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Lower secondary pupils in urban and rural areas in Norway reports on their English language outside the classroom: A comparative study.

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Abstract

The goal of this MA thesis is to investigate whether there are differences and/or similarities in how urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway use English outside of school, how important it is for them to be able to write, read and speak English, and whether they are satisfied with their language skills. The study used a quantitative approach, where data was collected through online questionnaires distributed to pupils at ten public schools in six different counties in Norway. Of these schools, seven were selected through a probability selection, while three were recruited to participate through personal contacts. A total of 249 pupils responded to my questionnaire. The participants in the present MA thesis are intended to be generalized to the population, but it can be argued that 249 pupils are too narrow a sample to be generalized. The findings in this MA thesis suggest that Norwegian lower secondary pupils, regardless of geographical areas, use similar activities that involve English outside of school. The most commonly used of these activities (according to the data in this research) are listening to music, using social media, watching movies and TV, playing video games, and YouTube. In addition, the data shows that the pupils in this study also experience and believe that English is an important language to know. The findings in this research also show that a large part of the pupils are satisfied with their English writing, reading and oral skills.

Additionally, the findings in this research indicate that urban and rural pupils seem to have different future ambitions and thoughts about future English use. Urban pupils appear more oriented towards using English in studies and for reading and learning, while rural pupils appear more oriented towards practical use in work and holidays. This study points to different attitudes towards English use, cultural differences, and different job opportunities as possible factors for why pupils have different ambitions.

In the conclusion, I mention that there are not major differences found between urban and rural lower secondary pupils in this study. By acknowledging the similarities in EE-engagement across urban and rural areas, both teachers and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training can develop strategies to support and improve extramural language learning for all pupils. In addition, by promoting appropriate EE activities, and acknowledging pupils' needs and interests, teachers can help pupils develop language skills in a way that is meaningful, engaging, and effective while also aid pupils that need additional support to reach their language learning goals.

Sammendrag

Målet med denne masteroppgaven er å undersøke om det er forskjeller og/eller likheter i hvordan ungdomsskole elever fra urbane og rurale områder i Norge bruker engelsk på utsiden av skolen, hvor viktig det er for de å kunne skrive, lese og snakke engelsk og hvorvidt de er fornøyde med sine egne språkferdigheter. Studien benyttet en kvantitativ metode, hvor datainnsamlingen foregikk over nettbaserte spørreskjemaer distribuert til elever ved 10 offentlige grunnskoler i 6 forskjellige fylker i Norge. Av disse skolene ble 7 skoler trukket ut gjennom et sannsynlighets utvalg, mens 3 ble rekruttert til deltakelse gjennom personlige kontakter. Totalt er det 249 elever som besvarte spørreskjemaet mitt. Masteroppgavens deltakere forsøkes å kunne generaliseres til populasjonen, men det kan argumenteres om 249 elever er et for snevert utvalg for å kunne generaliseres.

Funnene i denne masteroppgaven tyder på at norske ungdomsskole elever, uavhengig av geografiske områder, benytter like aktiviteter som involverer engelsk-bruk utenfor skolen. De mest brukte av disse aktivitetene (ifølge dataen i denne forskningen) er å høre på musikk, bruk av sosiale medier, film og TV, dataspill og YouTube. I tillegg viser data til at det virker som at elevene i denne studien også opplever og mener at engelsk er et viktig språk å kunne. Funnene i denne forskningen viser også at en stor del av elevene er fornøyde med sine skrive, lese og muntlige språkferdigheter i engelsk.

Samtidig viser funnene i denne forskningen til at urbane og rurale elever virker til å ha ulike fremtidige ambisjoner og tanker om framtidig engelskbruk. Urbane elever virker mer orientert mot å bruke engelsk i studier og til å lese og lære, mens rurale elever virker mer orientert mot praktisk bruk på jobb og ferie. Denne studien peker på ulike holdninger til engelskbruk, forskjell i kultur og forskjellige muligheter innenfor jobb som mulige faktorer til at elvene har ulike ambisjoner.

I konklusjonen nevner jeg at det ikke er funnet veldig store forskjeller mellom urbane og rurale ungdomsskole elever i denne undersøkelsen. Ved å anerkjenne fellestrekkene i EE-engasjement på tvers av urbane og rurale områder, kan både lærere og Utdanningsdirektoratet utvikle strategier for å støtte og forbedre ekstramural språklæring for alle elever. I tillegg, ved å fremme hensiktsmessige EE-aktiviteter, og anerkjenne elevenes behov og interesser, kan lærere hjelpe elever med å utvikle språkferdigheter på en måte som er hensiktsfull, engasjerende og effektiv, samtidig som de hjelper elever som trenger ekstra støtte for å nå sinespråklæringsmål.

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1. Introduction

In recent years, technology and internet access has developed significantly resulting in an increased engagement in activities that include online gaming, social media, global news broadcasts, TV/music/podcast streaming and similar (Olsson, 2016; Schurz et al., 2022; Sylvén, 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). Statistics have been measured of 9-15-year-olds in Norway and show overall engagement in various English activities outside of the classroom, such as the internet (92%), digital gaming (84%), and social media (72%) (SSB, 2021a). These statistics portrays the high engagement in extramural English activities among 9–15-year-olds in Norway. Technology-enhanced socialization provides communicative tools that enables people to interact more frequently with friends and/or strangers around the world. In today's society, technology facilitates for more engagement with English outside the formal school context and as a result, several will argue that young learners of a second language (L2) are better equipped for English language acquisition than ever before (Schurz & Sundqvist, 2022). For English teachers today, their pupils' engagement in English outside of school fosters unique opportunities, as well as challenges concerning the teaching of English to young learners. A central challenge for English teachers, then will be to ensure that their classrooms relate in a positive and relevant manner to the students' extensive engagement with English outside of school.

As for opportunities, Sundqvist (2009) argues that teachers can promote further learning by being informed of each student's English activity outside of the school. The term *extramural English* (henceforth EE) refers to all contact with and engagement in English outside the classroom context (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). EE will be frequently referred to in this thesis when discussing young learners' contact and engagement with English outside the classroom, and a thorough description of EE will be provided in the Background review chapter (2.1). Since the term EE was coined by Pia Sundqvist in 2009, empirical research has been expanding, spanning various aspects of language learning, from a wide range of perspectives (see for example Avello et al., 2019; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Reinders & Benson, 2017; Schurz & Sundqvist, 2022; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012; Zhang et al., 2021). Inspired by a recent upsurge in research interest concerning how young learners engage with English in their leisure time, the present MA thesis aims to investigate if there are any salient differences or similarities in such engagement between pupils in urban and rural areas of Norway.

The present study also explores how urban and rural lower secondary pupils view various English basic skills as important, and how satisfied they are with their own English language skills.

