

5th and 6th Grade Pupils' English Contacts Outside the Classroom - A Case
Study

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this case study is to examine the quality and quantity of 5th and 6th grade pupils' contacts with the English language outside the classroom. Results are based on pupils' own perceptions and feelings about their English contacts and learning English outside the classroom. The theory part of this thesis covers such matters as second language acquisition, implicit learning and the role of English language in Finland.

The study was conducted in a small school in Southwest Finland with semi-structured interviews. All 13 students from grades five and six were interviewed in the spring of 2017. The transcribed interviews were analysed and placed under different themes.

The results indicate that the most common contacts with the English language among this group of pupils were Youtube, electronic games and using English with Finnish-speaking friends. Just over half of the pupils claimed they encountered English contacts daily, but encountering was mainly exposure to the language, not speaking. All the interviewed pupils felt they learned English from these outside the classroom contacts.

Keywords: English contacts, implicit learning, second language acquisition, self-evaluation

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the world of today, the English language is used by more people and for more purposes than ever before. In Finland, English has a powerful position – even though it is not an official language of the country, we encounter it on a daily basis through such forums as mass media and popular culture. The role of English is especially important in youth culture and it has even affected the way we communicate with each other. It is the most popular first foreign language learnt in schools, but has also a significant role in the language of business and research. (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003, 3, 5-7) As English is particularly apparent in youth cultures, I find it is interesting to examine which ways and how often the English language is actually encountered by children. Thinking about how the society has changed in recent years, children have the whole world open now to them with their smart phones and other devices, and this has led to more and more children having conversations in English, learning new trend words in English, as well as using English web pages and so on.

As introduced, English is now clearly a language that is a vital part of children's daily lives. And, since this necessarily was not the case when their teachers and parents were younger, adults might not even know of all the ways the children use and encounter English in their spare time. As a future English teacher, the knowledge of pupils' English contacts seems intriguing. I think that there might be a lot of "secret", or unknown English contacts that the pupils use, perhaps on a daily basis that would benefit the teachers and adults if made visible to them, too. Knowing about these contacts would perhaps add understanding, be helpful in planning the lessons and bring the adults a bit closer to the world the children live in.

When I began to outline the study and look for previous studies, I came across several studies concerning children's contacts with English outside the school, some of which will be presented in the theoretical background chapter of this thesis. The limitation with these studies is, with the developing media and

electronic devices, they quickly become out of date. In addition, these studies often focused upon certain contacts only (as in 2.6.3 in the present study) or they did not really consider children's own perceptions as a valuable way of getting information, but instead were more focused on grades. Thus the aim of this study is to examine the quality and frequencies of these contacts with English, all contacts outside the school, and focuses on the way the children themselves see them. It is hoped that the results of this study would show an example of the variety and the quality of children's English contacts. Hopefully the results will be rewarding not only for me, but to others who work with children and the English language also, and perhaps even inspire others to learn more about children's outside the classroom ways of using a language, and maybe even find a way to develop those ways within the classroom.

This study consists of the theoretical background for the subject, presented in the following chapter. After that, we will take a look at the current study and the aims for the thesis will be presented, as will be the methods and research questions in detail. In Chapter 4, the results will be presented with excerpts from interviews in both Finnish and English, and they will also be analysed. The last chapter will provide conclusion for the study as a whole.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Second language acquisition

2.1.1 Defining second language acquisition

The first part of this study's theoretical background concentrates on second language acquisition. According to British Council (2008), the term 'second language acquisition' can have two different meanings. First, it can be used to describe second language learning. Second, and more specifically, it can refer to a theory of the process of acquiring, subconsciously learning a new language. This study focuses mainly on the subconscious learning, while

understanding that the term second language learning (SLA) contains both of these aspects.

Children learn their first language in the early years of life. There are exceptions, for example on social grounds, but most children can communicate without a problem by the time he or she goes to school. During the school years the learning process proceeds and by puberty the use of language seems complete. However, on some levels the first language learning process is lifelong – for instance, our vocabulary keeps developing constantly. (Klein 1986, 3) First language learning can also be considered acquiring. According to Klein (1986, 4) first language acquisition is considered to happen when the learner has been without a language, and then acquires one. Some children might acquire two languages in parallel during childhood, and this is known as being bilingual. Thus, children with only one native tongue are referred to as being monolingual. (Klein 1986,4)

However, most people learn more languages later in life. These additional languages are called the second language, whether they actually may be the third or the fifth (Saville-Troike & Barto 2016, 2). Just as the definition of the actual term ‘second language learning’ hinted, there are two different ways of acquiring second language. Second language learning can be either formal or informal (Saville-Troike & Barto 2016, 2). Informal second language learning would happen, for example, when a Finnish child is taken to another country, and then “picks up” the new language without it being taught to her or him. Language can be learnt informally much less thoroughly too, from TV-series, Internet and games, to mention a few ways. Formal learning occurs, for instance, when a Finnish child has Swedish lessons in school. Combinations of formal and informal learning occur, also. Other ways of making the division is with terms both implicit and explicit learning. Ellis (1994, 79-114) defines implicit learning as something that happens automatically, something that is natural and also simple. Implicit learning happens when the learner is not aware of his or her own learning taking place. Implicit learning can also happen through experiences. Explicit learning is knowingly learning, which is what happens for example, in schools, usually through being taught. (Ellis 1994, 79-114)

2.1.2 Second language acquisition in practice

In the world of today, there are various reasons for learning a second language; it might be for work purposes, for fun, for the new home country or for science, to name a few. According to Kaikkonen (2000, 49), what guides the language learning today is interculturality. The purpose and aim for language learning is no longer only the competence of a certain language, but also understanding different cultures and communicating with people from diverse backgrounds, tolerating different behaviour and understanding it. We aim for authenticity, and see the language as an inevitable part of the culture, which cannot be separated from it. (Kaikkonen 2000, 49-51)

Thinking about second language learning, English often comes in mind, and that is for a good reason. English is widely known as the *lingua franca*, a global language, written, understood and spoken all over the world. In the early 2000's, the estimate was that 1.5 - 2 billion people in the world were able to communicate in English. This would roughly mean that one-fourth, nearly one third, of the world's population speaks English at some level. English is considered to be the language of travel, science, politics and technology. In Finland, it is the most popular second language. A majority of children choose it as their second language in schools, and work-wise, globalization has caused it to become a compulsory tool for adults as well. English is constantly present in Finnish media and even in daily speech. (Pahta 2004, 26-28, 31,36-38)

As the reasons for learning might vary, the actual process of learning a second language has certain stable tendencies. We will take a brief look at these patterns through language learning's sub-categories: phonology and pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatics.

Pronunciation is often the most difficult area for the L2 (second language) learners, which can often be observed by the learner's foreign accent. When L1 and L2 languages are alike, it has been noted that L2 sounds will be more difficult to perceive and produce, than what it would be if the languages were notably different in pronunciation. In addition, infrequent, uncommon sounds

(also known as marked sounds) are learnt more easily than common, frequent sounds (unmarked). (Hummel 2013, 140, 145-146) Most of second language learners will still attain a foreign accent, and studies show that age plays a big part in this. In the studies regarding immigrant populations, it has been recorded that the older the person's age is when arriving to the new country, the stronger the foreign accent will be. (Flege, Yeni-Komshian & Liu 1999, 78) As pronunciation is a vital part of learning a new language, so is vocabulary. There are always a certain number of sounds in a language, but the vocabulary is limitless and ever changing. New words are acquired for instance by reading; the learner is often able to skip unknown words and still make sense of the text. During the process of learning, the learner always understands more words than they are able to produce, themselves. Lexical similarities between L1 and L2 are helpful when learning, and so is combining a new L2 word to the corresponding one in L1. (Hummel 2013, 147-149)

When it comes to grammar, there are three major sub-categories that need to be taken into account: morphology, syntax and question formation. It has been studied that learners from different language backgrounds tend to acquire a set of frequent morphemes in similar order. The same applies to syntax, where five different stages were identified based on which patterns appear in the L2 speaker's speech. In the earliest stage, the speaker tends to follow subject-verb- object (SVO) word order, whereas in the final stage the speaker is capable of placing the verb at the end of the subordinate clause. Similarly, there are also stages in question formation, beginning with single word questions such as "why?" ending up with complex questions with both auxiliary and the main verb. (Hummel 2013, 149-153)

Pragmatics is the patterns we use in our speech and how that usage affects our conversational partners. It seems that these features are acquired late in the language study process; their identification and usage are unusual for those in early second language learning stages. Closely attached to pragmatics is sociolinguistic variation, which means linguistic differences between different ages, social classes and regions. This is seen as a part of language competence, and therefore also taught in schools. (Hummel 2013, 154-155)

2.1.3 Characteristics of second language acquisition

Studying language, researchers have treated first and second language acquisition as something undeniably different. When searching, there are very few studies considering both types of acquisition together. In this chapter we will look at the characteristics of second language acquisition to see what makes it different from first language acquisition.

First, an obvious difference: When learning a second language, the learner already knows at least one other language, their native tongue. Having already learnt vocabulary, grammar and morphology of one language has an effect on learning the another – this is referred to as language transfer (Meisel 2011, 4-5). This means that the learner might “transfer” some elements of the old language to the new one. According to Meisel, this can happen thoroughly or selectively to some parts of the grammatical system. In other words, transfer does not necessarily happen in all parts of the grammatical system, but it can affect any part of the language learning. (Meisel 2011, 4-5) Theoretically, learning languages from the same language families would be beneficial, whereas some languages from different families will not have the benefit of helping the learning process with previously known linguistic factors (Classe 2000, 407). This would mean that for example Finnish learners would benefit from transfer effect when learning Hungarian or Estonian, but not when learning English or Swedish.

