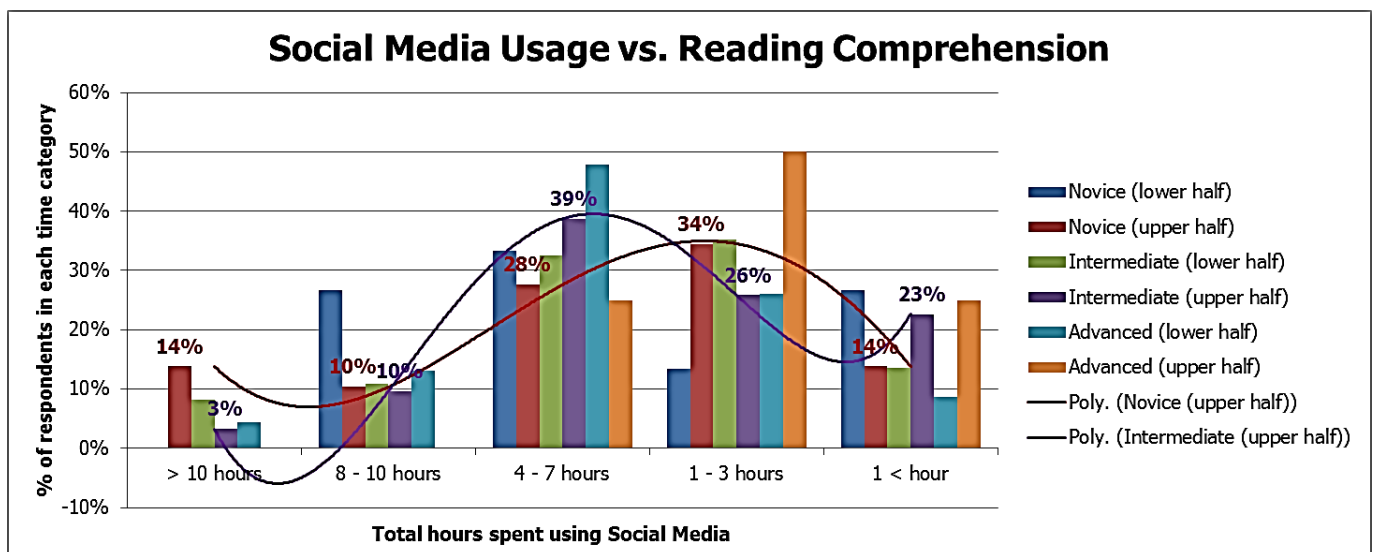


Figure 3 - Graph showing correlations between Social Media usage and Reading Comprehension

Again, we see a majority of students (53%) moderately to very frequently using some form of social media on a daily basis (29% used it occasionally). Likewise, a similar trend develops with Intermediate (upper half) pupils performing better up to a moderate level of use and a drastic drop-off after, with no significant statistical values ( $p = 0,752$ ). One would think that social media such as Facebook and Twitter provides convincing support for Vygotsky's SCT (and IH) as these networks were created as tools in order to control our lives and

developmental activities through interactions with others. Conversely, we are reminded that as a psychological process, SCT merely regards an NM, such as Facebook, as a tool supporting an essential biological function of communication. As stated previously in this text, “the value of the use of utensils in the activity of eating meat can be associated with the significance of using NM to interconnect with people and the world around us”, but this says nothing of the quality of the actual comprehension of the interaction. Even the best tools, if used improperly, can be ineffective for the task at hand. When analyzing the abbreviated, truncated, syntactically error filled language used in Social Media (i.e. “omg”; “ttyl”, “2day”, “your” instead of “you’re”, etc.), by nature, it is not an effective instrument (by itself) to improve reading comprehension. Krashen and Hatch have argued that IH involves output from an individual with proficient language ability. That is not to say that operators of Facebook are not proficient English language speakers. It is simply proposed that these users may not be using the language in a traditionally competent academic sense.

After performing the exhaustive process of analyzing the data of several possible links between NM used in English and English proficiency, including for example, online gaming/speaking skills, digital texts/reading comprehension and streamed video/listening comprehension, et cetera, most displayed the same “trends” as discussed in preceding blocks. However, the next block illustrates an example of how a correlation of NM and language proficiency can have positive effects on L2 learning.

Figure 4 shows the results of connections between online gaming and listening comprehension. Since the method of analysis remained the same throughout this study, they will not be explained in detail in the proceeding segment.