1.1. Background

Research on EE certainly seems to be expanding as researchers in many countries (see for example Alejo & Piquer-Píriz, 2016; Brevik & Holm, 2022; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Schurz et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021) investigate how to benefit from young learners' involvement in English outside the classroom in a school context. As a future teacher, I believe there is much to be gained from exploring young learners EE habits, particularly with regards to developing their language skills by drawing on specific EE habits as part of classroom instruction. This proposition finds support in pedagogical thinking, as for example Imsen (2017) states that no pupil is alike and that pupils have different needs in their academic development. Havik (2016) mentions the importance of having good relations with pupils in order to facilitate for academic development, which implicitly argues the point also made by Sundqvist (2009) that all learners deserve adequate attention from their teachers. It is the teacher's job to scaffold and vary the classroom content to facilitate for each pupil, and if the teacher is aware of his or her pupils interests outside the classroom, the teacher is better equipped to exercise that job (Sundqvist, 2009). Furthermore, Imsen (2017) claims that it is the school's duty to develop and expand on each pupil's capabilities and prerequisites, which further underscores the importance of utilizing already established language practices to build competence.

With the exponential growth of network availability, people around the world are connected and the flow of information and entertainment is available for nearly everyone. Modiano (2005) argues that the increased access to EE, stems from the mid 1990's where there was an accelerated usage of information technology. English is estimated to account for roughly 58% of the language communicated online, resulting in an overall high engagement with English by users online (Statista, 2023; W3Techs, 2023). Furthermore, according to the Internet World Stats (2020), the English language is the most important language on the internet with an estimate of 1.1 billion people using English online. In comparison, Chinese is the second most used language with roughly 300 million less users than English (Internet-World-Stats, 2020). The forementioned

statistics provide an indication of high engagement with English online, and as such, attests to the overall high engagement in EE. Brevik (2019) somewhat supports the forementioned indication as she implies that Internet access facilitates opportunities to improve English skills outside formal schooling. While there has been conducted a lot of research, in recent times, on EE in terms of how it is being utilized and if it contributes towards language acquisition, not many researchers have taken location into consideration. The main aim of the present MA thesis is to investigate any potential gaps between urban and rural lower secondary pupils' reported EE activities and, if they exist, make teachers aware of any of the potential gaps.

Since English is an important part of global teen culture, one might expect all teens to consider the language important to learn. However, as part of my teacher training, I have had conversations with English teachers from rural areas who have commented that in their experience their pupils' appraisal of English seem to have declined in recent years. Their experience added intriguing thoughts which resulted in me investigating said topic for my term paper. The research I conducted in the term paper provided an indication that urban and rural 10th graders do not have any major differences in their EE activities. For the term paper, I used an online survey aimed at 10th graders ($n=24$) to collect data from two schools, one based in an urban area and the other in a rural area. Although the data in my term paper reported inconclusive results due to the low number of participants, my previous supervisor suggested it might prove a relevant study to conduct on a larger scale. The suggestion from my previous supervisor provided a boost in motivation to conduct the research on EE interactions among lower secondary pupils on a larger scale, and hopefully provide more conclusive results that can aid the research on EE in the future.

In the year 2021, 8195 students finished their teacher's education (SSB, 2021b). Some of these fresh teachers, most of whom were educated in urban areas and by extent, will have had more contact with urban pupils and their EE habits, may take up work in more rural areas. Consequently, the teachers moving to rural areas might neglect any potential differences between urban and rural pupils' interests outside of school and as a result, provide classroom content that is less tailored for rural pupils. Considering the above-mentioned potentials, teachers might prevent any such gaps when working in rural areas by being more aware of any potential differences and similarities in EE engagement between urban and rural pupils.

1.2 Research question

Aiming to contribute to the research in Norway on EE amongst young learners and provide insight in how urban and lower secondary pupils interact and engage with English outside the classroom, the following research question has been formulated:

"What, if any, similarities and differences exist between the reported EE engagement of urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway?"

It should be noted that the present study will not necessarily find both differences and similarities, and that the findings are based on self-reported data from urban and rural pupils. As an additional inquiry, how urban and rural pupils view English as important and how satisfied they are with their own English language skills will be investigated.

There has been some indication that there are in fact differences in how urban and rural lower secondary pupils interact with English outside the classroom (see for example Alejo & Piquer-Píriz, 2016; Forsman, 2004; Sundqvist, 2009). In Forsman's (2004) licentiate thesis, results showed the total amount of EE was 51.1 hours per week for urban informants, in contrast to 36.7 hours per week as reported by rural informants. Furthermore, students living in urban areas reported more time on seven out of eight predetermined extramural activities, except for video games (rural informants 4.4 hours per week versus 3.2 hours per week by urban informants) (Forsman, 2004). Even though Forsman's (2004) findings are situated in Finnish schools and quite outdated, her study give cause for similar research to be conducted in Norway. Sundqvist (2009) found statistically significant differences in urban versus rural pupils' total amount of EE, reporting 22.4 hours per week by urban students and 15.9 hours per week by rural students. Similar to Forsman (2004), Sundqvist (2009) reports urban students engaging more on all but one EE activity, namely playing video games (rural informants 4.4 hrs/w; urban informants 3.2 hrs/w). Although the study of Forsman (2004) and Sundqvist (2009) were conducted in Finland and Sweden respectively, much of their findings can be applied to Norway as well due to the cultural similarities between the countries. Building on Forsman's (2004) and Sundqvist's (2009) studies, the present MA thesis seeks to add up-to-date research from Norway which potentially could aid future EE research. It should be noted that a more recent study from Spain, found that EE engagement was not affected by the urban-rural divide (Alejo & Piquer-Píriz, 2016), suggesting that my study needs to look for similarities as well as differences across cohorts.

Previous research investigating the urban versus rural aspect will be thoroughly reviewed in Chapter 2.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

First, the present MA thesis will introduce a Background review providing a definition of the key concept extramural English as well as various concepts regarding the same topic, before reviewing previous research done in the EE area (Chapter 2). Secondly, an overview of methodology will be presented, more accurately data collection procedures, sampling selection and analytical procedures (Chapter 3). Thirdly, results will be depicted and visualized (Chapter 3) before a thorough discussion of the results in view of reviewed literature (Chapter 4). Lastly, a conclusion will be presented connecting the forementioned elements (Chapter 5).

2. Background and review

The following chapter will first define the key concept *extramural English* (EE) and an overview of terminology similar to EE will be reviewed. Second, I will address English and EE's relevancy in Norway before I present an overview of various research investigating other aspects (e.g., learning environments, engagement time) of the present MA thesis' topic. The chapter concludes with a summary of the reviewed literature.

