

**LEARNING ENGLISH INFORMALLY THROUGH  
AUTHENTIC LITERACY PRACTICES:  
A case study of Finnish 8<sup>th</sup> grade students**

**A Pro Gradu Thesis**

**By**

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| <p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Suomalaisnuorten arjessa englanninkieliset tekstit ja kielenkäyttötavat ovat yleisiä. Nuorisokulttuuri on kansainvälistä ja sen yhteinen kieli on entistä useammin englanti. Uuden teknologian kehittymisen myötä monimediaiset ja monikulttuuriset englanninkieliset tekstiympäristöt ovat entistä useammin osa nuorten arkea. Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten hyödyllisinä englannin oppimisen kannalta kahdeksaslukkalaiset nuoret kokevat erilaiset tekstikäytännöt koulun ulkopuolella arkitodellisuudessaan. Tutkimuksessa etsitään vastauksia seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Mitkä koulun ulkopuoliset tekstikäytännöt tukevat englannin oppimista? 2) Millaisia yhtäläisyyksiä ja eroja oppilaiden ja oppilasryhmien välillä ilmenee? 3) Mikä oppilaita motivoi eri käytännöissä? 4) Millaista englantia oppilaat kokevat oppivansa vapaa-ajan käytännöistä? Tutkimus kiinnitetään teoreettisesti informaalisempaan oppimiseen ja sosiokulttuuriseen näkemykseen tekstikäytännöistä. Metodologisesti tutkimustehtävää lähestytään kahta eri metodia yhdistäen. Päämetodinä käytettiin oppilaskyselyä, johon yhden koulun kaikki kahdeksaslukkalaiset (78 oppilasta) vastasivat. Tämän aineiston perusteella vastataan kahteen ensimmäiseen tutkimuskysymykseen. Kyselyaineisto analysoitiin tilastollisesti. Ryhmittelyanalyysin perusteella valittiin 10 oppilasta haastatteluun, jonka tarkoituksena oli tarkentaa ja valottaa oppilaiden kokemuksia ja vastata kahteen viimeiseen tutkimuskysymykseen. Haastatteluaineistoa tarkastellaan laadullisesti.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että nuorten sekä kiinnostavimmiksi että englannin oppimisessa hyödyllisimmiksi kokemat tekstikäytännöt ovat monimediaisia, viihteellisiä ja sosiaalista kanssakäymistä mahdollistavia. Erityisesti television, elokuvien, Youtube-videoiden katselu sekä musiikin kuuntelu, pelailu sekä netissä ja kasvokkain keskustelu koetaan hyödyllisimmiksi. Perinteisiä painettuja tekstejä luetaan harvoin. Eroja ilmenee jonkin verran tyttöjen ja poikien sekä eri tasoilla englantia osaavien ja eri tavoin asennoituvien nuorten kokemuksissa. Oppilaista erottuu myös erilaisia osaryhmiä, joiden kiinnostuksen kohteet ja oppimiskokemukset vaihtelevat: TV:n ja videoiden katselijoita, pelaajia, nettikeskustelijoita ja kasvokkain juttelevia sekä monimedia-aktiiveja. Oppilaat kokivat oppivansa eniten englanninkielisistä elokuvista, peleistä ja keskusteluista arkipäivän ja nuorten käyttökieltä, ääntämistä, erityissanastoa, lauserakenteita sekä kielen käytön erilaisia mahdollisuuksia. Kirjoja lukevat tytöt, jotka olivat useimmiten monimedia-aktiiveja, oppivat myös kirjoittamista, kirjakieltä ja oikeinkirjoitusta. Vain kirjojen, uutisten ja ohjeiden lukemisen hyödylliseksi kokemisella oli yhteyttä englannin kouluarvosanaan, mikä herättää pohtimaan kouluopetuksen painotuksia, uusia opetuskäytäntöjä ja jatkotutkimushaasteita.</p> |   |
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Finnish adolescents live in an environment where they hear, see and use English as part of their everyday activities. They are constantly connected to different media and texts and can quickly acquire new information and entertainment on the Internet. They watch English-speaking TV-shows, play complex strategy games on-line, listen to popular music and sing karaoke-games in English. They might also read books and magazines in English. Furthermore, according to Leppänen (2000: 150) they share interests, activities and lifestyle by chatting and spending time in virtual spaces not only with their local or national friends but also with friends living around the world usually communicating with them in English.

The important role of English in Finnish youth language is a result of many cultural, social and educational processes (Leppänen 2007: 150). After the World War II, Finland sought to identify itself culturally with the West. Young people in particular became interested in the Anglo-American youth culture and way of life. In education, this positive attitude could be seen in young people's increasing interest to study English as a first foreign language. As a result, today practically all young people in Finland have studied English at some point during comprehensive school. Furthermore, quite a few schools offer special programmes in English, for example content-through-language education. In the youth culture, English-speaking rock and popular music, films and TV programmes have been very popular in Finland from the 1950s onwards. In many subcultural activities and lifestyle groups with shared interests English functions as an additional language or is being mixed with Finnish. (Leppänen 2007: 149-150; Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 17-18.) More recently, as the working life and large companies have become more global, the role of English as a common language of communication at work has become a significant external motivation to learn English both formally and informally (Leppänen 2007: 149). All in all, English is strongly present in Finland and young people's attitudes to English are positive. This was proved in the national survey in 2007, which also showed that English was the most widely

studied and used foreign language in Finland (Leppänen et al. 2009a: 155).

The recent development of information and communication technologies has made Finnish youth culture and language practices increasingly international and English speaking. The Internet, email, wikis, blogs, instant messaging, Facebook, on-line gaming and virtual worlds, for example, have become important shared contexts for Finns as well as for global youth (Leppänen 2007: 149-150; Luukka et al. 2008: 20), who favour English as a common language of intercultural communication and social networking. In these contexts, children and adolescents learn to use English informally along with their formal studies at school. I assume that the information and communication technologies will continue to discover new forms and functions and the youth will be the pioneers in this cultural change.

English is also learnt informally in more traditional face-to face contacts. It seems that there are more and more opportunities for young people to travel abroad. Children travel a lot with their parents and experience English as a common language of communication with foreigners. Teenagers can attend language courses during their summer holidays through organizations such as Student Travel School (STS) or Education First (EF). Many decide to stay in a foreign country longer as an exchange student via organizations such as Youth For Understanding (YFU), Rotary or American Field Service (AFS). There are also various international projects and youth camps available. Needless to say, many Finnish teenagers choose to go to an English-speaking country and obtain important English-speaking contacts and friends during these experiences. Some of these contacts are forgotten after the journey, but others remain as important friends who are visited later or communicated with. These contacts can motivate young people to learn and study more about the cultures and languages of their foreign friends. In 2006, 98% of Finnish ninth-grade pupils reported that they used English in their free time (Luukka et al. 2008: 46).

The informal usage of English can be seen at school, where there are differences between those students who are active users of English in various media contexts, and



those who are not. These differences may be related to students' own interests, gender and life style or they may be connected to students' socio-economic family background, which is reflected, for example, in the availability of books, newspapers and Internet at home as well as in opportunities to travel and take part in language courses abroad. As a result, various out-of-school interests and practices, such as watching films, playing games, reading books and newspapers and following the English-speaking pop culture may work for some students' advantage while the lack of these practices may work for others' disadvantage. Advantage in learning English at school, however, may deviate from students' views of learning English informally. Language achievement at school may accentuate types of language knowledge and skills that are different from those that pupils find useful in informal activities.

The aim of this study is to shed light on students' out-of-school language learning activities. More specifically, the study aims to examine 14-year old 8<sup>th</sup> graders' experiences of using and learning English informally in authentic literacy practices, authentic here referring to out-of-school practices that pupils themselves find interesting and meaningful in their life. In order to find out both a general view on useful literacy practices as well as examples of specific students' experiences and reasoning a mixed methods approach is applied: a survey and a set of interviews. All 8<sup>th</sup> grade students of one school in Jyväskylä answered the survey questionnaire. In the survey they assessed various literacy practices from the point of view of how these practices contributed to their learning of English. Based on these assessments, students' general learner profile as well as the profiles of various subgroups of students were explored and compared. Later a sub-sample of these students was interviewed in order to specify and illuminate pupils' literacy practices and to examine pupils' motivation and experiences in learning English.

Students' authentic literacy practices contributing to their learning of English are first examined from theoretical viewpoints. In chapter 2, the theoretical framework focuses first on the concept of informal learning both in general and in language learning in particular. In chapter 3, the concept of literacy and literacy practices are reviewed from

the socio-cultural perspective paying attention to main characteristics and their specification. Furthermore, new technology mediated literacies and multimedia contexts as well as purposes and authenticity of literacy practices are explored. In chapter 4, the research task and the conceptual frame are reviewed and the methodological approaches as well as the specific data inquiry and analysis methods are described. In chapter 5, the results of both the student survey and the interviews are presented. In chapter 6, the findings are further integrated and discussed. Finally, in the concluding chapter 7, I assess the methodology of the study and suggest some pedagogical implications and further research ideas.

A broader understanding of the informal learning of today's Finnish young people could benefit teachers who design new learning environments and instructional practices, as well as those involved in producing learning materials, both printed and multimedia. Unfortunately, teachers are seldom aware of students' informal learning practices, particularly, of those that students themselves have experienced interesting or useful out-of-school in everyday life. I believe that learning more about what draws youngsters to particular practices can be eye-opening to teachers and help them to facilitate literacy events and practices that are motivating and meaningful to students.

## **2 INFORMAL LEARNING**

Students' out-of-school learning is understood in the present study as informal learning. In the first part of this chapter, the concept of informal learning is first introduced by comparing and contrasting informal with formal learning. Secondly, the focus moves on to the main features of informal learning and specifies the concept from the point of view of learner's intention and consciousness in the learning process. Thirdly, the social aspect of informal learning is discussed and related to the socio-cultural view of learning. In the second part of the chapter, the informal learning is viewed specifically from the language-learning point of view and compared to the concepts of language

acquisition as well as spontaneous and naturalistic language learning. Finally, informal language learning is discussed by accentuating the socially and culturally mediated context of learning.

## **2.1 Informal versus formal learning**

The concept of *informal learning* is often contrasted with *formal learning* (Erraut 2000: 12). According to Marsick and Watkins (1990: 12), formal learning typically includes a prescribed curriculum, highly structured and sequenced learning events, a designated teacher or trainer, the award of a qualification or credit, and the external specification of outcomes. Informal learning, in contrast, does not include these factors. It is often a by-product of some everyday activity, experimentation, observation, communication, play or entertainment. When formal learning is usually provided by a school or by some educational institution, informal learning occurs in authentic everyday contexts, at home, at work or in leisure time activities.

Formal school learning is planned and guided by teachers or curriculum experts, while informal learning outside school is incidental, reactive and motivated by interesting experiences, social relations or feelings (Cross 2007: 229-230; Erraut 2000: 13). Most of what we learn informally, we learn with and from other people – parents, brothers and sisters, playmates, classmates, friends, interest groups and neighbours (Cross 2007: XIV). Even though children and youngsters spend many hours at school they experience and discover new knowledge and skills at least as much outside school, at home, in playgrounds, in parks, in various sport and music activities, in cafes, while working and travelling as well as in computer mediated practices and networks (Cross 2007: XIX, 16).

Beckett and Hager (2002: 128-130) emphasize the practise-based notion of informal learning. Practise refers to contextualized and holistic view of knowledge and skills that are related to interests, attitudes and values. Practise involves, according to Beckett and Hager (2002:12), “a rich set of phenomena: a body of knowledge, a capacity to make

judgement, a sensitivity to intuition, and an awareness of the purposes of the actions are all involved in some way". According to this notion of informal learning, Beckett and Hager (2002: 128) compare the main features of formal and informal learning as presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1. The differences between formal learning and informal learning

| <i>Formal learning</i>                | <i>Informal learning</i>         |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Single capacity focus, e.g. cognition | Organic/holistic                 |
| Decontextualized                      | Contextualized                   |
| Passive spectator                     | Activity- and experience-based   |
| An end in itself                      | Dependent on other activities    |
| Stimulated by teachers/trainers       | Activated by individual learners |
| Individualistic                       | Often collaborative/collegial    |

Whereas formal learning tends to focus on one thing at a time, be it grammar or pronunciation, informal learning can be described as organic or holistic. While formal learning is specific, informal learning is a seamless incorporation of many types of different learning. The focus is on the activity at hand and the information that needs to be processed in order to do or understand something that is relevant to the learner. Thus, learning is tied to other meaningful or enjoyable contexts and the learner develops the skill to 'put it all together'. A further characteristic of informal learning is that the will to learn derives from the student himself/herself, instead of the teacher or authority. Whereas teachers, trainers and lecturers shape the course of formal learning, informal learning is different. The focus is not on teaching a pre-structured content, but on the learners' own activity. This does not mean that the learner is alone with his/her learning. On the contrary, informal learning is often collaborative or collegial. Consulting peers, friends, family members and co-workers in challenging situations occurs frequently and gives a social aspect to the learning. (Beckett & Hager 2002: 115-122; Cross 2007: 3.) A good example of this kind of collaborative informal learning is a teenage boy who is playing an on-line game with his friends. Playing is enjoyable and socially rewarding. He discovers the rules of the game by reading manuals or on-line instructions in order to succeed in the game and works with a team of players to get ahead. There are ideas and

strategies shared via headphones, victories celebrated and losses mourned together. This kind of activity is very far from a formal learning situation because of the exciting experience and contextualized and active collaboration with peers.

This kind of dichotomy or contrasting of different types of learning could obviously be criticised as being too strict. There are many views of formal learning as well as informal learning that are different, and all the aspects listed in Table 1 are not always visible. Often the two ways of learning go side by side and complement each other. Competent teachers apply various informal practices, such as games, drama, discussions and field trips, to motivate, collaborate and contextualise learning at school. The social situations in the classroom can be as real as outside the classroom. The students may also apply the knowledge and skills that they have learnt informally in the school context.

Erraut (2000: 12-13) also criticizes the term informal by arguing that the term is associated with too many other features of situations, such as clothing, behaviour and discourse. He prefers the term *non-formal* learning. More recently Eaton (2010: 9), however, has criticized Erraut's definition and related non-formal learning to the type of learning that is formally or loosely organised, usually by work or by a private institute, and led by someone with more experience, by a tutor or a volunteer teacher. There are no formal credits granted in this kind of non-formal learning situations. Learning is usually intentional and adapted to the individual learner's needs. Eaton (2010: 9) further argues that informal learning is not intentional or organised, but rather spontaneous and experiential.

Erraut (2000: 12-13) also emphasizes the intention of learning. He creates a continuum in informal learning from this point of view. One extreme is *implicit* learning, which is unintentional and unconscious, a linkage of past memories with current experiences at the moment it occurs. The other extreme is *deliberative* learning, which is intentional, planned and conscious and which may take a long time. Between the two categories is

*reactive* learning, which is explicit but takes place near-spontaneously and in response to emergent learning opportunities. (Erraut 2000: 12-13.)

Schugurensky (2000: 3-5) follows Erraut's views and categorises informal learning process by using intentionality and consciousness as a basis, but by adding a social aspect to informal learning. He argues that it is possible to identify three types of informal learning: *self-directed learning*, *incidental learning* and *socialization*. Self-directed learning refers to learning projects undertaken by individuals without the assistance of a teacher or an instructor, but it can include a resource person. It is both intentional and conscious. It is intentional because the individual has the purpose of learning, and it is conscious in the sense that the individual is aware of having learnt something. Incidental learning refers to an experience that occurs when the learner has not had any previous intention of learning something out of that experience but after the experience becomes aware that learning has taken place. Thus, learning is unintentional but conscious. Socialization refers to the internalization of skills, behaviours, knowledge, values and attitudes in everyday social context. The person has no prior intention of acquiring them and no awareness that she or he has learnt something. Although learning through socialization is usually an unconscious process, the learner can become aware of that learning later on through retrospective acknowledgment, which can be internal or external. (Schugurensky 2000: 3-5.)

According to Schugurensky (2000: 5-6) informal learners can use a variety of sources for their learning, including books, newspapers, TV, the Internet, friends, parents, interest groups, their own experiences, and so forth. Informal learning can be additive or transformative in knowledge building. *Additive* learning refers to the addition of knowledge, the improvement of skills, and the development of attitudes and values. *Transformative* learning refers to learning experiences that lead the learner to challenge assumptions and values, and to radically change existing prior knowledge and approaches. Informal learning can *complement* and reinforce the knowledge and values acquired in formal school education, but it can also *contradict* it. It can reinforce social

control, but it may also advance social change and empowerment. (Schugurensky 2000: 5-6.)

Cross (2007: 40, 45) also argues for a social view in informal learning and emphasises a social context and a wider learning environment. He claims that learning happens in *learnsapes*, which have no borders. A learnscape refers to a learning ecology, where content and context are inseparable. The context includes social communication, collaboration and reflection among learners. This requires an attitude of surrender and acceptance (Cross 2007: 241). Cross (2007: 58) even claims that a shared space – here referring to a space that is both physical and behavioural – and creative relationships are more important for innovative learning than creative individuals. Cross (2007: 236) widens the context of informal learning to the goal of learning, which is not to certify or to give credit but to enable the learner to participate actively and successfully in life, at work and in the groups and communities that matter to the learner.

To sum up, during the last decade, there has been a shift in the notion of informal learning from the cognitive view, which accentuated a learning process and knowledge building of an individual, to the socio-cultural view, which assumes that learning is a socially and culturally situated and mediated practice (Beckett & Hager 2002: 128; Säljö 2001: 236). Informal learning is understood also in this study as a by-product of everyday activities. It occurs in various contexts and social relations at home and in leisure time. Informal learners can use a variety of sources for their learning, including books, newspapers, TV and the Internet. The social context of informal learning includes communication, collaboration and reflection among learners. Informal learning can be incidental, self-directed or socialization and it can add or transform knowledge and skills or even contradict and challenge the previous views and values. Informal learning is typically motivated by learners' interesting experiences, ideas or feelings. It may control the learners or may enable and empower them to participate actively and successfully in life, in peer groups, at school and in community.

## 2.2 Informal language learning

In the context of foreign language learning, formal and informal learning are often considered different, but not completely separate concepts. For example, Krashen's (1981: 1) concepts of *learning* and *acquiring* language refer to this notion. According to Krashen (1981: 1), learning refers to the formal instruction and it comprises a conscious process and results in conscious knowledge about language. *Acquisition* is the product of a subconscious process, similar to the process that children undergo when they acquire their first language. It requires natural, meaningful interaction in which speakers are concentrated not on the form but on communication. Correspondingly, Ellis (1994: 12) speaks about *instructed* and *naturalistic* language learning. While instructed language learning takes place in formal settings and involves instruction or guidance from books, naturalistic language learning occurs through communication in true-to-life social situations. Both Krashen and Ellis, however, accentuate that in successful language learning these two different ways of learning are often complementary, not contradictory (Ellis 1994: 18; Krashen 1981: 6-7). The informal learning environment can be efficiently utilized in more formal education (Krashen 1976: 158). More recently the terms formal, non-formal and informal language learning have displaced the previously favoured concepts of language learning and language acquisition. While the concepts of language learning and acquisition accentuated the learning process, the terms formal, non-formal and informal language learning emphasise the social and cultural context of learning as well as the notion that learning is lifelong and life wide (Eaton 2010: 15-16).

In this division into three types of learning, formal language learning is defined as situated in educational institution, based on a curriculum and instructed by trained teachers who assess and credit students' progress. Traditionally formal language learning has emphasised written forms of the language, and has focused on grammar and sentence structure. Although communicative methods are also used today, there is still a heavy focus on written forms. As regards the second type, non-formal language learning occurs at work or in freely organised groups or institutes. Non-formal learning



is led by a tutor or someone with more experience and adapted to learners' needs and goals. (Eaton 2010: 15–16.) Finally, informal language learning can happen any time and any place, at home, at play, or in community activities. Informal language learning occurs spontaneously in everyday life situations within family members, peers, interest groups or strangers. Informal language learning involves no authority or expert mediator but occurs through socialization in interaction with other people. Language can be also learnt through media: television, music, films and the Internet. (Eaton 2010: 17.) In these situations language can be communicated in many different ways, for example in written or oral language, visual drawings, pictures, music or other symbols. (Moje et al. 2004: 41-42). In informal contexts, the language that is learnt is likely to be authentic, typical of everyday situations, not like the official expressions presented in formal textbooks, and rather conversational in comparison to written forms of language (Eaton 2010: 17).

Nikula and Pitkänen-Huhta (2008: 171) use the term informal learning to refer to “contacts with the language in everyday settings that arise from the needs and interests of the language users”. This definition emphasizes not only the socio-cultural view of learning but also the intrinsic motivation of the learner. This definition covers all the various language situations that the learners encounter in their everyday life. The types of these situations are not described specifically but the emphasis is put on the fact that the language users' needs and interests lead to certain kinds of situations. In other words, the learners face particularly those informal settings and practices that are relevant and interesting to them (Lappi 2009: 16).

Informal language learning, particularly with regard to second and foreign languages, has also met scepticism from some scholars and educators who question the value of a learning experience that does not involve grammar and written textbooks. They argue that informal language learning may even “corrupt” the language learner’s repertoire with slang or indecent phrases. The fact that an informal learning experience might give the learner an opportunity to experience authentic language in a real life context that may enrich his or her language learning in a way that can not be achieved by using a

textbook, has traditionally not been given much regard. (Eaton 2010: 18.)

To conclude, the present study follows the socio-cultural view of informal language learning and, following Nikula and Pitkänen-Huhta (2008: 171) as well as Eaton (2010: 17), understands this type of learning according to as spontaneous contacts with the language in everyday life situations with family members, peers, friends, interest groups or strangers. The contacts arise from the needs and interests of the language users. Learning occurs through socialization in face-to-face interaction or through various types of media contacts. The present study also assumes that informal language learning enriches and complements learners' formal studies of English.

### **3 LITERACY PRACTISES**

In the present study I am particularly interested in young people's out-of school literacy activities and how these practices contribute to students' learning of English. This means that I want to examine not only the sources of informal language learning but also the everyday practices, students' interests and attitudes behind them and contexts related to them. In this chapter literacy is first defined as a set of social practices, following the socio-cultural view on literacy. Secondly, the notion of literacy practices are further specified by connecting practices to a social and cultural context, in particular to different domains, spaces, purposes and texts. Thirdly, literacy practices and texts are related to the concept of authenticity. Fourthly, literacies are viewed from the point of view of how new technology changes literacy practices. Finally, literacy practices are discussed in the frame of previous research and pedagogical implications.

#### **3.1 Literacy as social practices**

The socio-cultural view of literacy emphasizes students' active and social role in informal learning. The learner can be described as an active participant functioning in a

social and cultural context (Barton 1994: 34; Gee 1996: 4; Moje et al. 2008: 2-3). Barton (1994: 34-35) follows the socio-cultural view and specifies the concept of literacy in literacy practices and events. In the following set, eight features of literacy practices are described in Barton' terms and further discussed from the point of view of the present study:

*1. Literacy is a social activity*

People engage in literary practices in the various literary events that they face every day. These events and the practices used are the basic building blocks of literacy. Literacy events can be explained as social practices that are somehow connected to the written word or communicative situations where literacy is critical (Barton 1994: 36). Literacy events are activities where literacy plays a role. According to Barton (1994: 37), "literacy practices are the cultural ways of utilizing literacy in a literacy event." In the present study, these literacy events and practises include, for example, reading manuals for computer games, chatting with distant friends on-line or simply reading a book or a newspaper.

*2. People have different literacies which work for different domains of life*

People use language differently in the different domains of their lives, such as home, school, work, free time or hobbies. The social rules and norms of people are different in these places and so are their literacy practices. In the real life, domains of literacy practices are not strictly separate but rather fluid and overlapping. For example, at home people can work for school and community, at school they may play in various extra curricular activities. Different literacies are not equally valued. They vary in what purposes and whose purposes they serve. (Barton 1994: 39-40.) In the present study, the focus is on the domain of home and on free time literacies serving youngsters' personal interests. The study, however, assumes that the literacies practiced in free time are

overlapping with other literacies and have an effect on language and literacies valued at school as well.

### *3. Literacy practices are situated in social relations*

Literacy practices have to be put into broader social settings. In various settings people act differently, for example they might act as a child, a student, a classmate, a friend, a customer or a patient. In doing this people draw upon different aspects of their identity. People follow roles and demands placed upon them, and in most situations they know how to act. Nevertheless, roles are not fixed but often negotiated and also challenged. There can be conflicts between the demands of different roles. These demands and conflicts can be connected to social settings, roles and literacy practices. For example, some literacy practices are gendered or typical of a certain ethnic or age group. (Barton 1994: 41.) The present study is interested in different roles in which young people position themselves in different literacy practices. In particular, the roles of gender and interest group will be examined.