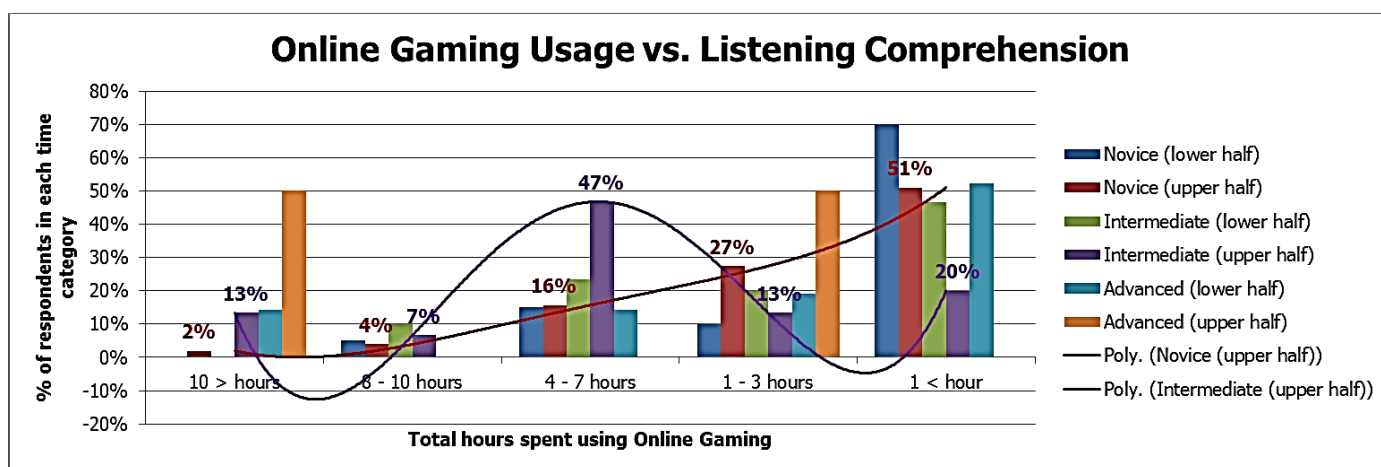
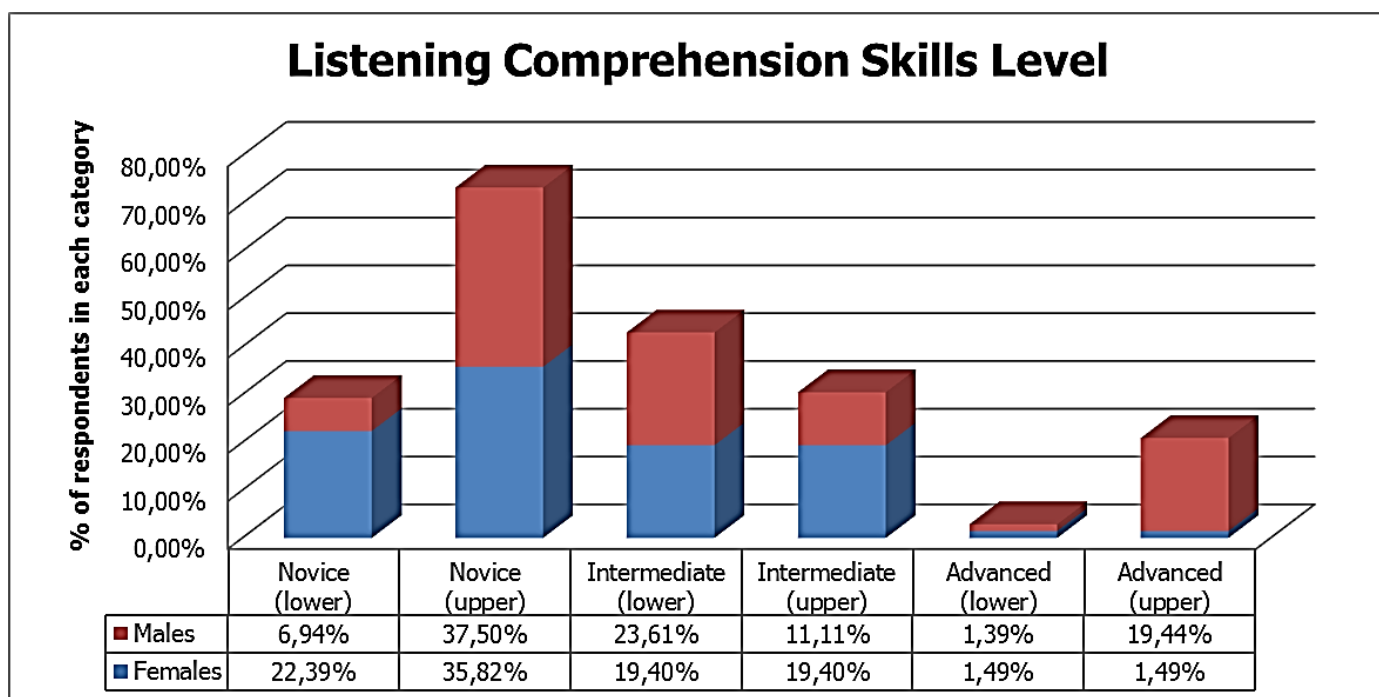


Figure 4 - Graph showing correlations between Online Gaming usage and Listening Comprehension

Results for this block revealed that for the correlation tests between online gaming and listening comprehension, there were in fact significant differences between the skill levels of participants and the frequency of NM use ( $p = 0,016$ ). There was an appreciably larger percentage of students who were considered Novice (upper half) level listeners (51%), that spent less than 1 hour per day, using online games compared to Intermediate (upper half) level listeners (20%) in the same category. Furthermore, as seen in the previous figures, the Intermediate students' percentages peak at up to seven hours of use (47%), however the Novice students' consistently decrease, even through ten hours or more of use (2%). Although the Intermediates show a similar trend of diminishing drastically after seven hours of use, the data indicates that up until this point, online gaming has a positive effect on students English comprehension skills. It should also be mentioned that, as in Sundqvist's study, males seem to benefit from this more than females, due to a 42% difference (see Table 7) in students categorized as moderate to very frequent users (specifically, 50% males and 8% females). Subsequently, listening comprehension (see Figure 5) and speaking ability were the two proficiencies that males scored higher than females on average.