2.1. Extramural English

Extramural English (EE) is a term coined by Pia Sundqvist in 2009, and corresponds to "English outside the walls", with the word 'wall' referring to the school building. More specifically EE can be explained as the English language that learners come in contact with outside of classroom instruction (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). EE encompasses both intentional and unintentional contact with English, and very often such contact does not occur as a deliberate attempt at acquiring English language skills (Sundqvist, 2009). A chance conversation with a stranger on the street is an example of non-deliberate EE engagement. As it examines both intentional and unintentional learning, EE seeks to be a broader term than its associated terms (e.g., out-of-school learning, incidental learning), and as such, it functions as an 'umbrella term' (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Input relates to the English a person reads or listen to, whereas output relates to the English that a person produces either in writing or orally. In her dissertation, Sundqvist (2009) explains that extramural English covers aspects of both input and output and she argues that it is a term which is free of negative connotations and collocations. Regarding input and output, Zhang et al. (2021) concludes that the effectiveness of EE may be influenced by the involvement of language inputs and outputs, as well as the amount of engagement time. Sundqvist (2009) remarks that EE activities can have an impact both on learners' level of oral proficiency and on the size of their vocabulary, as such activities may include various dialects of English or different speaking patterns which is unknown to the learner.

To summarize thus far, extramural English engulfs all episodes of contact with the English language that occur in learners' leisure time. Listed below are some of the most common EE activities according to Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016).

Table 1. A table illustrating the most common EE activities according to Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016).

Watching films, TV series, music videos, video blogs.

Listening to music.

Reading blogs, books, magazines, newspapers.

Surfing English websites on the Internet.

Following people, news, organizations et cetera on social media.

Reading/writing/speaking/listening/interacting in real life or online.

Playing video/digital games (online or offline).

While the list contains some of the most common activities, Sundqvist (2020) mentions that the pool of EE activities is constantly expanding and changing, and that with technological development, new possibilities in EE engagement will emerge. In short, it is the user/learner's creativity that sets the boundaries for EE.

In a teaching-learning process, *instructional scaffolding* can be a powerful concept. Instructional scaffolding accounts for the way in which pupils either learn new elements or adds knowledge to what is already known. Motivation and interests (for example various EE activities) among pupils can be contributing factors in instructional scaffolding as it can help the teacher find and create tasks that relate to the pupils. In relevance to EE engagement, if English teachers are acquainted with the EE habits of their pupils, they can do their job more easily and more efficiently (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). For example, if a teacher is informed about their pupils' EE habits, the teacher can draw on this information to promote interest and motivation in their pupils' learning (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Furthermore, acquiring information on pupils' EE habits can facilitate for interesting and motivational tasks, that intrigues the pupils in a way that the tasks are experienced as relatable and relevant to them. The term *scaffolding* is the basic principle

that the teacher's support in teaching should be related to the pupil's level of competence (Imsen, 2017). Likewise, Harmer (2015) explains scaffolding as a particular concept of learner support which involves breaking tasks down to more simpler chunks. In a practical setting, if a pupil is given an extensive task that is beyond his or her capabilities the greater the need will be for help and support from the teacher, and in a reverse situation, if the task is within the pupils' capabilities less is the need for help and support from the teacher (Imsen, 2017). Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) conclude that EE plays an important role in L2 English development, and supports the concept that to motivate L2 learners, teachers can draw on their EE engagement to an educational context and help scaffolding for better L2 acquisition.

2.2 Related terminology

While this MA builds on the term EE, which is found to be a very useful term to discuss the topic under scrutiny, there are several related terms in use to describe similar, although not completely identical aspects of English language acquisition. In this section, I will account for some of these terms.

2.2.1 Out-of-class learning

A terminology which is similar to EE is *out-of-class learning* (sometimes also out-of-school). Out-of-class learning refers to the activities that supplement classroom learning (Benson, 2015). Benson (2015) debates out-of-class learning as a phenomenon initiated by the learner, by the use of authentic resources, and it usually involves both pleasure and interest with language learning as an outcome. Furthermore, Benson (2015) stresses that out-of-class learning is with the broad intention of learning. This is in contrast with Sundqvist's term *extramural English*, as EE does not exclude the involuntary contact with English (Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Although there is relatively little research in this area, out-of-class learning is widely acknowledged as a significant contribution to higher levels of language proficiency (Benson, 2015). As different to the term out-of-class learning, in which the words 'class', 'school' and 'learning' can be associated with explicit educational context, extramural English incorporates implicit learning without excluding explicit learning making it a phenomenon implying learning happening both consciously and unconsciously. In addition, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) debates that the words 'class' and 'school' often lead the mind to imagining

settings that have something to do with the educational context. Debating which terminology to focus on in the present MA thesis, one could argue that out-of-class learning would be suitable to investigate lower secondary pupils' engagement with English activities outside the classroom. However, a concluding remark to which terminology to be implemented when discussing the data collected in the present study will be issued later in this section.

2.2.2 Learner autonomy

Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) mention *learner autonomy* as a term closely associated with EE in the sense that it affords many of the same opportunities offered for L2 learning. Learner autonomy is defined by Holec (1981) as the ability to take charge of one's own learning and Ceylan (2015, p. 86) elaborates that a person with learner autonomy is "capable of selecting appropriate learning methods, monitoring their own learning process and evaluate their own learning progress". Autonomy is regarded as imperative for learners' educational development, which is why teachers should prioritize this skill in their teaching (Harmer, 2015). In relation to language learning, Harmer (2015) argues that it is an ultimate goal for instruction that students do not require teaching to improve their language skills, but instead are able to do this by themselves. Like autonomy, EE engagement is proven to benefit educational development and should be encouraged by teachers.

2.2.3 Extracurricular language learning

Another term closely linked to EE is *extracurricular language learning*. Extracurricular language learning refers to activities that are a part of schoolwork, and are organized and evaluated by formal language teachers (Reinders & Benson, 2017). On one hand, extracurricular language learning provides the somewhat same educational effectiveness as EE. But on the other hand, EE is completely initiated by learners outside of school with no interventions or assessments by a school or a teacher. Extracurricular language learning is therefore by instructional nature in contrast to EE.

2.2.4 Incidental learning

In L2 vocabulary acquisition, a term called *incidental learning* is widely applied. Hulstijn (2001) refers the term incidental learning as a by-product of a learner while engaged in a listening, reading, speaking, or writing activity. In other words, it can be defined as the learning without the intent of learning. An example of such a by-product can be found in Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016,

p. 8): '… as the learning of one thing, e.g. vocabulary, when the learner's primary objective is to do something else, e.g. to communicate'. In a study by De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017), they used incidental language learning while investigating language acquisition of Flemish children who have not received any formal English instruction. Incidental language learning were applied in their study when referring to English learned through media, more specifically gaming and computer usage, and is defined by De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017) as learning of language without any formal instruction. However, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) argues that the term incidental learning is a sub-category of EE because EE 'allows' for both intentional and incidental learning.

2.2.5 Extramural language learning (ELL)

Extramural language learning (ELL) refers to learner-initiated activities beyond educational institutions that occur without an intention to learn a language but that nevertheless end with acquisition (Zhang et al., 2021). Extramural language learning (ELL) is concluded to be overall effective in developing language and enhancing affective states in language learning (Zhang et al., 2021). Without any clear distinction between ELL and EE, ELL can be interpreted as a different word for EE, but one that encompasses other languages as well. Although, as with Benson (2015) out-of-school learning, ELL contain the word 'learning' and can equivalently lead the mind to imagine settings that have something to do with educational context.