### *4. Literacy is a symbolic system which enables communication, the exchange of information and opinions*

Literacy enables communication and the representation of the surrounding world to others. In daily life people participate in literacy events where reading and writing are mixed with spoken language and with other means of communication. Literacy events typically involve a written text and talk around the text. Yet, other aspects of communication, for example visual design, come into play with written language. (Barton 1994: 44.) Even though Barton sees the important role of technology in written language, he could not yet in 1994 vision today's multimodal communication where the spoken and written languages are entwined with various technologies. Communication, as well as the sharing of information, opinions and feelings, has developed into use of pictures, sounds, and movement added to spoken and written languages.

5. *Literacy is a symbolic system which enables representing the world to ourselves*

Literacy enables representing the world to us. As well as its external features, it contributes to the mind and to thinking. Like other symbolic systems it has a cognitive and a cultural basis. Thus, a literacy practice includes a practice of thinking which is constructed and supported by social practices. For example, a symbolic system, such as writing, mediates between individual cognition and social communication. Similarly, the language is a symbolic system, which mediates between self and social environment. (Barton 1994: 45-47.) In the present study, I am especially interested in the literacy practices that mediate young people's social and cultural environment and individuals' language learning. Learning, however, is not limited only to cognition, thought and mental processes but is also resided in interests and in cultural and social activities.

6. *Awareness, attitudes and values connected with literacies guide our actions*

All literacy practices and activities have a purpose. Instead of writing in order to write or reading in order to read, people read because they want to do other things. People read to search for information, to make sense of their lives and world, to entertain themselves, to keep in contact with their friends or to make their voice heard. People's actions reflect their values and attitudes, which are related to their culture. (Barton 1994: 48-49.) In the same way, young people's literacy practices in this study can be assumed to be related to their interests, attitudes and values which may not aim for language learning but for fun, for exciting experiences and for social communication.

7. *Literacy has a history – learning continues through one's life*

There are two senses of historical change in literacy: the individual's development and the development of the whole culture. Every person has a literacy history. This goes back to early childhood and to home literacy events; it continues with school and community activities and goes on into adulthood. New practices are based on previous

experiences. Our view of literacy is dependent on our views of language and learning. It is a life long process that takes place in all activities and changes in order to meet life's changing demands. People's needs and interests also change over time and they are fed with different literacies. (Barton 1994: 49-50.) For example, teenagers today may have very different views and experiences of literacy and language learning when compared to their parents or teachers who may not value the practices that youngsters find most appealing and useful in life.

8. *Literacy has a social history – current practices were crafted in the past*

The second sense of history is that of a change in the whole culture. The history can provide some insight into various areas, such as the learning of literacy, levels of literacy in the society, literacy and technological change as well as literacy and power relations. Current practices are always based on the past. Cultures are passed from generation to generation through literacy. (Barton 1994: 51-52.) New technology has created new possibilities and needs for literacy. In the present study, it is assumed that today's youth has a strong grasp of new technologies that is combined with literacies that are different from those that their parents or grandparents are used to. The demands of society, educational institutions, working life and community activities are also different from the expectations of some decades ago.

To review Barton's definitions, a literacy event is something that can be observed but literacy practices are not observable, since they involve people's cultural knowledge, values and attitudes, as well as their social relationships. Literacy practices have a purpose, history and future and they change in various times, contexts, cultures and communities. Literacy practices are what people do with literacy and the ways in which they make sense of it in their lives. This does not mean that literacy practices are individual in nature. At the same time as individuals make use of their own literacy practices, practices connect people and involve shared values, attitudes and social

identities. New technologies and social practices create new possibilities and needs for literacy.

The term *literacy practices*, however, has been used in many disciplines and by several researchers. Scribner and Cole (as cited by Barton 1994: 37) see the concept central and apply the term directly to literacy. They argue that practices can be seen as ways of using literacy in various situations. While Barton defines literacy practices as social practices associated with written language, Gee (1996: 4) does not limit the language used in literacies only to written language. Gee widens the usage of language to reading, writing, speaking and listening as well as gestures and other semiotics (images, sounds, graphics, signs, codes) connected with the ways of thinking, believing, feeling, valuing, acting/doing and interacting in relation to people and to social groups. Similarly, many educational scientists (see, for instance, Alvermann 2008: 9; Moje 2008: 59-60; Moje et al. 2008: 2-3), who follow the socio-cultural views on literacy learning, see literacy practices as directly observable social practices.

Moje (2008: 63) adds a critical stance to the socio-cultural view on literacy practices, arguing that power, identities, and agency play important roles in whose social and cultural as well as literacy practices are valued and whose practices are not. Having access to socially constructed codes is central to being part of a community and having access to certain kinds of power. It also allows people to adopt and build the identity they want or are demanded to build in a particular relationship, space or time (Moje et al. 2008: 3). Young people's literacy practices may not support the identities that are valued and powerful in society or at school. Most youths are engaged in and shaped by some sort of popular culture and practices connected with it. (Moje 2008: 63-64.) These practices may differ to some extent across gender, ethnic and socio-economic groups. Most importantly, these popular practices appear to have real power in the lives of youth and therefore cannot be ignored.

For the present study, the socio-cultural view on literacy is chosen and literacy is defined as social and cultural practices connected with language, not only with written

language, but also with spoken language, as well as ways of thinking, believing, feeling, valuing, acting and interacting in relation to people (Gee 1996: 4). The concept is further specified mainly according to Barton (1994: 34-35) as social practices that work in social settings for different domains and purposes of life. Literacy practices have a history and a future and they vary between various cultural contexts and communities of practice. New social and cultural contexts create new possibilities and needs for literacy. Deviating from Barton's conception I apply the view presented by Scribner and Cole (as cited by Barton 1994: 37) that literacy practices can be directly observable as ways of using literacy in various cultural and social contexts. I also include new technology mediated contexts among social and cultural environments.

### **3.2 Domains, spaces and purposes of literacy practices**

Literacy practices are specified by relating them with different domains of life, such as home, school, work, hobbies, library and community. There are different places where people act differently and use language differently. To take the example of home, school and hobbies, young people typically take on different roles, talk differently, and have different purposes and tasks because social rules underlying these actions are different in each of the three domains. Even though literacy practices emerge from people's own interests and social networks, they are also connected to the general social ways of acting in different environments. (Alvermann 2008: 9; Barton 1994: 48-49.)

Domains of literacy practices are clustered by some scholars (for example Moje et al. 2004: 41) into wider *spaces*. The "first space" is the informal everyday world that is close and common to people, such as home, a peer or interest group and community. The "second space" is a more formal institution, such as a school or a workplace. Furthermore, Moje et al. (2004: 41-44) have suggested that these spaces could be reconstructed to form also a "third space" which can provide a "mediational" context and tools for future literacy development. For example, social media and various tools and networks in the Internet can build a bridge between informal and formal learning. The third space can also be viewed according to Moje et al. (2004: 42-43) as a



navigational space, a way of crossing between different literacy environments and a space for social and cultural change. From the point of view of the present study, the first and particularly the third space is interesting and inspiring.

As Barton (1994: 34) states, literacy practices have various *purposes* or *functions* that are connected with domains and wider goals. Young people, for example, read and write, watch TV, play games, use the Internet at home for fun, to search for information, to learn and to express themselves or to communicate with friends and to participate in various interest groups and networks. These practices, however, are not only associated with homes, but may also occur in other informal domains in the first and third spaces, such as peer groups, community centres, libraries and various media. It is important that along with these practices young people engage their subjective experiences in the socially shared knowledge and build their identity. (Moje et al. 2008: 4.)

Barton (1994: 39) further emphasises that literacy practices are not equally valued. They vary in what purposes and whose purposes they serve. One distinction is between *imposed* and *self-generated* practices. While imposed practices are directed by outsiders, self-generated practices serve the participants' own interests. Another distinction is made by Barton (1994: 39) between *dominant* and *vernacular* literacies. Dominant literacies originate from formal institutions of society, while vernacular literacies have their roots in informal everyday life. A different kind of dimension is that some practices are *creative*, such as creative writing, while others are *constrained*, such as filling a form. A further possibility is Freire's distinction between *domesticating* and *empowering* literacies (as cited by Barton 1994: 39). In this study, I am mainly interested in how self-generated, creative and empowering practices students favour in their everyday life.

Alvermann (2008: 17-18) focuses on adolescents' everyday literacies outside school and speaks about *individual* and *social* purposes of literacy practices. She also makes a distinction between *receiving*, *interactive* or *productive tasks* or uses of literacies focusing on the knowledge building process. Moje et al. (2008: 2-3) specify

youngsters' out-of-school literacy purposes and mention that reasons for engaging in literacy practices vary from *searching for information* to *self-expression* and *self-development* as well as to *entertainment* and to *sharing experiences* and *opinions* with peers. Compared to Barton's distinctions (1994: 39), these purposes are different to some extent. Differences are mainly based on the various domains and spaces. While Barton's distinctions are more general and cover all domains from home to educational institutions and to community life, Alverman and Moje (et al.) focus only on purposes and tasks outside school. Furthermore, Barton's classification is closely connected to wider goals and values, whereas Alvermann and Moje (et al.) refer to young people's own experiences and expressions about their purposes in both printed and technology-mediated literacy practices.

Purposes of literacy practices are often associated with *texts* in the sense that, for instance, novels are more likely to be read for entertainment than in order to search for information (Barton 1994: 38). Nevertheless, the purposes of texts are not predetermined, since in addition to imposed or constrained uses of literacy people also find, for example in canonical school literature, self-generated and creative purposes for texts. According to Sulkunen (2007: 22), texts have no characteristics that oblige readers to adopt a certain stance for approaching them. The socio-cultural view of literacy stresses rather that texts both reflect and construct the surrounding culture at the same time.

To conclude, the focus of examination in the present study is on adolescents' out-of-school literacy practices. Thus, the concepts of domain and space are relevant because attention is paid to literacy practices that young people find useful in their free time activities either at home or in peer and interest groups, in travelling and in communicating face-to-face or by media. This study is not limited only to the domain of home but considers other free time domains as well. The domains examined here rather resemble the first space that is close to and common to youngsters and merge the third space that provides a social context and tools mediated by new technologies and which are necessary for future literacy development. The spaces and accordingly purposes and

texts of literacy practices may vary but there might be some common uses of literacies among youngsters of the same age.

### **3.3 Authenticity in literacy practices**

Since the study focuses on young people's informal learning outside school, the concept of *authenticity* is prominent. Youngsters, for example, spend several hours a day by watching TV, chatting with their friends, listening to popular music, gaming and even reading books and magazines they are interested in, regardless of what parents or teachers recommend. All these practices are typically self-directed, many of them socially shared and some of them may even contribute to their learning of English.

Authenticity can be approached from various perspectives. *The Advanced Learner's English Dictionary* (2003: 81) defines *authentic* as something "genuine", "reliable and accurate". Ethically, according to Taylor (1992: 11), authenticity refers to the true-to-life, truthfulness, sincerity, and devotion. It is defined as being faithful to one's personal goals; to be honest to oneself. It places emphasis on one's own personal experiences and choices. but does not undermine values and social relations in the social and cultural environment where values and attitudes are shared and commonly negotiated

In reading research, authentic texts are defined as those that are in some way meaningful and relevant to the reader, and as such typical of the reader's culture (Valencia et al., as cited by Sulkunen 2007: 53). This means that the reader has a personal interest, a need or a desire to approach the text. It is always the individual reader who defines whether or not a text is authentic to her/him. Thus, authenticity has also a motivational aspect. Authentic texts have been defined not only typical or familiar, but also as texts that are interesting and engaging for learners. It has been further emphasised that the learner has a true need or purpose for using them. (Sulkunen 2007: 53.)

Sulkunen (2007: 41) studied the concept of text authenticity in the context of international reading literacy assessment. She collects and lists the various attributes of an authentic text as follows (Sulkunen 2007: 44):

- Naturally occurring, genuine, and unedited
- Typical and familiar in the reader's culture
- Meaningful and relevant to the reader
- Representative of the real world
- Appropriate for the reader
- Interesting, engaging, and rich
- True need or purpose for reading

Sulkunen (2007: 44) further argues that the attributes listed above are partially overlapping. Typical and familiar seem to refer to the same feature of a text, as do interesting and engaging. Relevant and meaningful as attributes of authenticity derive from a true need to read the text, and it has been argued that as a consequence of this need, readers become interested in the text (Sulkunen 2007: 42-43). The authenticity of texts seems to refer not only textual but also cultural and motivational aspects of learning.

The social views of literacy have given new insights into the use of authentic texts in language and literacy learning. Through authentic texts it is possible to enculturate students into the large variety of real-world texts in order to provide them with the knowledge and skills to cope with different texts in the world outside school. It has been stressed that due to the variety and diversity of real-world literacy practices, enculturation into literacy practices should be developed through a variety of experiences in different contexts and with different kinds of texts, paying attention to the relations between text and the purposes. (Sulkunen 2007: 49.)

In learning foreign language, it has also been emphasized that if students should learn to use a language within real-life situations, they should be engaged in authentic language

use (Widdowson 1979: 165). Since it is impossible to present students with all possible types of texts they may encounter later in their lives, an essential part of authentic language instruction is to enhance students' awareness of the practices, motives and purposes that are associated with language usage. Most importantly, students should become aware of the issues related to texts: who is the writer, what is the purpose of the text, what kind of linguistic and stylistic devices have been used and why, and what kind of values and ideologies the text reflects and whose values they are (Pitkänen-Huhta and Leiwo, as cited by Sulkunen: 2007: 49). Critical stance and awareness of these issues prepare students to meet the demands of new literacy practices irrespective of the language learnt.

To conclude, the authenticity of literacy practices in the present study refers to students' own experiences in typical and meaningful literacy situations and practices outside school that students themselves find interesting and engaging. These situations and practices serve youngsters' personal needs, purposes and goals in life and reflect their culture and social relations to their peers, friends and family members.

### **3.4 New literacies**

New information and communication technologies (ICT), such as the Internet, search engines, instant messaging, email, blogs and online gaming require new literacy practices and have become important new contexts for literacy, learning, and life (Leu et al. 2007: 37). A more expansive view of literacy has been presented by various scholars in different disciplines and been termed in various ways by different people, including *new literacies* (Bruce & Hogan, 1998: 270; Lankshear & Knobel 2007: 1), *multiliteracies* (The New London Group, 1996: 60 ; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000: 5) *digital literacies* (Merchant 2009: 38) and *online literacies* (Alvermann 2008: 8). In this study, the concept "new literacy" is used, even though it seems to mean different things to different people. To some, new literacies are new social practices that emerge with technologies (see, for instance, Merchant 2009: 38). Others see new literacies as important new strategies and dispositions that are essential for reading, learning and

communication (see Leu et al. 2007: 41). Yet others see new literacies as new semiotic contexts (Lemke, as cited by Leu et al. 2007: 41) made possible by new technologies. Still others see literacy as differentiating into multiliteracies (The New London Group 1996: 60), or new contexts and view new literacies as a construct that juxtaposes several of these orientations (Lankshear & Knobel 2007: 11).

Leu et al. (2007: 42) argue that these various views share at least four defining characteristics. First, new technologies bring new potentials to literacy tasks that take place within these technologies. They also require new skills, strategies and dispositions for their effective use. Second, new literacies are central to full civic life and personal participation in a community and society. As a result, they become important to learn. Third, new literacies are deictic; they regularly change as technologies change. New literacies of the Internet and other technologies are not just new today; they will be continuously renewed. Thus, what is important in literacy education is not to teach any single set of new literacies, but rather how to learn continuously new literacies that will appear during lifetime. Finally, new literacies are multiple, multimodal, and multifaceted. Thus, they increase the complexity to understand their structure and main characteristics. (Leu et al. 2007: 42.)

Cope and Kalantzis (2000: 5-6) and The New London Group (1996: 60) specify the multiplicity of media as well as the increasing salience of cultural and linguistic diversity in their notion of multiliteracies. In the multiple communication channels, the textual is also related to the visual, the auditive, the spatial, the behavioural, and so on. This is particularly important in the multimedia and electronic hypermedia. Meaning is constructed in ways that are increasingly multimodal. This is typical of Internet websites, which may contain various types of texts, pictures, graphics, audio-visual symbols, music and animation. This requires a new, multimodal literacy. New technologies further relate to increasing local diversity and global connectedness. (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 5-6; The New London Group 1996: 60.)

Cope and Kalantzis (2000: 6) further argue that even though local communication is conducted in a local native language, English is becoming a world language, a *lingua mundi*, and a *lingua franca* of global media, politics and popular youth culture. The common language promotes to share the culture. The New London Group (2000: 15-16) also claims that multiliteracies emphasize increasing diversity and multiculturalism and make subcultural differences more significant. Gender, ethnicity, generation, lifestyle and sexual orientation are just few of the markers of these differences. Youth cultures, in particular, are associated with new ICT mediated literacies, which are represented, for example, on TV and video films, computer games, chat spaces and music channels. Parents and teachers often find their literacy culture losing power and relevance in competition with these new literacy practices. (Cope and Kalantzis 2000: 6.)

Computer games are a typical example of new multimodal literacy practices. They combine written, visual, auditive and gestural modes of communication and form gamers' groups and subculture where players share a variety of literacy practices and texts (Alvermann & Heron 2001: 119-120; Kankaanranta 2007: 284). According to Marsh (2002: 129), games present players with a narrative in which players are positioned both as actors and producers, as they take on the actions of the characters within the games. The games merge images with text, although the amount of text differs from game to game. Players have to read visual images, both static and moving in order to understand the rules of the game and succeed in it. Playing demands particular literacy skills, some of which deviate and some of which overlap with those used in interaction with printed texts. Gamers are also actively shaping the environment they use, forming social groups and acting collaboratively. (Kankaanranta 2007: 282.) Gee (2007: 95-96) even argues that computer games can become extensions of life, since they recruit and externalize some fundamental features of how human beings orient themselves in and to the real world. In games, players can actively project their desires, values and goals. They can create identities into which they can step in, set goals to achieve and provide textual or other supports to guide gaming. (Gee 2007: 95-96.)

Lankshear and Knobel (2007: 7) do not only focus on specific practices but also see new literacies in a broader social context. They argue that new literacies have not only a new technical component but also a new ethos. A new technical component drives different kinds of applications. Someone with an access to a computer and an Internet connection, and who has elementary knowledge of software applications can create a diverse range of meaningful artefacts. It is easy to create a multimodal text, which may contain a short animated film and completed with an original music. This text could be sent to a friend or a group of friends or an entire Internet community in almost no time and almost without cost. The concept of “text” as understood in conventional print terms becomes hazy when considering the array of expressive multimodal media available now. Diverse practices of remixing – where original materials are copied, cut, sliced, edited and mixed into a new creation – have become popular because the production is possible for ordinary people. These remixed texts can be approached in ways that we are already familiar with, or they can be integrated into literacy and social practices that represent something new in a sense that they reflect different kinds of values, emphases, priorities, perspectives, orientations and sensibilities from those established during the era of print. (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007: 8-9.)

Lankshear and Knobel (2007: 13) claim that the power of the printed book as a text paradigm and the social control associated with “bookspace” are integral to the old view of reading literacy. The book paradigm represented textual authority, shaped a conception of layout and played a central role in organizing reading practices. The book also mediated social relations of control and power between author and readers. The authorial voice was the voice of the expert, teacher or authority. The textual formats used to be relatively stable to ensure conformity. Certain genres of texts were privileged over others and seen as appropriate within particular contexts, for example at school, whereas others were regarded as more marginal or inappropriate. Literature classics, for example, have been privileged, whereas news texts have been viewed as more marginal. In the digital media space, text types are subject to experimentation, hybridisation, and rule breaking (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007: 13-14.) I assume that also



Finnish young people are inspired to experiment new genres of texts and multimodality in their out-of-school literacy practices while the school literacies are still associated with the bookspace and print literacies.

According to Lankshear and Knobel (2007: 11-13) the new literacy practices involve a new ethos which is more participatory, collaborative, and distributed than conventional literacy. It is less “published”, less “individuated”, less “author-centric” and less “expert-dominated” than conventional literacy. The new literacies may even demand a new kind of “mindset” (see Table 2). The world is being changed as a result of people exploring visions of the future, imagining new ways of doing things that are made possible by new tools and technologies, rather than using new technologies to do familiar things. The world, which is less hierarchical than before, emphasizes producing enabling services and tools for collective competence, expertise and production. The space for various activities is more open than earlier and social relations become visible. Since texts are connected with open and social space, they are in continuous change (Lankshear & Knobel, 2007: 11-13.)

TABLE 2. The old and new cultural mindsets

| Mindset 1   | Mindset 2  |
|---|--|
| <p>The world operates on material and industrial principles. The world is centred and hierarchical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products are material artefacts.</li> <li>• Tools are mainly production tools.</li> <li>• The individual is the unit of production and competence.</li> <li>• Expertise and authority are in individuals and institutions.</li> <li>• Space is enclosed and purpose specific.</li> <li>• Social relations of “bookspace” prevail; a stable textual order.</li> </ul> | <p>The world operates on non-material and post-industrial principles. The world is decentred and flat.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Products are enabling services.</li> <li>• Tools are tools of mediation and relationship technologies.</li> <li>• “Collectives “ is the unit of production and competence.</li> <li>• Expertise and authority are distributed and collective.</li> <li>• Space is open, continuous and fluid.</li> <li>• Social relations of emerging “digital media space” are visible; texts in change.</li> </ul> |

Some scholars (for example, Alvermann 2008: 8; Luukka et al. 2008: 26; Merchant 2009: 54; Schallert & Wade 2005: 521), however, disagree with this kind of dichotomy and argue that traditional and new literacies are not in real life contradictory but rather coexist. Like people, literacies are situated in various historical and cultural periods and are influenced by the context and technologies of the period. Also, like people, changes in literacy are often layered or laminated onto the old, creating hybrid forms of literacies. Older forms often exist side side by side with new ones influencing and shaping one another. As new literacies emerge and compete, older forms that fit less well with new technologies lose their value and fade. (Schallert & Wade 2005: 521.)

In the present study, I view new literacies similarly as The New London Group (1996: 60) in that they represent a multiplicity of communication channels and media as well as the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity. Meaning is constructed in ways that

are increasingly multimodal. I further agree with Lankshear and Knobel (2007: 11-13) in that new literacy practices involve not only new technologies but also a new ethos. New literacy practices are more participatory, collaborative, and distributed and less “published”, less “individuated” and less “expert-dominated” than conventional print literacy. New literacy practices are, however, seen to exist together with the traditional literacies that might still be relevant and useful at least to some youngsters, while new literacy practices might be more interesting for others. Whether this division is evident in youngsters’ literacy practices to the extent that it shows markers for literacy subcultures, is an interesting question to study. Furthermore, it is appealing to find out, whether the markers are related to the gender or proficiency in English or whether they are associated with personal interests or home background.

### **3.5 Studies on young people’s literacy practices**

Previous studies show that traditional and new literacy practices coexist in our society. Schallert and Wade (2005: 521, 526) have found that age and gender play key roles in acquiring new technologies and technology mediated literacies. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, being a literate 15-year-old seems to be quite different from being a literate 35- or 65-year-old. While young people have a strong grasp of new technologies and new literacies, they start a literacy journey from an entirely different point than those who are today 45- or 65-year-old. Supposedly, 14-year-old students, who form the focus group of this study, and their parents and teachers who may be 20, 30 or 40 years older, use and value literacy practices very differently. When young people find various types of new literacies interesting and meaningful, older age cohorts often value more traditional print literacies.

Among 14-year-olds, literacy practices also vary according to living contexts, interests, attitudes and values. Home and school resources, the major gateways to literacy learning can differ a lot. This is typically related to the educational and socio-economic background of families. Some families provide their children with variety of books,

newspapers and magazines, even in foreign languages, whereas other families cannot afford those. Internet connections, however, are common in most families in Finland (Leino et al. 2004: 263-264). Families' attitudes and values towards various literacy practices might also differ and transfer to youngsters, even though they might not always be aware of that. These values and attitudes may be reflected in youngsters' self-concept, motivation and attitudes towards studying at school (Wang & Guthrie 2004: 165-167). Therefore, I am interested in studying differences in students' literacy practices associated with their attitudes towards studying English, language achievement, self-concept as a language learner, motivation and home resources. I also explore how students divide into subgroups according to their preferences of literacy practices. This might be connected to students' literacy identities.

In young people's literacies, gender has played an important role. While girls have been more interested in and more engaged with traditional literacy practices, boys have shown more interest in technology and literacies related to that, even though women and particularly young girls have overcome earlier barriers to technology mediated practices. (Leino et al. 2004: 261; Schallert & Wade 2005: 526.) Based on these findings, I pay special attention to gender differences in favouring various types of literacy practices. I am also interested in whether youngsters divide into literacy practice subgroups based on gender.