*Figure 5 – Listening Comprehension Skills Levels by Gender*

After this data was acquired, it was necessary to conduct random individual discussions with the students to ascertain which games were being played, and possibly some knowledge of their components. It was no surprise to learn that the most widely played games were MMORPGs such as *World of Warcraft* and *Minecraft*. These games were identified as such in

Sundqvist and Peterson's studies as well. The games require the players to navigate and interact with other players in a virtual environment. Peterson also appends of Steinkuehler's description of In-game practices include: "the titling of player avatars, letter writing, the delivery of detailed narratives, meeting holding conventions, rituals, the coordination of joint expeditions, and sports" (p. 43). The results seen in this block tend to support the principles of IH as perceived by Peterson who sustains that MMORPGs possess properties similar to language produced in real life, as they "provide a means to communicate meaning and enact the social relationships that are crucial in fostering literacy development", especially in the category of comprehension. The largely encouraging results of this study, and others before it, underscore the need to explore the potential for using NM as a tool for CALL. The next section is an inventory of the possibilities available from a practical perspective.

#### 4.2. Relevance of CALL to classroom learning

One of the goals of this study was to evaluate how NM in English could be used as an advantage in the ESL classroom. As exhibited in this discussion, certain characteristics of NM are beneficial with regards to certain aspects of language skills. Unfortunately, these benefits are predominately being accessed in environments situated outside of the classroom. After interviewing several respondents, it was learned that although some forms of NM were being used in English during class sessions (mainly for essay research using the Internet and the production of digital text for writing assignments), the vast majority of time reported using NM was done during "extramural" activities. This came as no surprise, however after tallying the data from the surveys, 56% of the respondents agreed with the statement (see Figure 5, next page); "The use of new media in the English classroom encourages and stimulates my motivation and willingness to learn the language"; students perceive these activities as beneficial to their learning and should be used more in the classroom. Arguably, these percentages could have been much greater had the 37% who had no response been exposed to more NM in the classroom to make a more decisive assessment of this statement. There are two propositions that will move the field forward that will require some original thinking.

First, it is important for those responsible for the development of the English course curriculum to embrace the fact that NM can positively challenge the student to be more active in the L2 acquisition. In this regard, the teacher plays a key role in actively intervening in the decisions made on what their students need in their development. This includes the selection of relevant classroom activities designed to target specific proficiencies and meet specific

curricular goals. This would require some support from school politicians, for instance, committing to research projects that involve the investigation of how games can be more effectively integrated into the syllabus.

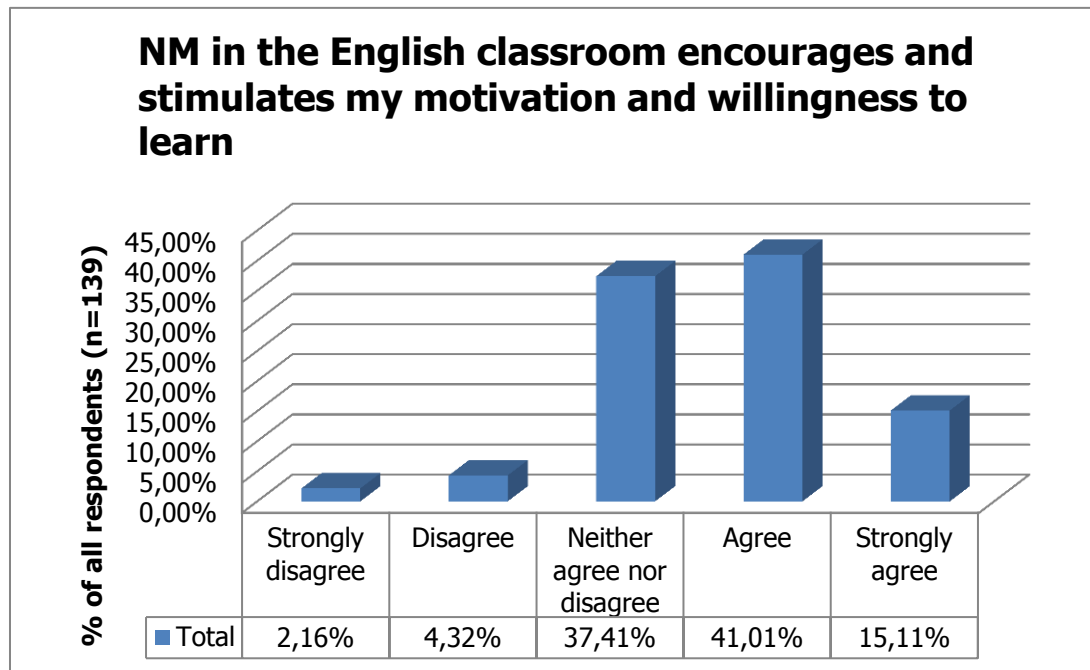


Figure 6 – Responses to Statement #13 of the New Media Survey

As daunting as the development of these modified games may be, there are already a number of commercial products available for use. Peterson (2013) describes several of them in various languages. One of which is designed for children learning English called *Mingoville* (<http://www.mingoville.com>):