On one hand, the forementioned terminologies all explain different aspects of the same concept, i.e. how learners engage in various English activities outside of school and how it is beneficial for language development. On the other hand, as EE arguably functions as an umbrella term for the forementioned terms, the present MA thesis views it suitable to incorporate the various terms when referring to EE in the Discussion chapter (5). In conclusion, as Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) debates EE as a term involving non-educational contextual acquisition of English, and that the present MA thesis is interested in exposure to and use of English in a non-educational context, EE is deemed most suitable and is adopted as the primary term when investigating and discussing lower secondary pupils' engagement with English outside of school. In the following chapter, I will discuss the relevancy of English and EE in Norway, and how the Norwegian curriculum aims to educate pupils in English and how it implicitly encourages for EE engagement.

2.3 English and extramural English in Norway

Much of the study concerning EE engagement among pupils in Scandinavia, are of Swedish and Finish origins (see for example Forsman, 2004; Sundqvist, 2009). The studies found EE engagement amongst Swedish and Finish to be high and calls for more EE research to be conducted. However, there are some recent Norwegian studies on how EE affects language development and school grades, while investigating how EE can benefit formal learning (see for example Brevik, 2019; Brevik & Holm, 2022; Sletten et al., 2015). As with Swedish and Finish pupils, Norwegian teens have often also been found to be active in EE activities such as online gaming and social media use, and many consume a large amounts of English music and films (Brevik, 2019; Brevik & Holm, 2022). English is the global language for communication and has over the past few decades become an increasingly important language for Norwegian people to learn and develop. As mentioned in the Background section (1.1), English is by far the most communicated language online, resulting in media coverage from around the world being conveyed in English. In order to prepare Norwegian pupils for their future, the Norwegian curriculum states that the purpose of the English subject in school is to aid pupils learn, communicate and connect with others in English (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). As for competence aims, the Norwegian curriculum states that the pupil is expected to use different digital resources and other aids in language learning, text creation and interaction, as well as explore and present the content of cultural forms of expression from various media in the English-speaking world that are related to one's own interests (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). Although the Norwegian curriculum does not explicitly mention extramural English activities, it encourages the pupils to engage in English outside the classroom related to their own interests. As for teachers, the Norwegian curriculum expect them to provide opportunities for pupils to experience that experimenting on their own and with others are a part of language learning. Furthermore, teachers are to facilitate for pupil participation and stimulate the desire to learn by using a variety of strategies and learning resources to develop the pupils' reading skills, oral skills, and writing skills (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2019). While this does not mention EE explicitly, one can interpret that the English curriculum encourages for EE engagement as it points to various learning strategies and learning resources as beneficial towards language learning.

2.4 Overview of EE research

In this section, I will present research that supports the contention that EE engagement has a positive impact on English language acquisition. The presentation includes perspectives from research related to, but not always utilizing the term, EE.

2.4.1 EE as potential classroom content

A review study on extramural language learning (ELL) found ELL to be overall useful and to indicate huge potential as a language educational approach (Zhang et al., 2021). The study reviewed 33 articles from Scopus and Web of Science databases based on four aspects: Target languages, type of ELL activities, research findings concerning people's engagement in ELL and research findings concerning the effectiveness of ELL. The articles that were reviewed concerned seven types of extramural learning activities, more specifically playing digital games, watching videos, reading, listening to audios, having technology-enhanced socialization, having face-to-face socialization, and writing compositions. The results indicated that of the EE activities that were investigated, gaming and listening to music were the most frequent, while learners did very little reading in the target language. Further, the study found evidence to encourage teachers to devote more time and effort to ELL activities, including digital gameplay. The researchers concluded that there is a huge potential for English language acquisition when teachers implement classroom content based on pupils' interests outside of school (Zhang et al., 2021). Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) supports this contention as they state that there are great opportunities for teachers to build on young learners' extramural language experiences, as it can help learners seek out compensatory activities to further boost their language acquisition.

Brevik and Holm (2022) studied the significance of connecting informal and formal language teaching as a way to understand language development among teenagers in Norway. They conducted a three-week fieldwork in two L2 English classes taught by the same teacher at a Norwegian secondary school. During the three weeks, they observed a technology-based project in which the teacher orchestrated an oral presentation task where the pupils had to explain modern devices to a time traveler from the year 1805. The teacher had drawn on her pupils out of school English use and created a project which focused on their interests in technology, gaming, and social media. The study found that the pupils' use of English outside of school was primarily

linked to online game play and social media and that the teacher was able to design activities which expanded the pupils' English use in the classroom (Brevik & Holm, 2022). In addition, it was revealed that social media users who did not commonly speak English in the classroom, found it motivating to participate in the project as it was aligned with their interests and enabled them to take a more active role in the classroom (Brevik & Holm, 2022).

2.4.2 EE affects English L2 acquisition

As Zhang et al. (2021) concluded that it is beneficial for language acquisition to implement classroom content based on pupils' interests outside of school, Muñoz and Cadierno (2021) states that it is important for English teachers to be aware of the types of activities in which learners engage with English in their leisure time, and the effect of these activities have on their proficiency level. In their study, Muñoz and Cadierno (2021) investigated potential differences in how out-of-school and in-school learning environments affect the acquisition of L2 English. The data in their study was based on language measures, more specifically a listening comprehension test, a metalinguistic knowledge test, and a grammaticality judgment test with participants of ages 14-15 from Denmark ($n = 56$) and Spain ($n = 80$). The Danish participants reported high engagement in English outside of school, and listed EE activities such as viewing audiovisual material, speaking and gaming as the most frequently engaged. Muñoz and Cadierno (2021) found evidence to state that teachers should train learners to exploit the advantages of informal input of English and they discuss how teachers should recommend proficiency-appropriate EE activities. Like Muñoz and Cadierno (2021), Coskun and Mutlu's (2017) found evidence to recommend that English teachers should take on the responsibility for encouraging L2 language learners to frequently take part in EE activities. They investigated the frequency of Turkish high school students' in (n=292) EE in relation to the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and concluded that the students mostly took part in listening-related EE activities. Further, they pointed out that the frequency in receptive skills (i.e., listening and reading) was much higher than in productive skills (i.e., speaking and writing). In their conclusion, Coskun and Mutlu (2017) argue that language learners' awareness can be raised by implementing EE activities into the classroom as authentic materials. This argument is supported by Brevik and Holm (2022) and Schurz et al. (2022) who reports that integrating EE-like material in class, i.e., authentic material that students might also use extramurally, can raise language awareness. Schurz et al. (2022) conducted an interview study based on 20 English teachers from Austria, France, and Sweden,

providing enquiries about their students' EE engagement and its effects on learning, their accuracy and fluency teaching methods and the perceived link between EE and English Language Teaching (ELT) practices. They found that EE engagement was common, and that EE is an influential factor for learners in all three countries regardless of their background and proficiency levels. Furthermore, they suggest that their findings highlight the potential of EE engagement to complement classroom instruction and support learners' language learning goals. In their studies, Brevik and Holm (2022) and Schurz et al. (2022) provide findings that suggests that there is a growing awareness among the teachers of the role played by EE in pupils' lives, and also supports the statement of EE being beneficial to English language proficiency.

