

CAN THE INTERNET SERVE AS A USEFUL TOOL IN  
LEARNING ENGLISH? – A CASE STUDY

Master's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract <p>Internetin ja uuden median käyttö on viime vuosina kasvanut räjähdysmäisesti erityisesti nuorten keskuudessa, ja sen myötä myös englanninkielistä materiaalia on tarjolla koko ajan entistä enemmän. Tämän ”Internet-englannin” suhdetta englannin kielen oppimiseen on tutkittu kuitenkin verraten vähän. Tämän tutkielman tarkoitus oli tarkastella tapaustutkimuksena sitä kuinka suomalaiset nuoret kokivat oppineensa englannin kieltä Internetin maailmassa, informaalissa, koulun ulkopuolisessa kontekstissa ja kuinka motivoivana he sen kokivat. Osallistujista tehtiin myös vertailevaa tutkimusta.</p> <p>Osallistujina toimivat kaksi lukioikäistä tyttöä eri paikkakunnilta, joiden taustatekijät poikkesivat toisistaan oleellisesti. Tutkimus oli laadullinen ja yksilöhaastatteluja käytettiin aineiston kokoamiseksi. Tarkoituksena oli saada käsitys aikuisiän kynnyksellä olevien nuorten mielipiteistä ja kokemuksista hakemalla selkeitä yhtäläisyyksiä kohdehenkilöiden väliltä, mutta myös tärkeimpiä eroavaisuuksia tarkasteltiin. Huomioitavaa kuitenkin on, että pelkästään kahden osallistujan voimin ei voida puhua kokonaisen ikäryhmän mielipiteistä.</p> <p>Tulosten perusteella voitiin todeta, että Internetillä ja uudella medialla on erittäin suuri merkitys näiden nuorten elämässä. He myös kokivat englannin kielen oppimisen sitä kautta erittäin luontaiseksi ja tehokkaaksi. Osallistajat jakoivat pääasiassa pitkälti samankaltaisia mielipiteitä muun muassa musiikin hyödyntämisen osalta englannin kielen oppimisessa Internetissä, mutta myös mielenkiintoisia eroavaisuuksia pystyttiin nostamaan esiin kuten heidän erilaiset taustatekijät ja lähtökohdat englannin kielen oppijoina sekä niiden myöhemmät vaikutukset. Laajamittaisella määrällisellä tutkimuksella ja suuremmalla otannalla pystyttäisiin todennäköisesti tekemään tarkempia yleistyksiä siitä kuinka nykynuoret, kokonaisena ryhmänä, kokevat Internetin paikkana oppia englannin kieltä ja toivonkin, että tässä tutkimuksessa esille tulleista tekijöistä saataisiin jatkossa entistä tarkempia ja laajempia tutkimuksia.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been some research and interest in the area of the Internet and its relationship with second language learning - yet, however, not enough considering the magnitude of the effect that this new media is believed to have on younger learners of English. I find this rather peculiar since Internet-based activities such as the social media, games, movies and music play such a big role in young Finnish learners' routine habits today. I feel that doing research in this area will certainly pay off in the future as, in my personal view, more and more young people are learning languages through these media. As Leppänen and Nikula (2008) note, In Finland, web-based activities such as English-based electronic games, fan fiction and Internet forums are an inherent part of the young learner's learning environments outside school.

Unfortunately, as this kind of learning is usually considered learning that takes place outside school, it is, thus, not often recognized by the institution. Possible co-operation between this constantly evolving and flexible new media and the stiff school institution should be more recognized as formal English teaching would greatly benefit from such a strong companion due to the status the Internet has in young learners' leisure activities. I do not think that there are too many people who deny the role of the Internet and its influence on learners in terms of language learning. Nevertheless, it must be conceded that not everyone learns languages through these media as not everyone even has access to it. Also, not all young people are even interested in the possibilities it has to offer in the first place. Yet, it is a widely held belief that the Internet plays a certain role, yet impossible to fully define, in enhancing young kids' language skills and in the future possibly even more and more resulting in a vast globalization of these media. As Leppänen and Nikula (2008) point out, becoming proficient in using

English on the Internet has enabled many Finnish people to take part in global information technology activities.

When I was starting to outline the research problems for the present thesis, I came across a number of studies that dealt with, for example, the Internet and computer-based language learning. However, most of those studies approached the subject from a different angle from mine. Even though they shared similarities to my topic, they mostly went on to describe how the Internet and computers can be taken advantage of in classroom situations, and not at the learners' leisure. Also, according EU Kids Online data repository, most of the studies that deal with young people's online activities have employed quantitative methodologies, whereas only 20% a purely qualitative approach (Donoso, Olafsson and Broddason 2009). My aim is to primarily, in a qualitative manner, evaluate and analyze learning processes and motivation in outside-school activities, a concept called *informal learning*, which will be an integral part of this study. Also, what needs to be stressed is that the learners' personal perceptions of their own learning are the key issue with regard to the present study. In addition, I want to make a very strict difference between what the learners have learned in school compared to various informal contexts. Nevertheless, classroom settings and the role of the teacher are still included in the present paper to some extent, mostly as a comparison element.

For these reasons, I feel that this is going to be a rewarding topic at the present time and in the future as well. It had not been researched that much the way I set out to do and, also, I was personally really interested in this topic since I have myself learned English mostly with the help of these media. By exploring this topic I may be able to teach my students how to take advantage of their favourite web sites, music and movies to learn English incidentally at the same time. Also, I would like to find out if there are some possible disadvantages to learning English this way: for example, if there can be certain structures

grammar-wise that may not be the same as in their school books. Also, they can incidentally absorb lots of expressions which are mainly used in small subcultures or some other colloquial environments. These factors could lead to a situation in which the learners tend to over-use these structures and expressions in their school papers, i.e. these influences have a negative impact on 'the pure English' that is taught at school. That is not necessarily a negative influence in each case but often it can even be paralyzing and difficult to know when there is interference between two or more language forms, and it can be difficult to realize when different dialects and registers clash.

All these interesting questions gathered together, I think this is a subject worth looking into. It was these exact reasons that prompted the present study in the first place and what made me embark on this subject. I also wanted to see if I could really find support for my presuppositions, which will be presented more in detail in Chapter 3. Given the confines of this study for being mostly a case-study and having only two participants, I am not aiming at giving any generalizable answers and solutions but rather scratching the surface of this topic. I hope that I can give it a small nudge so that more people such as fellow future teachers would become more aware of it and possibly even interested in using the possibilities of the new media in their teaching and pass it on to their students.

It should be noted that in the present thesis, I am going solely to focus on 'the new media' and the Internet, i.e. when discussing music, games and movies, for example, I am referring to those social media-, music-, games- and movies-related activities which occur online, on the Internet. Thus, I am not going to include things like CDs, DVDs and the television in this study. This is due to the fact that the Internet is a very vast subject itself and there simply is no room to discuss the aspects of all of these within the confines of the present paper.

As for the structure of the present paper, the next chapter provides an overview of the theoretical framework of this paper by discussing motivation from various angles, then presenting the way the Internet and the new media have ‘penetrated’ in the uses of the English language during the past decade or so. Following this, the subject of formal/informal learning contexts are discussed as well as the concept of learner-centered self-evaluation, and, finally, ending with some of the findings from previous studies. In Chapter 3, aims for the present study will be presented as well as going to go through the process of collecting the data. The results of the study will be presented and analyzed in Chapter 4. Finally, Chapter 5 features an evaluation and overview of the present study as well as takes a look into the future of the field.

## **2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

### **2.1. Motivation**

The first part of the theoretical background concentrates on motivation which is greatly present in young learners’ everyday life in a number of different ways regarding spending time online as well as learning English. This section aims at providing an overview of the aspects that are seen to constitute L2 motivation. I am going to discuss a couple of different approaches and aspects to studying motivation: the more socio-psychological view by Gardner and Lambert and more socio-culturally-oriented view by Dörnyei, and, respectively, their effects on L2 learning. First, let’s start by defining the central concepts of motivation.

#### **2.1.2. Motivation in general**

Motivation has been a central concept in second language learning for decades, and yet, there still is no one definite way to understand as to how it affects learning. In other words, the term can conjure up a number of issues since using the word 'motivation' may have different connotations for different people. As Dörnyei, a pioneer in the area of studying motivation, playfully argues: "there is no such thing as 'motivation'" (2001b: 1). He refers to the fact that it is a term that can cover a variety of meanings and goes on by saying that motivation is considered to be a rather complex area of research since it is thought to be a rather vague concept. Dörnyei (2001a) also says that people do not necessarily know the meaning of motivation but what they do know is that it has to do with something important. Nevertheless, regardless of motivation being a vague term even among researchers, due to variety and extent of research in this area throughout last decades, some well-known basic concepts have emerged and become part of everyday talk in motivational studies. These exact concepts and studies can be linked to researching motivation in an L2-environment as well: e.g. Gardner and Lambert's view of two different types of motivation: *integrative* and *instrumental* is a central issue in understanding modern L2 learners' learning process as well as Dörnyei's more recent findings. I will present both of these approaches and discuss them later in this chapter.

### **2.1.3 From past to present**

It was said 40 years ago: "given motivation, it is inevitable that a human being will learn a second language if he is exposed to the language data" (as quoted by Pit Corder in Dörnyei 2001b)

As mentioned, motivation has been studied quite a lot in recent decades. It is one thing that will never change when it comes to

learning a particular skill: some learners will always be motivated, for various reasons, while some may never find their inner desire to achieve something. For some, being and staying motivated can entail higher salaries at work or, for some, it is the motivation to becoming and being accepted as a member of a certain group. Motivation has been studied from a number of angles including the behaviorist view in the 1960s influenced by Freud. Then the rest of the century was dedicated to studying motivation as part of cognitive processes giving rise to goal and expectancy theories (Dörnyei 2011). Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the cognitive aspects of motivation are still widely prevalent in the field of studying motivation but also a new perspective, namely the role of emotions, has come forward little by little. Even though there are different underlying levels of motivation, one thing is certain: they all influence our behavior, one way or another (Dörnyei 2001b). However, given the previously presented view of motivation and it being a vague and difficult term to define, the actual effects these different underlying levels of motivation have on language learning, and the reasons behind them, is probably going to be a never-ending debate among researchers. Each researcher tends to focus on and specialize in only certain areas of motivation and as Dörnyei (2011: 4) points out: “researchers are inevitably selective in their focus since it seems impossible to capture the whole picture”. Nevertheless, in a positive way, those numerous underlying levels which different researchers focus on can also be viewed as an almost endless source for finding new ways of understanding how a human being and his/her inner desires and behavior work in a language learning environment.

As for L2 learning, there are a number of motivational studies focusing on why some learners succeed better than others, and these studies have been able to gather a great deal of information on this subject. At the beginning of the 1970s, Gardner and Lambert (1972) presented two common, and maybe a bit fallacious as they have also

been criticized, explanations for why there might be differences in the way learners learn at a different rate. The first argument they offered was that it all depends on how the second language is taught. In this view, the teacher plays an important role in the learning process of the learner. The other explanation had to do with the concept of *language aptitude*: "some people have a knack for languages, others do not" (ibid: 1), an idea that they vitiated by saying that since everyone has been able to acquire their first language, there is no evidence that they could not learn other languages as well. As mentioned above, even though these two ideas by Gardner and Lambert have been under criticism to some extent due to their simplicity, current motivation theories strongly rely on the same assumption that everyone is capable of learning a foreign language. Dörnyei (2001b), who has studied the concepts of motivation in recent decades, provides a common example of a situation in which sufficient motivation is usually enough to guarantee a learner a working knowledge of an L2, even though he/she did not have that particular 'knack' (Gardner and Lambert 1972) for it. Also, as Dörnyei argues, if one is not motivated enough, even the best learners are unlikely to reach higher levels of useful language. Thus, motivation is clearly given a crucial role in determining one's success in second language learning in which enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are the key factors of success or failure (Dörnyei 2001b), an idea, which is an important part of motivational research of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Next I will go through Gardner and Lambert's as well as Dörnyei's ideas separately and in greater detail.

#### **2.1.4. Theories**

As mentioned earlier, studying motivation has been approached from various angles, for example behaviorist psychology and social

psychology but, within the confines of the present paper, I am going to present only those that are the most relevant and closely related to the concepts of motivation as for the present study.

#### **2.1.4.1 Gardner and Lambert's *integrative vs. instrumental & attitudes***

It is assumed that learning takes place optimally when the learner is motivated (Julkunen and Borzova 1997). But do we know if or how a learner actually is motivated? According to Gardner and Lambert's theory, motivation is usually divided into two sub-categories: *integrative* and *instrumental*. Integrative motivation occurs when the learner is interested in the target community in an open-minded way, and s/he possibly wants to become a member of that community, some way or another (Gardner and Lambert 1972). In other words, integrative motivation refers to a situation in which the learner genuinely wants to learn the target language for his/her own sake, without any ulterior motives: e.g., moving abroad and the need/willingness to be able to communicate in that target language. *Instrumental* motivation, on the other hand, is about different kinds of ulterior motives. As Gardner and Lambert (1972: 3) say: "the orientation is said to be instrumental in form if the purposes of language study reflect the more utilitarian value of linguistic achievement". What this basically refers to is that there are some sorts of rewards that the learner gets when s/he is successful in learning the target language. However, the division between these two motivation types is not always that clear-cut, and according to Julkunen and Borzova (1997), the difference between integrative vs. instrumental motivation has been widely criticized.

An important aspect in Gardner and Lambert's behaviorist theory is that of *social context* (Dörnyei 2011), which has also received 'new'

interest during the past decade. The external environment is believed to play a major role in the learning processes of a human being as we are “social beings and human action is always embedded in a number of physical, cultural and psychological contexts, which considerably affect a person’s cognition, behaviour and achievement” (Dörnyei 2011: 7).

Attitudes are also viewed as a factor affecting our motivation. According to Gardner (1985), attitudes towards the target language play an important role in contributing to one’s L2 motivation. As a matter of fact, motivation and attitudes are often closely linked when researching motivation, while motivation is still viewed as the most powerful force.

In the next section, alternate views to Gardner and Lambert’s views are presented.

#### **2.1.4.2. Dörnyei and alternative theories**

This section presents findings that came forward when alternative theories for the behavioristic view of motivation were needed, a shift that occurred approximately in the 1970s. Atkinson’s *achievement motivation* theory was one of the well-received ideas in the field of motivational psychology at the time. According to the theory, there are two aspects when it comes to motivation and human behavior. The first one is *need for achievement*, which means that people who are seeking for success in something, tend to “work with heightened intensity at these tasks” (Dörnyei 2001a: 21). The second aspect to this theory is the concept of *fear of failure*. Its basic underlying assumption is that the achiever wants to avoid any negative outcome while doing a task.

Other valid motivation theories include *expectancy-value* and *goal theories*, which are discussed by Wigfield and Eccles (2010) from a more

psychological standpoint. Expectancy-value theories have to do with the belief that

humans are innately active learners with an inborn curiosity and an urge to get to know their environment and meet challenges, and therefore the main issue in these value theories is not *what* motivates learners but rather what directs and shapes their inherent motivation (Dörnyei 2001a: 20)

Thus, the term 'expectancy' refers to expectancy of success in a given task, meaning whether and how well the person feels that he/she will accomplish in that task. 'Value' means how useful accomplishing that task is for him/her. If the given task is expected to be succeeded and the value of carrying it out is great, the learner is likely to be motivated. On the other hand, if he/she feels that the task is too difficult and daunting, and it does not even seem too valuable, motivation for accomplishing the task is probably not so great. According to Wigfield and Eccles (2010), learners' beliefs and expectations become more negative as they get older and, thus, young children are hindered by these negative beliefs the least while adults are the most. As for the present study, it is important to take into account the fact that younger learners are likely not to be as discouraged by rapid technological developments and changes as older people who may more prefer things to stay where they are, which they consider safe and familiar and they do not need to constantly keep up with new developments.