The environment adopts a narrative whereby learners are immersed in a virtual city populated by English-speaking flamingoes. Each of the flamingoes has a unique personality. The English interface takes the form of a storybook that contains familiar characters found at home such as, for example, mothers and fathers and objects found in school including a textbook. The ten missions target specific language competencies and curriculum goals... Missions incorporate games that provide contextualized practice in using the TL [target language], such as vocabulary recognition and sentence construction. (pp. 134 - 135)

By committing to projects such as this, teachers and administrators will be making a conscience effort to fulfilling students' needs by making it easier and more effective for teachers to supervise individual students and motivate them by encouraging them to use tools

that are familiar to them. Likewise, as Sundqvist writes, “it is important that teachers learn about boys’ and girls’ different EE habits, namely, that boys spend significantly more time on active/productive EE activities than girls do, and that they generally benefit from doing so” (p. 205).

Secondly, teachers must take the initiative to do what they feel is best for their students. For example, an article published in a Swedish teacher’s union magazine periodical, *Skolvärlden* (Stridsman, 2014), interviews a head English teacher, Sara Bruun, at an intermediate level school in Hässleholm, Sweden. Bruun has converted her entire course to a NM based theme; no textbooks. For example, her eighth grade students are tasked with several assignments with a Nelson Mandela theme which begins with the watching of the film *Mandela: Long Walk to Freedom* (2013). They then work in groups of three to formulate a letter, in which they fictitiously petition for the freedom of Mandela. These letters are written using *Google Drive*, a free web-based word processor, a spreadsheet program, and a presentation program all built into one, “that makes it easy for her to see which student has written what and makes it simpler to give feedback” (p. 10). She then conducts a formative assessment using a screen recording tool called *Screencast-o-matic* to record their texts and give verbal feedback as she is grading them. The students are then free to listen to her comments on their work at their convenience. Coincidentally, she also commented that part of her motivation to do this came from the observation that her students were developing a lot of their English abilities outside of the classroom via music, movies, and MMORPGs. Bruun is quoted stating:

Above all, [they play] *World of Warcraft*. It has lifted the English of the guys unbelievable. They sit at the computer and play with headsets on and speak to each other in English. It really gave the boys an advantage, but we must find alternatives for the girls. I think that the iPad can help there. (p. 11)

Bruun’s seventh graders are doing just that by utilizing applications that allow them to create short animated films. This gives the girls, who tend to be shy, an opportunity to speak through a character instead of standing in front of the class. From an English teacher’s perspective, this is an excellent way for many students’ (not just girls) to benefit from participating in that type of NM activity. Sundqvist adds; “Teachers may play a crucial role in motivating students to engage in those EE activities which are more demanding than others, for example playing video games in English, using the Internet in English, and reading

various types of texts in English, because activities such as these may be perceived as less accessible by many learners” (p. 205).

Lastly, teamwork is a skill students will need for the future. There are several digital tools available that will help them work more efficiently together that do not require huge investments monetarily. For example, Sync.in (<http://sync.in.com>) is a practical tool for collaborating on a document in real time. This program is free and extremely user friendly. It allows multiple students to work simultaneously, chat and review one another’s edits. Dropbox (<http://dropbox.com>) is another collaborative tool which can be used when working together on videos or other projects that are heavy on graphics and require a lot of storage space. Additionally, teachers can also use these sites for collecting homework and other student assignments. Likewise, it is free.

Clearly, these alternatives put higher demands on the educator to be more organized and digitally literate. It would require school principals to not only insure that every student has access to iPads/computers, but to also assist teachers in acquiring the training needed to use these digital tools. It would involve the teacher taking a “connectivist” perspective to learning and acknowledge that all the pool of knowledge they need is “distributed across networks”. These networks include Facebook groups, Twitter accounts, iPad applications, word processors, CALL- based programs, and many more. As discussed in the “Connectivism” section of this text, learning is constant, ever changing, life molding, and shaped by living. New Media is inevitably connected to language acquisition, and the sooner we grasp that institutions and individuals are both interconnected learning organisms, the sooner we can start reshaping these systems to be more effectual ESL literate cooperatives.

## 5. Conclusions

Due to the wave of technological advancements in the last decade, our society has become increasingly saturated with new tools such as iPads, computers, smart phones, iPods, and the like, which are steadily changing how we navigate the world. This has affected every facade of our culture, including the way we socialize, develop, and even how we think. Some institutions have evolved to embrace these changes, for example, most companies have made their services and products available via the Internet. Others have developed products to compliment these advances, such as *Google*, *Microsoft*, *Apple*, and *Nintendo*. However, some institutions are lagging behind, such as government agencies and especially the education system. As a result, the individuals who rely on these organizations' services are forced to do without or seek them out by themselves. Namely, students wishing to better their language skills are finding the help they need outside the walls of school through New Media. The nature of ESL literacy has been an issue under scrutiny for some time and needs empirical studies to transition into the Digital Age. A number of educators have conducted research to explore the advantages of NM and language acquisition, however more should be done to reduce this "new digital divide" (Buckingham, 2007).