Luukka et al. (2008: 34) studied Finnish 15-year-old students' print and media literacies related to both formal and informal contexts in 2006. The findings show that print media, particularly reading books, were generally associated with school learning, while new media practices were mainly situated at home. The most popular print media practices at home were reading newspapers (83% read at least once a year), comics (81%) and youth magazines (77%). The most popular new media practices at home were visiting Internet sites (93%), using e-mail (87%), chatting on the Internet (85%) and playing computer games (56%). (Luukka et al. 2008: 162-163; 184-186.) Gender differences in home literacies were most prominent in reading fiction and gaming. Girls favoured reading literature and youth magazines, while boys were interested in playing

various types of computer games and reading comics. The common purposes of media practices were searching information from the Internet or from books as well as contacting friends, relatives, family members or teachers via e-mail or phone. Internet chatting and relaxing with films, music or magazines were common as well. (Luukka et al. 172-174.)

In the study by Luukka et al. (2008: 182-183), the media practices of youngsters' proved to be multilingual. This was particularly the case in new media contexts. Even though the Finnish language was generally used in most media practices, 95% of students mentioned that English was the first foreign language to use in media contexts. The most popular media practices used in English were playing games and searching information on the Internet as well as using e-mail and chatting. Gaming and searching information were more popular among boys, whereas e-mail and chatting were favoured by girls. In this study (Luukka et al. 2008: 182-183; 204), teachers' opinions about new media practices were asked as well. The findings showed that the majority of foreign language teachers found computer games useful in language learning. More generally, foreign language teachers' out-of-school media practices accentuated traditional print media, television and searching information on the Internet. (Luukka et al. 2008: 182-183; 204.)

A national survey on the roles and functions of English in the Finnish society, conducted in 2007 (Leppänen et al. 2009a: 96-98, 103), showed that the majority (83%) of the young respondents (15- to 24-year-old) read e-mail in English at least sometimes, and almost half (42%) of them read English web-pages daily. In addition, two thirds of the young write e-mail or web-texts in English at least sometimes. A similar pattern can be seen in youngsters' more specialized uses of new media, such as information search, chat, buying goods, and playing electronic or Internet games. In the light of these findings (Leppänen et al. 2009b: 1081), Finnish youngsters seem to be active, confident and skilled users of the new media. The skilled use of new media together with the use of English form a powerful combination to various literacy practices and spaces, both local and global.

According to Leppänen's studies (2007: 167) on Finnish youth language, Finnish youngsters use English in informal contexts often and quite creatively for their own purposes. For example, in game-playing situations English is often used for interacting with the game and other players to enhance the playing experience. In hip-hop lyrics and fan fiction English is not only part of a mixed style in which the local and the global are merged together but also a means of creating a meaningful distinction between Finnish and English. These case studies indicate that young Finns are able to take up English informally as one communicative resource and design their uses in ways that allow them to express and negotiate their meanings and identities. (Leppänen 2007: 167.)

The recent studies prove that the major difference between old and new literacies exist between formal schooling and informal youth culture (Alvermann & Heron 2001: 121-122; Luukka 2008: 234-236). The findings of these studies indicate that school education still values published and expert-dominated print literacies. Young people, however, are active in various self-initiated and technology mediated literacy practices where they push their development into an increasingly symbolic use of pictures, sounds, and movement added to verbal displays that can access local and even global networks across languages and cultures. (Alvermann & Heron 2001: 121-122; Schallert & Wade 2005: 526.) This situation may involve the risk that school literacy curricula no longer hold relevance for youngsters. They are communicating in increasingly expansive networked environments that are quite similar to working life (Selfe & Hawisher 2004: 233).

Recently, there have been various efforts to build a bridge between traditional and new literacies in education (e.g. Alvermann 2008: 8; Luukka et al. 2008: 26-27; Merchant 2008: 40; Moje 2007: 5). Based on her ethnographic studies on adolescents' out-of-school activities, Alvermann (2008: 9-10) suggests that, in designing new literacy practices for schools, curriculum planners should accept those literacies that powerfully motivate young people who are willing to invest a substantial amount of time and effort

in creating content to share with others online. Youngsters are often tirelessly producing or remixing multimodal content that they find online or in books to be shared with others in order to express their feelings and opinions. In these practices, they are rewriting their social identities in an effort to become who they say they are. (Alvermann (2008: 9-10.) They seem to be developing literacies that will serve them well today and in the years to come.

In the present study, I aim to build bridge not only between traditional print and new media literacy practices but also between everyday literacy practices and formal learning of English as a foreign language. I assume, based on Leppänen's findings (2007: 167), that Finnish young people use English in various literacy practices quite confidently and creatively for their own purposes and goals. When youngsters eagerly produce and remix multimodal texts in English they provide themselves with resources for self-generated learning opportunities, which might be equivalent to several years of school education.

## **4 RESEARCH TASK AND METHODS**

In this section, the goals and research questions of the present study are first set up. Secondly, the theoretical frame and main concepts are briefly summarized. Thirdly, the research methods are introduced by focusing first on methodological approach, then on data inquiry and analysis, and finally, on reliability, validity and ethical considerations of the chosen methods.

### **4.1 Research questions**

The aim of the present study is to investigate which out-of-school literacy practices contribute to Finnish 8<sup>th</sup> grade students' learning of English. The study illuminates the general situation only in one school, but seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of

specific learner profiles and their characteristics as well as to examine some background factors associated with them. In addition, individual students' learning experiences, motivations and contexts are explored in greater detail.

The research questions are as follows:

1. What out-of-school literacy practices contribute to students' learning of English?
  - 1.1 Do students experience new multimodal literacy practices more useful than the traditional print literacy practices?
  - 1.2 Are spoken language practices found more useful than written ones?
  - 1.3 Which literacy purposes students find most useful in language learning?
2. What are the similarities and differences in literacy practice profiles between different student groups?
  - 2.1 boys and girls?
  - 2.2 low- and high-achieving students?
  - 2.3 students whose attitudes towards studying English are different?
  - 2.4 students with different self-concepts in learning English?
  - 2.5 students with different home resources?
  - 2.6 What other kinds of student groups and group profiles can be discovered?
3. What motivates students to use various literacy practices?
4. What kind of English students learn through various literacy practices?

The first two questions focus on the general situation of 8<sup>th</sup> graders' literacy practice profiles and on students' clustering into subgroups. These questions are answered with the survey. The questions 3 and 4 further explore and specify individual students' learning experiences, motivations and informal learning of English. The last two questions are answered with student interviews.



## 4.2 Conceptual frame

The conceptual frame of the present study is grounded on theories and earlier studies of young people's informal learning of English through authentic literacy practices outside school. Informal learning is understood here as by-product of out-of-school activities. It occurs at any time and at any place, at home and in leisure time activities. Informal learning means here that the learner sets the goals, or the learning is incidental in social situation and motivated by interesting experiences, ideas or feelings (Cross 2007: 229-230; Erraut 2000: 12-13). Informal learning is contextualized activity, which is often shared and collaborative (Beckett & Hager 2002: 128).

In a similar vein, learning English informally is understood from the socio-cultural view contacts with the language in everyday settings related to the needs and interests of the language users (Nikula and Pitkänen-Huhta 2008: 171). It occurs spontaneously in everyday life, within the family, peers, community or media through socialization in interaction with other people (Luukka et al. 2008: 19; Moje et al. 2004: 41-42). I assume like Krashen (1981: 6-7) that informal language learning can support and enrich learning at school.

The socio-cultural view is also chosen to define literacies as social practices, which work in various settings for different domains and spaces of life. Literacy practices are understood to have a purpose, history and future, and they change when new social and cultural contexts create new possibilities, needs and demands (Barton 1994: 34-35). In my study, I apply views that practices can be observable (Scribner & Cole, as cited by Barton 1994: 37; Alvermann 2008: 9; Moje 2008: 59-60). The practices are understood authentic when youngsters find them interesting, meaningful and engaging in their life (Sulkunen 2007: 43-44). Authentic practices serve young people's personal goals and reflect their culture and social relations.

In this study, new literacy practices are seen as The New London Group (1996:60) representing a multiplicity of communication channels and the increasing linguistic diversity. In various practices meaning is made in ways that are usually multimodal. I further agree with Lankshear and Knobel (2007:11-13), who argue that new literacies involve a new ethos, which is more participatory, collaborative and distributed than conventional print literacy. I assume, however, that traditional and new literacies are not in real life contradictory but coexist. (Schallert & Wade 2005: 521).

Among 14-year-olds, living contexts, interests, attitudes and values vary and may have an impact in literacy practices and informal learning. Home resources, such as books, papers and Internet access, can differ (Leino 2004: 262-263). Gender has also played an important role in engaging in various literacies (Schallert & Wade 2005: 526). There might be differences between students also in their attitudes towards studying English, in their self-concept as a language learner and in motivation. Furthermore, it is interesting to discover how students divide into subgroups according to their literacy practices contributing to learning of English. This might reflect on students' literacy identities.

The conceptual frame of the present study is presented in Figure 1.

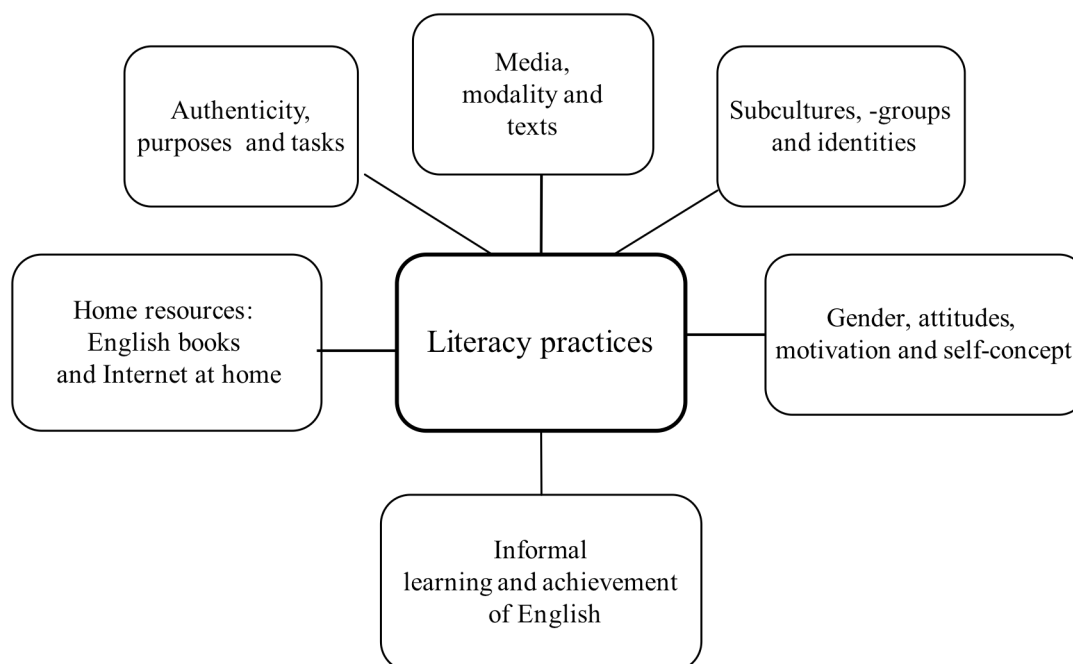


FIGURE 1. The conceptual frame of the present study

As the Figure 1 points out, literacy practices are in the centre of the present study. Literacy practices are specified from the perspectives of authenticity and purposes as well as media and modality of texts. Furthermore, practices are explored from the point of view of subgroups of students that might reveal some differences in identities. Differences in literacy practices that contribute to learning of English are assumed to be associated with gender, subgroup and -culture, home resources as well as attitudes, motivation and self-concept in studying English.

Students' attitudes, motivation and self-concept have been found to be associated with literacy practices in several studies (for example, Gee 2007: 95; Guthrie & Davis 2003: 72-73; Moje et al. 2008: 116-117; Wang & Guthrie 2004: 178-180). Attitudes towards studying English are understood as tendencies to evaluate a particular object, in this

case studying English, with some degree of favour or disfavour (Chaiken 2001: 899; Gardner 1985: 40-41). Attitude structure is composed not only of students' general evaluation but also of associated cognition and emotions (Chaiken 2001: 899). Motivation is viewed from both intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives. Intrinsic motivation involves engagement in an activity based on personal interest. Extrinsic motivation refers to participation in an activity based on external values, demands or rewards. (Wang & Guthrie 2004: 162, 165.) Self-concept as a language learner is understood as a self-attitude, a person's feelings and knowledge about his or her abilities and skills. Self-concept is based on how experiences are interpreted and influenced by significant others. (Taube 1988: 5, 10.) Home resources have been related in previous studies (for example, Leino et al. 2004: 262-263) to literacy practices as well. In this study, they are viewed as English materials and Internet access at home. Students' achievement in English is defined as marks in the previous record card in school and their learning of English is described in their own words by interviewing.

### **4.3 Methodological approach**

The study applied a *mixed methods* approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methods were applied. The mixed methods approach derives from pragmatism as a practical research philosophy (Cresswell 2003: 11; Tashakkori & Teddlie 2003: 20). It has been argued that the mixed methods approach suits well to studies of individuals in social contexts (Tashakori & Teddlie 2003: 17-20). This approach can also increase the reliability of the study, since by applying multiple methods (methodological triangulation) a more complete understanding of the phenomenon can be achieved (Sulkunen 2007: 75).

In this study, the quantitative method – a survey – was used to provide a general view of the students' literacy practice preferences and individual students' practice profiles in relation to the usefulness of informal learning of English. The survey enabled the inclusion of a wide spectrum of different literacy events and practices in the study. The

qualitative method – case interviews – was complementary and could further illustrate and clarify students' responses and, in particular, explore what motivates students and which specific language skills and contents students have experienced that they had learnt informally. The interview data could assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of the survey and triangulate the data methodologically, which strengthens the reliability and content validity of the study (Cresswell 2003: 215). Thus, the priority was given to the quantitative method while the qualitative inquiry was secondary. The design of the data inquiry approach can be described according to Cresswell (2003: 214) as a *sequential explanatory* strategy: QUAN → qual.

## **4.4 Data inquiry**

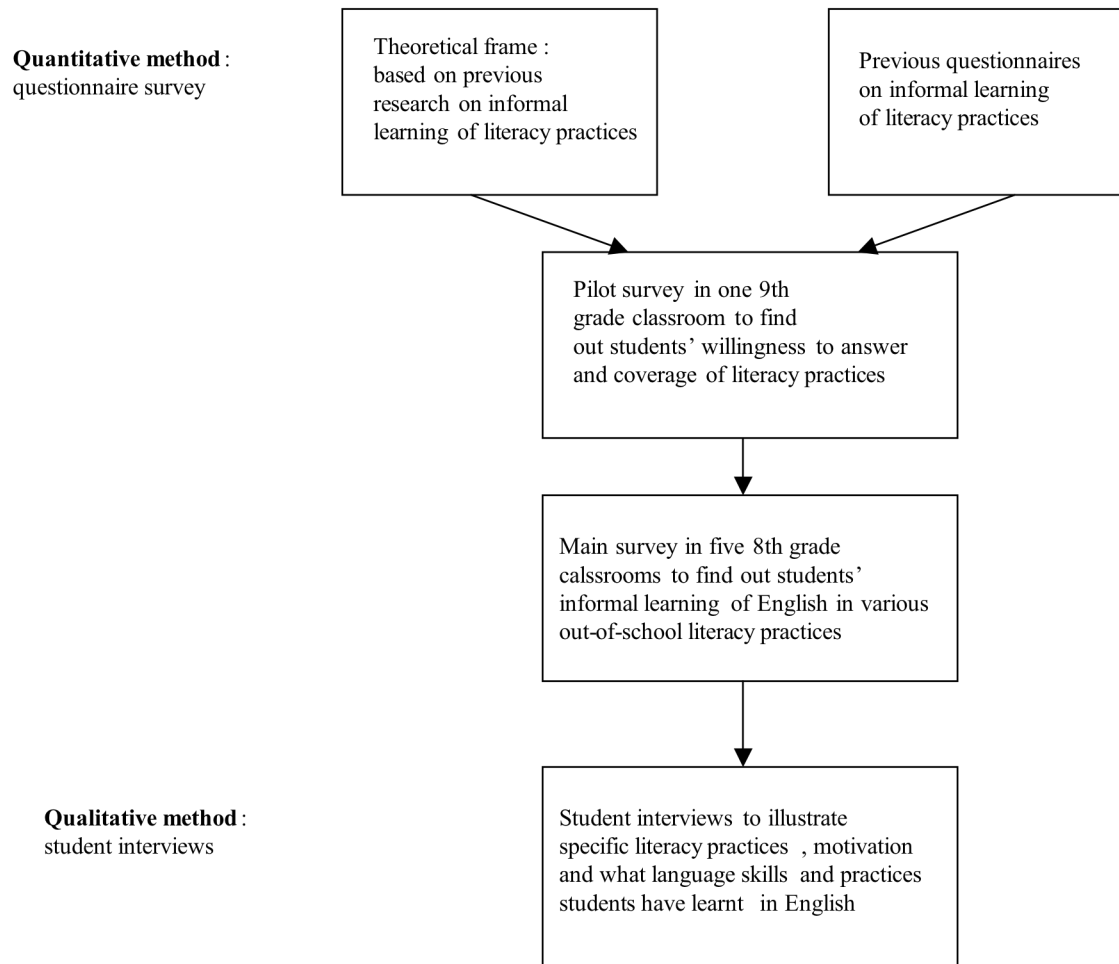
### **4.4.1 Data inquiry methods**

The main quantitative method was a survey based on a student *questionnaire*. The questionnaire was used to collect data from a large sample of students to find out which literacy practices students had experienced contributing to their informal learning of English. The questions focusing on various literacy practices were asked in the self-assessing format in order to emphasize students' own views and experiences, trusting that the students themselves are the experts on their own informal learning.

Students' learning profiles were exploited to select respondents for further *case interviews*. The selected students represented various subgroups discovered in the survey. The interviewing method in the case study can be defined as a *focused semi-structured interview*, which was applied in order to discover and authenticate individual students' experiences (Kvale 1996: 124). This method is a functional way to conduct interviews with adolescents because it provides the person interviewed with enough support and encouragement but allows a freedom of expression and modification as well. Since the interviews varied a little according to the survey answers of each individual interviewee, a pre-structured interview would have been too restricted.

However, some structure had to be given to assure that all the research questions were dealt with. The main themes in the interview focused on students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as well as learning and using English in various literacy practices. Even though a semi-structured interview followed an interview guide with some questions planned in advance, it was an efficient and practical way of getting enriching data on the areas suggested by the respondents in the survey. (Kvale 1996: 124.) The interviews were audio-recorded. The interviewer took notes at the same time and reviewed, summarised and reflected on the notes after each interview.

The methods and the data gathering process are illustrated in Figure 2. and will be discussed in further detail in the following chapters 4.4.2. and 4.4.3.



□

FIGURE 2. Methods and the data gathering process of the study

#### 4.4.2 Survey with questionnaire

In order to find out which literacy practices contributed most to students' informal learning of English, students rated various literacy practice items by applying a Likert ordinal scale as follows:

- 5 = more than a lot
- 4 = a lot
- 3 = some
- 2 = not much
- 1 = nothing at all

The literacy practice items were based on previous studies and questionnaires focusing on students' engagement in various literacy practices (Alvermann 2008: 11-12; Luukka et al. 2008: 260-261; Moje et al. 2004: 52-64; PISA Assessment framework 2009: 269, 279). Items were written to represent various free time domains and spaces, such as home and family, peer groups and friends, travelling and spending time in various media environments. Among the original 22 items, 7 represented printed media, 16 digital multimedia and 1 face-to-face practices. Two open questions on literacy practices were included into the pilot questionnaire to be sure that all useful media practices, purposes and tasks were covered from students' point of view.

The questionnaire was piloted in one 9<sup>th</sup> grade class (18 students) on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2009 in Jyväskylän Normaalikoulu to find out whether the questions covered the main literacy practices. In addition, the pilot study aimed to estimate the testing time and students' willingness and capability to answer the questions. In the pilot, students completed the questionnaire rather quickly (in 15–20 minutes). There were only few clarifying questions asked, but generally the rating of the literacy practices seemed to flow easily. Girls also completed the open questions carefully by telling about the most useful experiences in their informal learning. Boys' answers were shorter and did not give much further information to develop the instrument. Some students used the rating

scale from 0 to 5 instead of 1 to 5, since they seemed to think that a value meaning ‘nothing at all’ had to be 0. The scale, however, was considered an ordinal scale, which does not accept the numerical value of 0 for statistical reasons. Many students expressed their willingness to be interviewed, if interviewing would take place during school hours.

Based on the pilot responses, the questionnaire was modified. Five extra items that students had proposed were included into the set of literacy practices and two background questions were discarded as irrelevant. The open essay question focusing on the learning experiences was revised and some adjustments and clarifications were also made to make the answering easier.

In the finalised version of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1), there were total of 28 items, of which one was open. Among the items, 8 could be categorized as print media practices, 16 digital media practices and 4 face-to-face practices. Of the items, 11 emphasised social communication, 9 entertainment and 7 information searching. At least 14 of the items could be described as social or collaborative and interactive, 13 items could be viewed as mainly individual. Most items (12) represented practices where information was mainly received. In 5 items the information producing was emphasised. However, categorising the different practices is ambiguous because many practices included some characteristics of other categories as well. For example, it is ambiguous whether listening to music is a social or individual practice or whether talking in Skype can be classified as multimedia or face-to-face practice. In fact, many of the items fit in multiple categories depending on their social context and purpose.

In addition to the literacy practices, the questionnaire asked students’ background information, such as gender, mark in English in the previous report, home resources (English books and Internet access at home) as well as students’ attitudes towards studying and their self-concept in learning English (see Appendix 1). The main background and response variables of the survey are presented in Table 3.



TABLE 3. The main variables measured in the survey

| <b>Background variables</b>        | <b>Literacy practices (response variables)</b> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Gender                             | Media: print, digital                          |
| Achievement (mark) in English      | Modality: text, visual, oral, audio            |
| Attitudes towards studying English | Purpose: informative, social, entertaining     |
| Self-concept                       | Task: individual, collaborative;               |
| Home resources                     | receiving, interactive, productive             |
|                                    | Language: written, spoken                      |

Achievement in English was measured by asking the mark in the last school record. Attitudes towards studying English were viewed from the perspectives of a cognitive (importance) and an affective (pleasure) component. Students self-assessed their attitudes on the questionnaire by answering how important (Likert scale 1-3) and how pleasurable (Likert scale 1-3) it was to study English at school. Students' self-concept was measured by asking on the questionnaire which mark they should have earned in the following English language skills: reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and courage to perform by using the common school scale from 4 to 10. Students' self-concept was estimated based on the means of their marks. Students' home resources were measured as English books and the Internet access at home.

One open essay question was also included into the questionnaire. This question asked what literacy practices students experienced the most contributory to their informal learning of English. This was because it was expected that a student with interesting learning profile might not be willing to be interviewed. The written answer could then be further used in the qualitative analysis.

The main survey was conducted among all 8<sup>th</sup> graders in Jyväskylä Normaalikoulu. Altogether, 80 students from five classes were in the intended sample. Only two students were not attending school in the survey days. Thus, altogether 78 students responded on the survey questionnaire in March 2010. The response rate was as high as 98 per cent. Among respondents 44 were girls and 34 were boys. This was, of course, just a selected sample. That is why the results cannot be generalised to the whole age cohort. This sample could, however, be large enough to have some transferability to

other students in that school and, particularly, to find out various learner profiles for further qualitative interviews. From the survey sample 10 students were selected for interviews. The selection was based on students' responses in the survey, so that the selected students represented various subgroups of students.

The questionnaire was filled out during the 8<sup>th</sup> graders' guidance counselor's class and it took roughly 20 minutes, including the instructions. For the most part, the testing events went well. Most of the students listened to the instructions attentively and filled their questionnaires with care. Of course, there were also a few exceptions who were not that interested in the study and demonstrated it with some disruptive behaviour, but this can only be described as normal for youngsters of this age group. However, even the disruptive students had filled out their questionnaires with an adequate effort, so none of the answer sheets had to be discarded.

#### **4.4.3 Student interviews**

The student interviews aimed to clarify and illuminate students' informal learning profiles and to discover students' experiences in learning English informally. The interview focused on three main themes (see Appendix 2):

- 1) specific literacy practices that students found interesting in their informal learning of English (intrinsic motivation)
- 2) specific literacy practices and contexts that students found useful to informal learning of English (extrinsic motivation)
- 3) English language skills, contents and practices that students experienced they had learned through informal literacy practices in comparison to school learning

The first topic elucidated the students' intrinsic motivation, their personal interests, likes and dislikes, as well as their reasoning behind that. It also set a positive tone to the

rest of the interview. The second topic focused on extrinsic motivation, the usefulness of literacy practices and the context of usage. The third topic provided complementary data on students' learning of English in their words and meanings.