*Goal-setting theories*, on the other hand, refer to the concept that people are willing to set goals which help them pursue what they want. Setting specific goals is an important part of succeeding. Dörnyei (2001a) points out that goal-setting theories were originally developed for studying children's learning at school, and nowadays are probably one of the main areas of research on student motivation. Also, alongside goal-setting theories, there has been plenty of discussion about the concept of *goal-oriented approach* in which the basic idea is to

follow a certain goal which can, for example, be set by the teacher at the beginning of a new course. Thus, the learners have an exact goal right from the beginning which they can start pursuing.

Yet, in addition to the previous types of motivation, Dörnyei (2001a) brings up another kind of approach which can be more invisible to learners: the social dimension, or the micro-context, of L2 learning. He says that the social context plays an important role in the learning process, which was already noted by Gardner and Lambert decades earlier. There are factors such as parents, teacher, school, and learning group influencing one's learning process. These factors have an effect on both one's instrumental/integrative motivation as well, which can be seen as social pressure. Language teachers should also be aware of the fact that learners often, even quite strongly, depend on feedback given by their teacher. Dörnyei (2001b) says that giving feedback and encouragement to students have a salient role in bringing about changes in their learning behaviors. Another important thing for a teacher to do is to present tasks in a motivating way so that s/he can make the students become interested in the task as well. The teacher can thus play an essential role in creating a positive and motivating atmosphere for the learner, whether it occurs in a classroom or at the learner's leisure. Dörnyei (2001b: 101) goes on saying that cooperation between classmates also affects motivation as doing group work and projects "create a feeling of solidarity and comradely supportiveness". It seems that in cooperative situations peers often pull each other along when motivation is low.

To conclude, as presented in this chapter, motivation has been studied from various angles in the area of L2 learning and a number of relevant theories have emerged. Both Gardner and Lambert's pioneering ideas have been covered in this section followed by various views presented by Dörnyei and his sociocultural approach as well as the area of psychology. All these factors play a seemingly relevant part

in language learning situations and even though all the approaches and angles presented here are fairly different, they can still complement each other, and, instead of ruling some of them out, we should pay attention to each one if we are to understand a 21<sup>st</sup> century language learner absorbed in the worlds of the Internet and the new media. Also, what must be noted is that all these approaches work on different levels: some focus on an exact moment type of L2 learning situations while the effects of some models can only be seen in the long run.

As motivation is strongly present in this thesis and its accompanying study, I find it extremely important to understand all the various motivational aspects behind the participants of the present study which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5 further and in a more detailed manner. Nevertheless, given the topic of the present paper, the obvious question is - how can these language learning motivation theories be taken to the 21<sup>st</sup> century where technology and the Internet serve as a crucial part of young learners' language learning environment? Next I am going to move on to the active role of the Internet in today's world and discuss how its advantages can be integrated into learning the English language at school setting or at learners' leisure as for motivating them.

## 2.2. The Internet and globalization as an incentive for learning English

In this section I am going to go through some of the findings and effects about the key topic of the present paper - the Internet and the new media. I will discuss them as a tool and also as a motivator for learning English. First I shall start by taking a look at the rapid rise of this enormous system we call the World Wide Web.

### 2.2.1. Globalization and the rise of the new technology

“Technology has become an indispensable tool in the education of today’s students”. (Richardson 2010: 7)

The rise of the Internet in the last ten years has been a major booster for the English language worldwide. As Graddol (1997) stated over a decade ago, the Internet is regarded as the flagship of global English - people today are exposed to the English language more than ever. This kind of rapid globalization and growing intercultural contact have had a great deal of impact on people’s social lives (Dörnyei 2006) with the English language and the Internet uniting people from different parts of the globe.

In Finland, the shift towards these new technologies has also been eminent. According to Statistics Finland (2008), ninety-nine percent of all Finnish students had used the Internet during the last three months at the end of the year 2007. Based on this, it is rather safe to say that students in Finland are very reliant on the Internet. As for people in working life, the figure was ninety percent, and then the group of senior citizens in which thirty-six percent of the population had been engaged in an Internet-related activity during the past three months. Unfortunately, the study by Tilastokeskus did not show how the three groups had spent their time on the Internet. In other words, we do not know which web pages they had been browsing and in which language, whether they were Finnish, English or some other.

Statistics Finland (2008) as well as Richardson (2010) mention a number of global media-related websites that are really popular among young users, and, thus likely enhancing non-native English speakers’ language skills:

- YouTube
- Facebook

- Chats
- Weblogs
- Wikis
- Games
- Podcasts

Just to give an example of the magnitude of these web activities, in 2008, over 20 hours' worth of videos were uploaded to YouTube each minute (Richardson 2010), a clear majority being in English. He also mentions Technorati.com, a famous blog-tracking service, which listed over 133 million blogs in early 2009. On the English Wikipedia webpage, it says that there are 3,657,824 articles and 24,185,053 pages in total to review at the time the present thesis is going to the printing. In the computer game industry, the recent English-based hit game *World of Warcraft* had 11.5 million players from all over the world at the end of November 2009 (de Freitas and Maharg 2011). In addition, they mention the fact that women and older people have now also been able to get in the gaming community more than ever and these activities are no longer an exclusive benefit of younger males. It is evident that in case of each of these activities, whether social media, online videos and games or information-based websites, the figures keep getting bigger day by day as more and more information and possibilities are emerging, and also, more and more people in developing countries get to have an access to the Internet. Thus, in 2012, it is highly likely that there will be an abundance of more videos, online gamers, blogs and wiki entries than there were in 2008 and 2009. As for the social media, in the US in the year of 2008, over 65% of adolescents had either a Facebook or a MySpace account (Richardson 2010). It is also likely that these figures are higher now in 2011. In Finland, especially among younger people, all these new forms of Internet media have very active users as well (Leppänen and Nikula 2008: 423).

### 2.2.2. The Effects

Improvements in technology such as the Internet, are seen as beneficial when it comes to language learning. The Internet makes it easy to access lots of information and keep contact with people in foreign countries. As Coniam and Wong (2008) point out about two Internet-based computer programs which facilitate communication between people from different countries and, apparently, enhance the users' motivation: "From a motivational point of view, the benefits which IRC chat programs such as ICQ afford are substantial". They go on saying that in their study of Hong Kong secondary school students, the learners showed positive attitudes towards chat programs as a medium of learning English.

What is positive, from the point of view of a future language teacher, is that these web-based activities and communities are to a large extent English-based, and thus it is likely that people engaged in them are exposed, and even forced, to learn English to some extent to keep up. However, it must be noted that many of the previously mentioned Internet-activities can also be available in Finnish, and, thus, it is not always obvious that Finnish users absorb English when using them. Also, as discussed in Chapter 1, not every adolescent uses these media including, for example, YouTube, Wikipedia, blogs, games and the social media at all when they spend time online and, consequently, they may resort to using only a hundred percent Finnish websites. This has been a bit of an unfortunate drawback in quantitative studies in this area, which is why new and fresh qualitative studies are needed to see how people really spend their time on the Internet, what languages they face and how they respond to those.

As for one of the main goals of the present study – studying the relationship between motivation and the Internet – I personally think

that in today's world, in which technology keeps constantly growing and growing, it is highly important to take advantage of that technology in second language teaching/learning, and this is something that both teachers and learners should be aware of. Obviously, computers and technology have already been utilized in language learning contexts for a while and as Chang (2007: 187) mentions "traditional computer-assisted language learning has been revolutionized by the Internet technology". Even though the times of using blackboard and overheads are not over, it should be accepted that today's kids may be more interested in learning English in new ways. During the last ten years, there have been enormous technological developments, and nowadays young people spend more time in front of their computers than ever, which can be seen in the statistics presented earlier. By using the Internet, those young learners unintentionally absorb English through various channels. The role of motivation towards the new media and the English language is crucial as the younger people of today have had years of "screen time" (Richardson 2010: 7) or, more specifically, online time, which is something they are really motivated to do. From another point of view, using this technology and gaining familiarity with it from very early on is crucial. As Gauvain and Borthwick-Duffy (2004: 53) state, "Developing skill with computers is considered critical to children's present success in school as well as to their future success when they assume more independent roles in society". As a future language teacher, I think that this phenomenon is worth investigating. In the next section I will concentrate on more invisible side of things occurring online, which, still, are central to what makes the Internet such a special place for learning.

### **2.2.3. Further inherent characteristics of the Internet and the new media**

Since the Internet and the new media form such a vast subject in today's world as new trends and fads go by very quickly, there is not much room to go into them in much further detail in the present paper. Yet, I feel that it is important to present the following view by Drotner, Jensen and Schroder (2008) of what makes the Internet such an extraordinary learning environment for learning English compared to regular classrooms and those old-fashioned blackboards. There are four inherent characteristics about the new/digital media that set it apart:

- *Semiotic codes* – more multimodal production and interactivity
- *Time* – it allows instant exchange of mediatized forms of communication
- *Place* – it widens options of communication virtually everywhere
- *Social relations* – it enhances the possibilities which intensify one's forms of actions, participation and collaboration.

However, multimodality of *semiotic codes* is not completely an exclusive characteristic of the new/digital media as it has been used previously, for example, in books for a long time. The new media, however, enables an easier access to the multimodal world of texts and images, which has evolved into an essential language learning environment. Gilje (2008) and Perkel (2008) mention that young learners produce a lot of combinations of visuals, sound and graphics, thus handling a wide range of semiotic codes. They go on to say that learners' 'out-of-school uses' of these resources are more varied and advanced and less task-oriented than at school. These kinds of activities, especially when working with a foreign language, can often result in spontaneous, i.e. informal learning which is discussed in the next part of this chapter.

*Time* and *place* are an inherent part of the new media. Internet

messaging and social networking allow “synchronous, continuous and easy exchanges” (Drotner, Jensen and Schroder 2008: 19), which facilitates communication between people living in different parts of the world, and thus, making it possible to communicate in the target language with the rest of the world speaking the same language. As for *social relations*, the new media offers an unparalleled means of maintaining one’s social relations. Drotner (2008) takes up two very popular social-related web communities which I already brought up earlier: Facebook and MySpace and goes on to explain how “the rapid takeup of these services by the youngster generation has meant an enormous expansion of informal communication, participation and play.” (p. 19). What she ultimately says is that with all these factors involved in the new/digital media, the boundaries between formal and informal learning are affected and perhaps becoming more and more overlapping and vague, which can be clearly seen in the results of the present study as well in Chapter 4. The next section introduces some of the main theoretical concepts involved in formal/informal learning and how they apply to today’s modern technologies.

### 2.3. Formal vs. informal learning

Closely linked to the previous topics on the Internet, the role of formal and informal learning, especially the latter, has gone through some major changes over the last ten years as the technological developments discussed earlier have given informal learning a whole new meaning and a great deal of new possibilities. In this section it will be discussed how these two, formal and informal, approaches to L2 learning differ and what kinds of effects and ‘consequences’ they may have on today’s young learners of English. As the present paper deals with the concepts of the Internet and the new media, I will lean a bit more on the informal side of things.

### **2.3.1. General**

“Informal learning has very different significations for each”  
(Garrick 1998: 13).

An often said fact about informal learning is that it is difficult to define, as was the case with the concept of motivation as well. A lot of people do not always necessarily know that there can be various settings and ways, both formal and informal, for learning English. A number of ‘laymen’ and older people would most likely say that English is first and foremost learned in school settings because it is the way they have learned languages when they were young and attended school. They possibly cannot grasp the ample amount of possibilities the new media has to offer since it is not something they would know of. It is rather evident that there is an enormous gap between today’s young learners and their parents and, especially, grand parents in the way they exploit, or have exploited, technology and the Internet for language learning purposes. The new media forms a very important learning environment for today’s young learners in outside school activities and that is why it is crucial to make a clear distinction between formal and informal learning and, ultimately, understand what effects they may have on learning. In this section, I am going to give theoretical concepts about formal versus informal learning and first I will start by defining the two terms.

### **2.3.2. Formal learning**

Formal learning has to do with a school setting or some other kind of formal learning environment. It is learning that takes place in the classroom or doing homework given by a representative of an institution - in other words, the knowledge gained from a teacher,

reading from a school book or doing some other kind of assignment related to school. Formal learning could be also thought of as being a hundred percent conscious learning, i.e., a learner learning English in a formal way would think that now he/she is really trying to learn and not do anything else.

An important part of formal learning is its, often pre-determined, structure. As Jeffs and Smith (1999) point out, formal learning is considered a hierarchically-structured, chronologically-graded and established educational system. In Finland, children start formally learning English during the first grades in primary school, some even earlier in language immersion. This learning process goes on until their compulsory education is over by the time they turn fifteen or sixteen. This entire time lag starting from primary school and finishing the ninth grade, they learn, or more aptly, study English in a very structured way. There is a strict syllabus for each year and there is not much room for trying out and dwelling too much on any out-of-curriculum activities, which is often criticized by some:

*“The traditional, teacher-centered school, which lacks flexibility and imagination and focuses only on the curriculum and the teaching material, instead of the student, is unable to handle the new challenges and satisfy students’ needs.”*  
(Panagiotis, Efstratios, Aikaterini, Eirini-Myrsini)

Thus, even though formal learning of English is an essential part of a child’s life in many countries, it is still criticized for being too stiff and uniform by nature. As mentioned, there is a certain and rather meticulous structure in formal education of English. According to Schugurensky (2000) formal learning/education always has an “institutional ladder” with certain characteristics:

1. it is institutionalized
2. there is a period referred to “basic education” which varies from

- country to country (usually from age 6 to 12)
- 3 it is “propaedeutic” in nature, meaning that each level prepares learners for the next one and the previous level has to be completed successfully before entering the next one
  - 4 it is a clear hierarchical system in which students are at the bottom and ministries of education at the top
  - 5 each level is followed by a diploma or certificate that allows them to be accepted to the next level

As Schugurensky’s ladder model shows, studying and learning in a school setting does not provide the learners themselves to have much power in affecting their curriculum. Thus, in formal learning, the role of the teacher is critical. Moving on to a more learner-centered approach, I will next look at the polar opposite: informal learning.

### **2.3.3. Informal learning**

“any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs outside the curricula of educational institutions, or the courses and workshops offered by educational or social agencies”. (Livingstone 1999: 51)

Contrary to formal learning, informal learning basically entails any other kind of learning experience that is not related to school activities. This kind of learning can be seen as a way in which people use their daily experience to develop their values, beliefs, knowledge and skills (Coombs and Ahmed 1973). Also, it often broadens to the wide spectrum of hobbies and interests that people might have (Saunders, Wyn-Lewis and Andrews 2005) and this is what I am interested in the present paper – people’s interests online. When people are keen on something which reflects their personal interests, no specific aims are set for learning because it is only a casual experience and thus does not feel like a task that has to be accomplished (Coffield 2000). Also, as

Garrick (1998) mentions, informal learning is never neutral. It is always affected by one's social positioning. One's learning experience is always influenced by this positioning affecting their identity and different conceptions of 'reality'. Thus, as mentioned earlier, the effects of informal learning vary from learner to learner, making each learner unique.