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of NM in English on ESL students in Sweden and to offer practical alternatives to progress the entire field of language education onward into the Digital Age. Again, the hypothesis put forward in this text is that digital technology has shaped the way we learn. However, how this affects the field of linguistics and second language acquisition (L2) is ambiguous. This, and other studies like it, can narrow the gap between the many disciplines of education and communication, which will positively influence the way students acquire an L2 such as English. This study revealed correlations between specific NM use and higher language proficiencies in students at the intermediate school level (specifically in Sweden).

First, a description of Sociocultural Theory, as it relates to language acquisition, was presented, arguing that NM is a product of mankind's need to create tools in order to manage our lives and development through interactions. We mediate the use of these tools in different ways depending on the activity, and in regards to development of communication skills, we resolve our cultural differences by connecting with others via NM. Although the results of the current study, through the analysis of correlations between social media and reading comprehension, did not directly illustrate what SCT was, it did show what SCT is not. That is



to say, as Lantolf and Thorne remind us, we are not free to simply use these tools effectively in any context that we would like (see Section 2.2). For example, merely using *Facebook* or listening to music on *Spotify* seven hours per day, does not make one English literate. Literacy requires the learner to focus on both proficient input and output proficiencies.

Next, Long offers his Interaction Hypothesis as an aid in understanding these processes of exposure to language (input) and production of language (output) by reasoning that L2 acquisition benefits from individuals “negotiating meaning” through interaction. He also includes consistent “feedback of production” as an important part of comprehending how second language learning takes place. Contrasting the psychosomatic perspective of SCT, the interaction hypothesis, uses social and cultural factors to test the traditional definitions for literateness. The data in this research, particularly the correlations seen between online game playing and listening comprehension, support the idea that literacy is more than being able to read and write. The practice of online game playing provides “a means to communicate meaning and enact the social relationships that are crucial in fostering literacy development” as well.

This study has shown that NM activities such as, for instance, reading digital text and watching films were not as meaningful for English proficiency as others. However, they are still useful in the instruction and learning of the English language. As Bruun exemplified, by educating oneself on how digital technology such as, web-based word processors, screen recording tools, and streamed video, can be incorporated in the classroom, teachers can improve students’ willingness to learn. However, as this and other research has proven, Sundqvist suggests, “the use of music, TV, and films in teaching should be combined with tasks that require students to interact and to produce output” (p. 205).

Lastly, an effective educationalist that wishes to incorporate NM into their curriculum must also embrace the ideals of Connectivism. As Siemens argues; “Learning needs and theories that describe learning principles and processes should be reflective of underlying social environments” (See Section 2.4). This is coming to the realization that learners are now required to know a little about a lot of different subjects; informal learning is the only plausible way to acquire such knowledge; Technology is changing our biology; Institutes and individuals are both learning organisms; and it is not what one knows, but how efficiently one can find information that truly measures proficiency. The quality and quantity of the connections we make with our artifacts should become an obligation if we are to bridge the gap between extramural literacy customs and institutional literacy education, moving the field forward into the Digital Age.

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## Appendix 1. Student New Media survey

As a person born in the Information Age, you have been exposed to many different forums where the English language is being used via new media sources. *New Media* refers to on-demand access to information anytime, anywhere, on any digital device, as well as interactive user accounts, and creative media (i.e. social networks, online gaming, streamed video, PowerPoint presentations, etc.). I need your help in understanding how this may affect your English language learning. This survey is being conducted to evaluate your use and perceptions of new media. Your sincere input is important and much appreciated. Thank you for your participation!

|         |                                 |                               |  |
|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Name:   |                                 | Class:                        |  |
| Gender: | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Male <input type="checkbox"/> |  |

Please indicate the frequency of use of the following items by circling the one answer that best represents the number of hours you spend using that item on a daily basis *in English* (consider that more than one item can be used at a time):

| <i>Item</i>                                                                                                                           | Over 10 hours | 8 to 10 hours | 4 to 7 hours | 1 to 3 hours | Less than 1 hour to never |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Social networks (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Kik, Reddit, blogs etc.)                                                       | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |
| 2. Online gaming (i.e. World of Warcraft, Minecraft, The Sims, Second Life, Star Wars: The Old Republic, Battlefield, RuneScape etc.) | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |
| 3. Streamed and/or recorded video (i.e. Films, DVD:s, TV series, documentaries, YouTube etc.)                                         | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |
| 4. Digital texts (i.e. Wikipedia, PowerPoint, e-books, sms, e-mail, etc.)                                                             | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |
| 5. Streamed and/or recorded audio (i.e. Spotify, CD:s, podcasts, etc.)                                                                | 1             | 2             | 3            | 4            | 5                         |