Second, as mentioned in the previous chapters, first language is learned at an early age. Most Finnish children start their second language learning process in 3rd grade, aged 9-10 (POPS 2014, 126), but there are exceptions, and it is possible to learn a new language at any point in life. Age seems to have an influence on the level of learning: Tahta, Wood and Loewenthal (1981, 265) demonstrated in their study that when a language is learnt after the ages of 12-13, there will most likely be a foreign accent when producing speech, whereas when acquired earlier, the accent will be slight or there will be no foreign accent at all. It has also been studied that the older the learner is, the more self-aware he or she becomes. Being aware of ones mood, emotions and attitude can

affect the learning. In Zhu & Zhou's study (2012) the results revealed that especially among teenagers common negative factors such as boredom, anxiety, hopelessness and low self-esteem were affecting the learning negatively. (Zhu & Zhou 2012, 33, 40)

One more factor that separates second language acquisition from the first is the input. The term input refers to all the exposure the learners have to the authentic language (British Council, 2009). Krashen (eg. In VanPatten & Williams 2007, 25-27), a pioneer in SLA research created the influential monitor theory in 1970s and 1980s. Monitor theory is divided in five interrelated hypotheses, one of which is called the input hypothesis. This theory states that the input the second language learners receive, should always be a little beyond the current level of the learner's knowledge. This, then, would lead to the learner's access to the parts of the language they need, and then to successful language learning. (VanPatten & Williams 2007, 25-28) Even though in different theories input serves a different role, it is undeniable that in first language acquisition the amount and quality of input is often different from second language acquisition input, since in first language acquisition the child often lives in the world where the new language is constantly present.

Adding to the factors above, VanPatten and Williams (2007, 17-21) have collected the most common observations in the field of SLA (second language acquisition) research. According to them, all theories in the field of SLA try to explain these following observations. The numbered observations in quotation marks below are all discovered by VanPatten & Williams (2007, 17-21), and the following explanations are original in this current study.

"1. Exposure to input is necessary for SLA" Learning will not happen unless learners hear, see, read or is surrounded by the new language.

"2. A good deal of SLA happens incidentally" Most of SLA learning is implicit. Learners might read a book focusing on the message, and incidentally pick up and learn linguistic features.

“3. Learners come to know more than what they have been exposed to in the input.” Learners will learn to know what is ungrammatical and start to understand ambiguity, and that usually does not come from the input.

“4. Learner’s output (speech) often follows predictable paths with predictable stages in the acquisition of a given structure.” People from different language backgrounds tend to learn new things in the same order, for example the ing-form in learning English is usually mastered before the past tense.

“5. Second language learning is variable in its outcome.” Not all learners achieve the same level of knowledge, comprehension and speaking ability, not even under the same circumstances. SLA learners are not very likely to reach native-like ability in the second language.

“6. Second language learning is variable across linguistic subsystems” Language consists of different components, such as the sound system and syntax. Learners vary in use of these components.

“7. There are limits on the effects of frequency on SLA.” Even though it was long believed that the frequency of occurrence of some linguistic feature correlates with whether it is acquired in the early stages or later, it is not so.

“8. There are limits on the effect of a learner’s first language on SLA.” The learner’s first language might have some effect on learning the second language, but the effect of it is not as massive as once was thought.

“9. There are limits on the effects of instruction on SLA.” Giving instructions when learning is a two-way street; they can be beneficial, making learners learn faster, but they can also cause learners to skip developmental sequences.

“10. There are limits on the effects of output (learner production) on language acquisition.” There is evidence for and against the idea of learners producing language having an effect on acquisition. (VanPatten & Williams 2007, 17-21)

As characteristics of second language learning have been studied, there have also been attempts to find out what qualities does a good language learner have. An example of this was made by Lightbown and Spada (as cited in Edmondson 2000, 16), who studied what makes a student a good language learner. They conducted in-depth interviews, questionnaires, tests and also observed people. Even though no certain profile of a good language learner could be made, they found 12 characteristics that good language learners had in common. Not every learner had all of these traits, but all had at least some. The most notable characteristics were good self-image and confidence, practising often, early start to learning, preferably from childhood, and trying “to get a message across even if specific language knowledge is lacking”. (Edmondson 2000, 16)

2.2. Central theories in the field of SLA research

Before the 1990s, second language acquisition's explanation was divided roughly into two periods. The first period used behaviorism to explain both first and second language learning, and the second one can be called a postbehaviorist era. During this era, there were multiple competing theories around, some of which have left a permanent mark on SLA studies, and some which completely faded. One dominant theory was Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory, which was briefly mentioned earlier. (VanPatten & Williams 2007, 17, 25)

Behaviorism is a psychological theory that attempts to explain animal and human behaviour. According to the theory, behaviour is solely explained through the environment, and has nothing to do with mental processes. (VanPatten & Williams 2007, 18) For example, a child would smile and get a positive reaction from the caregiver, and thus repeat the action to get a similar response. If a child's smile would be ignored, this strategy would be abandoned. Actions are purely a result of responding to the environmental stimuli, and intentions, feelings and thoughts are not always involved. In language learning, behaviourist theory would mean imitating structures and sounds heard from other people, getting a positive response (“yes, that's right!”)

and repeating it. There has been only a little actual research considering SLA and behaviourism and no real evidence on behaviourism's effects on language learning has been provided. (VanPatten & Williams 2007, 18-21)

As mentioned, Krashen has been a pioneer in the field of SLA research: he has made several theories considering the matter, including the Monitor Theory (Krashen, 2009, 18). Input theory has already been mentioned, which is one of the five hypotheses included in the monitor theory. The remaining four are The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the Natural Order hypothesis and the Affective filter hypothesis. These explain why something that has been taught has not been learned and why something learned has not been taught at all and how differences between learners and learning contexts may affect the outcome of the second language acquisition. The Acquisition-Learning hypothesis states that there are two separate ways adults can learn language; acquisition and learning. The Monitor hypothesis explains that these two separate ways also function differently: acquisition provides us with fluency whereas learning has a function of being the Monitor. Conscious learning is the Monitor, and it edits the acquired language knowledge during speech production. The Natural Order hypothesis states that the learners follow certain predictable order in their learning of grammatical structures. Finally, according to the Affective Filter hypothesis there are filters that affect the learning process: for example motivation, self-confidence and anxiety all have an impact on the outcome of learning, either positive or negative. (Krashen 2009, 13-31; VanPatten & Williams 2007, 25-28)

Another major theory considering both first and second language acquisition is Noam Chomsky's Universal Grammar (In White 2007, 37; White 2003, 11). Universal Grammar is underlying, built-in competence in language and a skill in our minds and brains to understand the grammar and the structure of the language (Meisel 2011, 15-16). This theory suggests that not all unconscious knowledge comes from our first language, but some of it is due to Universal Grammar (White 2007, 37). Another way to approach this pre-acquired language knowledge is through the concept of transfer. The phenomena known as language transfer (sometimes referred to as linguistic interference) was

already introduced in the “Characteristics of the second language acquisition”, so, similarly as Universal Grammar theory claims some of our previous knowledge is built-in, according to the transfer theory some linguistic and grammatical elements come from our previously learned languages, such as our native language (Meisel 2011, 4-5).

2.3 Implicit learning

It was already introduced how language learning can be divided, for example, in learning and acquiring. Another common division in all types of learning is dividing the way the learning takes place- into implicit and explicit learning. Explicit learning is conscious way of learning, finding patterns and finding out how something works, whereas implicit learning takes place naturally, without conscious operations or efforts to learn (Ellis 1994, 1-2). Implicit learning leaves the learner unaware of the learning, and thus they are rarely able to verbalize what they have learned. This is often presented with the terms “implicit or explicit knowledge”, depending on whether the learner is aware of the knowledge or unable to identify what he or she knows. (Ellis 2009, 3, 11) This study focuses on the implicit learning, and therefore we will look deeper into the matter in the following text.

While the terms implicit and explicit learning can be used with different kinds of learning, they are most commonly associated with language. Implicit and explicit learning processes are a highly studied field in SLA, but there are not many studies exploring what can and what cannot be acquired implicitly (Rebuschat 2013, 4). However, studies show that the majority of the second language words we have acquired, have never been taught to us and that we acquire new vocabulary, for instance, by reading. (Ellis 1994, 219) While most implicit learning studies in the field of SLA focus on vocabulary, there is also evidence on learning determiner usage, word order patterns and word functions implicitly (Rebuschat 2013, 3-6).

However, there are many theories and studies about implicit and explicit learning, and the outcomes vary. Therefore the division of implicit and explicit

does not come without controversy. This might be due to the difficulty of demonstrating implicit learning, but also due to the indefinite nature of the term itself. For Instance, it has been argued that learning without any kind of awareness is impossible, thus it is sometimes thought that even implicit learning involves perception, but not metalinguistic awareness (e.g. analysis). Also, it is often thought that implicit and explicit learning work jointly, as there would not be implicit learning without some kind of explicit knowledge. (Ellis 2009, 7,8) This study does consider both implicit and explicit aspects of learning as real and useful.

2.4 Factors affecting one's perceptions about their abilities

While implicit learning plays a notable part in what this study is based on, learning outside the classroom requires certain traits from the learner too. Since this study focuses on students' own perceptions of their English contacts and their learning, we will consider what plays a great role in forming those perceptions – motivation, confidence and flow experiences in doing what you like.

2.4.1 Motivation

Individual differences in language learning are caused by motivation, aptitude (cognitive abilities that the learner has in the language learning process), learning styles and strategies. Of these four, learning styles and learning strategies are the most classroom-bound and they affect the happiness of the learner. Aptitude affects the ultimate attainment, meaning how close to the native-like state the learner eventually gets. Motivation's role, however, is self-evident: you need at least a bit of it to acquire a language. (VanPatten & Benati 2010, 42-46)

Even though motivation's connection to L2 learning has been studied, it remains a vague term with different meanings. VanPatten & Benati (2010, 43) define motivation as a "willingness to learn or do something". However difficult the concept may be to define, researchers have been true to one thing: L2 and

motivation research has been centred on Gardner and Lambert's division of motivation into two subcategories; integrative and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation refers to the internal need people have to identify with or integrate into another culture or just to learn more about a certain culture, whereas instrumental motivation sees language as a tool to achieve something, such as good grades or a better job. (VanPatten & Benati 2010, 111; Gardner & Lambert 1959, 267) Many researchers, such as Gardner and Lambert (1959, 166-272) have confirmed that motivation affects the achievements in language acquisition.