According to Schugurensky's theory (2000), there are three forms involved in informal learning:

1. self-directed learning
2. incidental learning
3. socialization

*Self-directed learning* is learning undertaken by individuals, usually alone without assistance but may include a 'resource person' who is not regarded as an educator in the situation. Learning which occurs in a self-directed manner is both intentional and conscious: the individual has the purpose of learning something and he/she is conscious that learning is taking place. Schugurensky (2000) offers an example of a toddler that wants to put her socks on and finally, after a number of tries, succeeds. Obviously, from the learning point of view, the toddler tries to put the socks on intentionally and she is conscious about what she is trying to achieve. There is no educator involved, only a resource person, possible mother or father, who is looking after her. *Incidental learning*, on the other hand, occurs when the learner does not have any intention to learn during a particular experience but after that experience she becomes aware that learning has taken place - it is unintentional but conscious. To illustrate this with a real-life example, again the same toddler touches a hot iron and immediately learns that it is not wise to do so. She did not expect that the iron was hot but learns afterwards (unintentionally) but she is conscious of that

learning process and probably will never touch a hot iron again. The last one, *socialization* (aka tacit learning) is internalization of attitudes, values, skills, behaviours that happen in everyday life. As for this form of informal learning, there is no prior intention of acquiring such a skill and there is no immediate awareness that a skill has been learned. Also, it can take years for the learner to comprehend what has been learned: the toddler learns to speak her first language as she has learned eating habits earlier without being aware that those were learning processes until years later. Imitation plays a big role in these kinds of learning contexts.

Schugurensky (2000) argues that self-directed learning and socialization are the two polar extremes, with incidental learning being somewhere in the middle. What has to be noted is that informal learning can also happen on a group level, not just with one individual. Also, informal learning can be both *additive* and *transformative* with the first one relating to addition of knowledge and skills to something that is already known. The latter refers to situations in which a learner challenges his/her assumptions and values, which may change prior knowledge. Schugurensky (ibid.) admits that this model is not thorough and it does not explain every aspect that is going on in informal learning but it aims to answer the question whether learning has been intentional/unintentional or conscious/unconscious.

In addition to the previous, there is still another aspect to informal learning. It is related to learning which is unintentional: *incidental learning*. According to Marsick and Watkins (1990), incidental learning occurs while doing something else but when a person, as the name suggests, incidentally learns another, a new, thing he/she had not expected to learn in the first place. Thus, incidental learning could be thought as a by-product of learning something he/she was originally set to learn. This kind of learning plays an essential role in language learning situations which occur on the Internet as Chapter 4 will show

more in detail as to the present study. But is that kind of informal learning more powerful than learning that takes place at school?

#### **2.3.4. Formal vs. informal learning?**

As Bigge (1990) says, in general, learning is defined as a process through which the individual combines personal experience, knowledge, skills and attitudes he/she has acquired in real life, with those formed by the learning process in the school setting. Thus, according to this idea, it can be seen that there is a clear connection between formal and informal learning. An often overlooked aspect about their connection is that they can actually complement each other and they do not necessarily have to rule out the other. When I pointed out earlier that informal learning is the polar opposite of formal learning that is not necessarily always the case. Both formal and informal learning have their inherent pros and cons as discussed earlier but, when put together, perhaps optimum results are achieved. Sometimes this occurs but sometimes, however, the two sources of information may contradict (Schugurensky 2000).

From the point of view of teachers, technology and informal learning, Richardson (2010) says that schools face a serious threat as more and more students become more skilled using the new media compared to their teachers: “today’s students, of almost any age, are far ahead of their teachers in computer literacy. They prefer to access subject information on the Internet, where it is more abundant, more accessible, and more up-to-date” (p. 7). This phenomenal has been noticed in the Finnish school system as well. Teachers are very much aware that their students are more proficient users of the new media and there is a need for educating the teachers more in this area in order to avoid drastic differences in online literacy skills between teachers and learners (Luukka 2008). What this means is that in the future, and

at the present time already, it is crucial for the school system to acknowledge the fact that the young learners of today depend on the Internet to a great extent and there should be no 'declaration of war' on the part of the school system (formal learning) against technology and informal learning. As Sandford, Facer and Williamson (2011: 179) say, the young people of today belong to 'digital generation' and educating them requires the use of digital technologies.

As I have discussed in this section, informal learning puts the learner him/herself in an active role in his/her own learning process. What often occurs as well is that, from time to time, the learner assesses his/her progress, comparing the past experiences and knowledge to something completely new he/she encounters. This may occur both in short and long-term basis. These concepts are the focus of the next section.

### **2.3.5. Informal learning and self-evaluation**

The final part to my theoretical background is that of self-evaluation which also plays a certain role in one's learning curve. Evaluating one's own development on a regular basis is an essential characteristic of an active language learner both in formal and informal settings, and in this section I will focus more on the latter. The present study is interested in the learners' self-evaluation process as a means of enhancing learning as it can serve as a useful tool in finding the problem spots in one's L2 repertoire, which might not be visible to the learner otherwise. As mentioned already, this sort of evaluating process can occur over either short or longer stretches of time, which is the case with the participants of the present study as well, and their thoughts will be further presented in Chapter 4. The following sections introduce the concept of self-evaluation on a general level, present its accompanying advantages in language learning situations as well as

some of the theoretical approaches to studying it.

### **2.3.5.1. Positive outcomes of self-evaluation**

Already in 1978, regarding self-evaluation, emphasis was placed on real life, i.e., informal settings:

“Authentic language situations provide the most valid opportunities for self-evaluation. It is in the actual use of the language, in real-life settings, that one may ultimately test one’s communicative ability. Therefore the learner should always try to assess his ability in terms of his use of the language in natural situations, not in terms of test scores or in terms of performance in an artificial learning situation” (Oskarsson 1978: 25)

In more recent years, self-assessment has become more and more popular and its possibilities as an instructional tool as well as a measurement tool have been heavily under discussion (Butler and Lee 2010). As Dann (2002) mentions, self-assessment has been assumed to be effective for learning as it enhances learners’ self-regulatory learning and autonomy. As the age of the Internet and the new media is dawning now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as already discussed in the earlier sections, learners encounter English in various new places in which they cannot rely on the help of a teacher and they are ‘on their own’ so to speak. What this basically means is that even though the school system provides a good basis for their language skills, learners themselves need to take initiatives in their learning and assessing their own skills if they want to cope with the English-based new media. For example, whether the learner sets specific goals for him/herself when browsing on the foreign web pages or other Internet-based activities, he/she is most likely to encounter words or phrases that test and challenge his/her prior language skills. The learner may come across completely new words, grammatical structures and strange accents,

which, inevitably, leads to a situation in which the learner must evaluate his/her language skills whether he/she can cope with new words, understand them and proceed reading. Some may give up easily and look up the new words in their dictionaries, while others may persistently give it a try to go on and see if they can grasp the gist relying on their instincts. In the long run, they may be able to assess their learning more in-depth and identify their learning strategies. This involves being metacognitively aware of one's learning, which is important for someone learning a language through the Internet (Dabbagh & Bannan-Ritland 2005). As for the participants of the present study and their way of self-assessment, this metacognitive aspect seemed to play a major role in their learning as well. In the next section, I will present these concepts in a more theoretical manner.

#### **2.3.5.2. Theoretical approaches to self-assessment and self-regulated learning**

According to Butler and Lee's theory (2010), self-assessment consists of two main aspects - *measurement* and *learning*. Measurement refers to how best to measure learner's understanding, skills and mastery of knowledge. This kind of self-assessment is often used when giving grades or someone is applying for an educational program, for example. The other side is learning which is linked to its potential role in advancing students' learning. When teachers give learners an opportunity to evaluate themselves, they - the learners - can become more aware of their learning habits, and consequently, become more efficient learners and develop better learning strategies (Butler and Lee 2010). Boud (1995) corroborates this theory by saying that "self assessment provides the fundamental link with learning" (p. 15) and points out that self-assessment is about students developing their learning skills.

There are a number of other factors involved in self-assessment and self-regulated learning as well. The learner directs, monitors and regulates his/her actions towards goals of information acquisition, gaining expertise and self-improvement (Paris and Paris 2001). Butler and Lee (2010) see that the advantages of this kind of learning includes learners becoming aware of their goals and expectations, and they are able to monitor their learning progress and evaluate their own understanding against the goals and standards defined in the curriculum. What is a great advantage about self-assessment is that it can help the learner to understand how much he/she needs assistance and effort to accomplish his/her goals and to develop strategies to get there effectively. Motivation can greatly increase as the learners feel a sense of control of their learning and, thus, they can start to develop positive attitudes towards learning (Paris and Paris 2001). Finally, if learners become more autonomous by doing self-assessment, it can have a positive long-term effect on their learning (Oskarsson 1989). That is why it is crucial for the teacher to constantly give constructive and encouraging feedback to students on their learning which occurs at their leisure as well as the work done in class, whether it is informal or formal.

As discussed earlier, as the possibilities and effects of the new media snowball year by year in today's technological world, it is important that teachers acknowledge that fact and integrate technology and the Internet into their teaching methods. As the new technologies interest younger learners and they provide them with new experiences; "Self assessment must in some way relate to the actual experience of students" and "engage them in tasks which are meaningful to them" (Boud 1995: 30). Boud goes on saying that self assessment encourages learners to take responsibility, particularly when they are actively involved in meaningful activities.

Even though teachers and the school system play an integral role in

enhancing young learners' English skills, it is inevitable that more and more learning occurs via the latest technological advancements in which the learner and his/her metacognitive skills have a major role. Thus, making learners aware of their own learning habits and giving them skills to monitor their own progress is crucial. As Dann (2002) argues,

“The learning in instructional aspects of self-assessment has gained substantial attention in various educational contexts. This reflects a growing interest in self-regulated learning and a conceptual shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered instruction.”

Self-regulated learning and learner-centered teaching are clear instances of putting the learner in an active role in taking care of his/her development, with the process of monitoring being an integral part of that. Dabbagh and Bannan-Ritland (2005) also argue: “in web-based or online-learning environments, students must learn how to monitor their own learning process to accomplish their learning goals” (p. 224). Thus, students must become autonomous and self-directed in order to be successful online learners. However, what must be noted is that not all online learning is conscious and the previous facts apply only when the learner has a certain task he/she needs to accomplish, whether it is something they want to pursue on their own or whether it is an online task assigned by a teacher.

So far in this chapter, I have covered the key concepts of motivation, the Internet, informal/formal learning and self-assessment in a strictly theoretical manner. Each of those concepts plays a vital role in the study featured in this thesis, and, without outlining them in-depth in this chapter, it would have been very difficult to draw any conclusions on the basis of the data that will be presented in Chapter 4. The key issues that have been addressed throughout this chapter as to what factors determine the relationship between the Internet and learning

the English language, will naturally also be the key issues as for the analysis of the results of the present study. The following and final section of this chapter will provide a few examples of how the previous types of concepts have been used in the past to study online learning. They also illustrate the angles that researchers have earlier taken in this field when studying Internet-based learning.

## 2.4. Previous studies

Since the emergence of new technologies such as the Internet and its role as a language learning tool is quite a new concept in the field of L2 research, there have been only a handful of studies investigating it so far, at least the way I personally feel important. As Blackshear Hull (2008: 198) points out about using technology as a booster in second language learning, “numerous studies demonstrate the effectiveness of face-to-face (F2F) simulations, but relatively few studies discuss the pedagogical implications of incorporating technology into simulations”.

In this part I am going to present some of the findings which have been gathered in those recent empirical studies. In the final section, I am going to see how they compare to the present study.

### 2.4.1. Taiwanese EFL students

Yang (2001) conducted a study featuring fifty-five Taiwanese EFL students majoring in applied English at a junior college. The participants were asked to give information on how they felt they had learned English through the Internet. The data were collected by observations and questionnaires, both quantitative and qualitative, through one semester. Since the study was conducted at the beginning

of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the Internet had just started growing and was not such a vast phenomenon back then as it is today ten years later.

The participants were assigned to prepare projects on American states, traveling, food, customs, and so on. One of the main goals was not to give the students straight answers by their instructor but to enhance the students' problem solving skills by choosing the needed information from the abundance of Internet articles and entries.

A clear majority of the students thought that the World Wide Web had a positive effect on their learning experience, with only one-fifth saying that books were a better source of information for them. They said that information on the Internet is easier to retrieve and they do not have to physically look for it in books. Using e-mail and bulletin messages were also considered beneficial for their enthusiasm. Only few students were dissatisfied with using the Internet, with things such as the connection being too slow or printers not working properly and not finding the information they were after because the search engines were too inconsistent. Also, some still preferred holding a physical book in front of them when searching for information. Yet, Yang points out that those who experienced frustration during the project were actually those who did not have much interest in it to begin with. Nevertheless, the overall mutual feeling was that using the Internet as a language learning tool was a pleasant experience and surfing was 'cool' (p. 163). Even though the students faced difficulties such as search breakdowns, comprehension failures, reasoning blockades, which caused them fear, anxiety and confusion, many seemed to overcome them. The multimodality of the Internet, which I discussed in greater detail in section 2.2.3., was also an appealing factor to the students. They found that the use of pictures, text, drawings, videos and sound were encouraging for them to open and explore new links behind them.

Yang also brings up that a great deal of incidental learning took place

during the study. A number of students said that they had learned new vocabulary and phrases while searching for information. He goes on saying: “Overcoming information overload and chaos and finding new knowledge and experiences ignited their passion for learning” (p. 168).

#### **2.4.2. Students from Selcuk University**

This study was conducted by Gülnar, Balci and Çakir (2010) in April 2008 in a Turkish university and included 728 participants. The main aim of the study was to collect information on students’ use of websites like Facebook and motivation towards them. In order to gather this data, a questionnaire was designed with 45 questions, with a basic one-to-five point scale (from ‘strongly disagree’ to ‘strongly agree’). This study did not solely focus on language learning aspects but was also set to find out about how the students actually used this kind of new media.

The study found that the majority of the participants viewed web pages such as Facebook and YouTube as a way to express themselves. Narcissism and self-expression were some the main factors that surfaced in the study as the reason for using these web activities, especially Facebook. Apparently, it was very important for the participants that they were able to give a positive impression of themselves when engaging in the new media. The results were rather interesting since Gulnar, Palci and Cakir expected the main motive to be able to connect with other people, not self-promotion.

An interesting thing was that gaining knowledge in English was not a common answer in the study. Perhaps this has something to do with the culture as the study was conducted in Turkey where they are very reliant on their own and original culture as, for example, Finland is more western/modern. As mentioned in the study, Turkey is still considered one of the developing countries where “social change and

social movements are observed more frequently" (p. 179).

Even though the study did not yield much information on the Turkish students' learning habits, it is important to understand how some of the young learners, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, spend their time online doing this kind of 'self-promoting'. From the point of view of an English teacher, by exploiting this knowledge he/she can design tasks and course materials around these kinds of web activities and make it also a language learning experience for the students by using English to communicate during the task/course. If, as the study showed, young learners really are motivated in promoting themselves and their social image, it would be a gold mine for teachers to include it in their teaching.

#### **2.4.3. Chat programs, various studies**

The use of chat by EFL learners have been studied in a number of studies. Based on a study on students' attitudes towards online chats, Jarrell and Freiermuth (2005) say that using chat groups as a learning tool was very helpful for students and those groups helped them to prepare for oral presentations in the same topic area. Also, the teacher had more control and was able to monitor the students' learning process better. What was striking about the findings of the study, was that the majority of the participants preferred to use chat as a learning tool compared to face-to-face, mainly because it was less threatening and, thus, led to an increase in their motivation to learn. In another study, Kitade (2000) found that using chat in assignments resulted in less competition among students, and enabled quiet and shy persons to take part more as they normally would. Finally, an online chat simulation by Freiermuth (2002) provided information on how the anonymity provided by the Internet lessens inhibitions felt by students compared to using F2F type of learning. It seems that the less learners

are restricted in terms of various social hindrances, the more they can focus on actual learning. Based on all these results, it is rather safe to say that chat is a valuable language learning tool for students as well as teachers in EFL situations.