Please answer the following statements by circling the one answer that most represents your agreement with that statement:

| <i>Statement</i>                                                                                                                 | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neither disagree nor agree | Agree | Strongly agree |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|----------------------------|-------|----------------|
| 6. I would prefer watching films in English that are dubbed in Swedish without the subtitles.                                    | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 7. When I chat with friends in English using new media, it is usually written.                                                   | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 8. When I chat with friends in English using new media, it is usually verbal.                                                    | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 9. The use of new media has improved my understanding of spoken English.                                                         | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 10. The use of new media has improved my English writing skills.                                                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 11. The use of new media has improved my English reading skills.                                                                 | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 12. Without the use of new media, my English would not be as good as it is now.                                                  | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |
| 13. The use of new media in the English classroom encourages and stimulates my motivation and willingness to learn the language. | 1                 | 2        | 3                          | 4     | 5              |

## Appendix 2. Student Motivation survey

It's reasonable to expect that some students are more interested in learning English than others. The reasons for this can vary, for example, course structure, teacher ability, student ability, and even parental support are all factors which can affect inspiration to acquire knowledge in this subject. This survey is being conducted to evaluate your level of motivation to learn English and what could be done to make the course more interesting for you. Your sincere input is important and much appreciated. Thank you for your participation!

|         |                                 |                               |        |  |  |
|---------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------|--|--|
| Name:   |                                 |                               | Class: |  |  |
| Gender: | Female <input type="checkbox"/> | Male <input type="checkbox"/> |        |  |  |

Please answer the following statements by circling the one answer that most represents your agreement with that statement (**note: all these statements relate to English studies, but not necessarily to your current teacher.**)

| <i>Statement</i>                                                                                                          | <b>Strongly Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Neither disagree nor agree</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Strongly agree</b> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1. I think of myself as a good English language learner.                                                                  | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 2. When I talk to my friends in English, I'm <i>not</i> afraid of sounding foolish.                                       | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 3. When I start an assignment it's difficult for me to stop.                                                              | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 4. I could spend an hour just thinking about what to write in an assignment.                                              | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 5. When I set a goal, I'm confident that I'll reach that goal.                                                            | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 6. Generally, I believe that I am in control of what grade I receive.                                                     | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 7. Generally, I feel I can understand what is being said to me.                                                           | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 8. If permitted to do so, I will turn in writing assignments to be checked before a final draft is submitted for grading. | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 9. When I write to my friends in English, I'm not concerned that they will not understand my meaning.                     | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 10. I am comfortable making suggestions to my teacher on what I feel would make the course more interesting.              | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 11. I generally don't get discouraged when I do not see improvements in areas I'm weak in.                                | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |
| 12. I can usually tell if I've done well on an assignment, or not, before my teacher comments on it.                      | 1                        | 2               | 3                                 | 4            | 5                     |

Please take a moment to list those things that you think would make the course more interesting for you:

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**Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 1, part 1****Odd News**

*On the next page there are some news items and short reports. In which of them can you read about the following things?*

*Fill in all the boxes using the letters A–H. Remember that most letters should be used more than once.*

**Example:** An animal that can't see very well

**A**



- |    |                                                  |                          |
|----|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1  | Two people wanting the same pet                  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2  | Making it easier to walk                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3  | An animal famous for its size                    | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4  | Jumping to get away                              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5  | Risks for people who stay up late                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6  | An animal running to win                         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7  | Animals that were difficult to handle            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8  | Someone taking legal action                      | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9  | Solving a problem for busy people                | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 10 | Many different ways of getting about in a city   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 11 | A person who didn't want his animal back         | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 12 | A family giving away their small pets            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 13 | A scientific test used on an animal              | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 14 | Something that might cause illness in the future | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 15 | Good and bad things about being small            | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 16 | Transport ideas to improve the environment       | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Points

16

**(continued Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 2, part 1)****A A Dog's Tale**

A man who owned a short-sighted racing greyhound couldn't understand why it always came in second in its races. The vet told him that, since the dog couldn't see very well, it needed another dog to follow. The owner had his pet fitted with contact lenses and now it wins all its races.

**B The Fast Track**

Operation Tugboat aims to do away with London's growing problem in the streets and help people who get elbowed out of the way or held up by dawdling shoppers. The Tugboat group's spokeswoman says, "On motorways you can overtake slow drivers so why not make fast lanes on the pavements. You could have one-way, fast pedestrian lanes with regulations like a minimum speed limit of 3 mph, no eating, no map-reading and no cameras."

**C It's a Dog's Life**

Baldy ran away from home and was found by Jenny Brown, who took care of him for several months. Now Baldy's original owner, Mary Clarke, has traced the dog and wants him back. Jenny thinks the dog had been neglected and doesn't think Mrs Clarke is Baldy's real owner either. Mary Clarke is now taking the case to court with her dog's DNA analysis to prove that she is the real owner of Baldy, the Chinese Crested dog.

**D On Your Bike!**

Eco-freak Brady Blade opened his speech on Car Free Day by asking, "Does your town look like Los Angeles on your way to work in the morning?" He advised the audience to "go green" and use electric powered vehicles. Or maybe try two wheels instead of four. According to Mr Blade, pedal-pushing could become the 'in' thing. "There's nothing like a flashy mountain bike to draw attention. Or inlines! Or skates!"