Worth mentioning is self-determination theory by Deci and Ryan. This theory assumes that humans are actively working towards the goals of fulfilling the basic needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness. This leads to the wellbeing of the self and better performance. (Deci & Ryan 2000, 262-263) In other words, according to the theory, behind the happiness and wellbeing, is the ability to choose which goals are worth reaching, positive feedback and the perception of competence, intrinsic motivation and having social contacts.

2.4.2 The concept of "flow"

One step further from motivation is Csikszentmihalyi's flow theory. Like Deci and Ryan's self-determination theory, it is based on intrinsic motivation. Flow is described to be a state, where the individual is completely focused on what he or she is doing. In flow, one is working at full capacity, feels in control, finds the activity itself rewarding and might even lose awareness of time, place and oneself. The state of flow happens, when the doer has a clear set of goals and his abilities and the challenge are in balance. Flow has been found to be similar in all ages, genders and cultures, and even with different kinds of activity. (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi 2011, 195-196; Csikszentmihalyi, Abduhamdeh & Nakamura 2014, 227-238) Flow experiences can be simple things in life, such as reading an interesting book, playing football, painting or engaging in a conversation - the most important thing is that it is something that one does for the activity's sake. (Csikszentmihalyi, Abduhamdeh & Nakamura 2014, 227-238)

Student engagement is something that is often determined via the concept of flow. It involves concentration, interest and enjoyment of the tasks provided. All these three domains have to be experienced simultaneously for flow to occur, either in classroom or outside it. (Shernoff, Csikszentmihalyi, Schneider & Shernoff 2003, 161) Thus, for example learning a language and reaching a flow experience would require personal interest in the subject, concentration and tasks that challenge, but are still achievable.

Studies show that children engaging in online games experience the state of flow (Voiskounsky, Mitina & Avetisova 2004, 276). Children also experience flow experiences through musical engagement (Custodero 2005, 185). Hobbies like these through which flow occurs have often a lot to do with English, too, (English lyrics, Games in English, online contacts in English and so on), so it would be virtually possible to learn a language through other kinds of flow experiences. Not to mention, that studies suggest that flow also exists in foreign language learning classrooms (e.g. Egbert 2004, 549).

2.4.3 Self-confidence

This study concentrates on student's own perception of his or her abilities in English, leaving out grades and teacher evaluations. Pupils themselves evaluate which English contacts they encounter, how well they understand them, how often these contacts occur and even if the contacts have any impact on their English abilities. While this might not be the most accurate evaluation of pupils' English contacts, it provides an answer to the research questions handling pupil's own experiences. While motivation might affect student's experiences, it is also important to pay attention to what else might be behind this motivation, one of these factors being self-confidence.

Self-confidence is thought to be one of the most important motivators in everything one does during their daily lives. As a concept, it is used to mean one's perceived capabilities of reaching a certain level of performance. The term "self-efficacy" is used similarly, but often meaning situationally specific self-

confidence, such as one's thoughts about their own abilities considering one specific math task. High self-confidence, or self-efficacy, has been connected with higher goals and firmer commitment to them. Adding to that, studies have also revealed a connection between self-confidence and performance, meaning that high self-confidence contributes to motivated behaviour and performance, at least on a moderate level. (Drukman & Bjork 1994, 173-174, 181, 194)

2.5 English in Finland

After the Second World War, English became a unique language known as a world language or a global language. This means that the language in question can be spoken and understood all over the world. (Pahta 2004, 26-27) Not only English is one of the most common languages spoken as a first language, but it is also known as the lingua franca; a language spoken by different language speakers when communicating together. As previously mentioned, it has been estimated that as many as one third of the world's population are able to communicate in English. (Pahta 2004, 27-28) Considering this, it comes as no surprise that also in Finland, English is a highly popular language. In Finland it is used for communication, research, business and meetings, but it is also present in everyday lives of the people who do not use the language for, for example, working purposes. The English language is highly visible in popular culture, cinema and television (where there are subtitles instead of dubbing), games and in music. (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003, 5) It has also been studied that English is used heavily in Finnish advertisements; many of them are in English or partly in English. Most of these advertisements are made for young adults or teenagers, and some are only in English because they were originally made for the international market, and then were partially translated. Word plays and puns sometimes remain in English due to translation difficulties. (Hiltunen 2004, 197-198)

English is also playing a big role in the field of Finnish education. Even though Finland is bilingual, with the two official languages of Finnish and Swedish, English is still the most common foreign language and according to studies,

most Finns find English to be also the most important foreign language. Most Finns begin to learn English at the age of 9, often as a first foreign language. It has been studied, that the Finnish children learning English have a positive approach on learning it and think of English as a useful tool that will be needed in the future. There is also a growing numbers of international schools offering tuition in all subjects in English, and many possibilities to even receive a degree using only English. (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003, 6-7; Birkstedt 2004, 242, 248)

English has also made it to people's everyday language and speech. When people change their language to another one whilst talking, the correct term to describe the phenomenon would be "code switching". Code switching is common within bilingual groups, and the term can also refer to switching from standard to vernacular language within one language. (Pahta & Nurmi 2004, 126) In Finland, code switching from English to Finnish and vice versa has become common, especially among certain social groups such as teenagers and representatives of some professions, such as doctors. Despite the fact that code switching is more common among certain groups, today English words can appear in all kinds of conversations between all kinds of people. Common phrases include short sentences and words such as "maybe", "cool" and "anyway". Some words, including those concerning computers and professions are never translated. It is common, that companies are looking for a "Sales manager", and people are sending an "e-mail" and pressing "enter" and "printer"-buttons instead of using Finnish equivalents. (Pahta & Nurmi 2004, 129-133) English is used in writing too, especially among youths in social media and communication. (Ratia & Suhr 2004, 143-144)

2.5.1 English as the language of the Internet

This study focuses on how and through which forums Finnish children experience the English language (excluding their education) and how some forums, are common among children, and the usage of those forums lead to encountering the English language.

First, the Internet: according to a recent study, 99% of the Finnish 10-12 year-olds use the Internet as a part of their daily lives. Nearly all of them (90%) use it without adult supervision, and amongst their favourite Internet sites there were numerous English ones, such as YouTube, Facebook, several gaming sites and Google, to name a few. Internet is used everywhere, and the amount of usage grows with age. (Happo 2013, 26-27) Most of the content on the Internet is in English; however it is important to keep in mind that the language is not always fluent, for everyone can create and add content. (Summala 2004, 44-47)

2.5.2 English in music

A recent study of Finnish children's media usage states that most children aged 0-8 listen to music weekly, and half of them, daily (Suoninen 2013, 46). These children, however, are rather young, and there is a lack of current studies about Finnish teenagers' music habits. However, it can be presumed that children over the age of 8 listen to as much, if not more music than the younger children. An international study from 2002 suggests that Finnish pupils listen to more music, in which the lyrics are English, than music in Finnish. The study also stated that lyrics of the song were considered important and that an average Finnish pupil listens to music approximately 23 hours each week. (Bonnet 2002, 86-88)

Teenagers today prefer their music from online streaming services and social media, such as Spotify and Youtube (eBrand Suomi 2015). In August 2017, Spotify's Finland top 50 list consisted of 23 English songs, which means nearly half of the top hit songs were in English at the time.

2.5.3 English in social media

Even though English as the language of the Internet was already covered, social media deserves a second look in its own section. Finnish youngsters use social media approximately 15 hours a week, mainly reading and "liking" different kinds of content. The most-used social media services are WhatsApp,

Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and Snapchat and almost all usage happens using smartphones. (ebrand Suomi 2016)

Although the study of using the English language in the social media in Finland is still noticeably non-existent, it is clear that Finnish teenagers stumble upon English words and phrases using these social media services, and some even use English instead of Finnish for being understood by a larger audience. It requires only a small visit on social media sites to see that code switching and the usage of English phrases and Anglicisms appear frequently. It would, however, require further studies to approach this subject more specifically and to say, for example, how widely or how often English words and phrases are used in social media among Finnish teenagers.

2.5.4 English in television and cinema

English is widely present in Finnish people's everyday lives through television and cinema. This is due to the fact that in Finland, in television and in cinema as well, authentic voices with subtitles are used instead of dubbing. (Taavitsainen & Pahta 2003, 5) Excluding Finnish broadcasting company's TV channels (Yleisradio), most other channels provide users with plenty of English TV-shows. According to Finnpanel (2016), in 2016, 19 out of 20 most watched TV-shows in the Sub television channel were in English. Likewise, out of the 20 most watched movies in Finland in 2016, 14 were in English. (Elokuvauutiset 2016)

Considering the factors above, it is also noticeable that subtitled audiovisuals have been proven to be a great tool for language learning, especially for second language learners. Using subtitles can function as help for learning comprehension, in formal and informal settings. (Caimi 2013, 167)

2.5.5 English in gaming

A recent study about childrens' and teenagers' free time in Finland revealed that 29% of the participants in the study play video games daily or even more

often. Boys play video games more frequently than girls. (Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016, 22-23) Computer gaming has been linked to growth in literacy and itself also provides a rich environment for learning foreign languages as many games are in English. Playing games provides useful visual aids, often involves collaboration with other players and provides players with new vocabulary. Thus, a study about video games and school grades confirmed that students who played a lot of video games had better grades in English than those students who did not play as much. Especially role-playing video games had a significant effect on the English grades, and importantly, most active players also their English skills had improved through gaming. (Saarenkunnas 2006, 200, 216-217; Uuskoski 2011, 56)

2.6 Previous studies

Implicit learning and learning outside the classroom has sparked researchers interest for some time now, and gradually, there are some studies concerning this, often concentrating on one method's effect on second language learning. However, most of these studies are tangent to classroom, perhaps unnecessarily so. Studies often concentrate on a specific attitude, learning method or a style, and this raises the question: what kind of an impact attitude has upon the learning process as a whole? Most studies leave children's (or learner's) own feelings and comments aside and do not focus on all possible implicit factors influencing second language learning.