#### **2.4.4. A summary of the previous studies**

As I have already criticized, there is an enormous lack of studies which solely concentrate on learning as a free-time activity. Even though the studies presented above do not, by no means, represent all the categories and modern ways to learn English via the Internet, they provide a good start and a very positive idea of how learners feel about using the Internet as a learning tool. In each study, it was clearly shown that the Internet was considered, by learners themselves, a beneficial and non-threatening way of learning. Those Taiwanese EFL students mentioned how it was so easy, via the Internet, to access lots of information at one time, whereas the Turkish students in the second study were really keen on using the Internet-based social media at their leisure. Finally, the learners in the chat program studies felt that by being in contact with a teacher and fellow students through the Internet, they were much more eager to express themselves and take part in class activities regardless of their social skills and status. I find all these findings very promising as each of them represents, on different levels, how young learners feel about the Internet and its possibilities as an educational method.

Unfortunately, none of these studies provided any direct quotations or ideas from the students themselves, and the results were only interpreted by the conductors of the studies. It would probably have given even more precise and in-depth ideas by the students on these matters had there been more qualitative side of research involved. As for the present study, I wanted to fix what I think was lacking in these

previous studies: the learners' voice. Even though the studies provided credible information and the data that were gathered showed clearly how the pros of using the Internet as a learning tool outweighed the cons, I thought that it would be even better to include the participants' own voice throughout the study by analyzing in greater detail the transcriptions of the interviews, thus making it more qualitative in nature compared to the previous studies. Also, instead of concentrating on just one area, e.g. chat programs or YouTube, I was eager to take a much wider look into how the Internet is being exploited by the younger generation. Nevertheless, I still think that these more 'restricted' studies are very important as well as they are able to gather very specific data on smaller phenomena. Yet, larger-scale studies are needed to get a more truthful and realistic overall picture on these matters, which will be the focus of the next chapter.

### **3 THE PRESENT STUDY**

As was already briefly discussed in Chapter 1, the ongoing trend of English-based online activities was the main motivator for this study. Since these technological developments are very new, mainly a decade or less old, the number of studies in this area has only during the past few years started to rise. Also, the majority of those studies focus on the school context, i.e., how these technologies have been and could be better taken advantage of in classrooms. This context entails having a supervising teacher giving strict and detailed instructions according to a pre-determined plan, which restricts and, possibly, lessens the learners' own thinking and actions.

My main aim in this study is to put the learner in the active and teacher-independent role of using the Internet and the new media in the out-of-school context. I want to find out how the relationship

and impacts between their online activities and their English skills are affected when they spend time in front of their computers. Even though some focus is still on how the school reacts to the use of the new media, the actual goal is to find out how the learners themselves see the situation.

In the next few sections, the aims of study as well as data and methods will be presented in detail.

### **3.1. Aims of the study and research problems**

The study aims at answering the following two questions:

- 1) How do learners' see the new media's role affecting their English skills in outside-school activities? What kind of role exactly?
  
- 2) Is their motivation to learn English any higher because they want to keep up with the media and be able to understand the language present on the Internet? Are there different levels of motivation and, also, are there any ulterior motives?

These two questions are the ones that previous studies have not concentrated on enough and, yet, they are crucial if we are to understand a 21<sup>st</sup> century learner of the English language. The first question takes a very broad look at the participants' history with the Internet and the English language, starting from their first memories all the way to their present habits as high schoolers. The participants were also asked to really ponder their experiences on the basis of the theoretical framework and its key concepts that were presented in Chapter 2: motivation, informal/formal learning and self-evaluation. All of these aspects play an important role in the first research problem. The second problem leans more closely towards the area of motivation

in terms of finding out the kinds of motivating factors that are in play when they interact with the English language online. The methods employed for eliciting the exact information I set out to find out about will be further investigated in the following section.

### **3.2. Choice of methodology**

Being a case study, the present paper is descriptive and qualitative in nature. The reason for this is that I really wanted to go deep in the participants' experiences and thoughts, and form a thorough understanding of their journeys as learners. Having a relaxed face-to-face interaction with the participants was an essential factor I strived for in order to avoid any miscommunication. Dörnyei (2007: 293) mentions, "the results of a qualitative study are usually seen as a co-constructed product of the participants' and the researcher's perceptions", which is why I felt the need to be on the same wavelength with the participants throughout the interviews. He goes on saying that a qualitative study is able to provide much richer details compared to a quantitative one as qualitative studies are usually associated with words rather than numbers, which was the aim of the present study as well.

One thing worth mentioning is that my proseminar study, conducted in 2008, consisted of about forty participants and it was, thus, more on the quantitative side. Since that I was very interested in trying out a qualitative study as for the present thesis as it would provide more detailed data and ways to interpret it. As Dörnyei (2007: 290) points out, "qualitative research writing is characterized by more freedom, diversity, and disagreement than its monolithic quantitative counterpart". Even though the whole process was conducted according to a well pre-determined plan, I was still able to react to unexpected phenomena arising from the data during the analytic process. Also,

another great advantage was that after conducting the interviews, I was able come back to it and ask the two interviewees for clarification if I felt uncertain about something.

Being a case-study and having only two participants, the present study does not aim to make any drastic generalizations about their age-group but rather to understand the different phases and processes between different learners. Yet, since the subjects come from the same age group and educational background, I hope that some sort of tentative conclusions can be made and apply the result in a wider perspective. The next section will provide more information as for these two participants and the data.

### **3.3. Subjects and data**

The data were collected in February 2011 by conducting face-to-face interviews. Both the participants, who I was already acquainted with, were interviewed separately in order to fully concentrate on one subject at a time. It was important that I already knew them beforehand since, according to Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 109-110), that creates mutual trust and conversation-like atmosphere which are positive factors in a successful interview. Also, one thing that should be mentioned is that the two participants did not know each other and I did not want to reveal them what the other one had said. In the beginning, I also conceived an idea about having a group discussion but quickly rejected that due to the fact that the two participants could unconsciously influence each other's answers. I wanted to avoid this and be a hundred percent sure that they were being honest and consistent in what they said and meant.

At the time of the interview, Tuuli<sup>1</sup> was an 18-year-old female high-school student living in Jyväskylä, Finland. She is originally from a

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<sup>1</sup> Both the participants' names have been changed

small town in Central Finland but she has moved to Jyväskylä to attend a local high school approximately three years ago. Mira, on the other hand, was a 17-year-old female living in Western-Finland, Seinäjoki where she has lived all her life. She goes to a local high-school.

Even though the two subjects may seem similar on paper, their past experiences with the Internet and the English language are very different. Nevertheless, they both are interested in languages in overall. These were the main reasons I picked these persons to be part of the present study and as for their age, they were mature enough to assess and reflect their experiences but still young enough to remember little details from their first encounters with the English-based new media. Also, an important fact was that since they were almost the same age, they have theoretically had the same possibilities of technology at hand during their youth, which makes comparing them fair.

The actual interview situations were relaxed, much like everyday discussions. At the beginning of each interview, I made sure that the atmosphere was not strict like an interrogation or questioning but more like a relaxed discussion on these topics. Even though the interviews and the questions were carefully structured beforehand, which I found to be important, both the discussions had a quite natural flow to them. Each interview lasted for about 45 minutes and a couple of short breaks were taken during them. No strict instructions were given to the subjects before the interviews - all I asked for was honesty in order the data to be credible. I wanted to make sure that neither of the subjects was giving 'a better image' of themselves than that of reality, whether intentional or not. As an interviewer, I also tried not to lead or manipulate them in any way in terms of their answers.

There are a number of ways to plan and conduct an interview. The reason I chose this type of interviewing method over other alternatives was because a kind of structured method was likely to be the best solution for my purposes as there was such a wide array of topics to be

covered. Thus, I decided to go through the interviews with a pre-structured plan as I considered it to be the most efficient way to achieve everything that I had planned on doing. Yet, I was also able to detect a number of qualities that are often associated with an unstructured type of interview as, in Dörnyei's (2007: 135) words, I was able to "follow the interviewee in unpredictable directions". Thus, the two interviews could best be described as semi-structured as they were more like a mixture of the two. Dörnyei (ibid.) mentions that a semi-structured interview is useful since it usually does not set any limitations as for the interviewee's story as there are no set and pre-determined categories to which the interviewee could base his/her answers on. Even though I had pre-planned the interviews in great detail beforehand, it was really important to give the participants more space as for their answers in case they would be able to come up with an angle that I had not thought about myself.

The fact that I was already acquainted with both of them prior to the interview processes further enhanced this semi-structured approach as I knew that if the interviews would be well-structured beforehand but still conducted in a very relaxed and open manner, I would get the best possible results. I do not think neither a hundred percent structured nor unstructured interview would have yielded such versatile results. Also, it should be mentioned that the interviews were conducted in single sessions as opposed to multiple even though I told the participants that should I miss anything crucial during the first interviews, we could arrange another meeting in case it was needed. However, that was not necessary and I was able to proceed to analysing the data which will be the focus of the following section.

### **3.4. Data analysis**

The data, i.e. the interviews, were interpreted by transcribing both the

interviews in full and later organized according to chronological themes. Interpreting all that information started by looking at both the participants separately, as if in a vacuum. Then, as this phase was done, I proceeded to look for the most obvious similarities and differences between the participants followed by a larger scale overall comparison.

Even though both interviews featured the same questions and structure, the analyzing part was quite a bit more laborious and time-consuming than I had expected since the participants had such different ways of answering the questions. In addition, even though the whole interview process was carefully pre-planned and I also had certain predictions about the participants' answers, lots of unexpected data arose which were relevant to the present study. However, that was a very positive outcome.

As the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the transcribing was naturally first done in Finnish and then translated into English. Thus, when presenting the results of the present study in the next chapter, all the extracts will be given in both languages. It must be noted that since the interviews were very informal in nature, I present the translations in a rough and down-to-earth format as well.

## **4 RESULTS**

The aim of the present study was to find out whether the Internet and the new media have an effect on young learners' English skills, and what kind of an effect exactly. Secondly, finding out about the reasons behind their motivation to use English on the Internet was the core of the second research problem. This chapter will look at these questions from various angles. It will be divided into three themes: past experiences, present time and overall picture, which were the base of

the interviews as well. Thus, section 4.1 focuses on the past experiences of the participants, from their first experiences to elementary school and junior high school. Section 4.2 addresses the participants' current feelings as high school students, from the angles of their leisure and, also, school setting to some extent. In section, 4.3, the focus will be on getting an overall picture of the whole process, i.e., summing it all up. In the final section 4.4, comparison between the two participants will take place.

The following section starts by going through Tuuli's and Mira's past memories as learners of English through the Internet and the new media.

#### **4.1. Past experiences**

Tuuli had rather clear memories of her first encounters with the English language on the Internet:

- (1) Taisi olla, mä en ollut edes koulussa silloin vielä, olisko ollut joskus vuonna 97. Mä olin tosi pieni silloin, 5 tai 6-vuotias kun me saatiin Internet. Siellä käytiin Spice Girlssin nettisivuilla kattelemassa kuvia, ja siellä oli vaan englanninkielisiä sivuja, eikä löytynyt suomenkielisinä niistä. Me käytiin tosi vakituisesti siellä sivuilla etsimässä tietoa.

(I guess it was, I wasn't even at school back then, I guess it was the year 1997. I was very small then, 5 or 6 six years old when we got the Internet. We went to Spice Girls' website and looked at the photos, and there were pages in English and we couldn't find any in Finnish. We visited there quite regularly looking for information.)

This extract shows how she was so eager to find out about her favourite band that she did not let the lack of her English skills get in the way even though she had not even started elementary school yet. Mira also recollected her first online visits clearly and vividly:

- (2) (...) olin 8-vuotias, niin pelattiin HabboHotellissa kavereiden kanssa. Englanninkielisestä Youtube silloin kun se oli vielä täysin enkuksi ja niitä sivujen toimintoja piti opetella käyttämään.

(...) (I was eight years-old and we played at HabboHotel with my friends. About the English ones YouTube when it was completely in English and I had to learn to use the functions of it.)

Obviously Mira's initial intentions were not to learn English but it sort of functioned as a medium to do other things she was keen on. She started to pay attention to the English language more about a year later:

(3) YouTubessa kuuntelin paljon englannin kielistä musiikkia ja pelasinkin myös englannin kielistä HabboHotellia. Olin silloin noin 9-vuotias.

(On YouTube I listened to lots of music that was in English and I played the English version of HabboHotel. I was probably nine years-old back then.)

However, she mentions that she did not understand much of it at this early age and she did not know the actual meanings of the English words she encountered. Instead, she had to learn by heart the names of those functions to be able to click the right buttons even though she did not understand what they really signified. Also, what must be noted is that she probably has small gaps in her memory as YouTube did not exist at the time she was nine. Thus, it is likely that she was using some other channels for listening to music online.

Due to the fact that they both were still very young at this point, they considered the language very difficult. Tuuli said that she almost could not understand anything at all at this point:

(4) Ehkä ne bändin jäsenten nimet sieltä ymmärsi, mutta en mä kyllä tajunnut mitä niistä siellä puhuttiin. Kuvia katselin enemmän.

I was maybe able to understand the names of the band members but I had no clue what it was told about them. I was just checking the pictures more.)

She mentions her older sister, who is three years older than her, occasionally helping her with the language at this point. As for Mira, coping with English online was difficult at first but then after a while she started to get the hang of it:

(5) (...) oli hirveän vaikeaa, enkä mä käsittänyt siitä oikein yhtään mitään ja aika paljon muistin perusteella piti tosiaan niistä napeista painella. Sanastosta lähtien kaikki tuntui tosi vaikeelta. Lauluja kuunnellassa oppi englantia, kun katsoi lyriikoita netistä samaan aikaan kun kuunteli. Mun lempilaulu oli pitkään Linkin Parkin Numb ja halusin sitten selvittää mitä siinä lauletaan.

(...) (was terribly difficult and I couldn't understand almost anything at all and I had to click the buttons based on my memory. From things like vocabulary everything felt very hard. When I was listening to songs, I was able to learn English when I was looking at the lyrics at the same time online. My long-time favourite song was 'Numb' by Linkin Park and I wanted to find out about what the lyrics were about.)

As the data shows, both participants started using the Internet at a very young age. Even though their English skills were still somewhat lacking at this point, they have been able to be in contact with the English language from early on. Finding the language attracting, they wanted to find about the bands, lyrics and games they were interested in even though understanding the language was difficult at this point.

Tuuli eagerly mentioned that after some time, little by little, she started to learn words and phrases from here and there, music playing a central role in the process:

(6) (...) aluksi jotain tosi yksinkertaisia kuten band ja and, mutta pikkuhiljaa alkoi sitten tajuamaan enemmän. Eihän silloin ollut mitään Youtubea, mutta oli Real Playerissä kaikenlaisia videoita, niin kyllä niistä tuli sitten kuunneltua kaikenlaista musiikkia. Musiikki kans on auttanut, mutta ehkä alussa ei ymmärtänyt mitä laulettiin. Yritti vain matkia sitä ääntä ja sen mukaan ehkä laului mukana. Mutta sitten mitä enempi rupesi ymmärtämään sitä kieltä niin rupes sitten ymmärtämään niitä sanoja.

(...) (at first something really simple such as 'band' and 'and', but little by little I started to understand more. At that time there was no

YouTube but in Real Player there were all sorts of videos and from those I used to listen to all kinds of music. Music has helped also but at first I couldn't understand what they were singing about. I just tried imitating the sound and maybe sing along. But the more I started to understand the language, the more I got into understanding the lyrics.)