As regards the first two topics, students' interviews followed the questionnaire structure and asked students to specify those text environments that they had found the most and least interesting and useful in learning English informally. This part was structured according to students' responses on the questionnaire. The less strictly structured open-ended questions on the third topic started with students' own views on language practices, skills and contents. In cases where students had difficulties to answer in their own words, the language practices, skills and contents presented in the background questionnaire were referred to. The frame of the interview that guided the practice is presented in Appendix 2.

The interviewer followed systematically the main questions of the guiding frame. If the student, however, answered a later question already in the context of a previous one, the question was not repeated. For example, when the interviewer asked about the usefulness of some literacy practices, a student might already tell in that context what kind of language skills and contents they learnt with that specific practice. Sometimes students also told about their experiences without being asked about them. In the analysis, the answers were related to the relevant topic.

Students were interviewed one month after the survey in April 2010 during the school hours. Ten students were selected for the interview to represent various types of responses based on the cluster analysis of the survey data. Among selected interviewees there were five girls and five boys; six high- and four low-achievers in English.

## **4.5 Methods of analysis**

### **4.5.1 Survey data**

Based on the student ratings in the questionnaire, each literacy practice received a numerical value of amount of English learnt through that practice on a scale from 1 (nothing at all) to 5 (more than a lot). Even though the numerical scale is ordinal, it can be used as an interval scale, which enables statistical analyses of the survey data (Metsämuuronen 2005: 61). Student profiles could be drawn based on the student level ratings. Furthermore, means of all students' ratings were calculated to form the mean ratings of the whole student sample. In a similar way, gender and achievement group means were calculated. A paired samples t-test (2-tailed with significance level of 5 %) (Nummenmaa et al. 1997: 83-88) was used to compare and contrast the mean ratings of boys and girls as well as low and high achieving students and, in particular, to see whether the differences between the student groups were statistically significant.

The students were further divided into subgroups according to their differences in attitudes towards studying English. Attitudes were viewed from the perspectives of a cognitive (3= very, 2= quite and 1= not at all important) and an affective (3= very, 2= quite and 1= not at all pleasurable) component. 59 students (76%) claimed that studying English was very important and 19 students (24%) stated that it was quite important. None of the students thought that studying English was unimportant. The students, however, did not feel strongly that studying English at school was pleasurable. Only 13 students (17%) felt that studying English was very pleasurable, 60 students (77%) found it quite pleasurable and 5 students (6%) thought that it was not at all pleasurable. The correlations between ratings of literacy practices and attitudes were estimated to find out the association of attitudes with the usefulness of literacy practices.

The students' self-concept was measured by asking in the questionnaire which mark they should have earned in six English language skills (reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and courage to perform) by using the common school grading scale from 4 to 10. Based on the means of their marks, students were divided into two groups. Those students whose mark mean was 8,5 or above was considered to have a strong self-concept in learning English (53%), and those whose mark mean was below 8,5 were considered to have a weak self-concept in learning English (47%).

The students' home resources, that is, English books at home and the Internet access, were asked about as well. Based on the students' responses on the English books at home, they were divided into two groups, those who had 20 or less English books at home (58 students, 74%) and those who had more than 20 (20 students, 26%). All students, except one, had an access to the Internet at home. Due to this finding, the students were not divided into subgroups based on the Internet connection.

To identify distinct student groups and their literacy practice profiles, the students' responses were submitted to a cluster analysis (Nummenmaa et al. 1997: 300; Metsämuuronen 2005: 812-813). The clusters were formed by grouping cases consecutively into bigger clusters until all cases were members of a single cluster. The method for cluster formation was Ward's method, and the distance measure used was the squared Euclidean distance (in SPSS). Ward's hierarchical clustering method is based on within-group sums of squares. For each cluster, the means of literacy practice variables were calculated, and then for each case the squared Euclidean distance to the cluster mean was estimated. At each step, the number of groups is reduced by one, by combining the two groups which give the smallest increase in the total within-group sum of squares (Metsämuuronen 2005: 815-816). Statistical analyses were conducted in the Information Management Centre of the University of Jyväskylä.

### 4.5.2 Interview data

The qualitative interview data were used mainly to specify and illustrate students' views and opinions. The interviewed students represented various learner profiles found by the cluster analysis. The interviews were transcribed verbatim (see Appendix 3). Interview data were further analysed by close reading, condensing, categorising and interpreting the main themes of the three topics (Kvale 1996. 189-191). The data collection methods and focuses as well as data analysing methods are summarized in Table 4.

TABLE 4. Data and methods of analysis

| <i>Data collection method</i> | <i>Focus of analysis</i>  | <i>Data analysis</i>  |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| Survey: questionnaire         | Entire grade level (8 <sup>th</sup> ) in one school; gender, achievement, attitude, self-concept and home resource groups; student clusters | Mean ratings of useful literacy practices; comparing mean ratings and testing the significance of differences (t-tests) by gender and by achievement groups; correlations of achievement marks and attitudes with the literacy practice ratings to find out relations; cluster analysis to discover subgroups; factor analysis to explore the latent structure of students' responses on literacy practice items. |
| Case studies: interview       | Individual students   | Content analysis: close reading, condensation, categorization and interpretation of the main themes of motivation and informal learning of English.   |

### 4.6 Reliability, validity and ethical considerations

The reliability of the questionnaire data was retested in the interview in a sub-sample of students when the literacy practice questions were repeated and students had to illustrate

and specify their responses on the questionnaire. The interviewed students' responses were consistent and corresponded to the ratings of the questionnaire items. This also strengthened the content validity of the questionnaire items when students had to specify their answers.

The construct validity of the survey measurement was also approached by an exploratory factor analysis (principal component analysis with Varimax rotation), which could determine latent factors behind students' responses on literacy practice items. In determining the number of factors to be extracted only those factors whose eigenvalue was larger than 1 were included. (Cohen and Manion 1986: 346; Metsämuuronen 2005: 598-599). The factor analysis indicated, as seen in Table 5, that the literacy practice items did not structure in students' responses according to any specific aspect or characteristic or the literacy practices but rather according to various combinations of media, purposes, modalities, tasks and language used. In the following, the factors are named according to the most prominent and common feature of the literacy practices with highest loadings.

TABLE 5. Factor structure of literacy practice items (highest factor loadings, based on the principal axis factoring with Varimax rotation)

|  | F 1<br>(AV*) | F 2<br>(GI*) | F 3<br>(SC*) | F 4<br>(RP*) | F 5<br>(M*) |
|--|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| Watching movies                        | .86          |              |              |              |             |
| Watching TV                            | .85          |              |              |              |             |
| Listening to music                     |              |              |              |              | .43         |
| Watching Youtube                       |              | .69          |              |              |             |
| Chatting on the Internet               |              |              | .53          |              |             |
| Searching the Internet for information |              | .60          |              |              |             |
| Playing single player comp. games      |              | .73          |              |              |             |
| Traveling abroad                       |              |              | .48          |              |             |
| Discussing with foreigners             |              |              | .59          |              |             |
| Singing songs                          |              |              |              |              | .64         |
| Playing multi-player com. games        |              | .70          |              |              |             |
| Reading manuals and instructions       |              | .49          |              |              |             |
| Communicating via e-mail               |              |              | .54          |              |             |
| Discussing in the family               |              |              | .41          |              |             |
| Reading newspapers                     |              |              |              | .59          |             |
| Using Facebook                         |              |              | .45          |              |             |
| Instant messaging                      |              |              | .79          |              |             |
| Visiting forums                        |              |              | .41          |              |             |
| Reading novels                         |              |              |              | .59          |             |
| Reading comics                         |              | .56          |              |              |             |
| Reading and writing blogs              |              |              | .42          |              |             |
| Reading non-fiction                    |              |              |              | .50          |             |
| Reading on-line news                   |              | .47          |              |              |             |
| Reading magazines                      |              |              |              | .55          |             |
| Reading and writing letters            |              |              | .48          |              |             |
| Playing board and role play games      |              | .47          |              |              |             |
| Visiting virtual worlds                |              |              |              | .61          |             |

*AV, audio-visual entertainment*

*GI, games and interests*

*SC, social communication*

*RP, reading print*

*M, music*

The first factor had the highest loadings on the literacy practice items that represented mainly *audio-visual entertainment*. The highest loadings were in watching films and TV. Both of these practices represent multimodal digital media where English is presented in



spoken language. The highly loaded practices are both responsive and primarily individual practices. The second factor had highest loadings in *computer games* and students' *interests*. These literacy practices represent entertaining, social and information searching purposes. The media are mainly digital and multimodal. For example, reading manuals and comics can be based on both printed and digital media. The language can be either spoken or written and tasks can be individual or social, but mainly interactive and collaborative. The third factor was loaded on the items that emphasised *social communication* by using various media, Internet, mobile phones, texts and face-to-face interaction. The language of these practices is mainly spoken even though it can be written and printed as well. The fourth factor represented mainly *reading printed* texts and using written language. The purposes of highly loaded practices can be entertaining or informative. The fifth factor was loaded on items representing *music*, both listening and singing. These practices can be multimodal (for example, music videos or singing karaoke) or emphasise only auditive media. They can represent both productive and receiving as well as both individual and collaborative tasks, where oral language is mainly used. The main purposes of these practices are entertaining, social or self-expressive.

The latent factors of students' responses indicate that literacy practices are combined in young people's minds mainly as multimedia practices that combine traditional and new media and various modalities of literacies. Particularly, the second and third factor represent a multiplicity of communication channels, media and texts. The first factor seems to be based on the traditional audiovisual multimedia, TV and films. The fourth factor represents the traditional reading of printed texts. The fifth factor is joining practices based on the music. The findings further indicate that new and traditional literacy practices both merge and coexist in students' minds.

The reliability of the survey data was checked during the interview by comparing students' answers in the interview with the responses they had given in the questionnaire. The correspondence of the answers was significant. The credibility of the qualitative data was checked by comparing students' answers to different questions in

the interview. Students' answers were coherent and consistent as well (see Kvale 1996: 235). There is, however, the possibility that only the most active and motivated students were willing to be interviewed. On the other hand, because interviews took place during the school hours, 42 students of 78 expressed their willingness to be interviewed. Thus, also some less active and less motivated youngsters could be selected.

Ethical issues were taken into consideration during the data collection (Cresswell 2003, 64-65). Students were informed about the purpose and procedures of the study and they had the right to participate voluntarily in the survey. No one, however, refused. They could further express their willingness to be interviewed by signing their name at the end of the questionnaire. Students for the interview were picked up from those applicants. In further analyses, students' privacy was protected and the anonymity of students was ensured by using pseudonyms for reporting results (see Kvale: 153-154).

## **5 RESULTS**

Keeping the research questions and the methodological approach in mind, this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section reports the results of the survey with the quantitative approach by following the order of the research questions. First, the results focus on the literacy practice profile of the entire age cohort of students in one school. The profile is drawn based on students' responses on the perceived role of various literacy practices in learning English. Findings are viewed from the perspective of media and modality, the language used as well as the purposes and tasks of literacy practices. Second, the similarities and differences in literacy practice profiles between different student groups are compared and contrasted. Attention is paid to gender differences as well as differences between high- and low-achieving students, students with different attitudes and self-concept, and students with different home resources. Third, the results of the cluster analysis that identifies distinct student groups and their literacy practice profiles are presented. The second section of this chapter reports the results of the

qualitative student interviews and thus explores the ten individual students' experiences of various literacy practices and their perceived role in learning English. First, the results examine students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in relation to specific literacy practices. At the end, students' experiences of learning English both in informal and formal contexts are described in their own words.

## **5.1 Survey**

### **5.1.1 The role of out-of-school literacy practices in learning English**

The general results of the students' views on the perceived role of various literacy practices in learning English are presented in Figure 3 in the preference order based on students' mean ratings. The ratings show that students found watching English-spoken films and TV-programmes as well as listening to music most useful to their language learning. On average, students had learnt a lot of English from these practices. Furthermore, watching YouTube, chatting on-line, searching for information on the Internet and gaming were found quite useful. After the popular on-line practices, some real life face-to-face social practices, such as travelling abroad and talking with foreigners were found quite useful. Likewise, singing songs (for example, karaoke), reading manuals and communicating via e-mail, discussing with the family and reading newspapers in English were experienced as somewhat useful. The ratings were quite similar for using Facebook, instant messaging and visiting forums. Reading novels, non-fiction or magazines in English were rated surprisingly low. The ratings indicate that on average students had not found these practices very contributory or they did not exercise them often. Reading comics as well as reading and writing blogs were also rated surprisingly low. Least contributory, however, were visiting virtual worlds, playing board and role play games as well as reading and writing letters.

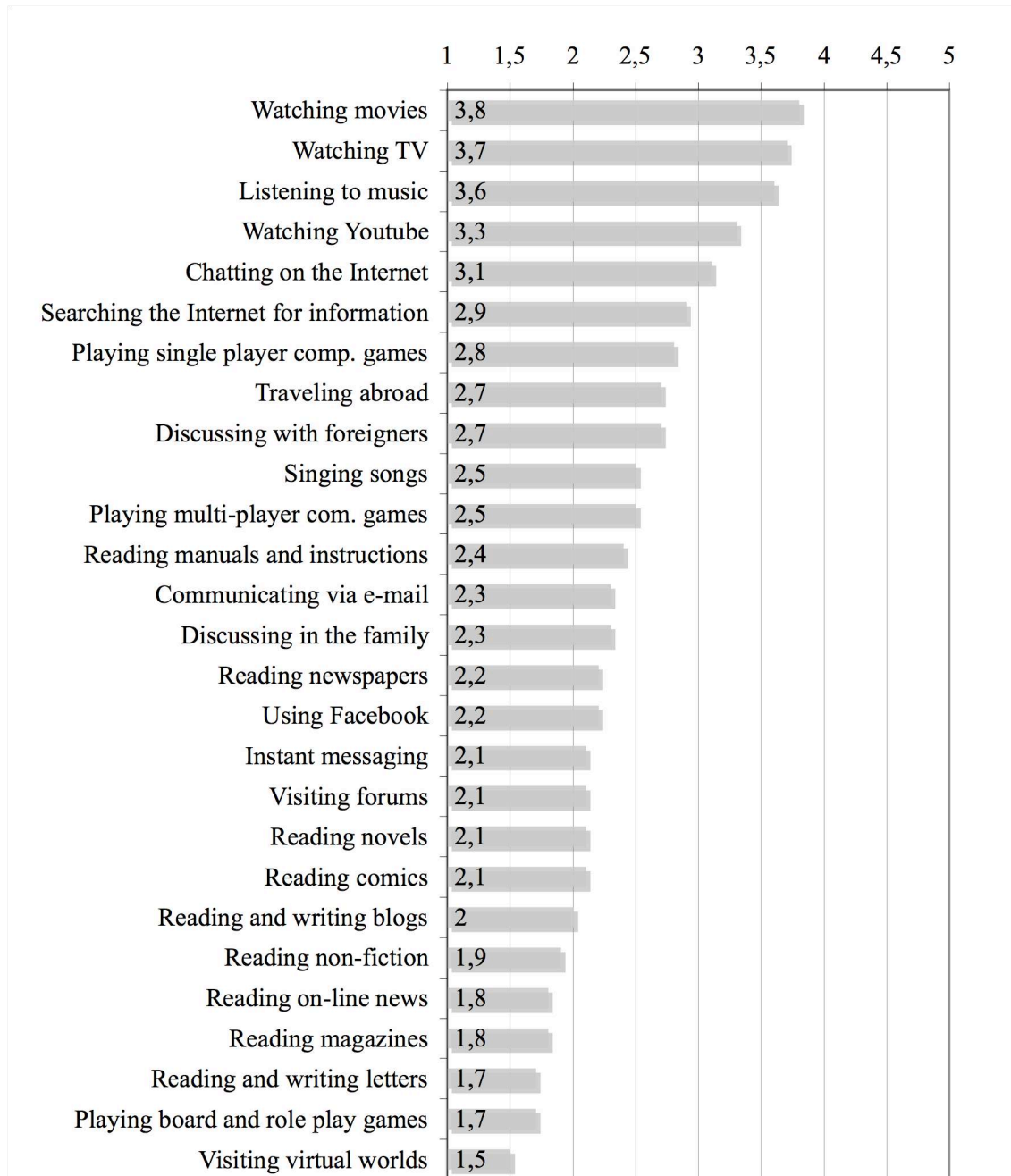


FIGURE 3. Mean ratings of literacy practices contributing to students' informal learning of English (in 1–5 Likert scale)

The results indicate that students felt they had learnt English mostly through entertaining multimodal literacy practices, such as listening to oral language, whether spoken or sang. The multimodality of these literacy practices also included viewing films and

listening to music. In these practices the purpose is mainly responsive and the role of the student is quite passive. These practices, however, are embedded with emotions and narrative features and some of them, for example Youtube, often contain humour. Furthermore, literacy practices that were both social and entertaining, such as chatting and playing Internet games were found quite useful. They are more interactive and the students' role is more active. In chats, language is written, but close to spoken language. In computer games both oral and written language is used and the games are often socially shared. Social function and interactive collaboration with spoken language was represented in face-to-face situations and practices, such as travelling abroad and discussing with foreigners. However, seeking information with reading printed or digital texts was also presented among useful literacy practices, at least in terms of searching and receiving information on the Internet and reading manuals and instructions. The findings, however, also indicate that the most traditional literacy practices related to reading printed texts and writing were not found very useful in informal language learning on average. Responsive and interactive practices were preferred to productive literacies.

To conclude, the general view of the literacy practices that contribute to the students' language learning outside school strongly accentuates new multimodal media practices. The students prefer entertaining and social purposes in practices and tasks that are primarily responsive or self-expressive. The most useful practices can be both individual and collaborative. The spoken conversational language is favoured instead of the formal written language.

### **5.1.2 Literacy practice profiles by gender**

The general view of the most useful literacy practices changes to some extent when the literacy profiles are compared and contrasted by gender. There were both similarities and differences in girls' and boys' literacy practice favourites as can be seen in Figure 4. The significance of differences between gender groups can be seen in Appendix 4 (in Table A).

Similarities could be found in both most and least favoured practices. Both girls and boys reported quite similarly that they had learnt a lot or at least some English by watching movies, TV and YouTube as well as searching the Internet for information. The learning profiles were quite similar also among the least favoured practices, such as visiting forums, reading non-fiction and magazines.

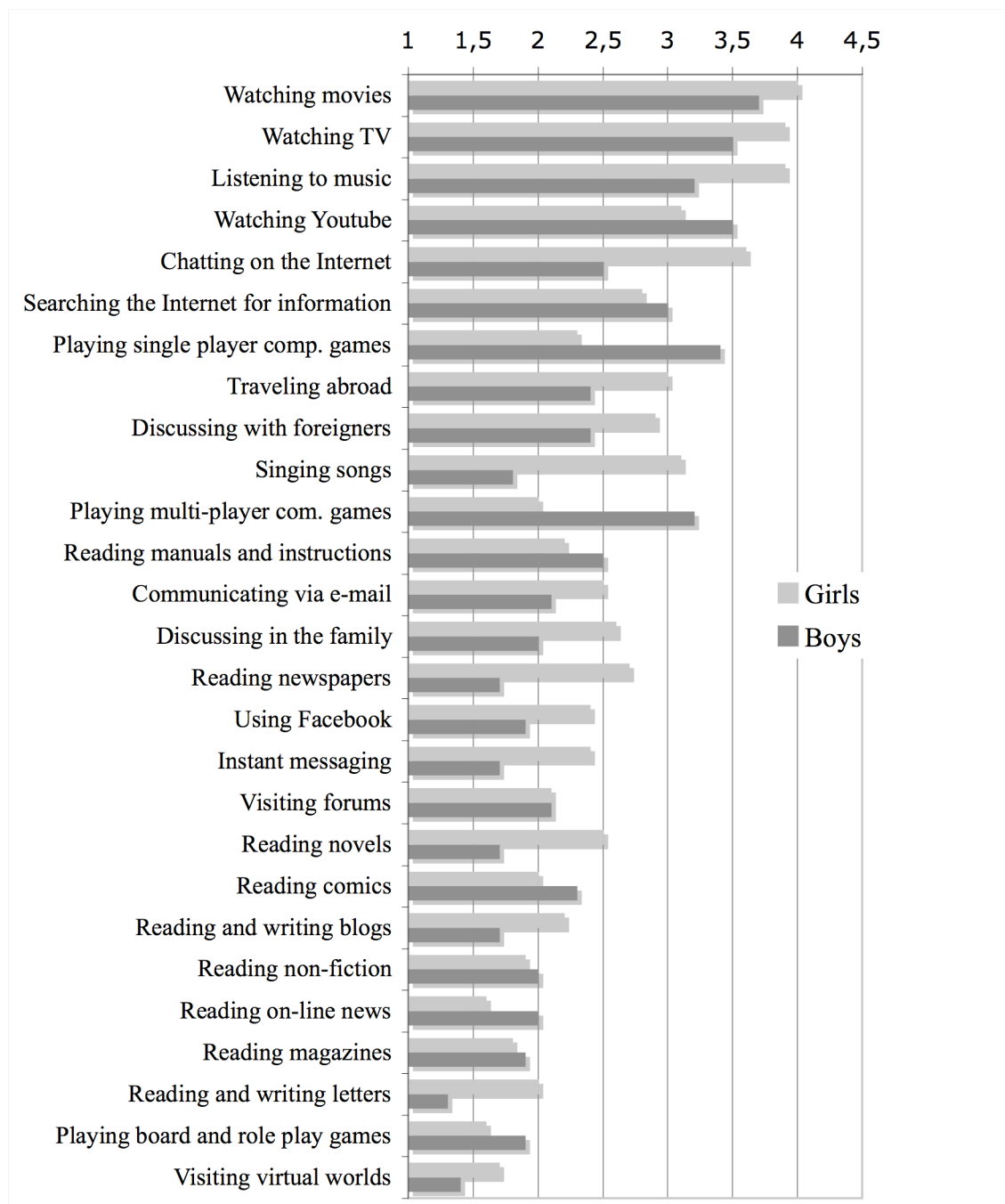


FIGURE 4. Mean ratings of literacy practices by gender

Generally, the differences revealed that girls had learnt somewhat more English through their out-of-school literacy practices than boys. Yet, the differences favouring girls were statistically significant only in few cases. Significant differences were found in singing songs, chatting on the Internet as well as in reading books and newspapers. In addition, differences were statistically almost significant favouring girls in face-to-face discussions in the family, in instant messaging, in listening to music as well as in reading and writing letters. Thus, girls' interests and learning profiles seem to be divided into many different purposes and tasks of literacies.

Boys reported that they had learnt English more than girls by playing both single- and multi-player computer games. These differences were statistically significant. Furthermore, they claimed that they had learnt English more than girls by watching Youtube, by searching the Internet for information, by reading manuals and instructions, by playing board and role play games as well as by reading comics, non-fiction and on-line news. These last differences, however, were not statistically significant.

The results indicate that girls experienced that they had learnt English in many different literacy practice contexts and purposes from entertaining films and TV to social communication through various media, to listening to music and singing songs and even to print reading and writing letters. boys' interests seemed to be more limited from watching films, TV and YouTube to playing computer games and searching information on the Internet.

In brief, the findings suggest that even though there were many similarities in the literacy profiles of girls and boys, there were some differences as well. The girls' literacy profile differed from the boys' profile, particularly in that girls favoured social, musical and print media practices. The boys' profile accentuated multimedia gaming as well as searching for information through various media practices.



### 5.1.3 Literacy practices and student's achievement and attitudes

The comparative results of the high- and low-achieving students are presented in Figure 5 (see Appendix 5, Table B, for more detail). The students were considered high-achieving at school, if their mark in English had been 9 or 10 in the previous report card. Low-achievers were those whose marks were 8 or below. There were 39 students in both groups.