In this chapter, previous studies are introduced which are relevant considering the current study. Suggestions are made which have affected the current work. All of the studies share some aspects with this study and provide samples that have helped to raise the current interest in the subject. There are multiple similar ones and the ones selected are in no way superior to the rest. In addition to these, there are some Finnish theses that focus on language learning outside the classroom, and some of them analyse children's own feelings as well (e.g. Uuskoski 2011; Koivumäki 2012; Pentti 2012).

2.6.1 Assessing Finnish students' skills in English

Gerard Bonnet led a large European research in 2002, focusing on pupils' English skills. Eight different countries were studied, one of them being Finland. It aimed to produce comparable data between European countries, with approximately 1500 students taking part in each country. The results showed that learning objectives do not differ greatly from country to country, but its results did. It was noted that other participating countries came from the Germanic language family, whereas Finnish is part of Finno-Ugric language group, which is considerably different. This might have played a part in the Finnish results, which stated that listening comprehension skills and boys' writing skills need special attention in the future. (Bonnet 2002, 12, 15, 83-84)

While the results above might not be crucially relevant considering the present study, what gave valuable information was that the study also had data about Finnish pupils' media usage and opportunities to make contacts with the English language- the present study's greatest interest. According to Bonnet, music, movies and the Internet were a main source of English for the Finns, while games, travelling and TV were also a resource. Then again parents, friends, siblings, books and papers appeared rarely to be a source for English. (Bonnet 2002, 119-124) All of these opportunities in English will also appear in the present study.

2.6.2 Pupils' perceptions on knowing and learning English

Mari Aro examined Finnish elementary school children's perceptions on English language learning and knowledge as a part of a larger project in 1998-2004. She interviewed a group of children over their elementary school years. In her report, she stated that Finnish fifth-graders thought of learning English through the written language, and knowing English was conceptualized as the ability to speak English. Pupils felt studying English at school was mostly studying to write and read, but when properly learnt, it can be used outside the classroom also. (Aro 2006, 87-88, 98-101)

Even though this study concentrates on explicit learning and school, it appears highly influential since it focuses on children's own feelings and thoughts about the English language. Nevertheless, there appears to be a dearth of studies that take children into account properly.

2.6.3 Impact of subtitles in TV series on second language learning

As mentioned, several studies have been made about the impact of one factor to the second language learning process – one brought up in the previous chapter stating that playing a lot of video games has a positive effect on English grades at school (Saarenkunnas 2006). Another example of similar research is Shabani & Zanussi's study in 2015. They studied 40 Iranian intermediate-level English learners, studying English as a second language. The participants were all male and between 14 and 18 years of age. In the study, these learners were divided into two groups, the other group receiving exposure to English in a form of subtitled American TV series. The results revealed that those who were watching the TV-shows outperformed the other group in terms of vocabulary development. (Shabani & Zanussi 2015, 118, 122-123).

Impact of several factors on learning is something I would consider highly important, since it also guides the teaching in classrooms. Some factors, such as television series and games, are something that children use as a tool for learning on their own, and it should always be taken into consideration that children are often not in the same level in capability even though they would receive the same education due to these tools. Thus studies such as this are of inspiration in finding out more about student's free time habits.

3.THE PRESENT STUDY

This case study focuses on elementary school students' own perceptions and feelings about their English contacts outside the classroom. The entire study has been inspired by the fact that most studies in this field concentrate on classroom learning, and if not that, they compare grades with leisure time

English contacts and usage. However grades hardly ever tell the whole truth – for example some children might find school English in school dull, but find motivation for learning the language from, for instance, movies or games. And obviously, finding out about children’s own feelings can help teachers in planning the teaching too. In the Finland of today, I would say that nearly all pupils have English contacts outside the classroom too – and that is something that the teacher needs to take into account. The pupils are rarely in the same level with each other, even though they would receive the same education. Thus, it appears important to also make time for asking the pupils themselves about their experiences with the language in question.

In the following sections, this chapter explains the research problems, methods, data and ethical issues of this study in detail.

3.1 Aims of the study and research problems

This study aims to examine the quality of children’s English contacts outside the classroom. The other main interest is in how the children themselves feel about the quality of those contacts, and whether they consider them helpful or just for fun. The full research questions used in this study are listed below.

1. What kind of English language contacts pupils have outside the classroom? What platforms and forums are used in these contacts?
2. How frequently are these contacts encountered, and which kind of contacts are the most frequent?
3. Do the pupils themselves feel they benefit from these English contacts? How do they feel they benefit from them?

In this study, *English contacts* mean all those ways the children encounter the English language outside the classroom. With platforms and forums, are meant all the places and ways these contacts are met, such as the Internet or books. As mentioned before, it is good to note that in this study, the children make their own judgements about their language contacts and evaluate the time, benefits,

and their own abilities about language understanding themselves, without other ways of evaluation.

3.2 Methodology

This study is qualitative in nature, which means that it is based on the portrayal of real life experiences. It aims at examining the target in a holistic, thorough manner, resulting in conditional explanations which are limited to a certain place and time. A qualitative study drives towards finding and revealing facts, rather than proving that certain facts are true. Typically a qualitative study uses people as a source for information and qualitative methods in gathering the information and does not use random samples but chooses the sample in a practical way and the situations and cases are always dealt with as unique. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 156-157, 160) Qualitative studies are not all alike; there is indeed variation in its types. This is a case study, which means one case is the sample in the study, providing specific, intensive information. The aim of a case study is most often in describing the specific case in detail. (Saarela-Kinnunen & Eskola 2010, 190) Qualitative methods and the case study as a type were chosen for this study, as they allow the researcher to study one case with intensity. This was thought to be the best way to reach the answers to the research questions. What is problematic about these types of studies is that they do not allow one to make generalizations out of the results, and this is what happens within this study too; the results apply only to this particular school and students. The results may differ from place to place and time to time, due to different fashions and styles. It was found important to learn about English contacts of today's children directly and solely from the students, given the case of this particular class. It was important to deal with everyone's thoughts, one at a time, without questioning anything, to make sure everyone was heard. The main goal is obviously not to make drastic generalizations, but to give teachers, headmasters and parents meaningful food for thought about the English usage of children.

3.3 Subjects and data collection

The data was collected via semi-structured interviews. According to Hirsjärvi & Hurme (2001), one of methods, the semi-structured interview, (i.e. “teemahaastattelu”) has the benefit that the interview is not tied into the order or depth or the amount of the questions asked. What is fundamental to this type of interview is the assumption that an individual’s thoughts and beliefs can be understood and studied through this method. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 47-48) Specifically, this method was chosen as it gives the interviewer the freedom to go deeper into some themes with some individuals who have a great deal to say about a certain matter. It also gives the choice of whether to ask the questions in the same order, but in these interviews the themes were often covered in the same, previously planned order. The interview, instead of a questionnaire, was chosen because it allows repetition, clarification of terms and misunderstandings. In addition to that, the conversational style makes the situation less formal, and thus might create trust between the interviewer and the pupil. (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, 124-125)

The subjects of the study were selected in terms of availability. This is often referred to as a convenience sample, (e.g. Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000, 102), and thus is also means that the results of this study cannot be generalized, and apply only to this particular group. The group became a combined class of fifth and sixth graders from Southwest Finland. The total was 13 pupils, which was all the fifth and the sixth graders of the small school, excluding two pupils who had individualized teaching and were not present in the class at the time of the interviews. The total of 13 was divided so, that six of them were boys, and seven girls. Four of the girls and the boys were in the fifth grade, which means that there were only two boys and three girls in the sixth grade. I was already familiar with the class, since I had been teaching them in the past, so whilst doing the interviews, I had the role of the teacher as well.

Permission for the study was first granted from the headmaster of the country school (who was also the teacher for the pupils I planned to interview) in the spring of 2017. After that, the dates for the interviews were set and permission

slips for the guardians of the pupils were sent. All the guardians granted permissions for the interview. Before the interviews were conducted, the planned interview structure was tested for a university project, and then some changes were made before conducting the actual interviews.

The interviews were all made on the same day in the spring of 2017, in a small classroom that was usually used by the special education pupils. First, I talked with the whole group, introducing my subject and letting them know that they are free to say anything they wish, that confidentiality would be maintained throughout, and nothing said can be associated with them nor will it affect their grades. I also made sure everyone knew this was not mandatory, but still everyone wanted to take part. Interviews were made one by one and were recorded with Macbook Pro's Quicktime Player, once each pupil had agreed to the recording taking place. The structure of the interviews, in which the themes and the central questions can be found, is placed as an appendix at the end of this study. All interviews lasted approximately 5 minutes excluding the introduction with each child. The shortness of the interviews is explained by some children's short answers and general shyness in a new situation, however; luckily most children were more talkative and open. At the end of the day, all participants were thanked for their contribution, and the headmaster was given more detail, and my contact details, if they were to be needed in the future regarding this study.

3.4. Analysis

It is always the researcher's choice to choose the appropriate way of analysing for a certain data and study. This analysis aims for understanding the data, thus discovering common themes and types, transcription and re-organizing of the data was conducted. (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 2007, 216-219) Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2001, 138) name two ways to dismantle the data: either with transcribing the text, or making conclusions directly from the recorded material. According to them, transcribing is more common and easier, when there are more than a couple of interviewees. Common themes were found in the beginning, creating an inevitable basis for analysing – making comparison and

re-arranging the data possible. Coding in order to figure out different themes and frequencies was used for convenience, even though it creates the danger of losing the totality of meaning. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2001, 142, 147) Since the research questions were clear and material fairly small, these issues were not present.