Thus, listening to songs and lyrics online has contributed to Tuuli's English skills already as a young learner as was the case with Mira as well, which gives music a very positive role in enhancing young learners' motivation.

As they navigated on the Internet, there were a plenty of new words they came across frequently. Tuuli admitted that even though English interested her very much throughout the grades 3 to 9, she did not use dictionaries much when learning the language at leisure. Mira, on the other hand, still remembered an interesting thing about the English language and her learning techniques:

(7) sanat olivat lyhkäsiä minkä takia ne ei vaikuttanut kuitenkaan niin vaikeilta opittavilta. Yritin päätellä niitä paljon, mutta sitten jälkeinpäin oon myös tarkistellut niitä ja usein ne oli ihan väärin. Mutta silloin ihan pienenä en tarkistellut niitä sanakirjasta.

(words were quite short and that's why they didn't seem that difficult to learn after all. I tried deducing them a lot but afterwards I also checked them and often they were just wrong. But when I was younger, I didn't look them up in the dictionary.)

Thus, she started using dictionaries later on but she could not remember the exact time when this happened. The lack of dictionary use was actually one of the most surprising outcomes of the study. I did not expect to find out that the subjects they did not really use dictionaries at this point when they encountered unorthodox words. Before conducting the study, I had the exactly opposite presupposition. I am assuming, among active and motivated young learners, that checking words up in dictionaries comes into play a bit later on, maybe at the end of elementary school or during upper-secondary school.

However, there can be a lot of variation between different learners and their learning strategies. Both of the participants mentioned how they just kept going when they encountered new words. Nevertheless, Tuuli said how she later on, when she was a couple of years older, looked up some of the words, which signalled her interest and motivation towards grasping the real gist behind the texts she read on the Internet when she was younger. Apparently, for younger learners (pre-elementary school and during), understanding a text word by word is not something they always strive for and they may simply just enjoy being around a foreign language. Even though nowadays one does not need to even open an old-fashioned dictionary book but can use an online dictionary, it is still something they do not seem to take advantage of.

When the discussion started to touch the subject of her first uses of English and the specific examples of this era as a language learner, Tuuli still vaguely remembered her first setbacks:

(8) (...) se oli semmonen "want to" -lauserakenne ja Spice Girlsillä oli semmonen laulu kuin Wannabe, niin sitten mä laitoin "wanna" niinku kielimuodon eli tommonen puhekielinen muoto ja sitten piti opetella, että se on "want to".

(...) (it was a kind of 'want to' sentence structure and Spice Girls had a song called 'Wannabe' so then I used 'wanna', the colloquial form, and then I had to learn that it's 'want to'.)

In the previous example, this kind of confusion probably happened to a number of young girls familiar with the song by *Spice Girls*. Even though Tuuli did not have started her formal English studies yet as the previous examples depict her life before the third grade, she said that seeing English online helped her greatly once she started learning English at school:

(9) Tuntuu, että ennen kuin aloitti itse englannin opiskelun (koulussa), kun oli niin paljon englanninkielistä materiaalia ympärillä niin oli

tosii helppo sitten aloittaa se opiskelu. Tiesi paljon etukäteen jo sanoja ja silleen. Ihan yksinkertaisia lauseitakin osasi muodostaa kuten "minä olen". Sanastoa on saanut aika paljon muualtakin kuin koulusta, että sitten on ollut helppo alkaa rakentamaan sitä kielioppia siihen päälle.

(I feel that before I started learning English at school, because there was so much English material around that it was easy to start studying it. I knew a lot in advance, words and stuff like that. I was able to form very simple sentences like 'I am'. I've absorbed vocabulary much from elsewhere besides school so it has been easy to build grammar on that.)

The Internet obviously seemed to have a positive impact on her skills from early on. Also, once her formal English studies began, she vaguely remembered using some learned 'online phrases' at school. When asked about specific examples, she said:

(10) (...) no kyllä ylipäänsä sanastoa mitä on tarttunut. Keskustelutilanteissa on voinut aika paljon käyttää niitä sanoja ja kyllä kans ainekirjoituksissa. Ja opettaja kyseli myös paljon että mitä on tehnyt kun luokassa oli mun lisäksi vain yksi tyttö, ja siinä pääsi sitten käyttämään niitä sanoja myös.

(...) (yeah generally vocabulary that I've absorbed. In group discussions I've been able to use those words and also when writing essays. And my teacher asked a lot of questions about what we've been doing as there was only one girl in class besides me, and that made it possible for me to use those words as well.)

At this point it must be mentioned that as she was from a very small town, there was only one girl besides her attending English classes in the local elementary school, which gave her a chance to use these outside-school-phrases in classroom to a great extent as there was more communication between the teacher and the students during classes compared to those of Mira's.

As for Mira, she did not have a clear recollection of how these pre-school online activities involving the English language affected her formal English classes when she started studying it on the third grade. Yet, she mentioned one little detail about the things she had learned on the Internet:

- (11) koulussa kaikki käytti sitä... mitenkäs se nyt menikään... sitä give me five -juttuu. Ja sitten oli what's up, sitä hoettiin paljon. Enkun opelta kysyttiin aina sitä kun se tuli luokkaan.

(at school everyone used to use it... how did it go... the 'give me five' thing. And there was 'what's up' which we repeated a lot. We always asked our English teacher that we she came to the classroom.)

Having a playful mantra like this between the students and their teacher probably eased the atmosphere at least a little during their English lessons.

Overall, both Tuuli and Mira discussed how spending time online and being surrounded by the English language was beneficial once they started their formal English classes in elementary school. Tuuli especially mentioned how starting studying English felt easy due to the fact that she had already learned a number of words and simple sentence structures. Mira did not have as clear memories as Tuuli but she remembered how she and her classmates used to learn English words and phrases online and then trying to communicate with their English teacher by using those phrases. It seems obvious that children have the need to 'show off' when they have learned something new. It may be due to the fact that using English is considered 'cool' and trendy among younger people. Taking influences from older siblings can also be a major booster for wanting to learn English. As Tuuli stated, the importance of her older sister was great as she was able to follow her online activities and, as young siblings often do, she wanted to copy everything her older sister did.

However, at Tuuli's school, they did not use the Internet much during elementary and, later, upper-secondary school as there was a shortage of technological equipment at times. However, every once in a while, the Internet was still used whenever they had a chance:

- (12) (...) ala- ja ylä-asteella kyllä aika vähän käytettiin. Ala-asteella kun meitä tosiaan oli vaan kaksi tyttöä siinä ryhmässä, niin aina sitten

jos toinen oli kipeenä niin aina mentiin sitten nettiin sinne Perunakellari-palveluun tekeen kaikkia englanninkielisiä tehtäviä.

(...) (During elementary and junior high schools we didn't use much. In elementary school there were only two girls in the group so whenever the other one was sick we went online to 'Perunakellari' to do all sorts of exercises in English.)

Also, in Mira's school environment computers and the Internet were not taken advantage of yet on lower grades but towards the end of elementary school they were incorporated in the curriculum a little more:

(13) Me tehtiin esitelmää ja haettiin englanninkielisestä Wikipediasta niitä tietoja. Nekin tekstit niissä esitelmän dioissa oli ihan väärin. Ja jotain kielioppi tai sanastotehtäviä tehtiin myös, mutta en enää muista missä siellä.

(We used to do lots of presentations and get information from the English Wikipedia but those texts (that they copied on the web) on the presentation slides were completely wrong. And we used to do some grammar and vocabulary exercises also but I can't remember anymore which ones.)

After these experiences, and later during her years at upper secondary school, the Internet was used at times but still quite rarely:

(14) (...) sielläkin tehtiin esitelmää ja sitten meidän enkun kirjan omilla sivuilla oli myös jotain tehtäviä, joita silloin tällöin tehtiin.

(...) (there we also did presentations and then there were some exercises on our own English books' website which we did every now and then.)

As the data shows, another striking thing that arose from the interviews was how little the Internet was used as a tool by Tuuli's and Mira's teachers for teaching and learning English during their comprehensive school years. The Internet came to the picture as late as at the end of elementary school and even then, throughout the sixth grade to the ninth grade, computers and the Internet comprised only a

very small portion of their curriculum. Regardless of the lack of the use of technology, an interesting aspect was that even though the participants came from very different backgrounds, Tuuli from a two-person English classroom and Mira a classroom of more than twenty learners, the Internet was used almost the same way. They both used a website called *Perunakellari* where learners can do English-based exercises and drills. Also, both had some experience of using Wikipedia to gather information for presentations. Mira also added that, in upper-secondary school, the company who produced their English books had their own website and there were some exercises as well related to vocabulary and grammar but it was not used that often. One of the many reasons leading to the 'discrimination' of the Internet in the English classroom may be that at this point, approximately between years 1998-2008, newer technologies including the Internet did not have an established role as an educator in the Finnish school system. Especially, at the end of the 1990s, the Internet had just emerged and, thus, was probably not given too much credit at that point by institutions. However, as the Internet became more and more popular at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, I personally would have thought that it would have been given more recognition by the school institution from that moment on. A number of English teachers at this point may have been incumbent for a number of years and have their own established teaching methods where there is not room for newer technologies. Another reason could be the lack of funding and, thus, there simply was not enough money to buy fancy and expensive computers. However, this reason is not very credible as both the participants mentioned how they had, to some extent, computers at school at their disposal and an access to the Internet but they just simply did not use them. The third reason involves the rather strict curriculum that all English teachers are under, especially in upper-secondary school. There are specific things that need be covered within

the syllabus and certain time frame, and there is not much chance to deviate from it by doing online work. To offer at least one counter-argument, I guess that the positive aspect of not exploiting the Internet too much in the classroom makes it more interesting for learners to do that at home, at their leisure. If the Internet was used too much at school, the 'glamour' of the new technologies could be diminished in the eyes of the young learners and that could have a negative impact on their leisure use of the Internet and new media.

Tuuli went on saying that even though she really enjoyed spending the few English classes doing online work, she still did not pay that much attention to it as a learning tool at this point:

(15) (...) no mä ainakin tykkäsin kauheesti niistä, mutta ei sitä aatellu silloin pienempänä niin paljoa.

(...) (at least I liked them very much but I didn't think about it that much then when I was younger.)

As for Mira, when asked about whether she would had wanted to utilize these new media more in school activities, she immediately said yes:

(16) No olisin joo. Se oli paljon kiinnostavampaa niin olis ollut sitten enemmän motivaatiota opiskella niitä asioita. Ala-asteella varsinkin oli kiva päästä nettiin, kun kotona oli niin huono nettiyhteys niin oli sitten kiva tehdä netissä mitä tahansa.

(Yeah I did. I was much interesting so it would have been a more motivating way of learning those things. Especially while in elementary school, it was nice to go online because our Internet connection was really poor at home and just going online to do anything at all was nice.)

Based on the data, even though the teachers seemed not to be keen on using the Internet in English classrooms, the learners were very positively motivated when they occasionally had a chance to do it. Both the interviewees mentioned how they genuinely enjoyed those Internet

classes whenever they had a chance to go online approved by their teachers. Mira also said that using the Internet during English classes was really refreshing as her Internet connection at home was very slow, which partly restrained her Internet usage in her free-time. Although she was learning English online at the time at her leisure, she was occasionally discouraged by her old computer and slow connection. The school apparently offered much better facilities for that.

So far I have discussed Tuuli's and Mira's past, starting from their first memories with the English language online all the way to upper secondary school. The theoretical framework covered in Chapter 2 was nicely present already in Tuuli's and Mira's past experiences in terms of motivation, informal learning and self-assessment as they seemed to be very integratively motivated at this point and they spent much time online outside school work surrounded by the English language. Also, they were already at that age able to see the connection between learning something online and then using it at school in a real-life context when communicating with their teacher and classmates, which likely enhanced their self-assessment on some level. Next I will take a broader look at how they currently feel about using the Internet as for learning English.

#### **4.2. Present time**

As mentioned above, in this section, the focus will be on the present time, with both of the participants attending high school and spending a great deal of time online outside school. This part will be divided into two separate sections: first in their leisure time and Internet activities occurring there and, then, how the Internet is used at school and how the school system and English teachers specifically feel about this technology.

#### 4.2.1. English at leisure

Turning to the present, Tuuli said that the majority of her Internet-related activities are currently English-based:

(17) (...) sanoisin, että suurin osa. Eli vähemmän käytän suomenkielisiä sivustoja.

(...) (I would say that most of it. So I use Finnish websites less.)

English-based web sites also comprise a clear majority of Mira's daily online activities:

(18) Noin 90%, oikeastaan Facebook ja YouTube on ainoastaan suomenkielisinä.

(About 90 percent of them, actually only Facebook and YouTube are in Finnish)

The fact that English plays such a dominant role in the current Internet world, it is a very positive finding from the standpoint of a future language teacher to know that there does not seem to be a shortage of English input. The more our students spend time online surfing on English-based websites, the better. It is also rather surprising that English seems to be so popular among younger people in their online activities and communities as nowadays there are perfectly good Finnish alternatives to many of those activities.

Mira specified her activities more in detail and came up with various ways how she currently takes advantage of this technology:

(19) No YouTubesta katson paljon TV-sarjoja, niissä on yleensä enkun kieliset tekstit. Sitten esim. Emmerdalea seuraan sieltä ja siinä ei ole tekstityksiä ollenkaan. Siinä on vähän vaikea aksentti ja välillä vaikea ymmärtää. Sitten vielä Perhesiteet ja yksi saksalainen sarja, joissa on tekstitys enkuksi. Englanninkielisiä biisejä kuuntelen paljon myös sieltä YouTubesta. Luen paljon Harry Potteriin liittyvää Fanfictionia enkuksi, koska ne on parempia kuin suomeksi.

The Sunia seuraan uutissivustoista, Perez Hiltonin blogia ja Ellen

Degeneres -showta sen nettisivuilta ja siinäkään ei ollut tekstityksiä. Sitä on paljon helpompi ymmärtää kuin sitä Emmerdalea.

(Well, I watch a lot of TV-series on YouTube, usually they have English subtitles. Then I watch Emmerdale which doesn't have subtitles at all. The Emmerdale accent is a little difficult and sometimes hard to understand. Then there is Brothers & Sisters and one German series that have English subtitles. Also, I listen to lots of songs on YouTube that are in English. I read a lot Harry Potter-related fan fiction in English because they are better than the Finnish versions.

As for news sites, I follow The Sun, Perez Hilton's blog and Ellen Degeneres show on her website which doesn't have subtitles either. It's (the accent) easier to understand that compared to Emmerdale.)

Thus, her English-based activities range from audio to text. She also mentioned she is keen on producing English herself at times by communicating with certain people. Tuuli's main activities were a little less versatile:

(20) (...) bändisivuja käyn tosi paljon lukemassa. Mä käytän tosi paljon Youtubea ja kaikki bändisivustot on englanninkielisiä.

(...) (I read a lot of websites about bands. I use YouTube quite a bit and all the band pages are in English.)

Even though the variety of Tuuli's ways of using the Internet seems a bit leaner compared Mira, it must be remembered that English-based web activities comprises most of her screening time as well.

In order to achieve a deeper understanding of how they actually spend all this time online, I will present more specific categories of various online activities and, after each category, Tuuli's and Mira's answers as to how they engage in those activities currently:

- Information-related websites:

Tuuli

(21) joo esim. Wikipediaa tulee aika usein käytettyä, jos pitää vaikka jotain kouluesitelmiäkin tehdä niin yleensä löytyy paremmat tiedot

englanniksi kuin suomeksi.

(yeah for example Wikipedia I use a lot if I have to do a presentation at school and I can usually find information better in English than in Finnish.)

Mira

(22) (...) englanninkielistä wikipediaa käytän kun sieltä löytyy paljon enemmän tietoa kuin suomeksi.