2.4.3 Digital gaming impact language learning

Jensen (2017) conducted a study on young English language learners' contact with and use of EE, more specifically Danish children aged eight ($n = 49$) and ten ($n = 58$). Data on the participants were collected with a one-week self-reported language diary containing their reports on minutes spent each day on seven EE activities (gaming, listening to music, reading, talking, watching television, writing, and others). The participants in the study reported frequent engagement in EE activities, and the two genders listed them in an order of preference: The girls' favorite activities were listening to music, watching television, and gaming, whereas the boys preferred gaming, watching television, and listening to music. In her study, Jensen (2017) concluded that English language games may have a significant role in language learning for young language learners. A somewhat similar study has been carried out by Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012), where they wanted to portray that out-of-school digital gaming among young learners in Sweden correlates positively with their English vocabulary knowledge and receptive proficiency measured in school. In the one-week language diary, the participants reported an average of 9.4 hours a week spent on EE activities. In their study, data were collected from 11–12-year-olds in Sweden (n=86) through a questionnaire, a one-week language dairy, and three proficiency tests. The data collected in their study, suggests that playing digital games at an early age can be important for L2 acquisition, which is supported by Sundqvist (2009) who found positive correlations between playing digital games and L2 proficiency. There have been studies in Norway investigating if gaming has an impact on school grades among teens. A study by Sletten et al. (2015) investigated the context between school performance, gaming and training in sports team among Norwegian teens, found that gaming significantly affects positively on

English grades, and that non-gamers receive lower grades in English. Because the most communicated language during gaming is English, it is likely that young gamers are more prone to receive informal exercise in English (Sletten et al., 2015). However, it is suggested (but not proved), that people who engage heavily in gaming receive poor grades in the subjects Norwegian and mathematics, although levels of concentration and truancy are also viewed to be contributing factors (Sletten et al., 2015).

2.4.4 Geographical dimensions

Much of the studies investigating the English subject's educational context (e.g., learning strategies, reading, writing and oral skills, out-of-school learning, and motivation), fails to differentiate between urban and rural schools and lacks geographical dimensions (Asplund & Prieto, 2013; Hargreaves et al., 2009). Little research is conducted on the teaching and learning processes in rural areas that might account for differential levels of performance, or on how or whether rural schools optimize the resources available to them (Hargreaves et al., 2009). One reason to conduct more research in rural schools, is that the rural school's educational provision is inferior to that provided in larger urban schools where there are more teachers and easier access to resources for teaching and learning (Hargreaves et al., 2009). However, there are some studies that investigate pupils linguistic attainment and EE engagement, and successfully differentiated between urban and rural schools (see for example Forsman, 2004; Sundqvist, 2009). In these studies, differences in EE engagement time between urban and rural pupils was discovered. Additionally, a study from Spain carried out by Alejo and Piquer-Píriz (2016) investigated potential different types of motivation and differences in linguistic attainment between urban and rural students. In their study, it was discovered that students from urban areas had started earlier in their English language learning and had greater formal support outside of school, which in turn provided a higher level in English. However, the study found that EE activities and motivation for learning English were irrespective of the urban and rural social milieu. On the other hand, due to the low number of participants (n=48) in their study, one could argue that Alejo and Piquer-Píriz (2016) conclusions are limited.

2.5 Summary of theory

This chapter have provided theoretical background and reviewed previous research. The findings provided in the forementioned material, all point to the concept that frequent exposure of and engagement in EE is beneficial towards language acquisition (Brevik & Holm, 2022; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). During the recent years, the research on EE provides findings that language teachers (in the present MA thesis, more specifically English teachers) should be aware of their pupils' EE activities. In addition, research suggests that English teachers should encourage L2 language learners to engage more frequently in EE activities in their leisure time (Avello et al., 2019; Brevik & Holm, 2022; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Ending on a concluding remark, studies have reported that the frequent engagement in receptive EE activities such as listening to music, watching movies and TV shows, and gaming, are higher than the engagement in productive EE activities (Avello et al., 2019; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021).

3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I present the methodology for my MA thesis, in order to investigate the research question: *What, if any, similarities and differences exist between the reported EE engagement of urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway?* Furthermore, I will provide an overview of the process of working with the present MA thesis. First, an overview of how the study was planned and constructed will be provided before a justification for why a quantitative approach was elected. Second, I will give a brief overview of how 'urban' and 'rural' areas are defined in the present study. Then, I present my sampling and recruitment process of schools participating in this study. Last, a summary of how the data was analyzed will be provided, including discussion of validity, reliability, and ethical considerations undertaken.

3.2. Planning and working with the present MA thesis

During the first year of my teacher education, I wanted to investigate how lower secondary pupils in Norway engage in and thinks of English outside the school. As a part of my 2nd year semester paper, I conducted a small-scale study on which English activities 10th graders in an urban and a rural school engaged in and further investigated what the 10th graders thought of English as a subject and language. As previously mentioned, the results I collected in my semester paper provided interesting findings, but due to the low number of participants (*n*=24) my results were inconclusive. However, they gave me motivation for investigating the topic on a larger scale. In the months before deciding the topic of our MA thesis, I was made aware of Pia Sundqvist's ongoing project 'STarting AGe and Extramural English (STAGE)' which further drove my interest and determination to continue investigating the EE topic. Wanting to explore the urban versus rural divide further, I eventually formulated the research question '*What, if any, similarities and differences exist between the reported EE engagement of urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway?*' as presented in section 1.2. From experience acquired during my semester paper, I continued to utilize an online questionnaire for collecting data. The choice of a quantitative approach will be presented in the following section.

3.3 Quantitative approach

A survey is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data from many individuals (Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, a survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2014). From the sample results, the researcher can generalize or draw inferences to the population. Population is, within society research, the collection of all the units which is applicable to a research question (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012). Within the present study samples, the present study identifies the population of Norway as population and lower secondary pupils as the unit. As the present MA thesis aims to investigate how urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway engage with English in their leisure time, a quantitative approach was deemed most appropriate for data collection. Quantitative methods are less flexible but provides a better opportunity to compare answers from multiple participants and settings (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012). The answers retrieved from urban and rural schools in the present study needs to be compared and analyzed in order to present valid data. Furthermore, the present study required a significant number of responses from lower secondary pupils in Norway to investigate whether there is indeed a salient pattern to the EE engagement of teens in urban vs rural areas. The present study is cross-sectional, meaning it that the data is collected at one point in time (Creswell, 2014). A prime reason for selecting a quantitative approach was thus to draw on opportunities to collect large amount of data that an online questionnaire provides. In contrast, qualitative approaches typically entail smaller selections of participants to study a phenomenon in more depth than what a quantitative approach can offer (Kleven & Hjardemaal, 2018). A qualitative approach would provide fewer opportunities to produce representative data investigating the differences between urban and rural pupils' engagement in EE.