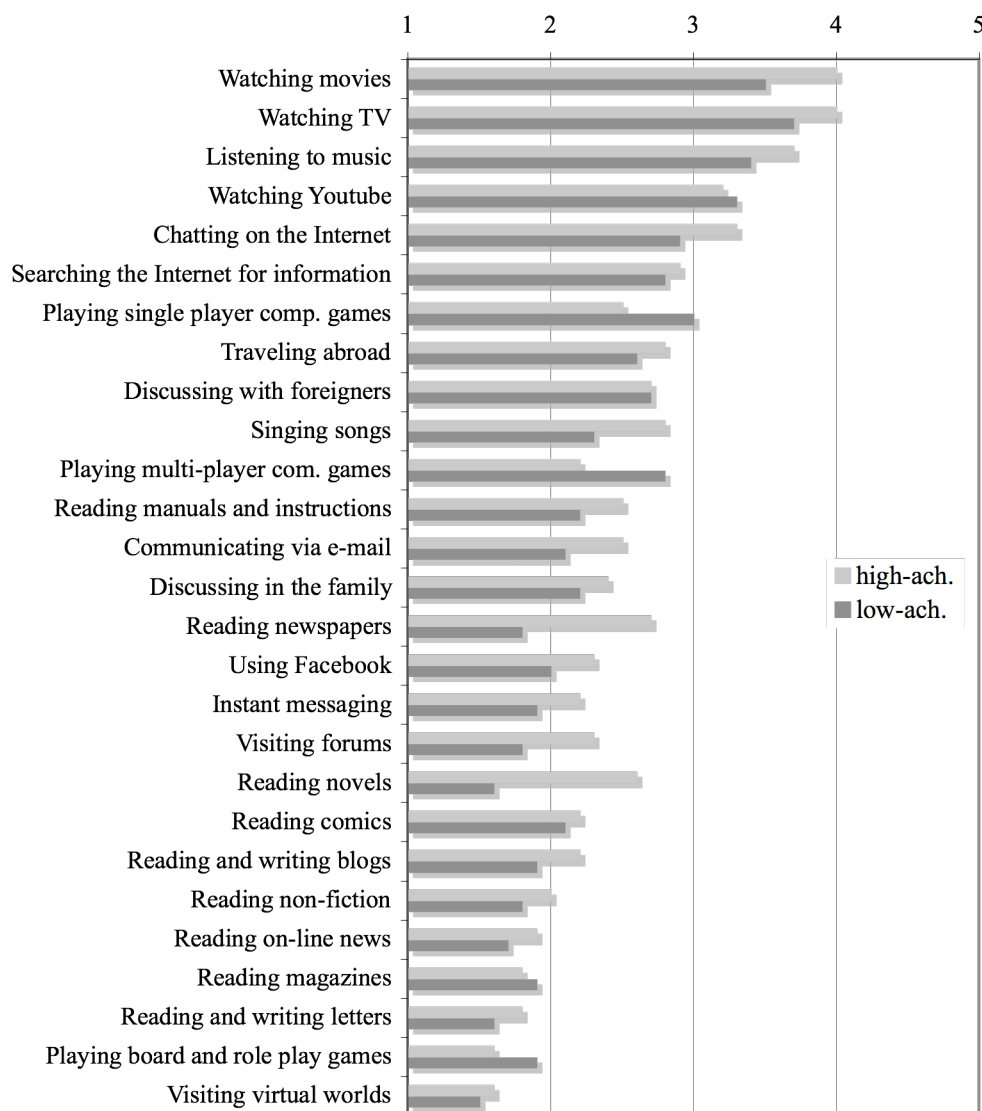


FIGURE 5. Mean ratings of literacy practices by the high- and low-achievers

The rating results show that the high-achievers had generally experienced various literacy practices more useful to their learning of English than the low-achieving students. The low-achievers' ratings were higher only in playing computer and board games as well as in reading magazines. The differences between the ratings of different achievement groups, however, were statistically significant and favouring the high-achievers only in reading novels and newspapers.

When correlations between the students' ratings and their actual marks in English (from 10 to 5) were correlated, some other literacy practices also seemed to have significance in school achievement (see Table 6). This is due to the wider range of the students' achievement distribution scale. In addition to reading novels and newspapers, also reading manuals and instructions as well as watching TV and visiting forums seemed to have significant correlations to school achievement in English. The highest correlations were still with reading novels and newspapers.

These results indicate that even though the students experience that they learn a lot of English through various out-of-school literacy practices, this does not seem to be strongly associated with their school achievement, at least when estimated with the marks achieved at school. The most significant contribution to school achievement in English seemed to be with traditional print reading, particularly reading novels and newspapers. These findings suggest that out-of-school literacy practices, apart from traditional print reading, are not so prominent for school learning or that authentic out-of-school practices contribute to language and literacy learning that is not appreciated by teachers or the school curriculum.

The students were further divided into subgroups according to their differences in their attitudes towards studying English. Attitudes were viewed from the perspectives of a cognitive (importance) and an affective (pleasure) component. The students self-assessed their attitudes in the questionnaire. Based on their ratings the students were divided into two groups with more and less positive attitudes. The correlations between the ratings of literacy practices and of attitudes are presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6. Correlations between ratings of literacy practices and marks in English and attitudes (importance and pleasure) towards studying English at school

| Literacy practices                     | marks  | attitudes       |               |
|--|--------|-----------------|---------------|
|  | r      | importance<br>r | pleasure<br>r |
| Watching movies                        | .14    | .25*            | .33**         |
| Watching TV                            | .30**  | .24*            | .33**         |
| Listening to music                     | .06    | .30**           | .30**         |
| Watching YouTube                       | .05    | .28*            | .28*          |
| Chatting on the Internet               | .20    | .34**           | .27*          |
| Searching the Internet for information | .24*   | .24*            | .17           |
| Playing single player comp. games      | .08    | .09             | -.01          |
| Travelling abroad                      | .15    | .33**           | .10           |
| Discussing with foreigners             | .03    | .29**           | .27*          |
| Singing songs                          | .12    | .25*            | .18           |
| Playing multi-player com. games        | .07    | .06             | -.01          |
| Reading manuals and instructions       | .36*** | .25*            | .19           |
| Communicating via e-mail               | .25*   | .36***          | .16           |
| Discussing in the family               | .09    | .28**           | .38***        |
| Reading newspapers                     | .40*** | .39***          | .39***        |
| Using Facebook                         | .16    | .33**           | .29**         |
| Instant messaging                      | .15    | .32**           | .16           |
| Visiting forums                        | .33**  | .25*            | .18           |
| Reading novels                         | .48*** | .25*            | .41***        |
| Reading comics                         | .17    | .08             | .12           |
| Reading and writing blogs              | .20    | .30**           | .14           |
| Reading non-fiction                    | .24*   | .30**           | .23*          |
| Reading on-line news                   | .15    | .25*            | .08           |
| Reading magazines                      | .19    | .13             | .17           |
| Reading and writing letters            | .21    | .21             | .27*          |
| Playing board and role play games      | .01    | .09             | -.08          |
| Visiting virtual worlds                | .16    | .07             | .10           |

\* significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

\*\*\* significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed)

The most significant correlations in relation to the importance of studying English were found with reading newspapers and communicating via e-mail. Furthermore, significant correlations were found between the importance of studying English and listening to

music, chatting on the Internet, travelling abroad, discussing with foreigners and in the family, using Facebook and instant messaging, reading and writing blogs and reading non-fiction. In brief, most of those literacy practices that emphasised social communication and searching for information were related to the positive cognitive attitudes (importance) towards studying English. The affective attitudes (pleasure) towards studying English were correlated quite differently. Very significant correlations were found in relation to the pleasure of studying English with reading novels and newspapers and with discussing in the family. In addition, significant correlations were found between the pleasure of studying English and with watching films and TV, listening to music and using Facebook.

The results indicate that traditional print reading and face-to-face communication were strongly related to positive affective attitudes towards studying English. In addition, the most favoured practices, watching films and TV, listening to music and visiting Facebook were also associated with the pleasure of studying English. The findings suggest that various literacy practices, both traditional print and new multimedia practices, could support positive attitudes towards language studies, even though only traditional print reading was associated with good marks in English.

To sum up, the high- and low-achieving students' authentic out-of-school literacy practices contributing to their learning of English did not differ significantly to a great extent. Main differences in useful literacy practices between high- and low-achievers were in traditional print literacies, reading novels and newspapers. Some difference in useful practices between the achievement groups was further found in reading manuals and instructions as well as watching TV and visiting forums. The most positive attitudes towards studying English were found among the students who favoured reading newspapers and novels. This was particularly the case with affective attitudes. Furthermore, face-to-face discussions and viewing films and TV were related to affective attitudes. The cognitive attitudes, the importance of studying English, was emphasised particularly by those who favoured various social media, both face-to-face and Internet-mediated, as well as by those who found traditional reading and writing

useful. All in all, reading newspapers in English seemed to relate most positively to both high English achievement at school and to positive cognitive and affective attitudes towards studying English.

#### **5.1.4 Literacy practices and students' self-concept**

The students' self-concept was measured by asking which mark they should have earned in various English language and literacy contents: reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar and their courage to perform. The students rated themselves by using the common school grading scale from 4 to 10. Based on the means of the marks, the students were divided into two groups. The literacy practice profiles of these two groups are presented in Figure 6. The significance of the differences was tested by t-test (see Appendix 6, Table C).

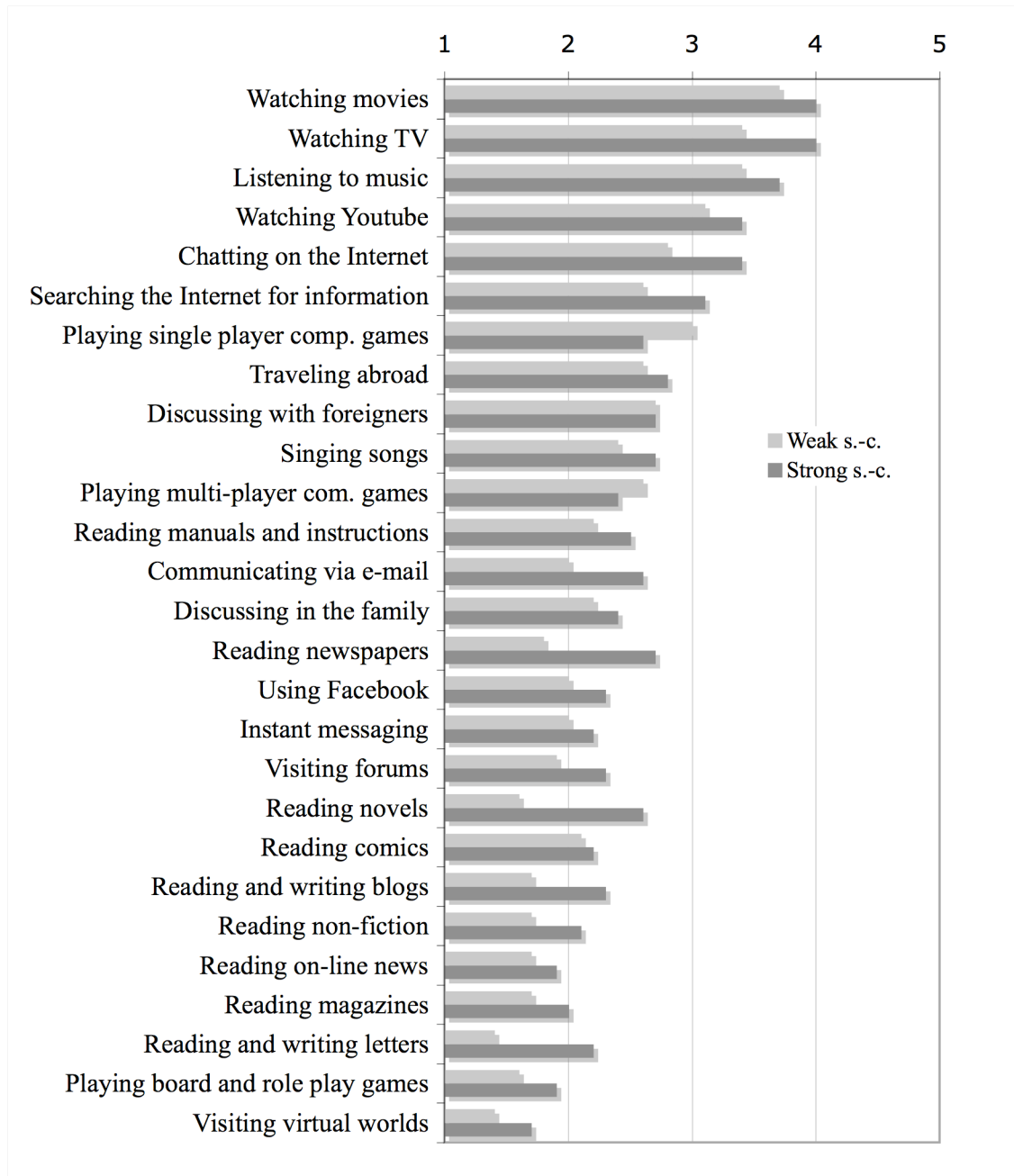


FIGURE 6. Mean ratings of literacy practices by students with strong and weak self-concept

The comparative results show that the students whose self-concept was strong thought that they had learnt more English from various literacy practices than those students whose self-concept was weak. The only exception was in playing computer games. The

significance testing (Appendix 6 Table C), however, showed that the differences between students with strong and weak self-concept were statistically significant only in few cases: reading novels and newspapers, watching TV as well as reading and writing blogs, all of these practices favouring students with strong self-concept in learning English.

The results indicate that traditional print reading, reading and writing blogs as well as viewing TV seem to be related to a strong self-concept in learning English at school. This suggests that students who believe themselves in language learning at school favour rather traditional literacies than new multimedia practices. This may be due to the findings that high achievement at school is associated with traditional print reading.

### **5.1.5 Literacy practices and home resources**

The students' home resources were measured by asking about the number of English books at home. The students were divided into two groups based on their responses: those who had 20 or less English books at home (58 students, 74%) and those who had more than 20 books (20 students, 26%) Since all students, except one, had an access to the Internet at home, this variable was not included into home resources.

The amount of English books at home was quite weakly related to literacy practices. Only few practices were statistically significantly associated with books at home (see Figure 7). These were reading novels and newspapers, reading and writing letters, and discussing in the family. Almost significant association was further found with travelling abroad and communicating via e-mail. All these practices reflect families' strong cultural capital and social communication at home. Moreover, they refer to traditional written literacy practices.

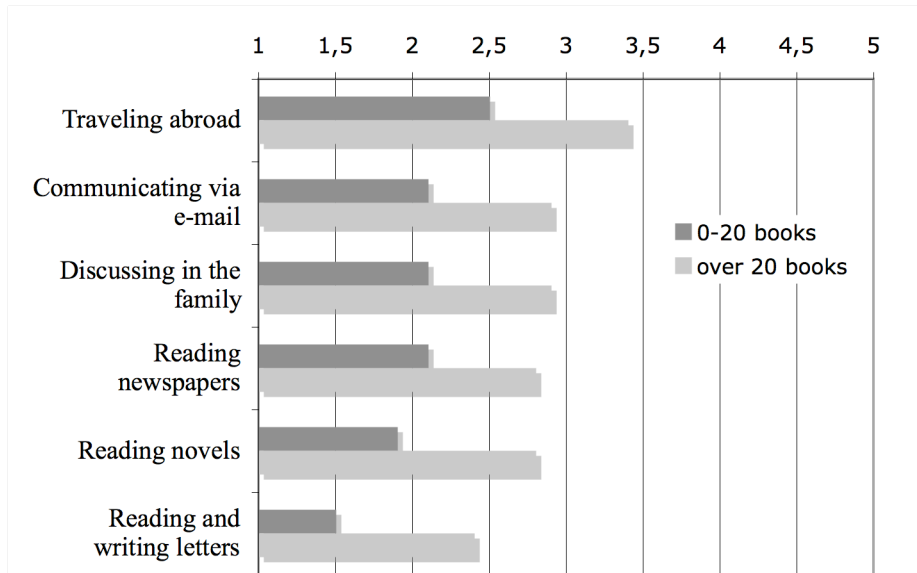


FIGURE 7. Mean ratings of those literacy practices where difference between home resource groups was significant (at least at the level 0.05)

### 5.1.6 Student clusters and cluster profiles

To identify distinct student groups and their literacy practice profiles, the students' ratings were submitted to a cluster analysis. The results revealed five distinct *subgroups* or *clusters* of students. The overall clusters can be seen in Table 7. The clusters are described from the perspective of mean ratings of the students' literacy practices. The frequencies of students as well as the amount of boys and girls falling into each cluster are given in the text below. In addition, the students' achievement level in each cluster is presented in the following text.



TABLE 7. Mean ratings of literacy practices by student clusters (cluster analysis)

| Literacy practices                     | C1  | C2  | C3  | C4  | C5  |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Watching movies                        | 3,7 | 3,5 | 3,9 | 4,5 | 4,4 |
| Watching TV                            | 3,5 | 3,3 | 3,9 | 4,6 | 4,6 |
| Listening to music                     | 3,5 | 2,8 | 4   | 4,8 | 4,4 |
| Watching Youtube                       | 4   | 2,5 | 3,4 | 4,4 | 2,5 |
| Chatting on the Internet               | 2,8 | 2,2 | 4   | 4,1 | 3,6 |
| Searching the Internet for information | 3,1 | 2,2 | 3,3 | 4,4 | 2,5 |
| Playing single player comp. games      | 3,9 | 2,1 | 3,1 | 3   | 1,3 |
| Traveling abroad                       | 2,4 | 2,3 | 3   | 3,6 | 3,5 |
| Discussing with foreigners             | 2,2 | 2,3 | 2,9 | 4,3 | 3,3 |
| Singing songs                          | 1,9 | 1,9 | 3,3 | 3,6 | 3,5 |
| Playing multi-player com. games        | 3,8 | 1,5 | 2,7 | 3,4 | 1,5 |
| Reading manuals and instructions       | 2,3 | 2   | 2,7 | 3,5 | 1,6 |
| Communicating via e-mail               | 2,1 | 1,7 | 2,9 | 4,1 | 1,4 |
| Discussing in the family               | 1,7 | 2   | 2,6 | 3   | 3,8 |
| Reading newspapers                     | 1,6 | 1,4 | 3,2 | 4   | 2,5 |
| Using Facebook                         | 1,9 | 1,4 | 3   | 3,5 | 2   |
| Instant messaging                      | 1,6 | 1,5 | 2,3 | 4,4 | 2,3 |
| Visiting forums                        | 2,3 | 1,4 | 2,5 | 3,6 | 1,1 |
| Reading novels                         | 1,4 | 2   | 2,8 | 3,5 | 1,6 |
| Reading comics                         | 2,4 | 1,6 | 2,7 | 2,8 | 1,1 |
| Reading and writing blogs              | 1,8 | 1,2 | 2,8 | 4   | 1,3 |
| Reading non-fiction                    | 1,9 | 1,7 | 2,2 | 2,9 | 1,1 |
| Reading on-line news                   | 1,8 | 1,5 | 1,7 | 3,5 | 1   |
| Reading magazines                      | 1,8 | 1,4 | 2,4 | 3   | 1   |
| Reading and writing letters            | 1,1 | 1,2 | 2,5 | 3,4 | 1,3 |
| Playing board and role play games      | 2,1 | 1,4 | 2,1 | 2,4 | 1,1 |
| Visiting virtual worlds                | 1,1 | 1,2 | 2,7 | 1,8 | 1   |

*Cluster 1* contains students who responded that they learnt most of out-of-school English by watching YouTube, by playing single or multi-player computer games and by watching films and TV programmes as well as by listening to popular music. This group reported that they did not learn English outside the school at all from traditional literacy practices, such as by reading novels or by reading and writing letters. This student group could be profiled as *gamers* according to the most distinctive feature in their learner profile. This cluster accounted for 20 students and included mainly boys (18) and low-achievers (13).

*Cluster 2* contains students who responded that they learnt English informally a lot by watching films and TV programmes and some amount by listening to popular music and watching YouTube. Otherwise, this group seemed to be quite passive learners of English outside the school. At least they had not learnt much from printed or social media. This group of students could be characterised as *film and TV viewers*. It accounted for as many as 25 students and was quite equally represented by boys (11) and girls (14) as well as high- (11) and low-achievers (14).

In *Cluster 3*, students reported that they had learnt English outside school a lot by listening to music and by chatting or searching information on the Internet, by watching films, TV and YouTube as well as by singing English songs. They had learnt some English also from newspapers and Facebook. This group of quite active and diversified learners could be called *music and social media users*. The cluster encompassed 17 students, mostly girls (13). In this group, there were both high- (10) and low-achievers (7).

*Cluster 4* contains students who seemed to be very active and responded that they had learnt more than a lot of English from various literacy practices outside school by listening to music, by watching TV, films and YouTube, by chatting and searching the Internet for information, from news, by discussing with foreigners, by communicating via e-mail and by instant messaging. Moreover, they had found visiting forums, reading newspapers and even novels and reading and writing blogs useful. These students seemed to take a full advantage of various media environments. The group could be called *multimedia actives*. There were, however, only 8 students in this group, 7 girls and one boy. Among these students, there were 6 high- and 2 low-achievers.

*Cluster 5* contains students whose profile was quite similar to those in Cluster 3. The students in this group responded that they learnt English a lot by watching TV and films and by both listening to music and by singing songs in English. In addition, they had learnt a lot of English by chatting on the Internet, but also by discussing in the family, by travelling abroad and by discussing with foreigners. This group, however, had not found

traditional printed media useful for their informal learning of English. The group could be called *face-to-face communicators*. Again, only 8 students, all girls, were clustered into this group. From these students 5 were high- and 3 low-achievers.

The students' cluster profiles display some similar but also some distinct features. All subgroups responded that they had learnt a lot of English by watching films and TV programmes. On the other hand, they reported that they had not learnt much from visiting virtual worlds or playing board or role play games. The clearest distinction between groups could be found in learning by using traditional printed media and written language, by computer games, by listening to music and singing songs and by using social media or by discussing face-to-face.

The gender distribution was even in Cluster 2 (the film and TV viewers), but differed in others. Boys were in clear majority in Cluster 1 (the gamers), girls in Clusters 3 (the social media users), 4 (the multimedia actives) and 5 (the face-to-face communicators). There were both high- and low-achievers in each cluster. However, in Clusters 1 and 2 the low-achievers were in majority, while in Clusters 3, 4 and 5 the high-achievers took the majority place.

The students' attitudes towards studying English at school did not differ a lot between clusters. The majority of the students found studying English very important in all other clusters except in Cluster 2, where distribution was even between those who found studying English important or not that important. The majority of students had not experienced studying English very pleasurable in all other clusters except in Cluster 4, where distribution was even between those who had found studying very pleasurable and those who had not experienced it pleasurable.

To conclude, the students at the same age level in one school reflected some unity but also some diversity in their out-of-school literacy practices. The students quite strongly agreed that they had learnt English informally mostly by watching TV and films. They also agreed that visiting virtual worlds and playing board and role play games were not

that useful in informal language learning. Diversity between student groups was most prominent in using traditional print media and communicating in social media, listening to music and singing in English as well as computer gaming. The diversity was also obvious in the number of useful practices. Some students seemed to learn from a wide variety of practices while others were more restricted to a specific set of practices. From the point of view of language learning, the multimedia actives who favoured a wide variety of literacy practices including traditional print reading and writing practices, were most often the highest achievers in English at school. However, among the music and social media users as well as among the face-to-face communicators the majority of the students were high-achievers as well. In all these three clusters, girls were in the majority. Most low-achievers were found among the gamers as well as the film and TV viewers. The gamers were mainly boys. All in all, the clusters were quite strongly gendered.

## **5.2 Interviews**

This section of the results is based on the interviews of the ten individual students. The interviewed students represented the five clusters of students discovered in the statistical cluster analysis. Among the interviewees, there were five girls and five boys; two of each cluster; six high- and four low-achieving students. The findings reveal individual students' experiences of specific literacy practices and explore how these practices contributed to students' learning of English. The first chapter deals with the students' intrinsic motivation, while the second chapter discusses extrinsic motivation. The last chapter describes students' experiences of learning English both in informal and formal contexts. In reporting results students' real names are not used but the following pseudonyms: Alex, Amy, Ann, Hanna, Ivan, Lenny, Lisa, Max, Sam and Vera.

### 5.2.1 Intrinsic motivation

The students' *intrinsic motivation* in relation to various literacy practices was studied by asking which practices they personally liked and disliked the most. To start with the question of the most liked practices, the students usually mentioned the same practices that they had found the most useful in the survey. The students mentioned most often that they liked watching TV and films, listening to music and visiting Internet sites. The students reasoned that those literacy practices are easily available, they are entertaining, their content is interesting and they do not demand too much effort or thinking. Two students connected interesting entertainment to the opportunity to learn English.

- (1) no varmaan kattoo noita tv-ohjelmia ja elokuvia ja saattaa käydä jossain nettisivuilla (...) harvemmin tarvii ite ajatella mitään. Voi vaan istua siinä ja kattoo sitä elokuvaa. (Lenny)
- (2) ehkä katon englanninkielisiä tv-ohjelmia ja elokuvia. ei oikeestaan hirveesti muita. mun mielestä ne on paljon parempia kuin muunmaalaiset ja kumminkin. ne on hyviä ja kiinnostaviakin osa. (Hanna)
- (3) kuuntelen englanninkielistä musiikkia ja katon elokuvia ja TV-ohjelmia (...) no TV:n katseluhan on erittäin viihdyttävää ja sit siinä samalla just oppii tosi hyvin kaikkia sellasia sanontoja, kaikkein oikeestaan parhaiten. ja kaikissa just noissa peleissä kun täytyy lukea noi ohjeet et miten pelataan englanninkielellä ja musiikista tietysti jää aina päähän kaikkee. (Lisa)

Often the most interesting literacy practices were related to the students' interests and hobbies, particularly to sports. This was typical of the boys. Lenny and Alex, for instance, were interested in football and their favourite practices were related to that field.