Before beginning the data analysis, all interviews were transcribed in detail. The final material totalled 26 pages of transcribed text. After transcribing and becoming familiar with it, the analysis itself was begun; first, the text was coded using colours and by trying to find common themes, e.g. types of English contacts that were shared among the children. Themes were found and were pieced together appropriately, taking causality into consideration. Second, was the organisation of the transcriptions so that information went under the research questions. Finally, as this phase was completed, the analysis of the pieces of information under each research question, describing my data and creating an overall picture. Necessary figures were created in order to alleviate the interpretation.

As the interviews were conducted in an informal manner in Finnish, it is worth mentioning that the interviews were likewise transcribed in Finnish. Representing the results, the extracts will be given in English and Finnish to provide the truest picture possible. Translations, as the actual Finnish transcriptions, are informal in nature, and are not literal, but rather made with the aim of making the sentences and thoughts behind them understood.

3.5 Ethical issues

When interviewing children, one should always be very aware of the ethicality of the study. Before interviewing, I was in contact with their parents and guardians and the headmaster, so everyone involved knew about the aims and the subjects of the study. In addition to this I made sure all the children knew that they were free to present their opinions and thoughts anonymously, and that they all had the right to say “no” to the whole interview process or the recording.

When analysing the data, the names of the students were replaced with codes to make sure their anonymity would be protected. Also, I am aware of my own professional confidentiality and therefore keeping all the details about identities to myself and protecting them. As this is the case, I also assure that all the quotes and data used in this study are the real results of the study, without any altering.

It is also worth mentioning, that during the interviews the children shared that some of their favourite social media applications through which they encountered English language. Since the children were in elementary school, fifth and sixth graders, not all of them had turned 13 yet, which is the age limit for several applications such as Snapchat and Instagram (ConnectSafely 2016; Instagram 2017), which means that not all of them are allowed to use them, but still seemed to be users. Also, some games and Internet pages that were mentioned in the interviews have higher age limits than 13, and nevertheless the pupils were using and playing them alone or with a peer.

4. THE RESULTS

The aim of this study was to research pupils' English contacts outside the classroom. This chapter gives answers to my research questions, so that section 4.1. clarifies what kind of English contacts the pupils in question had, section 4.2. concentrates on the frequency of these contacts and finally, chapter 4.3. gives an answer to the question whether or not the pupils found those contacts beneficial, and if so, how. The final section of the chapter, 4.4., analyses the results thoroughly.

4.1 Types of English contacts

4.1.1. Regular English contacts

The first research question aimed for finding all types of English contacts the pupils in question had, and also to find out which platforms are used in order to

encounter these contacts. When planning for the structure of the interviews, I made a harsh division between contacts one encounters by themselves and contacts that involve some sort of socializing. I had categorized the contacts I thought would be the most common beforehand. However, analysing my results I had to make some changes to the categories, because even though I perceived Youtube as a web page, the interviewees seemed to think it is not one, using it as a separate application. After interviews had taken place, I also made two subgroups under games; electronic and board games, according to the answers I received. Division was also made for watching television, for those who watched English-speaking shows with subtitles, and for those who watched without the subtitles. Below is a figure to clarify the final classification, with all the regular English contacts the pupils mentioned during interviews.

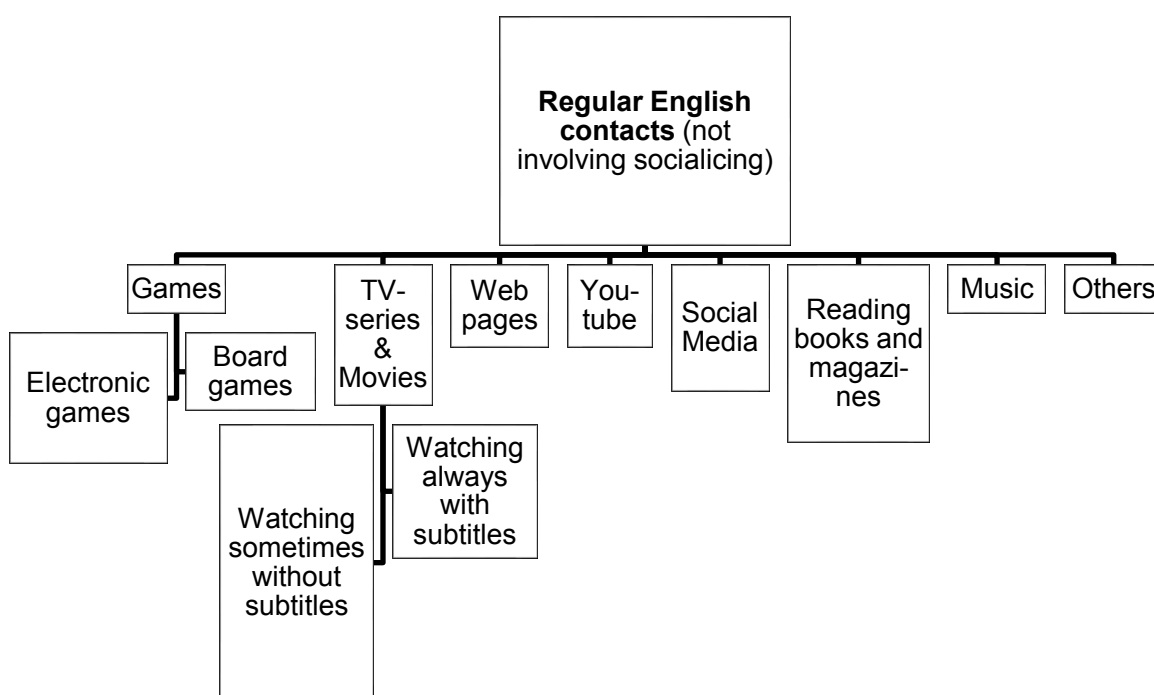


Figure 1. The Final division of Contacts not Involving Socializing in the Current Study

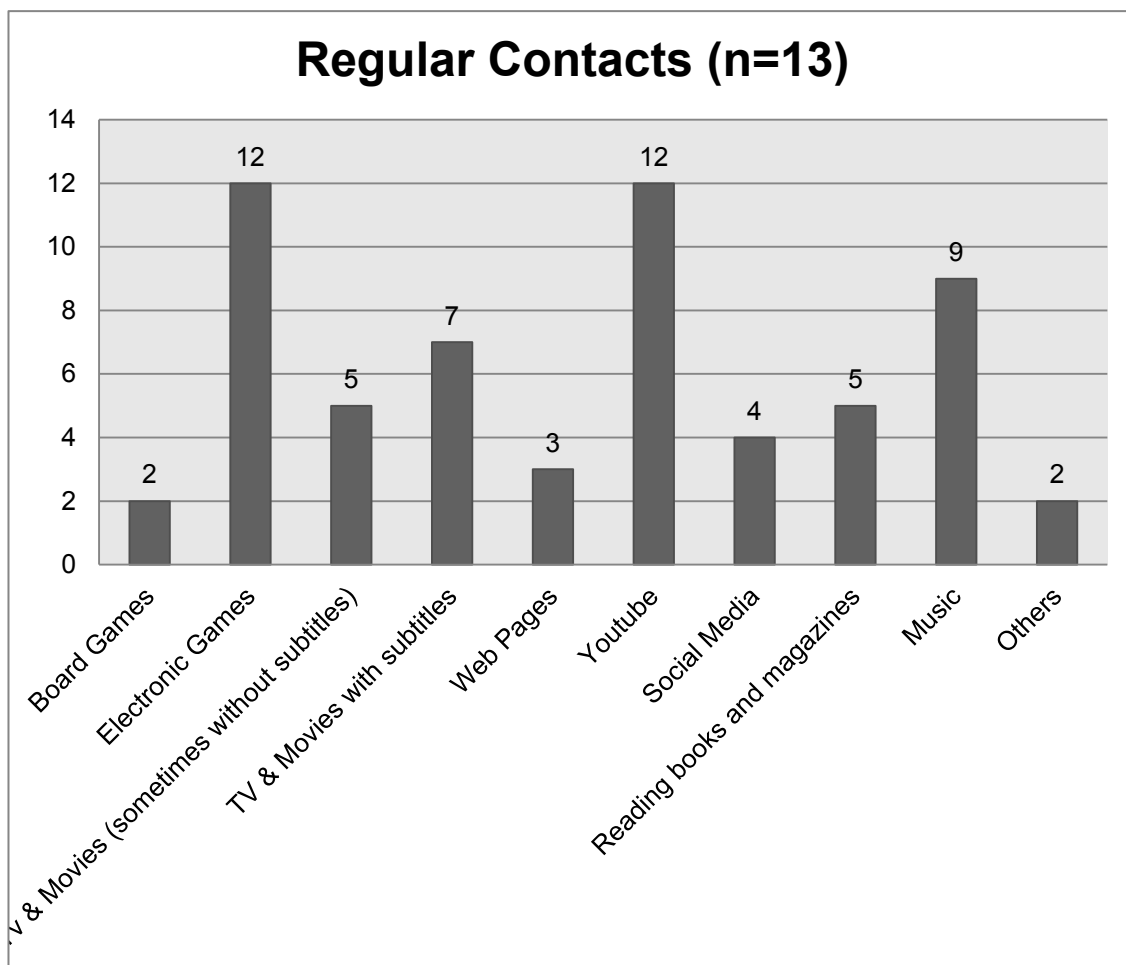


Figure 2. Amount of Pupils Using Each Regular Contact (n=13)

Most common of these contacts not involving any kind of social interaction (I named them “regular contacts” for the purposes of this study) were electronic games and Youtube. Out of the 13 interviewed pupils, there were 12 mentions for encountering each of these two contacts. Electronic games were played with iPads and other tablet computers, mobile phones, computers and video game consoles such as Xbox and Playstation. Out of these, tablet computers and mobile phones were used by most of the children (n=9). For tablet computers and phones, Clash Royale was the most common game (n=3). In game console and computer use, there was more variation, and games such as Halo, Counter Strike, Grand Theft Auto, Minecraft and Battlefield were mentioned. It is worth noticing that some these games were played even though on behalf of their age the pupils should not be allowed to do so. Board games, however, weren’t as

popular as electronic games. Only two of the interviewees mentioned they have played board games in English. The only game mentioned was Lexico, a dictionary game.