(...) (I use the English-based Wikipedia because it has way more information than the Finnish version)

- News-related websites:

Tuuli

(23) (...) no jotain viihdeutisia kyllä, mutta en sellasia virallisempia uutissivustoja.

(...) (some entertainment news on Daily News and The Sun yeah but not those more official news sites.)

Mira

(24) (...) siellä the Sunissa luen tosi paljon erilaisia uutisia, mutta lähinnä kuitenkin viihdejuttuja.

(...) (On the Sun website I read a lot various news but most of all the ones relating to entertainment.)

- Online movies:

Tuuli

(25) FinTV-palvelua tulee käytettyä. Ja ihan tulee imuroituakin tv-sarjoja ja elokuvia. Ja jos Youtubestakin katsoo elokuvapätkiä, niin ei niissäkään ole mitään suomenkielisiä tekstityksiä, joten kuullunymmärtämistä tulee opittua siinä. Nykyään jos onkin tekstitykset, niin ne kyllä automaattisesti lukee, mutta ei niitä silleen tarte ja yrittää olla lukematta jollain tasolla.

(I use FinTv service. And I download tv-series and movies. And if I watch movie clips on YouTube, they don't have subtitles so that is good for practising listening comprehension. Nowadays if they do have subtitles I automatically read them but don't really need them and I kind of try to cope without them on some level)

Mira

(26) (...) leffoja imuroin paljon netistä. Yleensä haen niihin englanninkieliset tekstitykset, että saa vähän enemmän niistä irti.

(...) (I download lots of movies on the Internet. Usually I download English subtitles for them to get more out of them.)

- Facebook:

Tuuli

(27) (...) jonkin verran, mutta se taitaa olla mulla suomalaisilla asetuksilla

(...) (a little but I guess I have it in the Finnish setting.)

(Mira did not use Facebook)

- Communicating with friends and relatives living outside of Finland:

Tuuli

(28) Ei juurikaan. Joskus keskustelupalstoilla saattaa puhua englanniksi, mutta ei semmosia ihan ystäviä. Mutta keskustelupalstoja joo tulee kateltua esim. just niitä The Sunin ja Daily Newsin viihdesivustojen keskusteluja, niin niissä käyn usein lukemassa ja oon ehkä joskus kirjottanutkin. Jotain bändifoorumeita olen kans käynyt seuraamassa.

(Not so much. Sometimes I may talk in English on discussion forums but not any real friends. But yeah I read those forums sometimes for example discussions on The Sun and Daily News forums so I go there often to read them and sometimes I may have also written something myself. I've also been following some band forums.)

Mira

(29) Mesessä juttelen kahden englantilaisen pojan kanssa.

(When using Messenger, I talk to a couple of English boys)

- Online games:

Tuuli

(30) jonkin verran joo (hehheh). Siellä törmää myös englannin kieleen, esim. pienempänä pelasin sitä Tomb Raider-peliä. En tiedä oppiiko niistä kuitenkaan hirveesti uutta kieltä, kun se on kuitenkin aika sellasta yksinkertaista verrattuna muuhun mitä kuulee. Joissakin peleissä tulee sitä kirjottamistakin vähän, mutta se on monesti semmosta väärää eikä ole kieliopillisesti oikeeta. Toisaaltahan siinä oppii sitten ite erottamaan että mikä on oikeeta ja mikä väärää kieltä.

(a little yeah (laughing). There I encounter English also for example I played Tomb Raider when I was younger. I don't know whether I've learnt that much anything from those after all because the language is kind of simple compared to that English that I usually hear. In some games writing is also involved but the language is not often that correct and grammar is poor. On the other hand that makes it easy to make a distinction between what is good and what's poor language.)

Mira

(31) Pelaan Harry Potter -pelejä ja niissä on paljon enkkua.

(I play Harry Potter games which feature a lot of English.) (She does not play actual online games).

As one of the aims of the present study was to find out what exact webpages/activities these participants find appealing when they spend time in front of their computers and what is the real motivation behind engaging in those activities, my conclusion is that they use a wide array of them, possibly even wider than I expected. Initially, I did not think that they would be so versatile in the ways they conjoin the technology aspect, i.e. the Internet and the new media with the English language. Both Tuuli and Mira admitted that they were occupied with English-related activities most of the time, while their mother tongue, Finnish, comprised only a small percentage of their leisure online activities. Mira even said that probably only 10% of her web activities are Finnish-based. These figures are very surprising and likely, at least, a little misleading considering the whole group of seventeen and eighteen-year-olds. It is highly positive though, from the point of view of a future teacher, that there are teenagers and young adults who spend most of their time online on English websites and, at the same time, absorb vocabulary and other aspects of the English language but it must be granted that not every one are the same. It is likely that some people spend their time completely on Finnish websites and do not even care for those in English. Also, due to the fact that today's younger people heavily rely on technology and the new media compared to other kinds of media, there is a certain disadvantage to using such little amount of Finnish websites and activities – the possibility of alienation from their mother tongue. Even though spending much time with the English language can be considered a positive outcome of the World Wide Web, we, as educators, do not want to do any harm to our own nationality and the Finnish language. An effective balance between the two languages would be an ideal situation. At the moment, at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the harmony still seems to be under control but who knows what might happen in the future. Will this fast-growing global English eventually

turn against us and make younger generations forget all about their own national language and identity?

As said, the way the participants employ the Internet is very versatile. Both of them actively visit the English-based *Wikipedia*, which, according to them, provides an unparalleled way of finding the exact information they need at a given time. They both also use it for school purposes, for example when writing an essay or preparing for a presentation. Another surprising outcome was that they read actual news in English, namely the newspaper *The Sun* which is something that they both use regularly, mostly by reading entertainment-related news. I did not expect to find about this since I had a presupposition that learners at this age are not interested in news at all, especially those that are in a non-native language. Yet another thing that seems to be a very common characteristic among younger people is that they seem to enjoy watching TV-series and movies online. The participants said that they barely watch those in any other way or format anymore because the new media offers such an easy access. They watch TV-series and random video clips on *YouTube* as well as longer videos on specific movie viewing sites such as *Fin-tv* and *TubePlus* or simply download them. From the point of view of a future English teacher, these kinds of possibilities are very encouraging even though they may raise the issue of copyright laws which some consider immoral, unethical and even illegal. Nevertheless, they enable access to authentic input. Both the participants admitted that they still like to lean on using subtitles in order to fully understand everything that is spoken in those videos but I do not see it as a negative thing necessarily. Even though having subtitles on often leads to a situation in which the viewer does not pay a hundred percent attention to the audio, meaning that watching the video is no longer a listening comprehension, they can still subconsciously listen to it most of the time. Also, as they are reading the subtitles, they can all the time check whether what they

hear matches to what they read. Thus, reading the subtitles is like checking the answers of a listening exercise, which makes having audio and subtitles on beneficial for both their listening and reading skills. Tuuli mentioned how sometimes she has subtitles helping her but she tries to avoid reading them if possible and, first and foremost, tries to solely trust in her aural skills. On the other hand, Mira admitted that she likes subtitles since she can understand online videos better that way.

The two girls also play video games and use English as a medium for communication. Yet, Mira does not play actual online games, whereas Tuuli does. She said that the grammatically incorrect English that is often present in the gaming communities can be distracting at times and she acknowledged that learning new things does not occur very often. Generally speaking, given the ample number of people from different cultures engaging in online activities, there can be certain drawbacks when learning English through those activities. As the Internet and the new media basically provide an infinite freedom of speech, everyone has a chance to share information and write in English even though it was not their first language and they would not be considered proficient users of English. Thus, there is a possibility of falling into the trap of absorbing this 'wrong English'. During the interviews we also talked about communicating with these kinds of foreigners online but much to my surprise, neither of the participants did not really have anybody to write to in English. Mira has occasional contact with a couple of British boys who teach her grammar and vocabulary whenever needed, which is positive as they are native speakers of English. However, it must be noted that even native speakers are not necessarily perfect users of the English language so we cannot assume that their grammar is always completely flawless either.

The participants were not very keen on reading any Internet forums, which I also found a little bit peculiar. They said that sometimes they

go search for specific information on a certain forum but they do not actively follow any even though they both have particular online interests and hobbies, and reading and writing on those kinds of forums would seem natural. Also, Tuuli mentioned that she does not learn English on *Facebook* since she uses the Finnish version of it which is, according to her, very popular among their friends as well. Unfortunately, it seems to be a growing trend that those vast online services are being translated in a number of languages. Even though that it is a positive development as it gives access to those services for people who do not know English but, on the other hand, it does not provide people anymore with certain English input and having a separate language for each country lessens communication among people from different countries.

As engaging in this abundance of Internet activities, the two participants are bound to encounter new words occasionally and resort to looking them up in dictionaries. Tuuli stated that she prefers online dictionaries as opposed to physical ones:

(32) (...) joo. Ne on yleensä se ensisijainen paikka mistä etsii niitä sanojen merkityksiä. Ei oikein jaksa aina etsiä mitään oikeeta sanakirjaa.

(...) (yeah. Those (online dictionaries) are usually the first place to go if I need to look for meanings of words. I'm really lazy at using any real (physical) dictionaries.)

Yet, even though she sometimes likes to look up words, she still likes to challenge herself as much as possible and often tries to grasp the meaning without the help of a dictionary:

(33) (...) se on monesti se ensisijainen että mitä yrittää. Yleensä ei jaksa edes vaivautua katsomaan sanakirjasta. Mutta jos sitä sanaa ei ymmärrä ollenkaan tai se esiintyy tosi usein, niin silloin on pakkoa tarkistaa se. Ja jos sana vaikuttaa muutenkin oleelliselta niin se on hyvä oppia sitten, jotta voi käyttää muuallakin esim. yo-kokeita varten.

(...) (that is often the first thing to try. Usually I'm so lazy that I

don't even bother using a dictionary. But I can't understand the word at all and it comes up often, then I have to look it up. And if the word seems important in some other way, it's good learn it so that I can be used elsewhere, for example, in matriculation exam.)

Thus, the prospect of learning words for matriculation exam is also present when learning new words online.

Mira, on the other hand, said that she occasionally looks up words in the dictionary but also noted that nowadays not so much compared to the times at upper secondary school:

(34) (...) aika usein joo, mutta niitä on loppujen lopuksi aika vähän. Tarkistan sanan yleensä silloin jos sitä lausetta ei muuten ymmärrä.

(...) (yeah rather often but after all not so much. I usually check a word if can't understand the whole sentence without it.)

Based on the data, as English comprises such a high percentage of the online activities Tuuli and Mira engage in, occasionally a situation arises in which their current language skills are not enough and they need to look for help as to vocabulary or grammar. It was rather a mundane fact that neither of them had any specific strategies when encountering tricky words or structures. They both seemed to go by feel - sometimes they would look up the new word and sometimes not and they could not give any direct explanation for this. Yet, one factor seemed to be important; when the 'new word' would appear numerous times and, thus, seem important, they would look it up. However, if the word would not appear in the text more than a couple of times and seemed somehow irrelevant, they would not bother looking it up. Tuuli said that she is a bit lazy when it comes to consulting a dictionary and when she does, she exclusively uses online dictionaries. Based on the interviews, it seems evident that laziness plays a role when it comes to checking up the meanings of new words. As for the 'old-fashioned' dictionaries in the form of physical books, they do not seem to be too popular among today's younger generations. There are a number of

useful online dictionaries nowadays which provide easier access to find the meaning of a new word. Yet, it seems that these online dictionaries are not used as much as I would have thought. As mentioned, an important part of looking up new words is to grasp the real gist behind a particular sentence when it feels relevant in its context. Another underlying reason for looking a word up is to be able to use it later on either for school purposes or leisure. Thus, even though using a dictionary, either online or a 'real one', may be laborious and have negative connotations for younger learners, they still apparently do it whenever it serves a real purpose for them.

Next we will look at things from the school perspective and also find out about how the school system currently feels about using technology.

#### **4.2.2. English at school**

Tuuli quite surprisingly pointed out that the current opinion and atmosphere among her high school English teachers are that learning English via these new media is greatly encouraged:

(35) joo siis kyllä ehdottomasti. Toisaalta sitä ei silleen erityisesti sanota, että kun sitä pidetään niin itsestäänselvyytenä, mutta usein sanotaan että hyvä kun käynte lukemassa sieltä kaikista muista lähteistä. Myös kirjoja yritetään saada lukemaan enemmän. Opettajat on myös aika myötämielisiä, jos oppilailta tulee jotain puhekielen ilmauksia ja sanovat että näinhän se on, kieli muuttuu. Jotkut opettajat näyttää myös Youtubesta videoita tunneilla.

(yeah absolutely. On the other hand, they don't specifically mention it and it's considered obvious but often they say that it's good to read about things from various sources. Also, the teachers try to get us students to read more books. They're also quite forgiving if students use colloquial forms and they acknowledge the fact that the language changes. Some of our teachers show us YouTube videos during lessons as well.)

High school English courses are rather hectic in nature, which leaves little room for online work during classes. However, when doing group

projects and presentations, the Internet is of great use. Mira talked about her local high school and how the teachers do not put much emphasis on using the new media as a language learning tool but they still acknowledge its strengths:

(36) (...) no ei oikeestaan, mutta on siitä jotain puhetta joskus ollut, että netistä oppii tosi helposti englantia kun siellä on niin paljon sivustoja.

(...) (not really but sometimes they've mentioned that the Internet is a good place to learn English because there are so many various pages.)

Thus, at Mira's school, they may not utilize the possibilities of online activities in English classes to a larger extent but they still use them for some purposes:

(37) (...) puhe piti pitää ja silloin piti netistä hakea tietoa siihen, muttei mitään kielioppi tai sanastotehtäviä. Kuuntelujen aikana saadaan kyllä pitää nettisanakirjaa auki.

(...) I had to give a speech and for that I needed go online and look for information but not any grammar or vocabulary-related exercises. When we're having a listening comprehension we are allowed to use an online dictionary at the same time.)

As the participants were high school students at the time of the interview, they had a clear and positive image of how the school system and their English teachers do not look askance at using the new media as a learning tool even though it is not always discussed so openly. In fact, one of my premonitions prior to conducting the study was that high school teachers are not too fond of promoting the possibilities of modern technology. I assumed that they would be more suspicious about the new media providing useful language as opposed to that learned at school by the instruction of real teachers. Yet, I am still somewhat baffled by the fact that the Internet is not used almost at all in English classes except for watching occasional videos or listening to songs, which are always led by the teacher giving not much room for

learners themselves to explore the Internet as a learning tool. Most high school learners are mature enough to handle authentic learning materials, which ought to be a gold mine for teachers. Having online classes every once in a while would be a great asset as the learners' motivation would probably be higher if they had a chance to do tasks that would be more meaningful to them. It is possible, however, that English teachers feel that young learners already have a sufficient amount of online input in their leisure and, thus, do not have the need to do the same in the classroom context. This enables the teachers to concentrate on something else than what the learners usually do in their own time.

When Tuuli was asked about the disadvantages of learning English online and using those words and phrases at school lessons, she was able to come up with a couple of instances in which the teacher may have intervened:

(38) Hmm, en tiedä... No jotkut puhekieliset muodot jää päälle silleen, että ei sitten aina ihan muista, että miten se sanotaan sillä kirjakielellä. Yksi kielioppijuttu oli ainakin, mutta sitä en nyt just muista... Toinen esimerkki oli enjoy ja loving-verbit, joista monet oppilaat käyttivät ing-muotoa ja opettajat yrittivät olla myötämielisiä.

(Hmm, I don't know... (long pause). Some of those colloquial forms tend to persist so that I can't always remember the grammatically correct way of saying something. There was one thing regarding grammar but I can't remember it just now... Another example were the verbs 'enjoy' and 'loving' and some students used the present continuous forms of them and the teachers tried to approve of that.)