- (4) jalkapallojoukkueen nettisivut, haluu kattoo miten jollakin joukkueella menee. (Lenny)
- (5) no on se varmaankin tota noi harrastelehdet, elokuvat ja TV-ohjelmat. harrastelehdistä oppii siitä omasta harrasteesta (...) jalkapallo[sta]. (Alex)

One of them was Sam whose interest in music directed his motivation also in his literacy practices.

- (6) no, varsinkin toi musiikki puoli se on erittäin mielenkiintoista, sitä tulee kuunneltua paljon ja soitettua paljon, ja tehtyä itekin jonkin verran. sitä ehkä eniten tulee käytettyä ja se on sillein mieluisin. (Sam)

Listening to music, gaming and reading comics were also related to interests and to situations where there was nothing else interesting to do. Thus, these practices are easily available and provide entertainment and collaboration. This was the case with Max.

- (7) no, kyllä mää kuuntelen paljon englanninkielistä musiikkia ja pelaan ja sitten nyt mää oon ruvennu lukeen netistä englanninkielisiä sarjakuvia viikko sitten tai kuukausi aikalailla ja niitä mää oon luku aika paljon (...) no jos ei illalla jaksa tehdä mitään tai lähtee ulos tekee mitää hauskaa, niin sitten mä vaan pelaan, saa aikaa kulutettua. mitä nyt mää pelailen niin aika paljon ruotsalaisten ja virolaisten kanssa, joskus amerikkalaisten, harvemmin erikoisemmista maista kuten pohjoiskorealaisten kanssa. (Max)

In addition to TV programmes and films, two girls, the multimedia actives, were interested in reading books in English. They had found these books interesting because they were funny, difficult or they were not yet translated into Finnish or were poorly translated. Magazines and blogs interested two girls as well.

- (8) (...) luen jotain kirjojen jatko-osia jos niitä ei oo vielä suomennettu niin luen niitä englanniksi tai jos tykkään jostain kirjasta niin haluan lukee sen alkuperäisen kun se on niin erilainen kuin se suomennettu (...) kaikkia kokkausblogeja (Ann)
- (9) mää tykkään lukee näitä romaaneja paljon ja sitten olla netissä ja kattoo leffoja. esimerkiksi Harry Potterit on kivoja ja sit ne Dan Brownin ne romaanit on mukavia. kaikki semmonen paksu ja vaikeaselkoinen. joo, luen myös englanniksi (...) en mää oikein tiiä siitä vaan saa jotenkin paremmin, kun lukee ne alkuperäiset, kun ne käännösjutut on välillä vähän kökköjä sillein. kaikkia sanoja ei oikein voikkaan kääntää, niin tulee parempi sillein, en mää tiiä, se kuulostaa vaan paremmalta (...) ja semmosia nuortenlehtiä (Amy)
- (10) (...) Elleä ja tämmösiä muotilehtiä. (Lisa)

Chatting on the Internet was quite popular among girls as well. They reasoned that they liked to keep in touch with friends and relatives, particularly those living abroad.

- (11) keskustelemalla englanniksi internetissä on ehkä noista se eniten.  
(...) lähinnä vaan mesessä, mulla on on muutama ulkomaalainen kaveri niin niitten kanssa englantia puhun. (Vera)

The students were also interviewed about literacy practices that they did not like at all. These were mostly the same as the least useful practices in the survey. Four students mentioned that they were least interested in playing board or role-playing games.

- (12) ehkä englanninkielisistä lauta- ja roolipeleistä. niistä tulee ehkä just mieleen koulun englannintunnit, et en määhän niitä vapaa-ajalla tee. (Lisa)
- (13) varmaan toi englanninkielisiä lauta- ja roolipelejä. (Alex)

Gender differences in dislikes were significant. Girls, particularly those who were interested in reading books and chatting, mentioned that they were least interested in computer games or comics. The reasons, however, could be quite different. Usually gaming did not just interest girls, it was too technical or they did not find it contributory to their learning.

- (14) en kauheesti mitään tietokonepeljä tai semmosia pelaile. siitä en sit kauheesti tykkää. se ei vaan ole oikein mun juttu. (Vera)
- (15) en määhän pelaa oikein mitään pelejä niin et sieltä oppis ehkä vaan jotain tietokonesanastoa, et ne ei mua kiinnosta, enkä määhän hirveesti lue mitään sarjakuvia. (Ann)

Boys mentioned two different groups of dislikes: first, singing songs, and, second, traditional print practices, such as reading books and papers and writing letters.

- (16) varmaan toi karaoke-laulujuttu ja kirjallisuus, ja varmaan tuo kirjeenvaihto (Ivan)
- (17) (...) niin lukea jotain lehtiä tai kirjoja. niitä ei tuu hirveesti luettua ainakaan englanninkielisinä. se on ehkä että siinä pitää ite jaksaa koko ajan lukee sitä tekstiä. pitää pysyä ajatus mukana. (Lenny)

Hanna, however, agreed with the boys and told that she did not like reading or writing in English. Yet, her reasons were different. They seemed to be connected with her reading and language learning difficulties in general.

- (18) kirjeenvaihtoa ulkomaalaisten kanssa, koska mun enkku on niin surkee. enkä mä tykkää käydä missään kielikursseilla, enkä millään leirillä, jossa opetellaan jotain enkkuu tai jotain vastaavaa. enkä mä oikeestaan luekaan englanniksi, kun oon muutenkin huono lukemaan niin en mä viitti englanniks rupee lukee. (Hanna)

To conclude, the findings of the interviews indicated that students usually mentioned the same practices as liked that they had rated the most contributory to their language learning in the survey. Similarly, the most disliked practices mentioned in the interviews were those that were rated as the least useful in the survey. The film and TV viewers reasoned that they wanted interesting entertainment without much effort or thinking. The interest in music, sports and gaming directed particularly the boys' choices of literacy practices. Gaming was mainly connected with situations where there was nothing else interesting to do. Girls' favourite practices, chatting on the Internet, viewing films and reading novels and magazines were typically related to social communication with friends or to interests in fashion or youth culture. Those girls who read books were mainly interested in the most recent popular fiction, not yet translated into Finnish. The most disliked practices were partly similar among both boys and girls, such as playing board or role-playing games, and partly gendered. Girls were least interested in computer games, which they found too technological. Boys disliked singing and reading books or writing letters. Reading and writing in English was considered by most boys and one girl to demand too much effort and thinking.

### **5.2.2 Extrinsic motivation**

The students' *extrinsic motivation* was studied in the interview by asking what literacy practices the students had found most useful in learning English and in what situations they were able to benefit from their language experiences. To start with the question of the most useful literacy practices, the interviewees mentioned the same practices that



had received high priority in the survey. The students often specified that watching TV programmes and films were most useful. They found that these practices contributed to their learning of English, because of the vivid discussions and everyday expressions, particularly those that young people use.

- (19) oikeestaan sellaset kaikki niin kuin Täydelliset Naiset joissa puhutaan paljon ja suht selvästi ja mis on paljon semmosia keskusteluja niitten ihmisten välillä. oon katonu OC:tä sillon kun tuli TV:stä ja kaikkii tälläsiä, ei hirveesti mitään Päivien Viemää tai tälläsiä, mut just semmosia niinku Täydelliset Naiset ja House ja tän tyypisiä. semmosia joissa on paljon niitten henkilöitten välisiä keskusteluja (...) James Bondeista ainakin. sillä Sean Conneryllä on semmonen jännä aksentti, niin niistä on tullu just sillein, jääny just sellasia erillaisia esim jos sanoo ”koskettavaa” niin voi sanoa touching ja sit mä opin siitä olikohan se Diamonds are forever niin siitä mä opin et voi sanoo myös et very moving. (Lisa)
- (20) katon sitä Skinssiä, niitä uusia tuotantokausia netistä kun niitä ei oo Suomessa vielä, vaikka siellä on paljon semmosta et ne ei oo kauheen virallisia, et sieltä oppii mitä nuoret oikeesti käyttää. joku Skins varmaan tai jotain elokuvia vaan (...) (Ann)

Both girls and boys mentioned that listening to various kinds of music contributed to their learning of English. The language used in popular songs was mentioned to teach poetic language or slang or dialects.

- (21) mä kuuntelen aikalaila kaikkee. sieltä jää just eniten just sellasista selvemmistä eli rauhallisemmista nii jää niitä. just sitä kieltä jää mieleen. (Lisa)
- (22) on niitä aika paljon, kaiken maailman rokkia tai heavyä englanninkielistä. kyllä niistä joistain kappaleista voi oppia, mut jotkut kappaleet on vaa kahta sanaa koko biisi. kyllä niistä oppii. Voi oppii jotain tiettyä murretta tai slangia. (Lenny)
- (23) vähän kaikenlaista, kaikki mikä kuulostaa hyvältä, en osaa sanoo musiikkilajia, lehistä ja Soundista ja netistä löytyy, kuuntelen jos tykkään ja sit kuuntelen lisää (...) oon oppinu hienompia sanoja, ei niin puhekielen sanoja, vähän semmosta runollisempaa ja keikoilla niistä välispiikeistä niis on sitä huumoria ja sellasta mitä ei välttämättä kirjakielessä ja tällein normaalisti törmää (...) tietyissä musiikissa sitä nyt ei äännetä ihan niinku normaalisti ja kaikki suomalaiset artistit jotka laulaa englanniks nii ääntää vähän sillein hölmösti. (Sam)

Both face-to-face and Internet discussions were experienced as useful. Students seemed to travel a lot with their families. In addition, they participated in the sport events and in language courses. One student had lived in a foreign country and others had relatives abroad. They had also met foreigners while working in Finland. In these situations they

had had useful discussions in English. The students also had friends and relatives in other countries. Usually they communicated with them in English through e-mail, Messenger or Facebook or even corresponded with letters.

- (24) ulkomaanmatkoilta ja leireiltä. Sveitsistä ja Australiasta opin aika paljon että just tällaisista englanninkielisistä maista oppii aika paljon. olen ollut Sveitsissä 2 vuotta ja 2 kuukautta (...) vanhemmilta ja sukulaisilta. se riippuu perheestä että miten perheessä on se kielitaito. kyllä minun perheessä, isä osaa täydellisesti englantia (...) no tossa kirjeenvaihdossa ulkomaalaisten kanssa. (Alex)
- (25) (...) sit vanhemmilta ja sukulaisilta, sähköpostista ja ehkä niin ku juttelemalla ulkomaalaisten kanssa (...) mulla on sukulaisia Facebookissa tai sukulaisia jenkeissä asuu, niin sitä kautta, osaa ne suomeekin mut ei kaikki niin hyvin osaa puhua niin niitten kanssa (...) viime kesänä olin töissä kahvilassa niin siellä tuli englanninkielisiä ihmisiä niin joutu puhumaan englantia. (Hanna)
- (26) ulkomaanmatkoilta, leireiltä, kielikursseilta laitoin neloseks, kun tota oman lajin puolesta saa olla loppukesät ja syksyt reissussa. siis alppihiihto [on mun laji], lasku, siellä kun treenataan muitten kanssa niin englanninkielellä pitää kohteliaasti osata hoitaa ne hommat. sieltä saa kavereita. harvoin tulee saksaa niitten kanssa puhuttua, niin sieltä oppii englantia hyvin. puhumista lähinnä. oli tääl et englanninkielisiltä kavereilta Facebookissa. se on taas aika sama et niiltä samoilta kavereilta mitä siel ulkomailla tavannu niin pitää sitten jälkepäin yhteyttä netin kautta. se on sitä samaa juttua. (Sam)

The two gamers told that they had learned English through discussions in both spoken and written language. One of them suggested that game instructions can be useful in language learning as well.

- (27) yksinpeleistä oppii englantia kun siinä pitää ite puhua kumminkin, vaikka valintapelit missä sää valitset mitä sää sanot niin kyl sun pitää tietää mitä sä sanot ja niis on aika paljon ulkomaalaisia (...) Counterstrike-moninpeleihin ja yksinpeleistä Left for Dead, puhun ihan headsetin mikkiin johon puhun englantia tai suomea tai mitä nyt puhun. joskus tulee väärinymmärryksiä ainakin mulle on siitä sanottu et voi mennä sanajärjestykset sekasin. siellä voidaan puhua esim paikkojen nimiä et ”hän on sillalla tai hän on talossa, tai siis paikkoja jos puhutaan, sit jos ei pelaa niin jää puhumaan vaan jotain kuulumisia sinne. kirjotan myös, koska mä puhun siinä ohjelmassa kavereille mut kun vastustajallekin voi puhua niin mä kirjotan sen sit siihen. (Max)
- (28) mä pelaan aika paljon sillein, enemmän just niinku Playstationilla ja Nintendo Wiillä. niissä on just englanninkieliset ne ohjeet, sillein et siinä joutuu kyl aika paljon miettii ja on paljon vieraitakin sanoja et joutuu kattoo sanakirjasta tai netistä ja samalla oppii siinä aika hyvin. (Lisa)

Instructions and manuals for various electronic devices were considered useful in language learning as well, because instructions are often either only in English or the Finnish translations are poor.

- (29) aika paljon on suomenkielellä ohjeita ja näitä mut englanniksii on jos tilaa vaikka jenkeistä jonkun tavaran, niin on yleensä englanninkielinen ohje. (Ivan)
- (30) jos ostaa kaikkia uusia elektroniikkalaitteita, niis on vajavaiset suomenkieliset ohjeet tai sit niitä ei oo ollenkaa, niin luen englanniks, tuoteselosteita jota ei oo suomeks niin tulee pakostikin luettua. (Ann)

Two multimedia active girls, Ann and Amy, mentioned that reading books and magazines had been useful for them. They were also personally interested in reading and found that reading English books had been beneficial for their learning of English.

- (31) niistä Stephanie Meyerin Uusi kuu ja näistä, ja oon luku kaikki englanniks ja kaikki potterit ja joku story of Edgar Sauther. niin luin kaikki englanniks, kun niitä ei oltu vielä suomennettu siinä vaiheessa. (Ann)
- (32) vaikka jotain erityissanoja tai sanastoa jotka liittyy niihin kirjoihin ja sit semmosia jotain lauserakenteita. ja kirjoitusasua jos on vaikka unohtanu jotain niin siinä tulee hyvin kerrattua eli ylipäätänsä kaikkee kirjoitustaitoa siitä (...) sieltä oppii ääntämisjuttuja, jos kattoo videoita ja sit jotain jos lukee niin oppii myös kirjallisia taitoja. (Amy)

In addition to reading books, the students had found reading magazines quite useful. Boys mentioned sports magazines, while girls listed fashion, youth and even golf magazines useful in language learning.

- (33) Cosmopolitania ja mää luen aika paljon semmosia kaikkii monilla eri kielillä ihan saksaks ja ruotsiks ja myös englanniks just tällasia Elleä ja tämmösiä muotilehtiä. (Lisa)
- (34) semmosia nuortenlehtiä, mitä ostaa joskus lentokentiltä. ne on yleensä englanniks tai jos mulla on tosi tylsää niin sit jotain iskän golflehtiä tai jotain siis ihan outoja. (Amy)
- (35) laskettelulehtiä, joskus vähän vaikeita sanoja, niin sitten niistä oppii. jos on kaikkien tempujen englanninkielisiä nimiä, astelukuja ja kaikkee tällasia. (Max)

Even though reading and writing blogs were not usual practices among students, some of them mentioned blogs related to their interests as useful for their language learning.

- (36) kaikkia kokkausblogeja, ne on vähän hankalia kun niissä on niitä mittayksiköt jotka pitäis muuttaa mut kyl mä tykkään niitä perusjuttuja lukea. (...) varmaan jotain sellasia koiriin tai kokkaukseen liittyviä ja kaikkii kasvijuttuja, tykkään kasvijutuista, kaikkee huonekasveja ja semmosia. (Ann)
- (37) Joskus jos luen englanninkielistä blogia niin siitä saatan oppia. (Max)

In the interviews, the students were also asked about the *situations* where they could benefit from their informal language learning. The responses were quite scarce to the question about the contexts in which they had used informal English. Usually the students mentioned discussions with foreigners either while travelling or while speaking with relatives living in a foreign country. They also mentioned conversations with tourists or foreigners living in Finland. English was used both with English-speakers and as a lingua franca with foreigners from different countries. The common interests, for instance, in sports seemed to connect people.

- (38) (...) sit parhaiten ulkomailla jos ei osaa Kreikan kieltä niin englanti on se ykköskieli. (...) no ihan joskus tääl Suomessakin tulee joku turisti kyselemään (...) (Lisa)
- (39) mullon Ruotsissa serkkuja ja puhutaan englantia serkkujen kanssa (...) (Max)
- (40) jos tulee joku englanninkielinen ihminen vastaan, joku ulkomaalainen. viime kesänä oli yks kaverin serkku joka oli englantilainen. se oli kauhee jalkapallofani, niin me jalkapallosta puhuttiin. (Lenny)
- (41) meidän alppihiihtoseurassa on sellasia kavereita, muutama kaveri yliopistolta, jotka on ulkomailta tullu ja ne laskee siellä niin niitten kanssa on tosi kiva jutella ja tällein. niiten kanssa saa monta kertaa viikossa puhua. Just noilla leireillä pakko käyttää ja tällein. (Sam)

Two students mentioned that they had spoken English with foreigners while acting as guides at school and one while working in a café.

- (42) (...) ihan täällä koulussakin ala-asteella mä toimin oppaana niin siinä tuli vähän (...) (Lisa)

- (43) no mä olin oppaana koulussa kuudennella luokalla semmosessa että mun piti opastaa semmosia ulkomaalaisia vieraita mitkä tulee tänne niin siinä pääsi hyvin käyttämään englannin kielen taitoa. (Amy)
- (44) viime kesänä olin töissä kahvilassa, niin siellä tuli englanninkielisiä ihmisiä niin joutu puhumaan englantia, mut ei hirveesti muualla ja koulussa. (Hanna)

Several students mentioned discussions with foreign friends or relatives on chat or on Facebook. In addition, one student had attended an international school in Switzerland and another was planning to take part in a language course in England.

- (45) mesessä juttelen, yks on Australiasta ja yks on Englannista, niitten kanssa puhun englantia. (Vera)
- (46) ulkomaanmatkoilla, sitten kirjeenvaihdossa, Facebookissa ja tietenkin kansainvälisessä koulussa. (Alex)
- (47) no mulla on ollut kaveri jonka kanssa oon jutellu netissä ja määhän lähentänyt kesällä kielikurssille kolmeksi viikoksi Englantiin, niin siellä varmaan pääsee taas kehittymään ja tietenkin myös käyttämään näitä taitoja. (Amy)

One student mentioned that he had used his knowledge of informal English while reading manuals and instructions in order to install something.

- (48) just niinku ymmärtää paljon paremmin ohjeita näistä tavaroista joita tilaa, asentaminen ja tämmönen. (Ivan)

A commonly mentioned context where informal experiences had been useful was also the English class at school. Three students found the school the most important context to benefit of informal learning. Five others mentioned the English class as a secondary. Usually the students emphasised that informal learning had provided them with some special vocabulary, true-to-life expressions or with some extra knowledge.

- (49) se on tosi helppoo jos tulee uutta sanastoa, tietää tosi paljon tunneilla, pystyy keskustelemaan paremmin puhekielellä, semmosia mitä ihmiset oikeesti käyttää eikä vaan sitä mitä opetellaan koulussa. (Ann)
- (50) koulussa kun opetetaan uutta asiaa niin on sullei, hei määhän oon tästä kuullu aikasemminkin. Jonkin sortin pohjustusta olemassa omasta takaa. (Sam)

- (51) just tunneilla jos kysytään jotain vähän mielenkiintoisempaa, jota ei välttämättä sillee ymmärrä tai tiä muuten, mut sit ku on pelissä puhunu tai tietää (...) (Max)

To conclude, the students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation seemed to be closely related. Those literacy practices that the students found entertaining, social or closely connected to their interests or activities were experienced useful as well. The entertaining TV programmes and films, YouTube, music and interactive computer games were also easily available and the youngsters chose them, particularly if they did not have anything else interesting to do. Even though these practices did not demand "much thinking" they provided (the students with) spoken everyday language and an access to English discussions, common idioms and vocabulary. Lyrics of popular music even provided examples of poetic language, dialects and slang. The literacy practices connected with the students' interests and hobbies were also experienced both intrinsically and extrinsically motivating. Some of the boys' interests in sports seemed to provide them with various opportunities for social communication both face-to-face and on-line. They searched information on the Internet and read sport magazines, which contributed to their language learning. The interest in computer games seemed to be useful in both oral and written language learning. Girls seemed to be more interested in social communication as well as in reading books and magazines and even in writing in English. Both face-to-face and Internet chatting seemed to be useful for social relations and oral language learning. Reading books and magazines contribute particularly to written language learning, sentence structuring, vocabulary and spelling. For everyday purposes, reading manuals and instructions of various devices in English were experienced useful and they contributed to readers' technical vocabulary. The students had found that their informal learning of English was most beneficial while travelling or speaking with foreigners in Finland either during their free-time activities or at work. Informally learnt English was also considered useful in relation to formal English classes at school.

### 5.2.3 English skills acquired through informal learning

In the interview, the students were asked what kind of language practices, contents or skills they had learnt mainly in informal situations in comparison to what they had learnt at school. To start with the question of learning in informal situations, the students usually mentioned that they had learnt everyday English, both spoken and written as well as true-to-life expressions, particularly those that young people favour.

- (52) pystyy keskustelemaan paremmin puhekielellä, semmosia mitä ihmiset oikeesti käyttää eikä vaan sitä mitä opetellaan koulussa. (Ann)
- (53) semmosia nuortenlehtiä (...) sieltä oppii kans jotain sanastoa ja kaikkee tällasta perushommaa. ja sit jotain nuorten käyttämiä sanoja. (Amy)

Almost all students mentioned that they had learnt pronunciation and spoken language through various informal practices, such as TV programmes, films, games and practices related to their interests and hobbies.

- (54) sieltä oppii ääntämisjuttuja, jos kattoo videoita. (...) jostain elokuvista ja tämmösistä, mut ei nyt kauheesti. sieltä ehkä enemmän jotain ääntämistä ja sellasta. joskus ollu jossain englanninkielisessäkin foorumissa lukemassa niitä viestejä, nekin on lähinnä jalkapalloon liittyviä. sieltä on oppinut aika paljon puhekieltä ja just niitä jalkapallosanoja. (Lenny)
- (55) yksinpeleistä oppii englantia kun siinä pitää ite puhua kumminkin. (Max)

All students also mentioned that informal practices enriched their vocabulary with new words, idioms and expressions. Three students further specified that they had also learnt written forms of words. Informal practices, such as songs, were mentioned to enrich language registers and to help to memorize expressions in the right context.

- (56) vaikka jotain erityissanoja tai sanastoa jotka liittyy niihin kirjoihin. ja kirjoitusasua jos on vaikka unohtanu jotain niin siinä tulee hyvin kerrattua eli ylipäättänsä kaikkee kirjoitustaitoa siitä. (Amy)

- (57) kyllähän sieltä [peleistä] oppii kaikkee lausahuksia ja sanontoja aika paljon ja semmosia jotain miekkojen nimiä ja kaikenlaista. (Max)
- (58) ainakin kappaleista tai musiikista yleensäkin jos muistaa ulkoo jonkun laulun niin siitä pystyy niitä sanoja sillein tai jos se on jossain oikeessa yhteydessä niin on helppo muistaa että mitä se niinku tarkoittaa (Ann)
- (59) (...) kaiken maailman rokkia tai heavyä englanninkielistä (...) voi oppii jotain tiettyä murretta tai slangia. (Lenny)

Written language, writing and spelling, was not often mentioned. Nevertheless, in relation to reading novels and blogs as well as to chatting and corresponding, students specified that they had learnt the written language and writing skills.

- (60) jotain jos lukee niin oppii myös kirjallisia taitoja ja sit jos vaikka viestittelee englanniks vaikka mesessä niin siinä oppii kirjottamaankin asioita. (Amy)
- (61) no, tossa kirjeenvaihdossa ulkomaalaisten kanssa siinä oppii lauserakenteita ja siis siitä ulkomaalaisen kirjoituksesta ja sanastoa voi oppia ja miten ne sanat kirjoitetaan. (Alex)
- (62) puhetta ja niinku miten sanat kirjoitetaan. (Ivan)

Some students mentioned the sentence structure. However, their opinions about this aspect of language differed.