TV and movies were also a common way to encounter English. 12 of 13 interviewees mentioned they have English contacts through TV and movie watching. Most of these pupils said they watch English movies and TV-shows always with Finnish subtitles (n=7), but there were also some who watched English shows and movies sometimes without subtitles, too (n=5). Movies such as Pirates of the Caribbean- series and Harry Potter-films were mentioned, and from TV-shows, The Hundred, Flash, Under the Dome and Prison Break.

Three pupils out of 13 mentioned they used English web pages. All these three pupils had different web pages and different ways of using the Internet in English; one mentioned she uses a site where one can do “tests”, to test for example which animal you resemble the most, one used Ebay and other sites for online shopping and one used Google in English and also had a streaming service site called Twitch in regular use. As mentioned before, children did not see Youtube as an Internet page; it was an application for them, only one mentioned Youtube when talking about Internet and web pages. Youtube was used by 12 out of 13 pupils, and it was used often and for seeing a lot of different kinds of videos; for watching English-speaking Youtubers, gaming videos, challenge videos, car videos, motorbike videos, drawing videos and graffiti-making videos. Out of these types of videos, car videos were the most common type amongst these pupils (n=4). One even mentioned that he edits videos with his gaming friends (with whom he communicates in English) for Youtube purposes, but is yet to publish any of them.

Social media became a category itself, even though while making the interview structure beforehand, social media platforms was used as an example, with an idea of the age limits that would prevent most of them from using social media. Four of the pupils mentioned they used social media such as Instagram and Snapchat.

“Niinku Snapchatis mä pistän kaikille et GM tai Hello tai jotai.”

“Well in Snapchat I send GM or Hello or something to everyone” –
Boy 3, 5th grade.

Social media was mainly used for short messages and sayings such as GM (Good morning), jokes, captions of the pictures and reading other people’s profiles and picture captions.

Some of the pupils were also reading books or magazines in English (n=5). Some were regularly reading books online, whereas most of these pupils said they only rarely read anything, besides schoolbooks, in English. For example, one mentioned she sometimes read news in English and one said he has only read English books and magazines abroad, where he was bored and nothing else was available.

English music, however, was listened by 9 pupils. Artists and bands such as Clean Bandit, Ed Sheeran, Marcus and Martinus, Post Malone, Italo Brothers, Alan Walker and Martin Garrix came up in the interviews, but some also said they prefer Spotify’s top lists and weren’t sure about the names of the songs and artists.

The last category regarding English contacts without social interactions was “Others”. There were only two answers that didn’t fit in the above categories, and neither did they fit in social contacts either. One was a mention from a girl from fifth grade, who mentioned she often sees advertisements in the streets and magazines that are completely or partially in English. The other was a boy from sixth grade who used English as tool for learning a foreign language and reaching his future goals:

Boy 2, 6th grade: *“No ku mä oon alkanu kirjottaa sellasia niinku tavallaan niinku espanjan englantia, suomisanoja silleen et mä osaisin espanjaa ku mä meen yläasteelle ni mä otan espanjan lisäkieleks ni mä sit oppisin vähänniinku englantia ja espanjaa.”*

Interviewer: *“Okei. Eli sä oot käyttäny englantia siinä apuna, sanoja hakiessa ja kääntäessä?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“Mm.”*

Interviewer: *“ Joo. Mut kuin usein sä sit käytät tätä?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“No yleensä viikonloppusin mä jatkan sitä mun kirjaa tai semmosta vihkoo mihin mä kirjotan noita sanoja. “*

Interviewer: *“Okei. Mistä sä haet niitä sanoja?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“No ihan (Google) kääntäjästä ja muuten vaan kattelen.”*

Boy 2, 6th grade: *“ Well I have started to write like Spanish English, Finnish words so that I could learn Spanish. When I’m going to the seventh grade I’m gonna take Spanish as an extra language, so I would learn like English and Spanish”*

Interviewer: *“Okay. So you have used English as help, when searching for words and when translating?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“Mm.”*

Interviewer: *“ Yes. But how often do you use this (technique)?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“Well I usually continue writing the book, or a notebook, where I write those words, on weekends. “*

Interviewer: *“Okay. Where do you get the words from?”*

Boy, 6th grade: *“Well from Google Translate and I just look for them.”*

4.1.2. English contacts involving socializing

The second part of pupils’ English contacts involved social encounters. This division was helpful, as the results and answers from social contacts varied more than in regular contacts, and in general the pupils were more talkative when talking about social contacts. Before going to the actual results and frequencies, I want to make clear that when I made the division between regular and social contacts, I saw social contacts as encountering English language, talking, listening and understanding, not only as using English in contact with another person, and thus all the categories are named with “using English”.

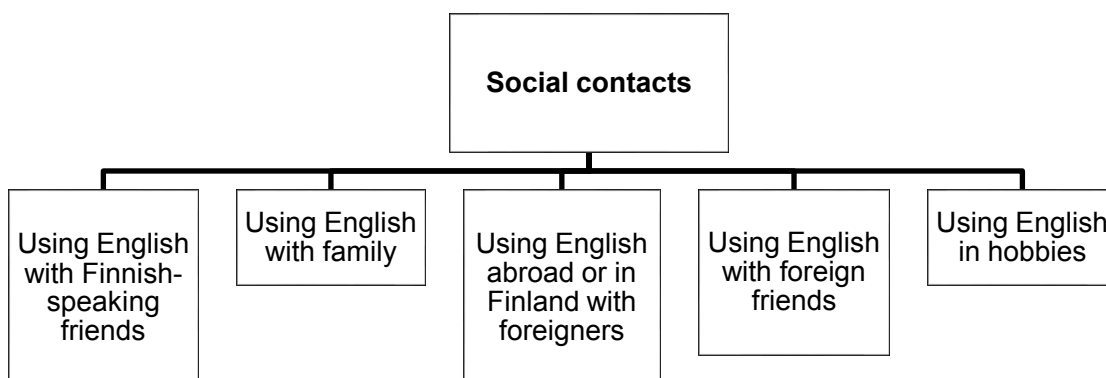


Figure 3. The Final Division of Social Contacts in the Current Study

Analysing the answers, social contacts were divided into five different categories; using English with Finnish-speaking friends, using English with family, using English abroad or in Finland with foreigners, using English with foreign friends and using English in hobbies. Out of these categories, using English with Finnish-speaking friends was notably the most common, in fact it was the only category considering all contacts, that everyone admitted to having (n=13).

“No esimerkiksi jos on saanu vaikka uuden puhelimen niin joskus sanotaan vaikka nice tai jotain sellasta.”

“Well for example if someone’s got a new phone you say “nice” or something like that” –Girl 3, 5th grade

“Me ollaan mun serkun kanssa joskus puhuttu niinku melkein koko päivä vaikka harjoteltu sillee vaan.”

“Me and my cousin we have sometimes spoken (English) for almost the whole day, just practising” –Girl 4, 5th grade

“Yleensä no niinku sanotaan aika usein hei tai päivää englanniks, se tulee niinku automaattisesti meillä.”

“Usually we say hey or good day in English, it comes naturally for us” – Girl 1, 6th grade

“No esim jos tota joku toinen kaveri ketä ei osaa niinku sitä englantii yhtään ni se ei saa tietää siit ni puhun sillon, mut emmä muute.”

“Well for example if one friend who doesn’t know English at all and I don’t want them to understand, that’s when I speak it but not otherwise” -Boy 2, 5th grade

It became very clear that English words and especially greetings were used in this class among the pupils, since there were many mentions of usage of greetings, phrases (such as “you know”) in the classroom itself. English was also used with friends outside classroom, but also as a tool to close certain people out.

In the context of family, English was often used solely for learning purposes. Out of all pupils, 5 mentioned they had sometimes used English with their family. Cousins, siblings and parents were all mentioned, but most commonly English was used with mothers (n=3) to practise. None of the children were from English-speaking homes.

“Kotona mun isosiskolla. Me puhutaan kokonaan englanniks.”

“At my big sister’s house. We do all the speaking in English” – Boy 3, 5th grade

“No yleensä me äidin kaa joskus harjotellaan englantia puhumaan. Puhutaan joka päivä jotain sanoja.”

“Well usually we practise English with my mom. Some words every day” -Girl 3, 5th grade

“Mun eno muutti Thaimaaseen niin sit sen tyttöystävän kanssa oon puhunu englantia sitten.”

“My uncle moved to Thailand and so I’ve spoken English with his girlfriend”- Girl 1, 6th grade

Using English abroad or in Finland with foreigners was something that almost half of the pupils admitted to doing (n=6). English was mainly used on a holiday, in everyday actions such as buying something or ordering food, or with foreigners in Finland, usually helping them. Foreign friends were excluded from this category, as this appears to be in a category of its own.

“Me käytiin Espanjassa ja siel mä tilasin kaikkee, no esim me oltiin tuol sellasella uimapaikalla ja sit siel oli semmonen baari, haettiin meille toastit.”

“We went to Spain and I ordered several things there. For example we were at a swimming place and there was a bar, and we got toasts for ourselves” – Boy 3, 5th grade

“Ku suomeenki on tullu paljon noita englanninkielisiä ni niinko lomalla täällä ni kyl mä niitten kaa joskus oon, kun ne on kysyny jotain ni mä oon auttanu.”

“Now that a lot of English-speaking people have come here, like for a holiday, I’ve sometimes been with them and when they’ve asked something, I’ve helped”, – Boy 2, 6th grade

“Ku jos tyyliin tilataan ruokaa ja kysytään jotaki neuvoja ni sillon mä oon puhunu englantia. Mä oon melkeen meiän perheessä paras puhuu englantia.”