These exact examples show clearly the current trend of the English language and how, in the Internet language, grammatical rules are often ignored. As for Mira, when asked about her experiences of whether there have been some drawbacks between learning English online and using it in the classroom, she said that in a number of instances they have seemed to clash:

(39) (no just viime enkun kokeessa. Mä en nyt muista sitä sanaa mitä siinä kysyttiin ja mä luulin että tiedän sen, mutta ei se sitten ollutkaan oikein. Myös kiro sanoja oon joskus vahingossa käyttänyt. Vaikka mä tiesin, että ne on kiro sanoja niin koska niitä käytetään niin paljon englannin puhekieles, niin mä aattelin ettei se nyt haittaa, mutta sitten se onkin haitannut.

(laughing) (in last test we had. I don't exactly remember the word that was being asked but I thought I'd know it but then it wasn't correct (she had learned the word originally online). Then I've used some swear words sometimes by accident. Even though I knew that they were swear words because they're used a lot in everyday language, I thought it's okay to use them then I wasn't. (For example 'screwed')

An interesting finding was conflicts between the language the participants had learned online and the language taught at high school. Apparently, they seemed to complement each other very well and there were no tragic collisions between the two. Occasionally there were some differences, mostly in grammatical forms and registers. I was quite surprised to learn that there had not been more instances of using inappropriate forms during school lessons or school papers. Even though I consider teaching grammar at school of value, it must be noted that that kind of language is not always used on the Internet. Also, it is highly important to understand that using these flawless forms may be seen as an oddity by a number of fellow Internet users, even by native speakers of English. Many online communities may have very strict code of language usage and deviating from that can lead to a sense of bewilderment within that community. Thus, aiming at impeccable language is not always the case. Yet, I think that teachers do a valuable job by correcting some grand mistakes that younger learners pick up online as was the case with Mira using the word '*screwed*' in a school paper.

Now that we have dealt with Tuuli's and Mira's both past and present experiences from a number of angles, it is time to take a more overall look at how they feel about the Internet and its role as a medium for learning English in a wider perspective.

### 4.3. Overall picture

In this final section about the participants' personal feelings involving their own voice, I will look at the whole process and Tuuli's and Mira's current English skills even in more detail. The participants discuss their thoughts from a couple of new angles and the motivation behind their will to learn English via the new media is also a major focus in this last section. Thus, this section is connected to the second research problem of the present thesis.

Grasping a wide overview of the previous and current learning experiences can seem daunting for a young adult going to a high-school. Nevertheless, after pondering a little while whether the media has influenced her English skills, Tuuli saw the situation very clearly:

(40) (...) no tosi hyvä voisin sanoa. Varsinkin yläasteella se on tuonut paljon uusia sanoja kielivarastoon. Ja vahvistanut sitä silleen, että on voinut siellä käyttää sitä englanninkielen taitoa ja helposti sitten käyttää myös koulun ulkopuolella sitä lukemalla englanninkielisiä tekstejä ja myös kuuntelu on ollut tosi tärkeää. Kun on vaikka kuullut jonkun sanan jossain biisissä, niin sitten helposti muistaa sen sanan vaikka jos jossain kokeessa kysytään. Sitten voi muistaa jonkun tietyn biisin missä oli se sana.

(...) (very positive I'd say. Especially during junior high it has brought lots of new words to my vocabulary And it has strengthened it so that I've been able use those English skills and then easily outside of school by reading texts in English and listening (to English) has been important as well. For example, when I've heard a certain word in some song, then I can easily remember that word if it's asked in some test. Then I can remember that specific song in which I heard it in the first place.)

Thus, Tuuli felt really positively about the effects the Internet has had on her language skills, which was the case with Mira as well as she came to the same conclusion that the new media has positively played a major role in her English skills:

(41) (...) tosi suuri. Huomaan siitä kun viime kesänä en oikeastaan käyttänyt niitä juttuja ollenkaan, mutta viime kesänä mä rupesin kattoon sitten niitä sarjoja ja sen jälkeen on sitten tosi paljon

karttunut. Joten suuri apu on tosiaan ollut ne enkunkieliset sarjat ja teksitykset esim. YouTubessa.

(...) (really strong. I can see that last summer I couldn't use those things at all but since that I've started watching those TV-series and my (English) skills have developed very much. So those YouTube TV-series and subtitles in English have really been a great help.)

Throughout the interviews, I was able to sense a very warm and positive atmosphere when the participants were allowed to tell about their relationship between the Internet and the English language. The outcome of discussing these matters was probably even more positive than I would have expected in the first place. As the two girls both presented very praising comments about how the new media has played a major role in their process of learning English, I can wholeheartedly stand by the assumptions I made at the beginning of the paper about how learning English can greatly be reinforced by modern technology.

Tuuli also felt that learning English online, in a larger picture, has helped her English skills at school environment as well:

(42) (...) just se sanasto ettei oo niin paljoa tarvinnut opetella. Ja sitten vaikka jotkut prepositiot, että tuleeko vaikka "to" tai "at" tai tällaset, niin ne tulee sitten itestään kun on nähnyt miten niitä käytetään.

(...) (the vocabulary so that I haven't needed to learn it that much (at school). Then there are prepositions, for example whether to use 'to' or 'at' and so on. Those come out effortlessly as I've seen how they're used.)

She gives much credit for the Internet being very beneficial during her progress, especially enhancing her vocabulary and grammar skills. She had a clear idea of what her English skills would be like at the present time had there not been this technology at hand:

(43) aika paljon huonompi. Varsinkin nyt lukioaikana se on ollut tukena aika paljon. Jos olisi pelkästään ollut vaikka televisio, josta oli saanut sitä englantia muuallakin kuin koulussa, niin olis kyllä paljon silleen heikompi. Ja netti on myös mahdollistanut sen, että sitä on voinut

käyttää kun ei tosiaan ole mitään englanninkielisiä serkkuja tai kavereita esimerkiksi.

(a lot worse. Especially now during high school it has served as a pillar quite a lot. Had there been only TV at disposal to get English input besides school, it would be not that good (her English skills). And the Internet has enabled me to use it since I haven't had any English-speaking relatives or friends, for example).

As Tuuli gives much credit to the Internet and says that it has been an enormous booster for her language skills, Mira concurs. She said that had there not been the possibility to access the Internet, her knowledge about the English language would be very different:

(44) (...) paljon surkeempi. Sanavarasto varsinkin olis paljon heikompi, lauserakenteet ja ihan kaikki oikeastaan. Ja kuullunymmärtäminen myös.

Musiikkia kuuntelemalla oon oppinu myös joitain sanoja. Myös niistä Harry Potter -peleistä ja fanfictioneista on tullut uusia sanoja.

Kielioppiasioita oon oppinut niiltä parilta englantilaiselta kaverilta, kun en aina oo ymmärtänyt mitä ne tarkoittaa, niin oon sitten kysynyt niistä.

Ainekirjotusten pistemäärät on nousseet paljon kun esim. viime vuonna sain yleensä jotain 72 pistettä, mutta nytkin sain 92.

Kuunteluissa se on myös auttanut kun joskus niissä puhutaan brittiaksentilla ja sitten kun oon kattonut sitä Emmerdalea ja siinä puhutaan vähän hämärästi, niin se on sitten auttanut niissä kuunteluissa.

(...) (a lot worse. Especially vocabulary, syntax and everything actually. And understanding spoken language as well.

By listening to music I've learned some words. I've also learned vocabulary from those Harry Potter games and fan fiction stuff.

I've learned grammar from those couple of English friends and always whenever there has been something I haven't understood, I've asked them.

The scores of my essays at school have also gone up a lot because for example last year I usually scored something like 72 points but just recently I got 92 points.

It has also helped me in listening comprehension tests as they often speak with the British accent in those and when I've watched Emmerdale in which they speak with an accent that's difficult to understand, so that has helped in those tests.)

As the extracts show, the Internet has provided a great means of enhancing learning in the areas of audio, video, text as well as communication with other people. These areas, respectively, help learners' listening, reading and writing and/or speaking skills. Tuuli stressed how each of these different areas has helped her to become better, not only as an English user at her leisure but also at school. Mira also felt the same. She brought up how reading online news and her dearest hobby, fan fiction, has helped her to learn a great deal of vocabulary as has watching her favourite movies and TV-series given her a chance to absorb input in different accents. What I found intriguing was how they both said that if it was not for the Internet, their English skills would be much more inferior to the current state.

Tuuli pointed out that even though that she has always consciously wanted to get better in English to be able to follow all these current new media, the learning has actually come more accidentally, without paying attention to it:

(45) ehkä itestään enemmän. Kun on opiskellut englantia sieltä 3. luokalta asti niin se on ehkä tullut vähän huomaamatta se kielitaito aina. Mutta muistan kyllä että ihan pienenä kun ei vielä tajunnut englannista paljoa, niin silloin sitä ajatteli että voi kunpa osaisin paremmin, mutta sitten se on lähtenyt tulemaan itestään eikä oo tarvinnut erityisemmin miettiä, että opettelenpa nyt tämän asian että tajuan sen.

(maybe more accidentally. Having studied English from the third grade on, the skills may have always grown more incidentally. But I do remember when I was a child and didn't understand English almost at all, and then I wished I knew more but after that it (learning) has started to come naturally and there has been no need to specifically go and say that 'now I'm gonna learn this thing to be able to understand it.)

Mira also agreed to this Tuuli's statement. Looking back at her development in a larger sense, she mentioned that a great deal of that learning has occurred accidentally, or better yet, incidentally even

though she has always been conscious about her willingness to get better :

- (46) (...) kyllä kun mä luen niitä fanficcejä niin ei mun perimmäinen tarkoitus oo oppia enkkua vaan ihan sen takia että ne on hauskoja ja hyviä, ja sitten välillä huomaa että aijaa.
- (...) (yeah when I read that fanfiction stuff, it's not my innermost thought to learn English but just because they're fun and entertaining, and then at times I realize that I've actually learned something.)

Thus, the Internet and the new media have provided her two different approaches to learning English - at first, she just wanted to learn English more to be able keep up with it instead of using it as a medium for doing the things she really was interested in:

- (47) (...) Jotain tv-sarjoja katoin ihan vaan sen takia, että niissä puhuttiin just enkkua ja niissä oli enkunkielinen tekstitys. Ja ihan vaan tosiaan katoin niitä kun halusin oppia enkkua lisää. Esim. just se Emmerdale, mutta sitten mä rupesin ihan oikeestikin tykkään siitä. Sitten oli myös yks espanjalainen sarja, jossa oli enkunkieliset tekstitykset.
- (...) (Some TV-series I used to watch just because they were in English and had English subtitles. And I just watched those to learn more English. For example that Emmerdale but then I actually started to like it. Then there was a Spanish series which had English subtitles.)

In addition to understanding the language better, being able to communicate and integrate with foreign people and cultures has also enhanced her motivation to learn English online:

- (48) Joo. Esim. Frendejä katoin ennen New Yorkin reissua ihan senkin takia, että jos siinä puhuttais jotain slangisanoja kuin mitä ne oikeesti siellä käyttää. Sitten ihan asuminenkin ulkomailla Lontoossa on käynyt mielessä, mut se on vielä aika kaukainen haave eikä se silleen näy siinä tän hetkissä netin käytössä.
- (Yeah, for example I used to watch Friends before my trip to New York just because I wanted to find out whether they use some slangy language that people would actually use there. Then I've thought about living abroad in London but that's still in the distant future and I guess it doesn't really show they way I use the Internet at this point.)

Even though Mira did not directly say it, she is apparently, at least, a bit interested in the idea of living outside of Finland at some point and being able to use English in a totally different setting.

As for the second research problem of the present paper, a crucial part of this study was to find out about Tuuli's and Mira's motives behind learning English online. Due to the English language being of great interest to both the two girls, they mentioned that learning English with the help of the Internet had occurred mostly incidentally without consciously thinking about it. It seems that they have learned English simply because they like it so much, which is an important observation if we are to understand a young English learner's frame of mind. It is obvious that integrative motivation theory put forward by Gardner and Lambert plays an extremely important role in determining how well the learner is to succeed. As the participants have been 'integratively' inclined throughout their life span when it comes to learning English, they have succeeded very well over the years since learning, or more aptly, absorbing, has mostly occurred by natural encounters with the English language. Thus, English has been only served as a means for understanding something else whether it was lyrics, movie or a piece of fan fiction, and not the goal of learning itself. Yet, Mira said how she has occasionally tried to actually learn English on purpose, for example when she was going on a trip to New York and she knowingly wanted to hone her skills. Also, there was a time when she wanted to watch as many English-based TV-series as she could just so she could learn to understand their various accents better. Even though both ways of approaching learning are very different, they can complement each other in a way that the learner can get the most out of his/her learning experiences. However, I found it rather surprising that the prospect of communicating with foreigners in the future or moving abroad did not seem like a particular reason for learning English for neither Tuuli nor Mira. It seemed that they wanted

to learn English merely for themselves at the present time and not think about what to do with it later on in their lives.

Moving on to the attitudes at play, Tuuli felt that her feelings towards the English language and learning it, both at leisure and at school, have been very positive as it has always been her favourite school subject:

(49) (...) on joo, että englantia on aina ollut ihan mun lempia-aine. Sitä kuitenkin kuulee niin paljon joka paikassa, että se on niin läheinen osa elämää ja kun mä kuitenkin olin siellä koulussa, jossa oli vaan kaksi oppilasta englannin tunneilla, niin jotenkin se lämmin tunnelma sieltäkin on vaikuttanut. Tunnit oli tosi intensiivisiä ja aina kun käytiin läksyjä ja tehtäviä läpi, niin ei tarvinnut edes viittailla vaan sai aina puhua suoraan. Tosi paljon puhuttiin, että ei ollut ollenkaan semmosta... niin, että koko ajan sai olla äänessä siellä. Sekin on varmasti auttanut just siihen, ettei pelkää sitä englannin puhumista.

Kun muutettiin vähän isommalle paikkakunnalle yläasteella, niin siellä oli sitten paljon isompi luokka kuin mihin oli aikaisemmin tottunut, mutta sielläkin olin innostunut englannista ja omatoimisesti vastailin. Ja silloin se Internetin käyttö alkoi enemminkin.

(...) (yeah because English has always been my favourite subject. After all I can hear it everywhere and it's such a close part of my life. And as I attended an elementary school with only two people on English classes myself included, the warm feeling there has had an effect. The classes were really intensive and every time we went through our homework, I didn't need to raise my hand but I always got to speak straight away. We talked a lot and it wasn't anything like... (long pause) and we were allowed to speak all the time, which surely has helped not being afraid of speaking English.

When we moved to a bigger town during junior high, I came to a much larger classroom that I was used to but there I also was really enthusiastic about the English language and spontaneously answered questions. And during that time the Internet came into picture more.)

However, Tuuli was rather sad about the fact that she never had any pen pals or relatives in foreign countries with whom she could have had a chance to communicate in English. However, my interpretation is that the Internet has been somewhat a substitute for not having those people around as she has been able to communicate with people through, for example, online games. Generally speaking, not having

friends or relatives living in other parts of the globe can be, at least to some extent, be rectified by taking part in online communities such as discussion forums and games as both of those activities may involve verbal or/and written communication.

All these things taken into account, Tuuli seemed confident that her current language skills and motivation are as high as they could be:

(50) (...) kyllä tää englannin kieli tuntuu nyt sellaselta, että sillä voi kommunikoida eikä pelkää tilanteita, jos vaikka joutuu käyttämään sitä. On tullut just sen verran sanavarastoa ja vaikka ei aina just muistaakaan, että miten tää nyt sanotaan oikein kieliopillisesti, niin ei se sitten haittaa kun on kuitenkin sen verran jo varmuutta. Kuullunymmärtäminen on ehkä se vahvin osa.