The questions formulated in the online questionnaire (see appendix 2), were constructed in Norwegian as it was deemed more suitable for Norwegian lower secondary pupils. An argument supporting the forementioned decision could be that if the questions in the online survey were provided in English, a potential risk of misconceptions of the questions could arise and could ultimately affect negatively on the validity in the lower secondary pupils' responses. In order to receive quantifiable data, most of the questions in the questionnaire were closed-ended except

one (question number 4 in appendix 2). As for utilizing closed-ended questions in the online survey, a viable statement can be found in Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) as they mention that open questions can be more time consuming to analyze than information gained.

Prior to the distribution of the online survey, and information letter (see appendix 1) was forwarded to the participants. The information letter provided information regarding the present study and what the participation meant for the participants. Furthermore, the information letter clearly stated that participation was completely voluntary, and that the data collected would at all times be strictly anonymized.

3.4 Defining urban and rural areas

At the start of the process of recruiting lower secondary schools to participate in this research, a clear definition of rural and urban area had to be determined. Statistics Norway (SSB) provides a somewhat clear distinction between urban and rural areas, mentioning population caps and infrastructure. By 1997, the Norwegian Parliament tightened the distinction between urban and rural by constituting that the area had to contain a minimum of 5000 people in order to obtain urban status. In contrast, Statistics Norway specifies rural areas as containing housing for a minimum of 200 people (SSB, 2023). Although these distinctions seem quite specified, Statistics Norway claims that the criteria for distinctions between urban and rural areas are rather vague. Even so, Statistics Norway's distinction between urban and rural areas are implemented in this project as their criteria are well suited for this project. However, it should be noted that the urban schools recruited in this project, all contain populations well above the 5000 people criteria set by SSB. With the clear distinction between urban and rural set, the process of selecting and recruiting schools to participate in this project could commence. Finding urban schools to participate in the present study proved no difficulty as Norway contain clear distinct urban areas situated favorably spread. However, it proved to be a challenging task to identify a sample of schools in the rural areas as the criteria for defining a rural area set by SSB are not easy to apply to for example a digital map such as Google Maps. A more detailed review will be presented in section 3.5.2.

3.5 Sample details

The main goal of the recruitment process was to provide a representative depiction of Norway's lower secondary pupil's reports on their engagement in EE, and as such, the need to select schools across the nation was of particular importance. Christoffersen & Johannessen (2012) stresses that the crucial principal of selecting a representative selection is to utilize a randomized selection. To account for this crucial principal, a probability selection was conducted as to which counties would provide the most representative depiction based on the bigger cities in Norway as well as rural areas scattered around in Norway. Despite Christoffersen & Johannessen's (2012) statement, a strategic selection was used to determine which urban schools were to be contacted. During my teacher's studies, I have obtained a network of contacts which helped me contact urban schools in the counties Agder, Vestlandet, and Viken. As for the rural schools, most of these were selected using a systematic cluster selection within the forementioned counties. Due to the different number of pupil's attending the various schools, more rural schools had to be recruited using a randomized selection within the remaining counties. The randomized selection then included rural schools in the counties Nordland, Rogaland, and Trøndelag, and a cluster selection was utilized to locate the specific rural schools within these counties.

The online tool *Google Maps* was utilized by searching for *lower secondary schools* to locate schools in both urban and rural areas. When a strategic selection of the urban schools was assembled, the Norwegian registry of schools became the main tool for obtaining the schools' contact information, as well as the number of pupils attending the schools. For the rural schools, the same forementioned procedure was applied. Schools located in areas matching the criteria by Statistics Norway was contacted first by telephone, and if the schools consented in participating, an email with information was sent (see appendix 1). When a formal consent by the schools was attributed, the online questionnaire (see appendix 2) and a reminder that the pupils' participation was completely voluntary, was forwarded to the teachers responsible for undertaking the online survey with the lower secondary pupils. During the first recruitment process of urban schools via my contact network in Agder, Vestlandet, and Viken, principals and administrative persons were contacted, the process was slow because of the time it took for the request to reach actual teachers. To remedy this situation, in the second recruitment process involving the rural schools in Nordland, Rogaland, and Trøndelag, department heads and coordinators were contacted to streamline the recruitment process as they easily could respond on behalf of the teachers

regarding time and capacity factors. An overview of the urban and rural schools participating in the present study is depicted in figure 2 in section 3.5.2.

3.5.1 Pupil sampling

While formulating my research question, I immediately started thinking that I should base my data collection on lower secondary pupils' responses. At first, I thought of only recruiting 10th graders as participants in the present research, but in order to collect a significant number of responds I decided to include the 8th and 9th grade as well. The specific reasons for inquiring lower secondary pupils to participate in the present study, was due to the mature responds that was received during the data collection in my term paper. The 8th and 9th graders provided equally mature responds in the questionnaire as the 10th graders did.

3.5.2 School sampling

It became clear from the start that the present MA thesis had to acquire a significant amount of responds from lower secondary pupils in order to provide any significant data. As such, the way forward was to locate enough schools in both urban and rural areas that would participate in the current study. During the school recruitment process, many of the schools that were contacted, were already involved in studies carried out by local universities in their respective areas and as such, could not participate in the current study. In return, more schools had to be contacted resulting in more time spent in the recruitment process. Although I thought contacting schools seemed like a relatively straight forward process, the time spent on locating appropriate schools in line with the criteria by SSB and gathering contact information for each school proved to be time-consuming. The schools participating in the present MA thesis had to fulfil the following requirements:

- The school had to be a lower secondary school or contain the lower secondary grades (some schools in Norway operate with 1-7th grade, some with 1-10th and some with 8-10th grade).
- Urban schools had to be situated near major cities (defined in section 3.4)
- Rural schools had to be relatively far away in proximity to any major cities.
- Rural schools had to be in communities with a population less than 5000 and more than 200.

The idea from the start was to accumulate the same amount of responds from urban and rural areas respectively, but the number of pupils attending rural schools are not necessarily the same as in urban schools. As a consequence of the forementioned issue, more rural schools had to be recruited to participate in the present study as shown in figure 2, which actually provided more participants from rural areas. I believe the difference in the number of participants are not too significant, and therefore decided not to exclude some of the participants from rural areas to make the number of participants equal.

Table 2. A table showing the distribution of respondents according to area, gender and grade.