- (63) sit semmosia jotain lauserakenteita [oppii]. (Amy)
- (64) lauseenrakenne ja sanoja miten ne kirjoitetaan ja sitten se puhuminen. (Alex)
- (65) ei sieltä mitään lauserakenteita [opi]. (Ann)

One student mentioned that informal literacy practices show that the sentence structure and word choices in language are flexible. People tend to understand even though the speaker makes some mistakes in word order or choice.

- (66) kun mä oon jutellu sukulaisten kanssa silloin kun ne on ollu täällä niin on oppinu et ei sillä sanajärjestyksellä oo ihan niin väliä et kyl ne ymmärtää sen silti jos mää en osaa laittaa niitä oikeeseen järjestykseen tai jos ei muista jotain sanaa niin se voi olla hyvin joku muukin. (Hanna)



One student suggested that Informal literacy practices, both spoken and written can help in developing an ear for languages, a linguistic instinct.

- (67) pitäs niinku ite vaan oppia kuulemaan. siinä kehittyi vaan kielikorva periaatteessa kun sä luet jotain tai kuuntelet. (Amy)

Furthermore, the interviewees were asked about their learning of English at school in comparison to informal contexts. Everybody mentioned that they had learnt mainly grammar at school and particularly the rules of grammar, which seemed not to be easy to learn through informal literacy practices.

- (68) no siellä käydään tosi tarkasti kielioppijutut ettei varmasti jää mikään epäselväks. siinä annetaan ne tarkat säännöt miten se sanajärjestys menee vaikka ku muuten se pitäs niinku ite vaan oppia kuulemaan. kun sul on englannintunti niin ne annetaan sillein kaavana kaikki jutut. en mää tiää oppiiko siinä paremmin mut siinä ainakin oppii sillein rautalangasta et näin sanottas. (Amy)
- (69) ehkä niitä kielioppiasioita, niitä ei oikein taho oppii vapaa-ajalla, enemmän sitä sanastoa oppii vapaa-ajalla kuin kielioppia. (Hanna)
- (70) perusjuttuja opin koulussa että minä olen, minä osaa, minä olen sieltä, minä olen hyvä siinä jne. ei niitä oppis netistä, verbit, substantiivit, adjektiivit jne. (Max)
- (71) kylhän sitä koulussakin oppii paljon enemmän kielioppia ja tehään kaikkee paritoita mut kielitaidon hyödyntämistä ei mielestäni niin paljon opi. (Lisa)

In addition to grammar, students mentioned that they had learnt more formal English and vocabulary at school than in informal contexts.

- (72) kun koulussa opetetaan niin on kuitenkin aika paljon semmosia sanoja vielä mitä arkipäivänä ei käytetä mitä on oppinu tunnilla. (Lenny)
- (73) kyllä sieltäkin niitä uusia sanoja oppii, vähän asiallisempia. ei niitä opi mistään tv:stä tai mediasta että miksi sanotaan näin. oppii sen vähän virallisemmän muodon. (Sam)

To summarise, the students argued that in informal situations they had learnt everyday and true-to-life language, both spoken and written. Through TV, films and games youth language and particularly speaking and pronunciation had become familiar. From

literacy practices that were related to students' interests and hobbies, they had learnt new vocabulary and idioms. Music had helped them to recall and memorize words and contexts to use them. Songs had further enriched their language by providing more poetic, dialectal or slang expressions. Written language, spelling and writing skills were mainly mentioned by those who were interested in reading books and corresponding by writing. The opinions differed in relation to the learning of sentence structure. Some students argued that informal practices contributed to their learning, while others had the opposite opinion. One student had noticed that face-to-face discussions allowed more flexibility in terms of sentence structure and word choice than formal practices. Informal practices could also develop an ear for language, while school instruction focused mainly on formal language, particularly on rules of grammar.

## **6 DISCUSSION**

In the previous chapters the results of the student survey and the interviews were reported separately. Here the findings of the study are integrated. They are first summarised, then compared and discussed following the preference order in the survey findings, from the most to the least useful practices. Then the similarities and differences of various student groups are reviewed, paying special attention to the student clusters. Finally, the key findings are compared to previous results.

The survey results indicated that the students felt that they had learnt English informally mostly through entertaining multimodal literacy practices, such as viewing English-spoken films, TV programmes and YouTube videos as well as listening to music. Of these practices Only watching TV, however, correlated significantly with high achievement in English at school. In these practices, the students' role is quite passive and the activity is mainly responsive. In the interviews, the students told that these practices are interesting because they have narrative contents, emotions and humour. Furthermore, the students reasoned that these literacy practices are useful because they are easily available, generally entertaining, their content is close to life and they do not

demand too much effort or thinking. The students found that these practices had contributed to their language learning with vivid discussions and everyday spoken English and particularly with expressions that young people use. Listening to popular music and paying attention to song lyrics had even provided the students with examples of poetic language, dialects and slang.

The multimodal literacy practices, which can be considered both entertaining and social, such as playing Internet games and chatting were likewise found quite useful for language learning in the survey, even though these practices did not correlate significantly with high achievement in English at school. While the boys favoured gaming, girls were more interested in chatting on the Internet. Both of these practices are more interactive and the students' role is more active, even though the students admitted in the interviews that these practices were often chosen when they had nothing else interesting to do. In chat, language is written, but close to spoken language. In computer games, both oral and written languages are used and the games are often socially shared and collaborative. Likewise, the games include instructions that were mentioned in the interviews to be useful both in successful gaming and in language learning.

Chatting on the Internet and communicating via e-mail or on Facebook were rated quite useful in the survey. Girls, in particular, favoured these practices of social communication. These practices, however, did not correlate significantly with the English achievement at school. In the interviews, the students reasoned that these practices provide them with an opportunity to keep in contact with their local mates as well as with their friends and relatives abroad. Through these practices the students also share experiences in various interest groups and networks, particularly, those around sports and music. In addition, interests and hobbies direct students' information searching on the Internet as well as choosing to read certain magazines, books and blogs. In these contexts, new vocabulary and written forms of words are easily picked up and used.

Social purposes of literacy and interactive communication in spoken language are also represented in face-to-face situations and practices, such as travelling abroad and discussing with family members or with foreigners. In the survey, these practices were found only somewhat useful to learning English. This finding may be due to the fact that all students do not have an opportunity to travel. There was no correlation between favouring these practices and high achievement in English at school, even though these practices seemed to be associated with positive attitudes towards studying English. According to the students' interviews, travelling and participation in sport events and training camps as well as language courses abroad had provided them with communicative contexts for language learning and usage. Students also mentioned that they meet foreigners while travelling and in summer jobs in Finland. In these situations they had had useful discussions in English, which contributed to social communication and particularly to oral everyday language learning. According to the students, these practices had also showed that the sentence structure and word choices could be flexible, for people try to understand even though the speaker makes mistakes.

The findings of the survey further indicate that traditional print literacy practices, such as reading newspapers, novels and magazines as well as reading and writing letters, were not generally found very useful in language learning. These practices, however, divided the students clearly by gender and by achievement level. Girls experienced these practices as significantly more contributory than boys. The interviews proved that this was due to the students' intrinsic motivation. Boys were not personally interested in these more traditional reading and writing practices. Favouring these practices, however, correlated in the survey most significantly both with the achievement in English and with positive attitudes towards studying English at school. Those girls, who favoured these practices, mentioned in the interview that they are mainly reading new popular books or books which are not yet or are poorly translated into Finnish. The magazines that the students read were closely related to their interests. Boys were following sports or music, while girls' interests were fashion, cooking, pets and plants. The students argued that through print reading and writing practices they learn written language, writing skills and spelling as well as the sentence structure and vocabulary. Furthermore,

one student mentioned that through these practices it is possible to develop a linguistic instinct, “an ear for language”.

According to the survey results, the literacy practices which students found least useful for their informal learning of English were visiting virtual worlds and playing board or role play games. The dislikes were reasoned in the interviews by claiming that these practices are either personally uninteresting or they resemble too much the work done at school. In the interviews, the students shared their dislike of board games. Furthermore, only few girls were interested in computer games. The boys disliked reading novels and writing letters as well as singing in English the most, even though they were interested in both listening to and playing music and claimed that they had learnt English from lyrics.

Gender differences in informal literacy practices existed but they were not very striking in the survey. The comparison and contrast of the students’ views pointed out both similarities and differences. Similarities could be found both in most and least favoured practices. Both girls and boys reported quite similarly that they had learnt a lot or at least some English by watching movies, TV and YouTube as well as by searching the Internet for information. The least favoured practices, such as visiting virtual worlds, reading non-fiction and magazines were the same among girls and boys as well. The differences revealed that girls had found their out-of-school literacy practices generally more useful than boys. Yet, the differences favouring girls in the survey were statistically significant only in singing songs, in chatting on-line as well as in reading books and newspapers. Thus, girls’ interests and learning profiles seem to be divided into various practices and purposes, mainly to those that accentuate self-expression and imagination, searching for information, and social relations and communication. Boys assessed in the survey that they had learnt English more than girls by playing computer games. The findings relate to practices that are associated with exciting entertainment. In the interview boys claimed that playing computer games is useful in both oral and written language learning. While the girls’ literacy profile emphasised social, musical

and print media practices, the boys' profile accentuated multimedia gaming as well as searching for information through various multimedia practices.

Even though the students reported both in the survey and in the interviews that they had learnt English informally through various literacy practices, only few practices seemed to be associated with high achievement in English at school. In the survey, only reading novels, newspapers, instructions and manuals as well as watching TV and visiting forums correlated positively and significantly with high achievement in English. Similarly, the most positive attitudes towards studying English related to reading newspapers and novels. In addition, positive correlations were found between the attitudes towards studying English and many social and entertaining practices, such as discussing in the family and with foreigners, chatting on the Internet, communicating via e-mail, using Facebook, instant messaging, travelling abroad, listening to music and watching TV and films. This was particularly true in relation to affective attitudes, experiencing studying English pleasurable. The cognitive attitude, the importance of studying English correlated most positively with the literacy practices of social media and traditional reading and writing. Furthermore, traditional literacy practices were related to the strong self-concept in learning English at school. In addition to reading novels and newspapers, writing blogs and watching TV were associated with the strong self-concept. Reading novels and newspapers as well as reading and writing letters, and discussing in the family were also associated with English resources at home. There were, in fact, not many English books and papers at students' homes but these findings may reflect the general cultural capital and communication at home. The Internet connection, however, was available to all students except one. To sum up, these findings suggest that favouring traditional print media and reading practices seems to be strongly associated with high achievement in English at school, with strong self-concept in learning English, with positive attitudes towards studying English and with cultural capital and communication at home.

One research task was to discover student subgroups by cluster analysis. The results indicate that even though there were many similarities in the students' views of their

informal learning through various literacy practices, five distinct subgroups could be traced: the film and TV viewers, the gamers, the music and social media users, the multimedia actives and the face-to-face communicators. Diversity in the student groups was prominent in using and learning through traditional print and communicating in social media, listening to music and singing songs as well as computer gaming. The differences between the groups were further related to the variety of contexts. Some students seemed to learn from a wide variety of spaces, practices and purposes while others were limited to fewer practices. The multimedia actives seemed to take a full advantage of various practices, while the gamers as well as the film and TV viewers exploited only few contexts. From the point of view of language learning, the multimedia actives, who were mainly girls and who favoured a wide variety of practices including traditional print reading and writing, were most often the highest achievers in English at school. The music and social media users as well as the face-to-face communicators were both mainly girls and high-achievers. Most low-achievers in English were found among the gamers, who were mainly boys, as well as the film and TV viewers, who included both girls and boys.

The literacy practice subgroups reveal the students' interests and purposes in informal language learning. The multimedia actives seem to be interested and engaged in many literacies, both traditional and new, and their goals seem to vary from entertainment to social communication, to self-development and even to intentional learning. The film and TV viewers appear to be quite passive bystanders, whose learning of English is unintentional and random. The music and social media users as well as the face-to-face communicators focus on social relations and self-expression. Their informal learning happens spontaneously through socialization with peers, friends and family members. The gamers seem to be experts in their own restricted space, where the excitement and competition in games entertains them and supports their self-improvement both in gaming and in learning English, the common language of the games.

The literacy practices that the different subgroups favoured in informal language learning can reflect the students' identity building. Wortham (2006: 14) argues that

learners' identities are evident in what they do. People learn as part of the same activities through which they act in the world. Identities are formed in the space of practice and different identities are related to different contexts and practices. In a similar vein, citing the work of Gee, Rowsell and Pahl (2007: 392) connect identities to lived worlds, where identities are related to literacy practices where the intimate and personal worlds connect with the social relations and contexts. Based on this argumentation, the students in my study are building their learning identities through various literacy practices connecting them with their personal interests, purposes and goals in life. Some students, such as the gamers and the film and TV viewers in this study, seem to set their goals in relation to specific situations, such as gaming or watching films, TV and humorous YouTube videos, merely to enjoy and entertain themselves. Even though their language learning is not intentional, they can become aware of that learning through retrospective acknowledgment (compare Schugurensky 2000: 5-6). Other students, such as the music and social media users as well as the face-to-face communicators, see the literacy practices as serving self-expression and social purposes and their identity building occurs through interaction and social communication where language, particularly spoken language, has a central role. The others, such as the multimedia actives, seem to set their goals wider in life to become engaged in popular global youth culture. They take a full advantage of various learning spaces and literacy practices. Their learning is connected with various media, purposes and personal tasks in life: entertainment, social and cultural communication as well as self-development. Their informal language learning is self-initiated and self-directed, both incidental and intentional (compare Beckett & Hager 2002: 128; Schugurensky 2000: 4-5). In their informal literacy practices, both traditional and new literacies coexist and seem to empower them both in everyday life and at school.

The findings of the survey are in line with several previous studies on young people's literacy practices. As the findings in previous studies, the findings of this study show that print media are often associated with school learning, while new media practices are mainly situated in informal contexts (compare Luukka et al. 2008: 162-163). However, in this study there were also students, particularly the high-achieving girls, who were



reading books and newspapers in their free time, even in English. In previous studies, the most popular media practices used in English have been playing games and searching information on the Internet as well as using e-mail and chatting (compare Leppänen et al. 2009a: 96-98; 103; 1091; Leppänen et al. 2009b: 1091; Luukka et al. 2008: 182-183). In addition to these, various other practices, such as watching films, TV and Youtube videos as well as listening to music and singing songs in karaoke proved to be popular among youngsters in this study. Similar to the previous studies, gaming and searching information was more popular among boys, whereas e-mail and chatting were more popular among girls. In addition, in this study girls also liked to sing as well as read and write blogs and letters and communicate face-to-face. The role of music was also found quite significant in this study. The youngsters enjoyed listening to music and singing songs. The results are in line with Lappi's (2009: 103-104) findings that music can be fun and both provide linguistic models and work as a memory tool for learning English. The results of the present study also agree with Leppänen's (2007: 167) findings that Finnish youngsters use English in informal contexts for their own purposes and in ways that allow them to express and negotiate their meanings and identities.

The findings of this study that pointed out that only traditional literacies, such as reading novels, newspapers and instructions, were associated with high achievement at school resemble also the results of the previous study by Moje et al. (2008: 11-12) that explored the effects of out-of-school literacy practices of mainly Spanish-speaking students on their English achievement at school. Even though the survey by Moje et al. included a variety of print and new media literacy practices, only the reading novels had a significant impact on English achievement at school.

Based on the results of this study and the findings of previous studies, I agree with Schallert and Wade (2005: 526) that school education still values expert- and book-dominated print literacy, while young people are active in various self-directed socially and technologically mediated literacy practices through which they access local and even global networks across languages and cultures. It is time to build a bridge between traditional and new literacies in school education. We should accept, like Alvermann

suggests (2008: 9-10), new literacy practices that inspire young people who are willing to use their time in producing and sharing contents and feelings with others online and rewrite their social identities in an effort to become who they are or want to be.

## **7 CONCLUSION**

The aim of the study was to shed light on 8<sup>th</sup> graders' authentic out-of-school literacy practices which contribute to their learning of English. The study focused first on finding out the general profile of students' literacy practices and then on illuminating various learner profiles and students' motivation and language learning experiences. The study applied the mixed methods approach. In this concluding chapter, the first section assesses and discusses the possibilities, challenges and limitations of the methods used in this study. The second section focuses on educational implications and further research ideas.

### **7.1 Assessing the methods of the study**

The methodological framework applied in this study was a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative data inquiry and analyses were applied. It has been argued that the mixed methods approach suits well to study individuals in the social contexts. This was the reason I chose this approach, because I wanted to focus my study on individuals and their social peer context. The quantitative method was used to provide a general view of the students' literacy practices, while the qualitative method was complementary and aimed to illustrate and clarify the students' responses in relation to their informal learning of English. By assessing my approach afterwards, I am glad that I had the chance to experiment with both methods, even though it took a lot of time and effort to get acquainted with both quantitative and qualitative approach.

The quantitative survey provided me with the general view of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders literacy practices in English. I was actually surprised how similar students' responses were in the

survey. Even though there were a few significant differences on students' average responses between gender, achievement and attitude groups, there were also a lot of similarities which refer to a quite unified youth culture. The qualitative interviews, however, clarified individual students' interests and learning experiences that were quite diverse. It became obvious to me that the qualitative interview provides much personal and richer data on the phenomenon, but it also accentuates individual differences. By using only the qualitative approach, it would be difficult to see the common picture, "the forest, not only the trees".

There are, of course, some limitations in the present study that one has to take into consideration when viewing the results. First, the sample of the survey data covered only one school, even though the entire grade level was assessed. Thus, the results of the survey cannot be generalised to the whole age cohort. Second, the school and students' background might be socio-economically privileged. This could be seen in the interview answers, which revealed that many students had travelled and participated in various activities abroad. One student, whose father spoke English, had even studied some years in an international school in Switzerland. As a result, the students' privileged background may have an effect on the results of the study. Third, it is also possible that active and motivated high-achievers were more willing to sign up for the interviews than passive low-achievers. On the other hand, while 42 students out of 78 signed up, I could select also some low-achievers for the interviews. However, the average level of the students' achievement in English was surprisingly high, which might have an effect on the results as well. Fourth, only one person analysed the qualitative data. The analysis was altogether quite general, because the data were not primary but complementary in this study. This may, of course, weaken the reliability of the findings. On the other hand, the methodological triangulation was used to strengthen both reliability and validity of the study.

## **7.2 Pedagogical implications and further research suggestions**

Even though the findings of this study cannot be generalised to all 14-year old students in Finland, they can provide the basis for pedagogical implications and further research ideas. This section focuses on five main aspects that arose from the findings. First, it claims that the students' views of informal language learning are strongly related to their intrinsic motivation and the available media spaces. Second, it argues that new literacy practices are gendered, but not as much as the traditional print reading and writing practices. Third, it focuses on the various subgroups of students and proposes to take into consideration various values and purposes of practices in learning and identity building. Fourth, it argues that the authentic multimodal literacy practices that students find useful in informal language learning are not appreciated at school. Fifth, it emphasises that, even though the youngsters' multimedia literacy practices do not have a strong impact on English achievement at school, they may be significant and powerful in their lives and identity development. Finally, some further research ideas are suggested.

First of all, 14-year-old students seem to be quite active language learners outside of school. Particularly entertaining multimedia literacy practices contribute to their learning of English. The practices that students find most useful are mainly those that are easily available for everyone and that are personally interesting and somehow meaningful. Thus, the literacy practices seem to be clearly situated in students' everyday activities and they were purposeful to students. Students' reasoning for literacy practices reveals that they value pleasure, building and maintaining social relations, seeking information, following popular culture and enjoying the excitement of gaming. Some of them are looking for and sharing the interest and affinity groups for self-development and identity building (compare Leppänen et al. 2009b: 1101; Moje et al. 2008: 25–27). These findings imply that students are motivated to learn English informally, if their personal interests, values and goals, and the available media space meet. This does not seem to happen at school because, according to the findings of this study, students' affective attitudes towards studying English at school were not as positive as could have been

expected. The positive attitudes and meaningfulness of studying English at school could be improved by putting more value on the practices that students find personally interesting and authentic in their lives outside of school.

Second, new literacy practices are gendered, but not as much as the traditional print reading and writing practices. The findings of this and many previous studies indicate that there are many similarities and only few differences between girls' and boys' favourite practices, at least from the point of view of language learning. Even though many previous studies have shown that boys are more interested in new literacies (for example, Schallert & Wade 2005: 526), the results of this study indicate that boys are significantly more interested only in gaming. Girls, instead, find various new literacy practices contributory to their language learning. Particularly social media and communication by chatting on the Internet are popular among girls. The real gender gap favouring girls is still in traditional print literacy practices, particularly in reading novels for pleasure and newspapers to seek information. This difference may be critical and act to girls' advantage because language and literacy learning at school emphasises printed texts, literature, reading and writing. By accepting new multimedia literacy practices into school the school curriculum could equalize the students in language learning. Gee's (2007: 95-96) suggestions to use computer games at school could widen the language registers and boys' active role in learning. In this study, gaming did not show a positive effect on the achievement in English, which may be due to the fact that English achievement in school is marked based on learning through formal language and traditional printed texts.

Third, even though the students shared to some extent the general profile of literacy practices, specific clusters of students could be discovered. The differences in these subgroups related, on one hand, to a wide or limited repertoire of useful literacy practices, and on the other hand, to focusing on specific literacy practices, such as gaming, chatting or film and TV viewing. From the point of view of school learning, the students who could be called the multimedia actives, who favour a wide variety of practices including traditional print literacies, were most often high-achievers at school.

These students' interests extended from entertaining multimedia practices to social media, both computer-mediated and face-to-face interaction, as well as traditional print media and writing both letters and blogs. Multimedia literacies of this kind match well with today's literacy demands, particularly because this kind of informal learning can support and complete language learning at school. The question is, however, how this multifaceted interest could be shared with other students, particularly, those who were quite passive film and TV viewers and gamers and whose language achievement at school was comparatively low. Shared, collaborative projects where students could exploit their various skills and knowledge of various media and texts could be worth of exploring. In these projects, the gamers and the film and TV viewers could discover that imagination and narrative scripts that are common in computer games and films can be found and enjoyed in printed books as well (cf. Kankaanranta 2007: 295-302). The Gamers could, according to Gee (2007: 96), show to other students how the virtual social world of the game can be connected to a live social network and thus build youngsters' social capital and future aspirations.

Fourth, the findings on the students' achievement in English at school are somewhat contradictory to their own views of informal learning. Even though the students thought that they had learnt a lot of English through various multimedia practices, the correlations between practices and the English achievement at school was limited. The strongest association with English achievement was with traditional practices, that is, reading novels, newspapers, manuals and instructions. The findings are in line with some other studies (for example, Kankaanranta 2007: 302; Moje et al. 2008: 20-25). The question arises, whether this means that the students' responses are not reliable or whether the teachers' views on language learning deviate from the students' opinions. Based on the findings, I would argue for the last view and claim that students assess their learning of English with different criteria in informal contexts and at school. In informal learning the assessment focuses on everyday spoken language used in informal authentic situations, where language usage is flexible and where mistakes in grammar or speaking with an accent are not so critical. At school, the criteria by teachers and students accordingly focus on correct formal and written language and academic

expository or narrative texts. The mistakes in grammar are not easily passed. In order to support both students' motivation as well as informal and formal learning, the criteria for language achievement could put a greater emphasis on communicative competence, spoken language and everyday expressions that are useful outside of school as well. In addition, students' interests, motivation and engagement in various language and literacy practices should be appreciated more.

Fifth, I would conclude by agreeing with Moje et al. (2008: 26) that even without being able to demonstrate a strong impact of multimedia literacy practices on school achievement in English, the multiple informal literacy practices documented in this study are significant and meaningful in young people's lives. These practices should not be evaluated only from the point of view of school achievement. The qualitative results revealed that the students' informal learning of English through multiple literacies is related to their personal interests as well as to their social, intellectual and emotional goals. In addition, their literacy practices can foster not only self-expression, self-development and identity building but also communication, social relationships and cultural understanding among peers and family members at home and abroad. This empowers them in their everyday life today and provides them with language and literacy skills in their future.

In the future, it would be interesting to study informal literacy practices in English with a larger representative sample of young people in order to be able to generalize the findings and examine closer the unity and diversity among the Finnish youth, in their literacies and culture. On the other hand, ethnographic field studies with interviews and observations that would follow closely students' choices and engagement in literacy practices and their language learning in various spaces and for various purposes would be fascinating as well. Personally, however, I would be most inspired to do an action or intervention study, where students with different learning profiles could interact and collaborate in common projects, where they could exploit each others' knowledge and experiences and negotiate common goals for their studies based on their shared interests and values. For instance, gamers, film viewers, social communicators, music lovers and

book readers could design together a learning project where students' interests, values and visions would guide the designing of a language curriculum and practices for life outside school.