(...) I indeed feel comfortable with my current English skills and I'm able to communicate with it and I'm not afraid of situations in which I need to use it. I've gained vocabulary enough and even though I don't always remember the grammatically correct way of saying something, it doesn't matter because I've gained much confidence. Understanding spoken language is probably my strongest skill.)

As she had this clear idea of her strengths as an English user, she went on saying that there is not much for her to learn at the moment:

(51) (...) tuntuu että se on nyt aikalailla sillä tasolla, että ei tarte siitä enää paineilla. Ehkä vielä on jotkut uutissivustot sellasia, että niissä tulee jonkin verran vaikeempia sanoja kuin jollain normaaleilla foorumeilla, mutta kyllä siellä tosi hyvin niitä ymmärtää.

(...) (it feels that it's now on such a high level that I don't need to stress about it. There may be some news sites where a little more difficult words may come up compared some normal forums but I can still understand them well.)

As Tuuli showed much confidence, Mira felt the same way and stated that there is not much more she wanted to learn more about:

(52) Ei mitään sellaista kummempaa. Ehkä enemmän sanastoa vielä.

(Long pause) (Not anything special. Maybe still more vocabulary).

Also, Mira thought that her current English skills enable her to focus on

the actual content and she does not have to dwell on too much on the language itself:

(53) Joo, suurimmaksi osaksi. Mutta välillä vielä ainakin semmosilla vähän virallisemmilla sivuilla on joskus vähän, mutta sitten sellasilla vähän epävirallisemmilla ei yleensä oo sitä ongelmaa.

(Mostly yeah. But every once in while, at least on more official websites, it's sometimes a bit difficult, but with more unofficial ones there are usually no problems.)

Yet, she admits that she still needs to check some weird words up in the dictionary if she is not able to grasp the gist of a whole sentence and there are still times when she feels unsure of her skills.

One of the most pleasing facts that arose from the data was that due to the possibilities the new media has offered in terms of giving a chance to learn English, they both feel quite content with their current skills as users of the English language in the context of the Internet. Needless to say, occasionally they encounter situations when they do not feel so confident about their skills but when that time comes, they can always manage and find a way to cope with the problem. Mira mentioned how she earlier needed to constantly self-evaluate her skills against what she was facing online but the more she has been in contact with the English language online, the more she has gained confidence and become more autonomous and motivated. Based on the data it is easy to say that trusting one's own instincts and finding out about things on their own are important qualities of a successful online learner. Consequently, in the world of WWW, it is obvious that each non-native speaker comes across situations in which he/she does not feel confident about him/herself but to overcome those difficulties is what matters and makes them better learners. As Tuuli also said, having used and learned English online very much during the past few years have given her a great deal of self-confidence and she is nowadays not afraid of situations in which she has to communicate

with a foreigner, both orally or by writing.

As the last extract, I wanted to present Mira's final thought about these topics. According to Mira, due to the fact that English holds a prevalent status as the 'Internet language', she strongly claimed that it has influenced the fact that she feels so positively about the English language:

(54) (...) se on ihan varmaan se suurin tekijä, ja kun englannintunneilla yleensä on koulussa vähän sellanen että ei jaksa, mut sitten kun on netis niin ei oo sellasta.

(...) (it's probably been the single most important factor, and usually during English lessons at school I feel rather unmotivated but when I go online I don't feel that way.)

This particular comment by Mira was extremely delightful as she even went on suggesting that learning English online with all the accompanying difficulties has felt more natural than learning English at school with an instructor. Part of this positive image of 'online English' seemed to be the fact that English has always had a certain appealing status to it right from those first experiences with it years earlier. Based on this, it is relevant to ask the inevitable question whether and for how long English teachers in the current school system can still be of use to young learners wanting to learn English. Ultimately, will there be a time when the World Wide Web takes fully over? To avoid any such scenario, the school institution needs to immediately wake up and take a close look at the current trends that their students participate in in order to start a counter-attack and co-operation with this strong companion as I already suggested in Chapter 1.

So far, I have discussed Tuuli's and Mira's thoughts and experiences mostly together. In the final section of this chapter, comparison between Tuuli and Mira will take place in more detail.

#### 4.4. Comparison

In this final section, I am going to draw attention to the most striking differences that appeared in the data between the two. As pointed out earlier, the way Tuuli and Mira have used the Internet and the new media is really similar, which is why in this section I am comparing them more in terms of their feelings about the English language instead of purely technological side of things.

Even though both the participants had quite similar experiences of how the Internet and the English language became a part of their lives, there still were a number of things that set them apart. Firstly, it seemed that Tuuli had a better starting point to learn English as she had an older sister who was helping her with the language as Mira did not. Thus, at early stages, Tuuli's language skills seemed to be at a higher level since she was able to form sentences and had a wider vocabulary at the beginning of elementary school. She also stressed the fact that starting to learn English formally at the third grade was easy due to the prior knowledge of it. Another important factor was that Mira did not have exactly the same kind of motivation towards the English language, while Tuuli stated that English had always been her favourite subject at school. Thus, combining the English language with the Internet has come more naturally to her.

Secondly, a major difference was the English classroom in which they started learning it at school from the third grade on. As already mentioned, Tuuli came from a very small town and went to a local village school where there was only one student in the English class besides her. On the other hand, Mira's learning environment was strikingly different as she went to a much bigger school where the English classes consisted of approximately more than twenty students. However, she could not remember whether their whole class attended at the same time or whether it was divided into two groups as it is

often done with younger learners. Yet, she had to deal with more students around her, while Tuuli was able to get more personal instruction by her teacher and the atmosphere was always very relaxed without being hectic at any point. Based on the data, I made the conclusion that this must have contributed, at least on some level, to the positive motivation towards the English language she had during her years at elementary school. It seemed to give her more confidence in using English in classroom situations as opposed to Mira, whose learning environment was very different, and speaking English in front of a classroom full of people seemed more daunting and stressful.

Lastly, the participants felt differently about their English skills in the present time to some extent. Tuuli seemed to be very happy about her language skills after all the years of gaining familiarity with it, while Mira was not as confident as Tuuli. Even though they both mentioned that they have learned English a great deal via the Internet during its existence and nowadays they do not need to check unfamiliar words in the dictionary very often, Mira said that there are still a number of things she feels unsure of. She was still somewhat concerned about learning to watch movies without subtitles and enriching the scope of her vocabulary. While Tuuli also wanted to hone her skills in the latter area, she was not worried about it. First, when collecting the data, it was almost like an unexpected difference since both of them equally used the English-based new media at their leisure and daily routines. My conclusion was that those very early experiences they had had of the English language came to the picture at this point. As Tuuli had always considered English fun and her favourite subject at school, that probably was a major factor in how she felt about her current skills even though she admitted that she does not know everything. At the time of the interview, having such a positive attitude towards the English language, she even mentioned that studying languages at the university was an option for her. To Mira, English seemed more like a

tool although she was quite fond of it as well. Her attitude towards learning English at school was not very positive as she stated that she mostly learns the language while surfing on the Internet.

The following and final chapter wraps up the discussion, the aims of the present thesis and to what extent they were achieved. Also, a look into the future will be taken featuring suggestions as for future studies in this field of language learning and technology.

## 5 CONCLUSION

The goal of the present study was to find out how the Internet and its accompanying new media affect high school learners' English skills. Also, a crucial aspect of the study was to find about the different levels of motivation underlying this learning process. These problems were studied based on the theoretical framework of the present thesis taking into account the concepts of motivation, informal versus formal learning as well as self-assessment. The results did not leave much room for doubt as it was found that the Internet plays a very important role in enhancing young learners' skills in English, which mostly seems to take place in the learners' free time and not, in fact, in classroom situations. They are exposed to a variety of language learning areas such as understanding texts and audio (music, movies) as well as producing written language themselves to some extent. It was noticed throughout the process of interviews and data analysis that a great deal of their current language skills emanates from the use of the Internet in a very versatile way. The participants were also very much aware of their own learning process as well as their different levels of motivation, informal learning and self-assessment, and how they all interact with each other.

As shown earlier, the data were collected by conducting face-to-face

interviews with the two participants. As the idea of conducting a case study was conceived right from the beginning, choosing a qualitative approach as for the methodological framework was the only natural solution. During the interviews I managed to get a great deal of information, possibly even more that I had hoped for. As the interviews were recorded on tape, it gave me great chance to listen to the participants' answers in depth and finally transcribe both the interviews. Having the 'luxury' of knowing both participants prior to conducting the interviews proved to be an essential part of gathering information which was very consistent and straightforward as I requested for only honest answers, otherwise the result would not have been credible. As for the weaknesses of the study, even though I really enjoyed conducting a case study with only two interviewees, there could have been even more room for participants, which would have provided a better base for making assumptions and generalizations of this whole particular age group. In addition, the fact that they were both girls is probably something that sets certain limitations. Also, as the participants were asked about memories of their past when they were as young as 6-year-olds, it is possible that those memories are not as accurate anymore as they used to be.

Even though I criticized the lack of studies in this area at the beginning of the present paper, when compiling the theoretical framework for the present study, it was extremely positive to notice that the relationship between learning English and the Internet is given more recognition, although only little by little. When I was writing my Candidates' Thesis over three years ago on this very same topic, finding up-to-date studies and literature was a laborious task. However, this time I was positively surprised to see that during these past three years fresh studies and books on these areas have started to emerge in the field of language learning. I find this crucial as the possibilities of the new media have grown a great deal during the last

decade and possibly will grow even more and more in the near future. By understanding how the Internet can be taken advantage of, both at learners' leisure and school English lessons, we, as teachers and language specialists, may be able to offer a multitude of fresh ideas to our students. Even though younger learners of today seem to be proficient in finding ways to explore the Internet by themselves and use it as a learning tool, a teacher can still have an essential role in making suggestions and give a boost as to the ways the students can learn, whether intentionally or not, English via these new technological advancements that are such an integral part of today's young people.

For future studies and research in this area, I would like to make a couple of suggestions, which also apply to the current curriculum in the Finnish school system regarding the teaching of English. First, more online work should be included in the curriculum. I was quite surprised to hear, based on both participants' experiences, that applying computers and the Internet as for learning English occurs only rarely during the years in comprehensive school and high school. Since young learners enjoy so much spending time online, it would be a great success to add it in classroom routines as well. As presented in the previous chapter, I was able to come up with only two arguments not to make this happen: there simply is no room in the curriculum to include online work or teachers of English think that their students get enough exposure already at home. Another likely reason is that even though we live far in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, there still seems to be a great deal of suspicion as to learning English online as the language occurring there in the virtual world is not always 'correct' and up to the standards of the school institution. While I, as a future teacher of English, can somewhat relate to this thought, I still find it outdated. Since it currently is the year of 2011 and the current elementary and high school students around Finland have been born in the 21<sup>st</sup> century or just before, we also need up-to-date teaching methods to be able to

keep up with the contemporary young language learners. By no means, I do not mean to throw in the trash the old methods which have proven to be effective throughout their existence, but to acknowledge the possibilities of the latest technological advancements and including them in the classroom, even little by little, would take the possibilities of the current language learning methods to the next level.

Finally, we need to help learners to become better learners. Even though younger people seem to be very resourceful when it comes to using technology and, based on the results of the present study, they seem to be keen on learning English to be able to fully exploit that technology, it is not always the case that each one of those younger learners know of the great variety of things that they could achieve by using that technology. In other words, not everyone knows how to gain access to the full potential of using the Internet to learn English. There is so much information and ways to explore it on the Internet that it can be paralyzing for a young learner to understand the full scope of it. Thus, educating learners as to how they can benefit the most from the use of the Internet should be something that teachers do even though most of the 'screening time' occurs at the learners' leisure. Also, it is important to prod them to use technology in a positive and constructive way, not to cast doubt about the negative connotations of that technology. The attitude of a teacher plays a significant role in how the learners perceive and feel about learning English online.

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## APPENDIX

1. Mikä on ensimmäinen muistosi Internetissä? Kuinka vanha olit?
  2. Ensimmäisten muistojen jälkeen, muistatko minkälaiset englannin kieltä sisältävät jutut (aktiviteetit) netissä tulivat vakituisen tai satunnaiseen käyttöösi?
  3. Kuinka koit kielen netissä? Oliko sanasto vaikeaa? Entäs tuntuiko lauserakenteet monimutkaisia? Tuntuiko videot/musiikki yms. kuullunymmärtämisiä vaativia juttuja vaikealta ymmärtää? Entäs mikä tuntui netissä helpolta?
  4. Suomensitko tietoisesti netin tekstejä/puhetta esim. sanakirjojen avulla vai tyydyitkö vaan ymmärrykseen ilman sanakirjan apua?
  5. Muistatko käyttäneesi jotain netissä näkemiäsi ilmauksia/sanoja koulussa englannin tunneilla silloin? Missä?
  6. Ala-/yläasteella, oliko teillä koulussa englannin tunneilla Internet käytössä? Jos oli, mitä teitte? Jos ei, niin olisitko halunnut, että olisi käytetty?
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7. Tällä hetkellä, kuinka paljon käyttämistäsi Internet-sivustoista on englannin kielisiä verrattuna esim. suomalaisiin sivustoihin?

Minkälaisia englannin kieltä sisältäviä "aktiviteetteja" sinulla on netissä tai missä ylipäänsä näet englantia? (tietosivustot, uutiset, elokuvat, Youtube...)

8. Kohdatessasi vieraita ilmaisuja, tarkastatko niiden merkityksen sanakirjasta? Vai yrität ymmärtää ilman apuja? Tai ohitat sanan, koska se ei tunnu tärkeältä? Jos katsot sanan sanakirjasta, niin katsotko siksi, että haluat oppia sen sanan englannin kielestä vai että ymmärtäisit lukemasi/kuulemasi?

9. Kannustetaanko koulussa mielestäsi oppilaita tarpeeksi oppimaan englantia netissä koulun ulkopuolella? Annetaanko netistä oppimiselle mielestäsi arvoa koulussa? Onko teillä ollut mitään nettiin liittyviä aktiviteetteja/projekteja koulussa englannin tunneilla?

10. Onko netistä ollut kenties joskus jotain haittavaikutuksia kielitaitoon esim. koulun englannin tunneilla? Entä muuten?

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11. Minkälaisen roolin näet medialla/Internetillä olleen englannin kielen taitoihisi?

12. Katsoessasi ajassa taaksepäin ja miettien tätä hetkeä, koetko oppineesi englantia Internetissä? Jos kyllä, niin minkälaisissa tilanteissa? Minkälaisia asioita? Onko näistä taidoista ollut hyötyä koulun englannin tunneilla? Jos et koe oppineesi netissä kieltä, niin mistä luulet, että se johtuu?

13. Tällä hetkellä, tuntuuko siltä, että pärjät kielitaitosi kanssa kaikessa mitä teet Internetissä?

14. Oletko yrittänyt/halunnut tulla paremmaksi englannissa, jotta ymmärtäisit paremmin netistä löytyviä engl. kiel. kiinnostuksen kohteitasi ja engl. kielestä mediaa? (Esim. tietosivustot, ymmärtääkseni paremmin puhetta, lyriikoiden/tekstitysten ymmärtäminen). Tai oletko halunnut oppia englantia sitä varten, että haluat käyttää sitä vaikkapa ulkomaalaisten kanssa kommunikoimiseen kuten esim. sähköpostilla/foorumeilla? Muita ajatuksia siitä onko Internet/engl. kielinen media aiheuttanut sinussa halun oppia englantia?