Norwegian survey					
Urban schools			Rural schools		
N=117			n=132		
3 schools across 3 counties			7 schools across 4 counties		
Boys	Girls	Other	Boys	Girls	Other
53	61	3	50	72	10
Grade			Grade		
8th = 24	9th = 23	10th = 70	8th = 0	9th = 12	10th = 120
Total = 249					

3.6 Data analysis

The data collected in the questionnaire in the present MA thesis were initially visualized as the number of pupils responding to each question, but due to statistical reasons, the number of pupils were converted to percentages to easier distinguish the differences and similarities in the data samples. For easier visibility, the data collected was logged in Excel for creating visual graphs that are provided in the Results chapter (4). One of the final steps in data analysis is to present the results in tables or figures, and interpret the results (Creswell, 2014). An interpretation of the results means that the researcher draws conclusions from the results for the research question, hypotheses, and the larger meaning of the results (Creswell, 2014). In the present study, the interpretation of the results will be based on exploring and elaborating on tendencies found within the data collected. It should be noted that no statistical tools have been utilized to check for statistical significance within the data collected in the present study.

3.7 Validity, reliability, ethical principles, and limitations

Validity is explained by Christoffersen and Johannessen (2012) as how good, or relevant, the data collected actually represents the phenomenon. Whereas reliability relates to the accuracy of a study needed for enabling a replication of the study (Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012).

3.7.1 Validity

Avineri (2017) expresses three validity issues that may affect questionnaire data: *Research construct*, *fatigue*, and *bias*. Research construct is explained as whether you are able to capture data on what you are interested in measuring (Avineri, 2017). Fatigue is explained as whether the questionnaire design is causing participant to respond in ways that are not authentic (Avineri, 2017). Lastly, bias can affect responses by for example *self-deception* (how the respondent would like to think of themselves versus how they really act) and *acquiescence* (that the respondent imagines what the researcher wants to read) (Avineri, 2017). As for research construct and fatigue, the questionnaire (see appendix 2) is formulated to specific examine what EE activities the pupils engage in, and the questions do not encourage for responds that are not authentic. Bias can be hard to exclude in the present study as it can occur pupil's that inaccurately perceive their own English skills. But one could argue that since the questionnaire is completely anonymous, there is less reason to believe that any pupil participating in the present study would provide inaccurate responds to their own perception of their English skills. The sample selection in the present study attempts to represent the general Norwegian lower secondary pupil's interaction and thought of English outside the school.

3.7.2 Reliability

Reliability can refer to what extent a study is reliable, consistent and accurate (Avineri, 2017; Christoffersen & Johannessen, 2012; Kleven & Hjardemaal, 2018). As to how the present study is reliable, Christoffersen and Johannessen (2012) refers to good reliability as if the data collected are not affected by measurement errors. As a precaution for any potential measurement errors, the online questionnaire was tested by fellow students prior to distributing the questionnaire to the schools to check the accuracy of the questions. Furthermore, the online questionnaire was distributed in Norwegian to avoid misconceptions of any of the questions. Regarding consistency,

one could argue that if one were to test-retest the present study at a later stage, the answers would most likely be consistent.

To uphold the participants anonymity, exactly which schools that participated in the current study are withheld. As a result, the inter-reliability of this study can be affected, as any data reconstructed in a potential replicate study can yield deviated responses from other participants than the ones collected and depicted in the present study. Six of eleven counties in Norway are represented in the data collection meaning that the remaining five counties can yield different results than the ones represented in this study. The questions provided in the online survey distributed in this study are provided in appendix 2 and the present study is possible for recreation.

3.7.3 Ethical principles and limitations

The guidelines for conducting research on lower secondary pupils were adhered to at all stages of this research. The online questionnaire was presented as completely voluntary to avoid the pupils feeling coerced to participate in the present study. Furthermore, the participants in the present study were informed in the information letter that they could revoke their participation by not responding in the online questionnaire. To assure that the pupils understood that the participation was completely voluntary, the teachers performing the questionnaire with the pupils were specifically told to point that out prior to giving the link to the questionnaire. In summary, no ethical principles were breached in the present MA thesis.

The present research is not without any limitations. First, I did not conduct any follow-up of the participants due to the time schedule for this MA study, so any misunderstandings or questions regarding the online questionnaire could not be clarified. Second, I did not run a statistical analysis on the data collected. As a result, the data extracted from the online questionnaire are not proven to be of any significance. However, a discussion of tendencies found regarding the potential gap in the engagement in EE between urban and rural lower secondary school pupils in Norway will be presented. The data collected provides interesting insight that can be beneficial for future EE research in Norway while also point to fascinating aspects in EE engagement that is worth investigating further.

Another limitation is that more schools spread across Norway could be contacted and invited to participate in the present study to provide more depth and insight in how lower secondary school

pupils engage in EE. Additionally, expanding the number of schools participating in this research could potentially provide more different and varied numbers than the ones depicted in the present MA thesis and by extent, provide a more reliable result which can be generalized. Furthermore, the amount of responds from lower secondary school pupils are too low for generalizing the findings within the present research. As mentioned in section 3.5.2 (School sampling), due to the number of schools rejecting the invitation for participation I had to settle with less participants than anticipated, and it would be too time consuming to contact and collect more schools.

This chapter has presented the methodology for the current MA thesis. In the following chapter, results of the reports from lower secondary pupils' engagement in EE activities, how urban and rural pupils view English as important, and how satisfied they are with their own English language skills will be presented and reviewed.

4. Results

This chapter will provide visual representations of the data collected from the online questionnaire. The following data provided were collected from two separate questionnaires distributed to two school categories: One to urban schools and the other to rural schools. The results will mostly be visualized in graphs displaying the responses from both urban and rural schools, where the urban and rural responds have been given different colour coding for better visibility. Here, blue is used for urban schools and orange for rural schools.

As discussed in sections 3.3 and 3.7.2, the questionnaires were formulated in Norwegian to avoid any misinterpretations from the participants. For the purpose of this thesis, the following extracts have been translated into English by me.

4.1 presentation of the results

Figure 1 provides an overview of the language(s) my informants speak at home. They were asked to indicate whether they use Norwegian, English, other languages, or a combination of these alternatives. It should be noted that the pillar 'a combination of languages' in figure 1 are a combination of the following options provided in the questionnaire: Both Norwegian and