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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1. Survey questionnaire

Tutkimuskysely yläkoululaisille

*Tämän kyselyn tuloksia tulen käyttämään Pro Gradu-tutkielmassani, jossa tutkin yläkoululaisten englannin oppimista koulun ulkopuolella. Voit vastata kyselyyn täysin nimettömänä.*

### Mistä olet omasta mielestäsi oppinut englantia koulun ulkopuolella?

Arvioi kutakin kohtaa asteikolla (1-5)

- 5= erittäin paljon
- 4= paljon
- 3= jonkin verran
- 2= aika vähän
- 1= en lainkaan

Oma arviiosi (1-5)

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| 1. englanninkielisistä tv-ohjelmista                                 | _____ |
| 2. englanninkielisistä elokuvista                                    | _____ |
| 3. englanninkielellä laulemista musiikista                           | _____ |
| 4. laulamalla itse englannin kielellä (esim. karaoke tai laulupelit) | _____ |
| 5. englanninkielisistä tietokirjoista                                | _____ |
| 6. englanninkielisistä romaaneista (esim. Potteri)                   | _____ |
| 7. englanninkielisistä sanoma- ja aikakauslehdistä (Newsweek, Elle)  | _____ |
| 8. englanninkielisistä harrastelehdistä                              | _____ |
| 9. englanninkielisistä sarjakuvista                                  | _____ |
| 10. englanninkielisistä verkkolehdistä                               | _____ |
| 11. englanninkielisistä tietokone- tai konsolipeleistä               | _____ |
| 12. englanninkielisistä verkkopeleistä (CS, BF, WoW)                 | _____ |
| 13. englanninkielisistä lauta- tai roolipeleistä                     | _____ |
| 14. keskustelemalla englanniksi Internetissä (MSN, Skype, IRC, Chat) | _____ |
| 15. englanninkielisistä virtuaaliympäristöistä (Habbo.com, IMVU)     | _____ |
| 16. englanninkielisiltä kavereilta facebookissa                      | _____ |
| 17. englanninkielisistä blogeista                                    | _____ |
| 18. englanninkielisiltä foorumeilta/keskustelupalstoilta             | _____ |
| 19. englanninkielisiltä video- ja huumorisivuilta (esim YouTube)     | _____ |
| 20. muilta englanninkielisiltä Internet-sivuilta                     | _____ |
| 21. englanninkielisistä ohjeista tai manuaaleista                    | _____ |

22. englanninkielisistä tekstiviesteistä \_\_\_\_\_
23. englanninkielisistä sähköpostiviesteistä \_\_\_\_\_
24. juttelemalla ulkomaalaisten kanssa (Suomessa) \_\_\_\_\_
25. ulkomaanmatkoilta / leireiltä \_\_\_\_\_
26. kirjeenvaihdossa ulkomaalaisten kanssa \_\_\_\_\_
27. vanhemmilta tai sukulaisilta \_\_\_\_\_
28. muualta, mistä? \_\_\_\_\_

**Vastaa vielä seuraaviin kysymyksiin:**

1. Oletko tyttö \_\_\_\_\_ vai poika \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Mikä on äidinkielesi? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Montako vuotta olet opiskellut englantia? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Mikä oli englannin numerosi viime todistuksessa? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Oletko asunut tai käynyt koulua toisessa maassa? Jos olet, missä ja kuinka kauan?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Minkä numeron olisit **omasta mielestäsi** ansainnut seuraavilta englannin osa-alueilta?
  - a) Lukemisesta \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Kirjoittamisesta \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Puhumisesta \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Kuuntelemisesta \_\_\_\_\_
  - e) Sanavaraston laajuudesta \_\_\_\_\_
  - f) Kieliopista \_\_\_\_\_
  - g) Ilmaisurohkeudesta \_\_\_\_\_
7. Miten **tärkeänä** pidät englannin oppimista? (*Merkitse rasti arviosi mukaan.*)  
Erittäin tärkeänä \_\_\_\_\_ Melko tärkeänä \_\_\_\_\_ En lainkaan tärkeänä \_\_\_\_\_
8. Miten **mukavaa** englannin opiskelu on koulussa sinun mielestäsi?  
Erittäin mukavaa \_\_\_\_\_ Melko mukavaa \_\_\_\_\_ Ei \_\_\_\_\_ lainkaan mukavaa \_\_\_\_\_
9. Pääsetkö internetiin kotona? \_\_\_\_\_
10. Onko teillä kotona englanninkielisiä kirjoja tai lehtiä? Jos on, niin arvioi niiden määrän.  
(ympyröi)  
0-10      11-20      21-30      yli 30

**11.** Kerro vielä yksi tyypillinen esimerkki siitä, minkälaisia taitoja tai minkälaisia asioita olet oppinut mainitsemistasi lähteistä. (Voit jatkaa kirjoitusta sivun toiselle puolelle.)

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Kiitos vastauksistasi! Jos suostut haastatteluun, kirjoita nimesi alapuolelle. Haastattelut järjestetään kouluajalla.

---

## Appendix 2. Interview frame

### Haastattelukehys

1. Mukava, kun suostuit haastateltavaksi. Sopii kai, että nauhoitan haastattelun.

### Teema 1 (motivaatio):

2. Mitä tämän listan asioista teet kaikista mieluiten?
3. Miksi tykkäät tehdä juuri näitä asioita?
4. Mitä listan asioita et tykkää tehdä ollenkaan?

### Teema 2 (hyödyllisyys):

5. Sinä arvioit, että olet oppinut englantia koulun ulkopuolella eniten \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Mitkä ohjelmat/kirjat/lehdet/pelit jne. ovat olleet sinusta erityisen hyödyllisiä englannin oppimisen kannalta? Miksi?
7. Arvioit myös \_\_\_\_\_ hyödylliseksi englannin oppimiselle?
8. Mitkä ohjelmat/kirjat/lehdet/pelit jne. erityisesti? Miksi?
9. Millaisissa tilanteissa olet päässyt hyödyntämään oppimiasi taitoja?
10. Tuliko sinulle mieleen vielä muita tilanteita, joissa olet oppinut englantia koulun ulkopuolella?

### Teema 3 (taidot):

11. Sanoit, että olet oppinut englantia eniten \_\_\_\_\_.
12. Mitä englannin kielen käyttöä, tietoja tai taitoja olet tästä oppinut?
13. Mainitsit hyödylliseksi myös \_\_\_\_\_. Miksi?
14. Mitä englannin kielen käyttöä, tietoja tai taitoja olet tästä oppinut?
15. Mainitsit vielä \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Mitä englannin käyttöä, tietoja ja taitoja olet oppinut tästä?
17. Mitä sellaisia taitoja olet oppinut englannin tunnilla, joita et olisi oppinut vapaa-ajalla?

Kiitos haastattelusta.

Jos oppilas ei osaa määritellä, mitä englannin kielen käyttöä, tietoja ja taitoja hän on oppinut, viitataan taustakyselyn osa-alueisiin.



### **Appendix 3. Interview transcription notes**

Full stop (.) = *longer pause that indicates the end of a speech section*

Comma (,) = *short pause*

Three full stops in brackets (...) = *there has been speech before or after the extract*

Square brackets [ ] = *clarifications by the interviewer*

## Appendix 4

TABLE A. Mean ratings of literacy practices by gender and significance of differences (t-test)

|  | Girls | Boys | Sign. |
|--|-------|------|-------|
| Watching movies                        | 4     | 3,7  |       |
| Watching TV                            | 3,9   | 3,5  |       |
| Listening to music                     | 3,9   | 3,2  | *     |
| Watching Youtube videos                | 3,1   | 3,5  |       |
| Chatting on the Internet               | 3,6   | 2,5  | ***   |
| Searching the Internet for information | 2,8   | 3    |       |
| Playing single player comp. games      | 2,3   | 3,4  | ***   |
| Traveling abroad                       | 3     | 2,4  |       |
| Discussing with foreigners             | 2,9   | 2,4  |       |
| Singing songs                          | 3,1   | 1,8  | ***   |
| Playing multi-player com. games        | 2     | 3,2  | ***   |
| Reading manuals and instructions       | 2,2   | 2,5  |       |
| Communicating via e-mail               | 2,5   | 2,1  |       |
| Discussing in the family               | 2,6   | 2    | *     |
| Reading newspapers                     | 2,7   | 1,7  | ***   |
| Using Facebook                         | 2,4   | 1,9  |       |
| Instant messaging                      | 2,4   | 1,7  | *     |
| Visiting forums                        | 2,1   | 2,1  |       |
| Reading novels                         | 2,5   | 1,7  | **    |
| Reading comics                         | 2     | 2,3  |       |
| Reading and writing blogs              | 2,2   | 1,7  |       |
| Reading non-fiction                    | 1,9   | 2    |       |
| Reading on-line news                   | 1,6   | 2    |       |
| Reading magazines                      | 1,8   | 1,9  |       |
| Reading and writing letters            | 2     | 1,3  | *     |
| Playing board and role play games      | 1,6   | 1,9  |       |
| Visiting virtual worlds                | 1,7   | 1,4  |       |

\* significant the the 0.05 level

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level

\*\*\* significant at the 0.001 level

## Appendix 5

TABLE B. Mean ratings of literacy practices by high- and low-achievers in English and significance of the differences (t-test)

|  | high-ach. | low-ach. | Sign. |
|--|-----------|----------|-------|
| Watching movies                        | 4         | 3,5      |       |
| Watching TV                            | 4         | 3,7      |       |
| Listening to music                     | 3,7       | 3,4      |       |
| Watching Youtube                       | 3,2       | 3,3      |       |
| Chatting on the Internet               | 3,3       | 2,9      |       |
| Searching the Internet for information | 2,9       | 2,8      |       |
| Playing single player comp. games      | 2,5       | 3        |       |
| Traveling abroad                       | 2,8       | 2,6      |       |
| Discussing with foreigners             | 2,7       | 2,7      |       |
| Singing songs                          | 2,8       | 2,3      |       |
| Playing multi-player com. games        | 2,2       | 2,8      |       |
| Reading manuals and instructions       | 2,5       | 2,2      |       |
| Communicating via e-mail               | 2,5       | 2,1      |       |
| Discussing in the family               | 2,4       | 2,2      |       |
| Reading newspapers                     | 2,7       | 1,8      | **    |
| Using Facebook                         | 2,3       | 2        |       |
| Instant messaging                      | 2,2       | 1,9      |       |
| Visiting forums                        | 2,3       | 1,8      |       |
| Reading novels                         | 2,6       | 1,6      | ***   |
| Reading comics                         | 2,2       | 2,1      |       |
| Reading and writing blogs              | 2,2       | 1,9      |       |
| Reading non-fiction                    | 2         | 1,8      |       |
| Reading on-line news                   | 1,9       | 1,7      |       |
| Reading magazines                      | 1,8       | 1,9      |       |
| Reading and writing letters            | 1,8       | 1,6      |       |
| Playing board and role play games      | 1,6       | 1,9      |       |
| Visiting virtual worlds                | 1,6       | 1,5      |       |

\* significant the the 0.05 level

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level

\*\*\* significant at the 0.001 level

## Appendix 6

TABLE C. Mean ratings of literacy practices by students of strong and weak self-concept and significance of the differences (t-test)

|  | Strong s-c. | Weak s-c. | Sign. |
|--|-------------|-----------|-------|
| Watching movies                        | 3,7         | 4         |       |
| Watching TV                            | 3,4         | 4         | **    |
| Listening to music                     | 3,4         | 3,7       |       |
| Watching Youtube                       | 3,1         | 3,4       |       |
| Chatting on the Internet               | 2,8         | 3,4       |       |
| Searching the Internet for information | 2,6         | 3,1       |       |
| Playing single player comp. games      | 3           | 2,6       |       |
| Traveling abroad                       | 2,6         | 2,8       |       |
| Discussing with foreigners             | 2,7         | 2,7       |       |
| Singing songs                          | 2,4         | 2,7       |       |
| Playing multi-player com. games        | 2,6         | 2,4       |       |
| Reading manuals and instructions       | 2,2         | 2,5       |       |
| Communicating via e-mail               | 2           | 2,6       | *     |
| Discussing in the family               | 2,2         | 2,4       |       |
| Reading newspapers                     | 1,8         | 2,7       | ***   |
| Using Facebook                         | 2           | 2,3       |       |
| Instant messaging                      | 2           | 2,2       |       |
| Visiting forums                        | 1,9         | 2,3       |       |
| Reading novels                         | 1,6         | 2,6       | ***   |
| Reading comics                         | 2,1         | 2,2       |       |
| Reading and writing blogs              | 1,7         | 2,3       | **    |
| Reading non-fiction                    | 1,7         | 2,1       |       |
| Reading on-line news                   | 1,7         | 1,9       |       |
| Reading magazines                      | 1,7         | 2         |       |
| Reading and writing letters            | 1,4         | 2,2       | *     |
| Playing board and role play games      | 1,6         | 1,9       |       |
| Visiting virtual worlds                | 1,4         | 1,7       |       |

\* significant at the 0.05 level

\*\* significant at the 0.01 level

\*\*\* significant at the 0.001 level

## Appendix 7: English translations for the interview extracts

- (1) Well I probably watch TV-programmes and movies and I may visit some websites. (...) I rarely have to think about anything, I can just sit there and watch the movie. (Lenny)
- (2) Maybe I watch English TV-programmes and movies. Not really anything else. I think they are a lot better than movies from other countries and anyway. They are good and interesting, at least some of them. (Hanna)
- (3) I listen to music in English and watch movies and TVshows (...) Well, watching TV is very entertaining and at the same time you can learn all kinds of sayings really well. Actually it's the best way. And from computer games, when you have to read those English manuals on how to play and from music, of course, all kinds of things can be learned. (Lisa)
- (4) Soccer teams' websites, when you want to see how some team is doing. (Lenny)
- (5) Well, maybe magazines, movies and TV-programmes. From the magazines I learn about my own hobby (...) football. (Alex)
- (6) Well, especially the music stuff is very interesting, I tend to listen to it a lot and play a lot and I make music myself too. I probably do it the most and it's the most enjoyable. (Sam)
- (7) Well, I do listen to a lot of music in English and play games and now I have started reading English comics from the Internet about a week ago or a month ago pretty much and I've read lots (...) If I'm too tired to go out in the evening or do something fun, I just play games, to pass the time. The game I have been playing recently, I play with Swedish and Estonian people, sometimes with Americans, rarely with people from more exotic countries like North Koreans. (Max)
- (8) (...) I read sequels of books in English, if they haven't been translated into Finnish or if I like a book and want to read the original because it's different from the translated one (...) all kinds of cooking blogs (Ann)
- (9) I like to read novels a lot and hang out on-line and watch movies. For example Harry Potters are nice and those Dan Brown novels are good. All books which are thick and difficult to understand. Yes, I read in English as well (...) I don't really know, you just get a better, when you read the originals, because those translations are really crummy in a way. Some words can't even be translated, so it's better that way, I don't know, it just sounds better (...) and different youth magazines (Amy)
- (10) (...) Elle and other fashion magazines. (Lisa)

- (11) Talking in English on-line is maybe the most [pleasurable] of them. (...) mostly on Messenger, I have a couple of foreign friends so I talk with them in English. (Vera)
- (12) Perhaps from English board- and role-playing games. They remind me of English classes in school, I wouldn't do those in my free time. (Lisa)
- (13) Perhaps those English board- and role-playing games. (Alex)
- (14) I don't really play any computer games or anything. I don't really like them. (...) It's just not my thing. (Vera)
- (15) I don't really play any games. You can only learn some computer vocabulary from them, they don't interest me, and I don't really read any comics either. (Ann)
- (16) Perhaps karaoke-singing and literature, and maybe writing letters (Ivan)
- (17) (...) and reading magazines or books. I don't tend to read them at least not in English. Maybe it's because you have to read the text yourself and keep focused on it your thoughts in it. (Lenny)
- (18) Corresponding with foreigners, because my English is so terrible. And I don't like to go to any language courses, or any camp where you learn English or something like that. And I don't really read in English either, because I'm such a poor reader anyways so I don't want to start reading in English. (Hanna)
- (19) In fact all those like Desperate Housewives where they talk a lot and quite clearly and where there are a lot of conversations between people. I've watched OC when it was on TV and series like that. Not so much Days of Our Lives and those types, but Desperate Housewives and House and those types. Programmes where there are a lot of conversations between the characters (...) At least James Bond movies. That Sean Connery has a fascinating accent. So from them, a lot has stuck, when you say "koskettava" you can say touching and then from Diamonds are Forever I learned that you can also say very moving. (Lisa)
- (20) I watch Skins, the new seasons on-line because they haven't come out in Finland yet. Even though the language isn't very official, you learn what the young people actually use. Something like Skins and maybe some movies (...) (Ann)
- (21) I listen to pretty much everything. You learn from the clearer or slower ones. Some language sticks in your mind. (Lisa)
- (22) There are quite many, all sorts of English rock and heavy metal. Yes, you can learn from some of the songs, but in other songs there might be only two words in the whole song. You can learn from them. You can learn a certain dialect or slang. (Lenny)
- (23) A little bit of everything, all that sounds good, I can't say which genre, I find them [bands] in magazines and Soundi and on the web. I listen to it if I like it and then I listen to it some more. (...) I have learned fancier words, not so much spoken language, something a little more poetic. And I've learned things from performers speaking during gigs; there is humour and things you don't come across in literary language or in normal

life. (...) In certain music, they don't pronounce things the regular way and all the Finnish artists who sing in English don't pronounce well. (Sam)

- (24) From trips to abroad and camps. in Switzerland and Australia I learned a lot and in English-speaking countries. I have lived in Switzerland for 2 years and 2 months. (...) From parents and relatives. It depends on the family, what kind of language skills they have. In my family, my father speaks perfect English. (...) In the correspondence with foreigners. (Alex)
- (25) (...) Then from parents and relatives, from e-mails and perhaps by talking with foreigners (...) I have relatives on Facebook or relatives who live in the States, so through them, they do speak Finnish too but not so well so I can talk to them (...) Last summer I worked in a coffee shop and there I had to speak English to some English-speaking people. (Hanna)
- (26) From trips to abroad, camps, language courses I marked as a 4, since I have to travel every summer and fall because of my sport. Alpine skiing [is my sport], there we train with others and we have to know how to handle thing politely in English. I get friends from there. I talk rarely in German with them, so I learn English well, talking mainly. I did have "from English speaking friends on Facebook". It's again from the same friends I have met abroad so I keep in touch with them afterwards through the Internet. It's part of the same thing. (Sam)
- (27) I learn English from single-player computer games, for example from games where you have to choose what you say, so you have to know what you are saying and there are a lot of foreign players. (...) From multi-player games such as Counterstrike and single-player games Left for Dead, I talk to a headset microphone where I speak either English or Finnish or whatever. Sometimes misunderstandings happen at least I have been said that my word order was mixed up. There might be talk about locations, for example he is on the bridge or in the house, different places. Then if I don't play I might just talk about how I'm doing. I write as well, because if I speak with my friends in the programme I can talk to my opponents through typing. (Max)
- (28) I play quite a lot, more with Playstation and Nintendo Wii. They have English manuals, so I have to think about them and a lot of new words that I have to check in the dictionary or on the Internet and at the same time I learn. (Lisa)
- (29) A lot of the manuals are in Finnish but if I order an item from, for example, the States then the manual is in English. (Ivan)
- (30) If one buys some new electronics, they usually have poor Finnish manuals or they don't have them at all, in that case I read it in English, product information that isn't in Finnish you can't avoid. (Ann)
- (31) From Stephanie Meyer's novels, New Moon and those, I have read them all in English and all the Potters and the story of Edgar Sauther. I read them all in English because back then they hadn't been translated. (Ann)
- (32) For example some special words and vocabulary related to certain books and some sentence structures. And writing, if I have forgotten something then it works well as

revision so overall I learn writing from it. (...) I learn to pronounce when I watch videos and if I read, I learn literary skills. (Amy)

- (33) Cosmopolitan and I read a lot of those kinds of magazines in different languages, in German, Swedish and also in English, Elle and other fashion magazines. (Lisa)
- (34) Different youth magazines that I buy from airports. Usually they are in English or if I'm really bored I might read my dad's golf magazines or something really weird. (Amy)
- (35) Skiing magazines, sometimes there are some difficult words, so that's how I learn. There might be some names for [skiing] tricks in English, degrees and things like that. (Max)
- (36) All sorts of cooking blogs, they are a little tricky because they have the measurements that have to be converted but I like to read about the basic stuff. (...) Maybe something related to dogs or cooking or plants, I like stuff about plants, houseplants and such. (Ann)
- (37) Sometimes I read blogs in English and I might learn from it. (Max)
- (38) (...) Travelling abroad, if you don't speak Greek [in Greece] then English is the number one language. (...) Sometimes in Finland some tourist might come and ask something. (Lisa)
- (39) I have cousins in Sweden and I speak English with them (...) (Max)
- (40) If some English speaking person comes along. Last summer I met my friend's cousin who was from England. He was a real football fan so we talked about football. (Lenny)
- (41) There are these guys in our alpine skiing team, they study at the University and they have come from abroad and they ski. It's nice to talk to them and all. I talk to them many times a week. And at our camps you have to use English and so. (Sam)
- (42) (...) When I was in middle school, I worked as a school guide, that's where I used it [English] a little. (...) (Lisa)
- (43) I was a school guide on the sixth grade. I had to guide foreign visitors who were visiting, so that's where I got to use my English. (Amy)
- (44) Last summer I worked in a coffee shop and there I had to speak English to some English-speaking people. (Hanna)
- (45) I talk on Messenger, one is from Australia and one is from England, I speak English with them. (Vera)
- (46) Travelling abroad and corresponding with letters, on Facebook and of course in the international school. (Alex)
- (47) I have a friend who I have talked with on-line and next summer I get to go to a language course in England for three weeks. So there I will be able to develop and use my English. (Amy)



- (48) To understand instructions better and about the things I order and about the installing and such. (Ivan)
- (49) It's really easy if you get new vocabulary, I know a lot in class and I can speak better, use words that people actually use, not just what they teach in school. (Ann)
- (50) When they teach new things in school I can be like hey I have heard about this before. I have some sort of base for it from before. (Sam)
- (51) In class, if they ask about something a bit more interesting, something that is hard to know or understand but then if you have talked about it in a game or you might know (...) (Max)
- (52) I'm able to speak better, use expressions that people actually use, not just the things they teach in school. (Ann)
- (53) Youth magazines (...) Vocabulary and some basic stuff can be learned from there, and then some expressions young people use. (Amy)
- (54) Pronunciation can be learned by watching videos. (...) From movies and such, but not so much. Maybe more about pronunciation and such. Sometimes I have been reading the messages on an English forum, usually they are about football too. I have learned quite a lot of spoken language from there as well as football words. (Lenny)
- (55) English can be learned from single-player computer games because you have to talk there. (Max)
- (56) For example some special words and vocabulary related to certain books. (...) And writing, if I have forgotten something then it works well as revision so overall I learn writing from it. (Amy)
- (57) You can learn [from games] a lot of different sayings and phrases and names of swords and all sorts of things. (Max)
- (58) From songs and music in general, if you know a certain song you can remember the words and if it is in the right context it's easy to remember the meaning. (Ann)
- (59) (...) all sorts of English rock and heavy metal. (...) You can learn a certain dialect or slang. (Lenny)
- (60) If you read something you learn literary skills and if you chat on Messenger you also learn to write things. (Amy)
- (61) Well, maybe corresponding with foreigners. You learn sentence structures from the foreigner's text and you can learn new vocabulary and how the words are written correctly. (Alex)
- (62) Speech and how the words are written. (Ivan)
- (63) And then some sentence structures [can be learnt]. (Amy)

- (64) Sentence structure and how words are written and also speaking. (Alex)
- (65) You don't [learn] sentence structures. (Ann)
- (66) When I have been talking to my relatives, when they have been here, I have learnt that the word order isn't so strict. They understand even if I don't know how to put things in the right order or if I don't remember some word, it can just as well be replaced with another. (Hanna)
- (67) One should just learn how to hear [what sounds right]. your ear for the language develops when you read something or listen. (Amy)
- (68) They go over all the grammatical stuff really carefully, so that nothing is unclear. They give you the rules on how the word order goes. Without the rules you would just have to learn to hear it. When you have an English class they give you all the formulas. I don't know if it's a better way to learn but at least they pound it in you head that this is the way to say it. (Amy)
- (69) Maybe those grammatical things, those are hard to learn in your free time, more vocabulary than grammar can be learnt during free time. (Hanna)
- (70) Basic things are learnt in school like I am, I can, I am from there, I am good at something etc. those can't be learnt on-line, verbs, nouns, adjectives etc. (Max)
- (71) You do learn a lot in school, more grammar and you do a lot of exercises in pairs but you don't learn so much about how to make use of your language skills. (Lisa)
- (72) When they teach you in school, there are a lot of words you don't need in your everyday life (that you've learnt in class). (Lenny)
- (73) You learn new words from there, more formal words. You don't learn those from any TV or media. You learn the more official form. (Sam)