**E Portrait of a Pet**

When the Anderson family take their pet Whitney for a walk they have to be careful to keep her away from cats because she is scared stiff of them. Whitney only weighs 740g and is under 15cm tall and 23cm long. The family have to be careful too because the dog was flattened last week by a thick envelope that came in through the letterbox. But being the world's certified smallest dog has its advantages—she is quite a celebrity, has appeared on talk shows and even has her own agent.

**F Monkeying Around**

Two rampaging marmosets have finally settled down and started a family at Cricket St Thomas Wildlife Park, near Chard. The wildlife park offered a home to the mischievous little monkeys in the spring when the Bristol family that owned them decided they could not cope. Josh and Cruella, who are only seven inches tall, had terrorised their owners when they became aggressive and territorial at the family home.

**G Bluebell in the Wood**

Bluebell took one look at the lorry that her owner was trying to coax her into and decided that this was definitely not for her. She took off at great speed, crossed a busy road, and with one leap she was on the other side of two barbed wire fences and disappeared. "I've never seen a cow take off like that," said Mr Macy, her owner. "We told the police our cow had done a runner and they just laughed." Bluebell was later found by an animal charity in a wood and Mr Macy has decided to let them keep her at their animal sanctuary.

**H Seeing the Light**

Are you a nightowl, watching videos or sitting at the computer or maybe drawn to the nightlights, living it up? Be warned. Your brain is programmed for darkness during the night. People who get a lot of bright light at the wrong time of day could be storing up trouble for themselves. Some experts have found that those people are more likely to have serious health problems later in life.

**(continued Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 1, part 2)**

## Young and Free

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*This story was written some years ago by a girl called Lynn MacGee. Read the two parts of the story and answer the questions after each part. Your answers must be in English.*



Hi,

My name is Lynn and I come from a small village in the north-east of Scotland. I am a twenty-year-old student presently spending a compulsory year of study in Sweden. In the summer I shall return to Great Britain, where I shall then resume my studies at University College London. Within the next two years I hope to graduate and gain my degree in Scandinavian Studies.

I've been living in Sweden for the past six months. As well as studying I work in a restaurant to earn a little extra money. So far my time here has been great fun. I've met lots of new people and my ability to communicate in the Swedish language has improved rapidly.

I'm often asked: "Why did you come to Sweden?" and "Why did you learn Swedish?" I suppose people ask suchlike questions because it is not a very large country and the language is not widely spoken in the world, so Swedish people feel it is strange that foreigners take an interest in their country. Consequently, I can answer these queries rather quickly. Four years ago, before I entered my final year of Secondary School I decided to become an exchange student and take a 'year out'. My reasons for this varied, but basically I was a bit bored and felt I needed a break. So I decided that a year abroad, living with a host family, experiencing a new language and culture would be an invaluable experience.

I chose Sweden as my host country simply because it was a country I knew absolutely nothing about and the prospect of going to a completely strange country excited me.



**(continued Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 2, part 2)**

**1** Where does Lynn come from?

- A A part of Great Britain called Ulster
- B Northern England
- C A university city in Scotland
- D The United Kingdom

**2** What different things is Lynn doing in Sweden at the moment?

\_\_\_\_\_ *and* \_\_\_\_\_

**3** What are her plans for the summer *and* for the next few years?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**4** What does she say about her knowledge of Swedish?

\_\_\_\_\_

**5** Why does Lynn think Swedish people find it a bit strange that she went to Sweden?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**6** What was Lynn's *main* reason for becoming an exchange student in 2005?

\_\_\_\_\_

**(continued Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 3, part 2)**

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I spent the year 2005–2006 in a rather small town in the south of Sweden, where I was placed in the third year at the local “Gymnasiet”. I must say I had one of the toughest but best years of my life. I made some great friends and grew up a lot during my year. One of the most interesting things about my year was realising the contrast between a typical Swedish school and a typical Scottish one and the differences between how teenagers live.

For one thing, in Scotland you start school when you’re younger, at the age of five, but the school leaving age is about the same as in Sweden, I think. Also, in Scotland nearly everyone wears school uniform and addresses their teachers as ‘Mr’ or ‘Miss’. I must say that, in my opinion, in Sweden the teacher tends to be more of a friend to the student and respects the student more.

Teenagers generally don’t differ that much throughout the Western world and the Scottish teenager is no different. However I did detect some small differences between Scottish and Swedish teenagers that were rather prevalent.

One difference is that in Scotland most teenagers are financially quite independent by the age of sixteen—nearly all my friends had part-time jobs. Indeed in the last five years I have experienced the trials and tribulations of being a waitress, shop-assistant, factory-worker, fruit and vegetable packer, strawberry picker as well as a baby-sitter. Earning your own money at the age of fifteen teaches you the value of money as well as giving you the freedom of going out and buying whatever you want without a guilty conscience.

It is quite clear to me that the world is changing rather rapidly and I am living in a time where opportunities are abundant. At the age of twenty I feel that my life hasn’t really begun and I still have many hopes, dreams and ambitions I want to fulfil. This is in comparison to my mother, who by the age of twenty was married with a child, and this was the accepted thing to do. I want to complete my studies, then I want to travel for a few years and do some voluntary work. I think travelling and experiencing different cultures is the most valuable source of education. Ideally everybody should have an opportunity to travel, as I feel world and cultural understanding would play a big part in creating world peace.