“If we order food or are asking for some advice then I’ve spoken English. I’m probably the best in speaking English in my family” – Boy 2, 6th grade

Only 3 of the pupils had used English with their foreign friends and only one had sometimes used English in hobbies. Foreign friends were first met through

family or online games. The contact with them was maintained through text messages, and online services allowing video and voice such as Skype and TeamSpeak.

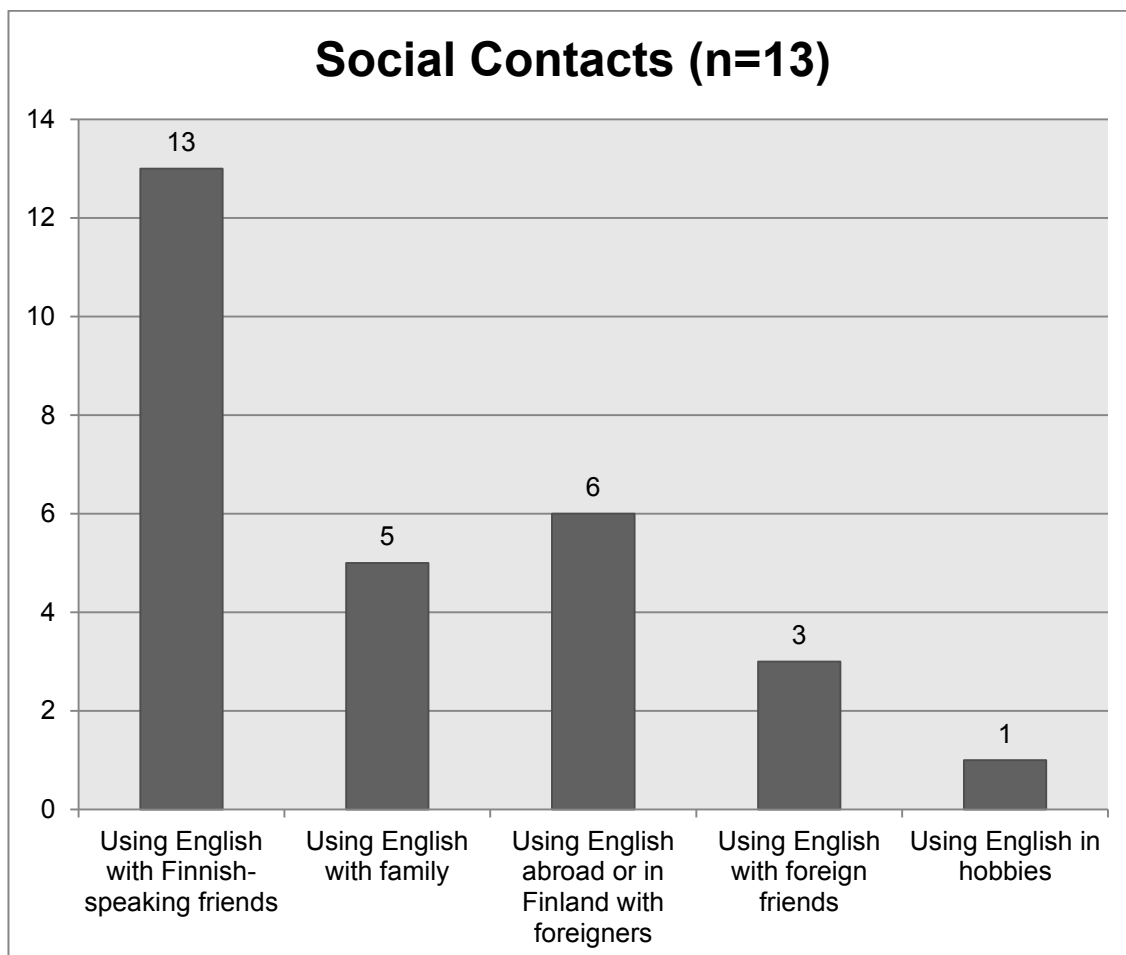


Figure 4. Amount of Pupils Using Each Social Contact (n=13)

4.2. Frequency of the English contacts

The second research question aimed to examine the general frequency of these contacts and also naming the types of contacts that were the most frequent. The question regarding frequencies was divided so that all pupils were asked about how often they feel as though they see English within these English contacts and also how often they feel like they themselves actually use English within these contacts, since these results for these two might differ. 7 out of 13 pupils said they encountered these contacts daily, whereas 4 felt as

though they did encounter these on a weekly basis and 2 said this happens a couple of times a week. The results were quite different when talking about actually using English outside the classroom: the majority, 7 pupils, said they rarely used English themselves, even though they did have these contacts. Most of these 7 pupils failed to remember the last time they had actually been using English, not just reading or encountering it. Even though the majority did not use English often, 4 admitted to using it weekly, 1 a couple of times a week and 1 even daily.

The most commonly used English contacts were clearly divided into 3 even main categories within these 13 pupils. Youtube and friends were both mentioned by 3 pupils as the one English contacts they are in touch with the most often, as games were mentioned by 4 pupils to be the most common for them. The rest of the pupils (n=3) gave varied answers: one felt like it is music, one said advertisements and papers and one felt like all English contacts were equally frequently used by him.

4.3. Benefits of the English contacts according to the pupils

The last research question was about finding out if the pupils feel they have learned English from these English contacts they use, and if so, what they have learned. Perhaps surprisingly, all pupils felt as though they had learned something from outside-the-classroom English contacts (n=13). Some felt like they had learned a lot, whereas others said they had learned something, but what was common for every pupil was that they had felt like they had been learning English. However, what was learned, sparked different kinds of answers too:

“Jotain niinku lisäsanoja. Jos mä en osaa jotain sanaa niin sit mä kysyn sen äitiltä ja se suomentaa sen sillee.”

“Like, extra words. If I don’t know a word, I’ll ask mom and she’ll translate it.” –Girl 1, 5th grade

“Noo aika monta sanaa ja sillee lauseitakin ja. Siel matkoilla esimerkiks opein aika paljon englantia.”

“Well, a lot of words and sentences too. When I was traveling I learned quite a lot of English, for example” – Boy 3, 5th grade.

“Mun mielestä enemmän mä opin vapaa-ajalla ku koulussa.”

“I think I learn more on my spare time than I do in school” – Boy 1, 6th grade

Most pupils felt they had learned words or specific vocabulary for certain situations (n=11). Gaming vocabulary, vocabulary for a certain TV series and useful words for traveling were learned. Even though most pupils perceived they mostly learned vocabulary from their free time activities, there were also mentions of learning whole sentences and sentence structures and pronunciation.

4.4. Analysing the results

In the following section there will be a deeper look from various angles into the presented above. Before delving specifically into each research question, some analysis is presented about the answers and the study in general.

First, this study was completely based on student evaluations of themselves. The results would have probably been at least studied from different angle, if the grades and teacher evaluations had been involved. However, leaving that out was a conscious decision. If the children feel good about what they are doing on their spare time, why bring grades to that? While self-evaluation might not give us the truest picture of the pupil's level of English, it gives us the feeling of self-confidence. Self-confidence affects motivation highly, and has at least a moderate effect on having higher goals, commitment and performance (Drukman & Bjork 1994, 181, 194). After all, the aim of this study was to find out about pupils' English contacts outside the classroom and their perceptions about them, not to find out about their performance and abilities in the language itself. Adding to that, according to previously introduced Aro's study in 2006 (87-

88,98-101), pupils do feel that studying English at school is mostly writing and reading, and when properly learned, the language can be used outside the classroom too, and this is exactly what these pupils are doing, using it on their spare time.

Even though it was not a research question itself, the pupils were asked whether they felt like they understood everything or not, when they mentioned for example that they sometimes watched TV-series without subtitles. Each time, every pupil answered “yes”. This also has to do with the self-confidence – even though it is not known how well they actually understood everything they encountered in English, they felt confident and able. Future educators would find this a great tool for also the language learning that happens in the classroom: confidence and motivation generated from free time activities.

Secondly, even though the results could have been viewed from both the sex and age perspectives, this was not the criteria chosen. This study is a case study, and the case here consists of fairly few people, thus it was unimportant to make this division, when, for example there were only two boys from sixth grade. Also, in the world of today, where gender neutrality is becoming a trend, it was important to look at these children as pupils, as equals, not just as girls and boys. Age, however, should be considered important in this study, at least in terms of age limits. The children were playing games, watching TV-shows and using apps that, considering their age, they should not use. Nevertheless, the children were using these contacts alone, or with peers. These contacts, like certain games and TV-shows, are in fashion and they talk about them in school, too. That might explain why age limited contacts were so common in this group.

4.4.1. Types of English contacts

According to Bonnet’s study (2002, 12, 15, 83-84, 119-124) the greatest sources of English for Finnish children are games, music, movies and the Internet. Other sources include games, travelling and television, while parents, friends and siblings, books and papers are a source of English only rarely. These results have some similarities with this study’s results; games and

movies are a highly used source, whereas books and papers are only a rare source. Likewise, traveling provides some source of English for Finnish children in both studies. However, there are great differences too; for example in this study, games are a great and common source of English, as are friends. In this study, the Internet is not seen as commonly used source as in Bonnet's study. Even though the current study is a case study, and Bonnet had considerably more participants, these might be also explained with the fact that Bonnet's study is now fairly old, and things such as fashions and technology change swiftly. While conducting the interviews, it was evident that today's children do not even see the Internet the same way as I do. I considered Youtube to be mainly a web page, whereas they saw it as an application to use with tablet computers and smartphones. Why these pupils did not feel like they used Internet as a source of English, perhaps due to this – Internet is used unknowingly, now that it is accessible all the time, everywhere you go. Google, WhatsApp and Youtube are used on the go, through applications rather than with computers and laptops. Moreover, social media is a relatively new concept. In 2002, when Bonnet's study was conducted, Facebook was not even up on the Internet yet (Phillips 2007), so from that year things have changed quite a lot. As with social media and the Internet, language has changed too. Today, everyone, sometimes unnoticed, uses English in Finland and words such as "anyway" and "e-mail" are understandable in the middle of Finnish words. English is common among teenagers and is used in writing too, for example in social media. (Pahta & Nurmi 2004, 129-133; Ratia & Suhr 2004, 143-144) This explains why all the pupils in this study named speaking English with Finnish-speaking friends as one of their English contacts, and also may explain why, within this class, English words and greetings were commonly used.

As previously treated, the pupils did not think of Youtube as a web page. This was considered in the analysis of the data, but it is also useful to think that some other misunderstandings could occur in the analysis. As an adult I inevitably experience some of these contacts differently as the children do. Even though I cannot really compare my own perceptions with these pupils', this is a possibility to bear in mind, when considering this study and its results.

It is important to consider the possibility of different kinds of results, were this study was conducted in a larger city. The pupils were all from a small country school in a small city, and this affects the results, especially considering the social contacts. The children interviewed were all Finnish, and in the entire school, there were only a few pupils who were not speaking Finnish as their native tongue. As refugees and immigrant families tend to move to cities that are the centre of growth, small cities like this one end up still having fairly homogeneous classrooms. This could explain why only one claimed they used English in their hobbies – in small cities there is not necessarily a need for that.

4.4.2. The frequencies of English contacts

7 out of 13 pupils said that they encountered English language on a daily basis. As all the interviewees are living in Finland, in a Finnish speaking family and community, this is significant. However, today English has become a part of our everyday lives, which raises the question whether the pupils actually notice English every time they come across it. Thinking that English is around us, everywhere, in TV, in advertisements, in magazines, in news, on the Internet and so on, it's conceivable, that not every person even notices English every time they come across it. Whether or not the children would actually encounter English more often than what they estimated cannot unfortunately be examined with current data, but it is something to consider.

In Bonnet's study, in 2000 (12, 15, 83-84, 119-124) the greatest sources of English were the Internet, games, music and movies, as mentioned in the above section. After 2000, however, new platforms such as social media have appeared. Digitalization has caused media to become part of our everyday lives, and games, TV shows and Internet are all always within reach, in your pocket. (Merikivi, Myllyniemi & Salasuo 2016, 5) Also, social media is often used at schools too, and for schoolwork outside the classroom. Facebook and similar forums allow pupils to keep contact with each other and exchange ideas about assignments, thus the difference between using social media forums (and encountering English) for school purposes and for fun is only a fine line (O'Keeffe & Clarke-Pearson 2011, 801). These facts might explain why one

does not always register English language – mobile phones are used constantly, sometimes only to kill time.

Youtube, friends and games were named to be the most frequent ways of encountering English. They differ slightly from Bonnet's results (2000), but are still in line with them. Friends were perhaps the most surprising frequent contact – and one way to explain this may be through the prevalent culture in this particular classroom. There were many mentions about how saying something in English as a thing they do together in this classroom, for example, that it is common to greet each other in English. There are different trends within different cities, schools and even classrooms, and thus I would suggest that the most frequent contacts could vary within different groups of pupils. This, again, would be an interesting subject for another study.

4.4.3. Learning from English contacts

The final research question revealed that all the interviewed pupils felt as though they had learned English from outside their classroom English contacts. As emphasized, this was only measured by the pupils' own perceptions, and, for example, no grades or teacher evaluations were used. This means, that we cannot be sure, whether the pupils have actually learned from their contacts, or if this was somehow measured. However, there was a reason why the pupils about their own perceptions of learning: the sense of learning. If the children themselves feel competent and able, isn't that a great source of motivation? According to Desi & Ryan's theory that was introduced in the theoretical background part of this thesis, all humans work towards feeling competent, which, with other traits, leads to wellbeing and better performance (Desi & Ryan 2000, 262-263). The pupils' sense of learning seems to lead to their feeling competent. Once they feel as though they are learning outside the school, this might motivate to learn in the classroom too, since they have realized that the things they study might actually be useful for them in real life.

According to this study, the pupils' felt they learned mostly vocabulary from their outside the classroom contacts, but some also mentioned they felt they learned

pronunciation and sentence structures. Observing previous studies, it seems as though the pupils did well in determining what they had learned, or at least their answers seem realistic. What has been studied before is that what is the most often learned implicitly, is new vocabulary, but also word order patterns, determiner usage and word functions (Ellis 1994, 219; Rebuschat 2013, 3-6). There is also evidence for learning pronunciation implicitly: In Papachristou's study, implicit and explicit methods of pronunciation teaching were used, and implicit learning groups succeeded better than explicit in producing native-like vowels (Papachristou 2011, 372, 380).

5. CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed at discovering the quality and quantity of fifth and sixth grade pupils' English contacts outside the classroom, along with finding out the pupils' own perceptions about the usefulness of those contacts. The results gave an answer to all three research questions: for instance, that the most common types of contacts were Youtube, electronic games and speaking English with Finnish friends and that all interviewees felt they benefitted from having these outside the classroom English contacts. These questions were answered satisfactorily through these interviews and they also provided new information. However, it is important to remember, this is a case study, and therefore the answers are not to be universalized nor can they be generalized.

As for the assessment of this study, reliability and validity need to be taken into consideration. According to Hirsjärvi, Remes & Rajavaara (2007, 227), in qualitative studies the terms "reliability" and "validity" are sometimes unclear, since qualitative studies are considered unique and one-of-a-kind, however reliability and validity should be dealt with somehow. Terms aside, this study has described in detail the methods of this study, hence the reconstruction of this study would be achievable. Using multiple researching methods is referred to as "triangulation" (Hirsjärvi, Remes & Rajavaara 2007, 228), and in this study triangulation is fulfilled with the usage of transcription, coding and considering the quantities, adding validity to this study. Assessing the overall study and

project, the kind of answers to research questions were complete. As for weaknesses of this study, conducting the study with more participants to be interviewed, could provide more clear results, containing more impact.

After conducting the interviews and analysing the results there were unexpected revelations – moral problems. I am aware that I have to keep my professional confidentiality, as I have promised the children, but then again, I found out that many of them were playing games and using social media platforms they should not play and use, due to their age and age limits provided. As a future teacher it seemed important to do something about this, and respecting the confidentiality, this was shared with the class teacher that among these children it is very common to disrespect age limits. It also became evident how important age limits are and perhaps all the pupils are not aware of them, or not aware why these guidelines should be respected. This knowledge and understanding is of importance in teaching.

Since this study has been completed, there are a few extensive research ideas that would be of value. It would be highly interesting to broaden this study to see how the frequencies and contacts would vary in different cities and in different groups of pupils, perhaps even within different age groups. It would also be interesting to conduct a similar study, in which grades would have been analysed as well. The current study leaves room for exploration of whether the grades would correlate with the amount and frequencies of outside the school English contacts or not. It would be an intriguing subject to study in this field in general: to find out in a bigger picture, whether the relatively new English contacts have something to do with Finns' English skills. Are Finnish children better in English now that English is part of their everyday lives through social media and the other resources made evident in this study? Are their skills more advanced than they were with children twenty years ago? Or is it the school, which plays the largest part in language learning? These could provide useful research questions for future studies.

This study gave an idea about what pupils' outside the classroom English contacts might be. As a future English teacher, I find this knowledge to be

important for the teachers: outside the classroom, there is a whole wide world of English for the children, that the teacher might not even know of, and this knowledge could impact their teaching in important ways. Knowing the students' English contacts might help with forming a bigger picture about their knowledge, and this in turn could provide help with planning the lessons, using more diverse teaching methods and individualising the teaching. The pupils could ideally bring their extra knowledge to the classroom, and perhaps encourage other students to find more of these contacts. Knowing about these contacts and encouraging the pupils to have them might provide a source of motivation for the pupils – they know these contacts are appreciated and they feel like they benefit from them, and most of all, they actually learn to use English in their own spare time. In addition to this, on their free time they can focus on the parts of English they find to be the most interesting. It is hoped that this study will provide teachers, future teachers and parents a greater idea of the variety of ways English occurs in the world of children, and that these contacts will be appreciated and used in the future – with English as a lingua franca – learning English as a child will most certainly be of much use later in life as well.

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APPENDIX

Teemahaastattelurunko

-Taustatiedot: Luokka-aste, sukupuoli.

-Englanninkielinen media vapaa-ajalla:

-pelaatko englanninkielisiä pelejä, mitä, millä pelaat

-katsotko englanninkielisiä sarjoja tai elokuvia, mitä (ilman tekstitystä vai tekstityksillä?)

-vierailtko englanninkielisillä nettisivuilla (millaisilla, mitä siellä tehdään?) (tubettajat?)

-kuunteletko englanninkielistä musiikkia, mitä

-luetko englanninkielisiä kirjoja tai lehtiä, mitä?

-tuleeko mieleesi muuta, esimerkiksi sosiaalista mediaa, jossa käytät englantia koulun ulkopuolella

muut, interaktiiviset kielikontaktit:

-tuleeko mieleen tilanteita, jossa olisit vapaa-ajalla muuten käyttänyt englantia?

-käytätkö englantia harrastuksissa, miten esimerkiksi?

-oletko käyttänyt matkustaessa englantia (suomessa tai ulkomailla), miten?

-onko sinulla ystäviä, joiden kanssa puhut englantia? (kirjekaveri, nettikaveri, muu ystävä?) miten kommunikoitte? Puhutko kavereiden kanssa ikinä englantia? Tai käytätte englanninkielisiä sanoja? Mitä?

Englanninkielisten kontaktien määrä:

-asioista joista puhuimme äsken, tuleeko mieleen, missä näistä yhteyksistä käytät englantia useimmin? (mikä on usein?)

-kuinka usein koet käyttäväsi englantia koulun ulkopuolella?

Englannin kielikontaktien vaikutus:

-Koetko, että tämä koulun ulkopuolinen englannin käyttö on opettanut sinulle englantia?

-mitä olet näistä kontakteista oppinut?