It is extremely difficult to try and imagine what the future holds for me. I am interested in many different things. At some stage of my life—hopefully quite soon—I would like to join a theatre school. At home I have been in several theatre productions and I personally don’t think you can experience a better feeling than standing up on stage and giving the audience pleasure.

At the moment I am young, free and single and the thought of marriage has never really occurred to me. In fact, it scares me. I imagine one day in the far future it would be nice to settle down and have children. However, for the time being, I would just like to continue to have a good time with my friends. Laughing, talking and dreaming of what future lies ahead for me.

**(continued Appendix 3. Reading Diagnostics Test; page 4, part 2)**

7 What differences did Lynn find between a typical Swedish school and a typical Scottish one?

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8 How does Lynn describe the economic situation of most Scottish teenagers?

- A They often find it extremely difficult to handle money.
- B They have to apply for many different jobs before they finally get one.
- C They learn quite early to take responsibility for their own expenses.
- D They have to work for at least five years before they get decent wages.

9 What is Lynn's opinion about teenagers making money?  
Why does she think so?

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10 What do we know about Lynn's mother?

- A She settled down quite early.
- B She doesn't accept young marriages.
- C Lynn is her only child.
- D She has always wanted to travel.

11 Lynn wants to complete her studies and spend time with her friends.  
What other ambitions does she have for the next few years?

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## Appendix 4. Listening Diagnostics Test; page 1

### The River Police

Listen to this interview divided into three parts. After each part there will be a pause to give you time to answer some questions. You can, if you wish, use the margin to take notes while you listen. It's an interview with the head of the Thames Division of the London Metropolitan Police, usually referred to as The River Police. You will hear the interview twice, the second time without any pauses.

Notes

Notes

#### Part 1

1a What type of work do the River Police do, outside the London port itself?

They patrol \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (2 pts)

1b The port of London...

- A is a major shipbuilding centre
- B has a lot of heavy machinery
- C is a very attractive tourist sight
- D has more trade than other harbours

2 What are the main types of criminals that the River Police fight? Give two examples.

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_ (2 pts)

3 Why do the Houses of Parliament, MI5 and the Millennium Dome need special protection?

\_\_\_\_\_



Foto: J. English/Retna  
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**(continued Appendix 4. Listening Diagnostics Test; page 2)**

Notes

Notes

**Part 2**

4 Why did the River Police discuss children catching crabs?

Because the crabs were...

- A making the children sick
- B caught illegally in the mud
- C served at eating places
- D disappearing unexpectedly

5a What is the problem with increased traffic on the Thames?

- A People are unaware of the risks
- B There is now greater pollution
- C Several boats are not seaworthy
- D Canoeists often go at high speed

5b What qualifications are needed to use a boat on the Thames?

\_\_\_\_\_

6 Some people who were rescued had...

- A been trying to be funny
- B been diving in shallow water
- C been challenged to race
- D been affected by drinking

7 Swimming across the Thames seems to be an impossible task.  
Why? Give two reasons.

• \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_ (2 pts)

**(continued Appendix 4. Listening Diagnostics Test; page 3)**

Notes Notes

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**Part 3**

8 What do police officers think about jobs in the River Police?

\_\_\_\_\_

9 What is required in order to get a job with the River Police?

New recruits must have...

A been trained as pilots

B onshore experience

C taken lifesaving courses

D naval military training

10a What happened to the Marchioness?

\_\_\_\_\_

10b How many people were on-board the Marchioness?

A 50

B 80

C 131

D 181

11 Why aren't there many accidents on the Thames?

\_\_\_\_\_



**Points**  

|    |
|----|
| 17 |
|----|

## Appendix 5. Writing Diagnostics Test

### Impressions and Experiences

*As time passes by we come into contact with many different people. Sometimes we experience very special moments.*



Photodisc/Milton Images

Choose ONE of the following topics and write either an answer to the letter below or a text about a special moment in time:

**Hi Ohio!**

or

**One Moment In Time**

#### Hi Ohio!

Students at Montgomery High School in Columbus, Ohio, are doing a project about countries in Europe. Read this letter from the Sweden Project Group and write a letter in reply.

Dear friends in Sweden,

We're working on a European project and we've discovered that we don't know very much about your country and the way you live. Please write back and tell us. And of course we are curious about YOU—who are you and where are you from?

Our high school has about 1,000 students and we have a great football team, a big band and lots of after-school activities. What about your school? And what about the Swedish school system? Tell us what it's like!

Some more questions that we have are:

What is it like to live in your country? What are young people interested in?

What do people talk about and what do they think is important?

We think that a lot of people get the wrong impression of our country through TV and other media. So we wonder what you know about life in the US.

Finally, what are your plans for the future?

Hope to hear from you soon!

Debbie, Carlos, Said and Tom



<http://www.pod.gu.se/sal/ep6ax.htm>

#### One Moment In Time

Some moments are more important than others  
—to individuals or groups of people.

Write a text about **one** of those very special moments.

**YOU** decide what to write about.

It could be an important moment or event ...

- in your own life
- or
- in other people's lives

Exempel på provuppgifter, Åp 9 - Engelska  
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