English, both Norwegian and another language (not English) and Norwegian, English and another language.
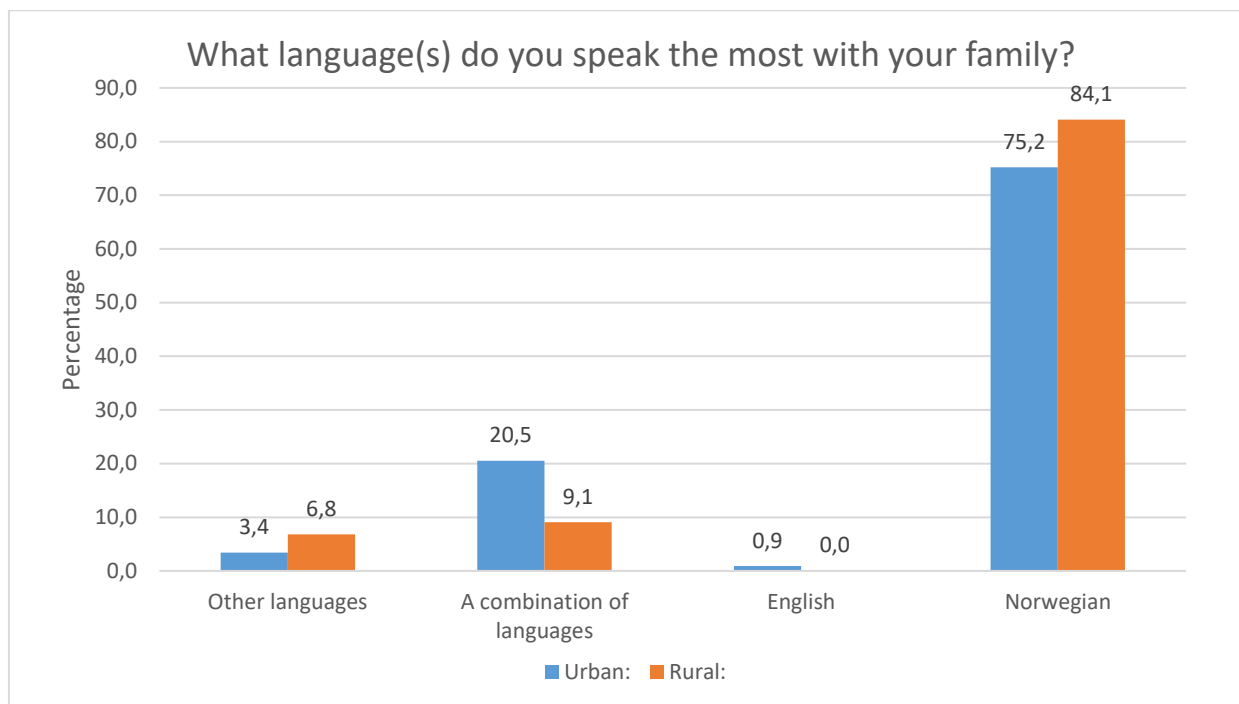
Figure 1. A graph illustrating which language(s) the respondents speak the most with their family.

As seen in figure 1, most of the pupils speak Norwegian at home, regardless of location. While there are more pupils in urban areas who speak Norwegian in combination with other languages, more pupils in rural areas speak another language only. Finally, it can be noted that very few pupils in this selection only speak English at home.

Figure 2 presents an overview of which activities outside of school are assumed to contribute the most to English language learning as reported by my informants. The informants were asked to choose the 3 most important of the following activities: Traveling or stays outside of Norway, reading books, comics or similar, gaming, listening to music, use of social media, watching

Youtube, watching TV and movies, conversations with friends, conversations with family, and
other.

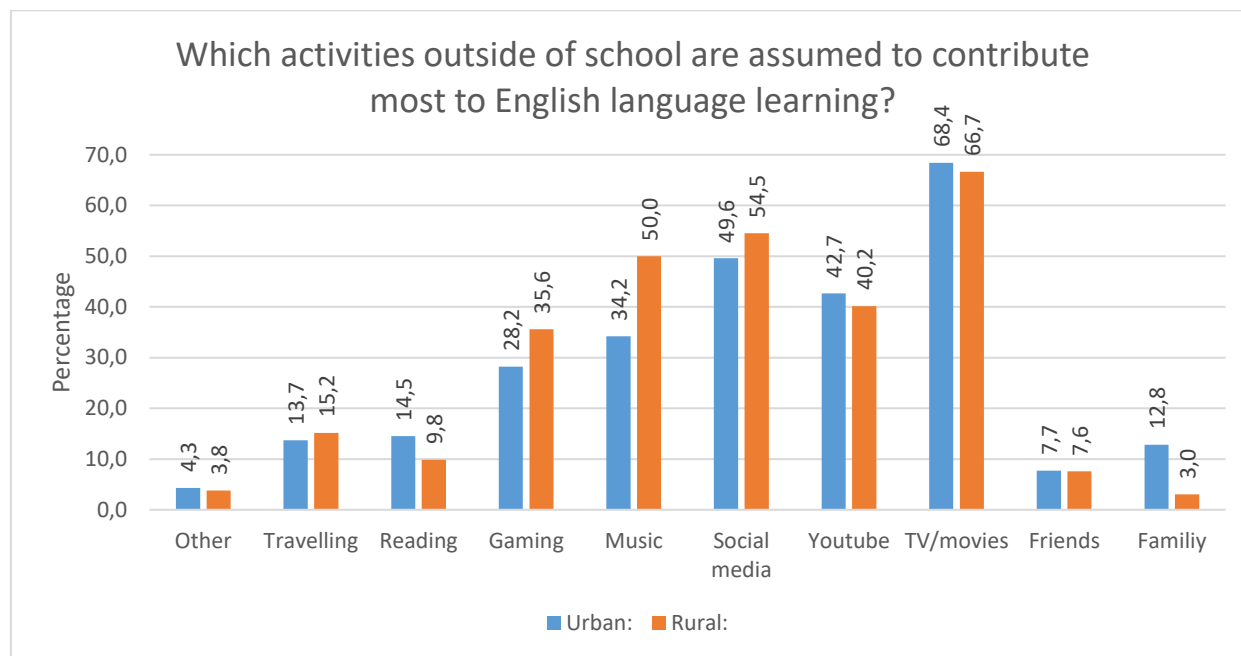*Figure 2. A graph illustrating the respondents' reports of which EE activity they assume have contributed the most to their
English learning.*

As seen in the figure (2), there are mainly small differences between the reports of urban and
rural pupils concerning which activities outside of school they view as having contributed the
most to their English language learning. For the most part, both the urban and rural pupils report
similar EE activities as influential toward their English learning, and TV/movies, social media,
YouTube and music were the top four activities in both areas. The options 'Other', 'Traveling',
'Reading', 'Friends' and 'Family' are reported as little influential as contributing EE activities
among both urban and rural pupils. There are, however, some differences worth mentioning.
Concerning the role of music, 50% of pupils in rural areas mentioned this as one of the top three
EE-related contributors to their English skills. In urban areas, the corresponding figure was
lower, with roughly 34%. Furthermore, while a minority in both areas mentioned 'Family' as one
of the top three contributors, there was a noticeable difference between urban and rural pupils in
their reports of the significance of family. In rural areas, only 3% saw family as having a
significant impact on their English language skills, making this the least influential, while the
figure was nearly 13% in urban areas.

Figure 3 provides an overview urban pupils' reports of how likely it is that they will use English in a range of situations. Each of the situations were given the options: Very unlikely, unlikely, not unlikely, and very likely. The respondents were to mark the option that was most suitable in the following situations: In recess, at home, visiting family, with friends, when talking to the trainer/instructor during leisure activities, while gaming, while making content for social media and writing messages or emails.
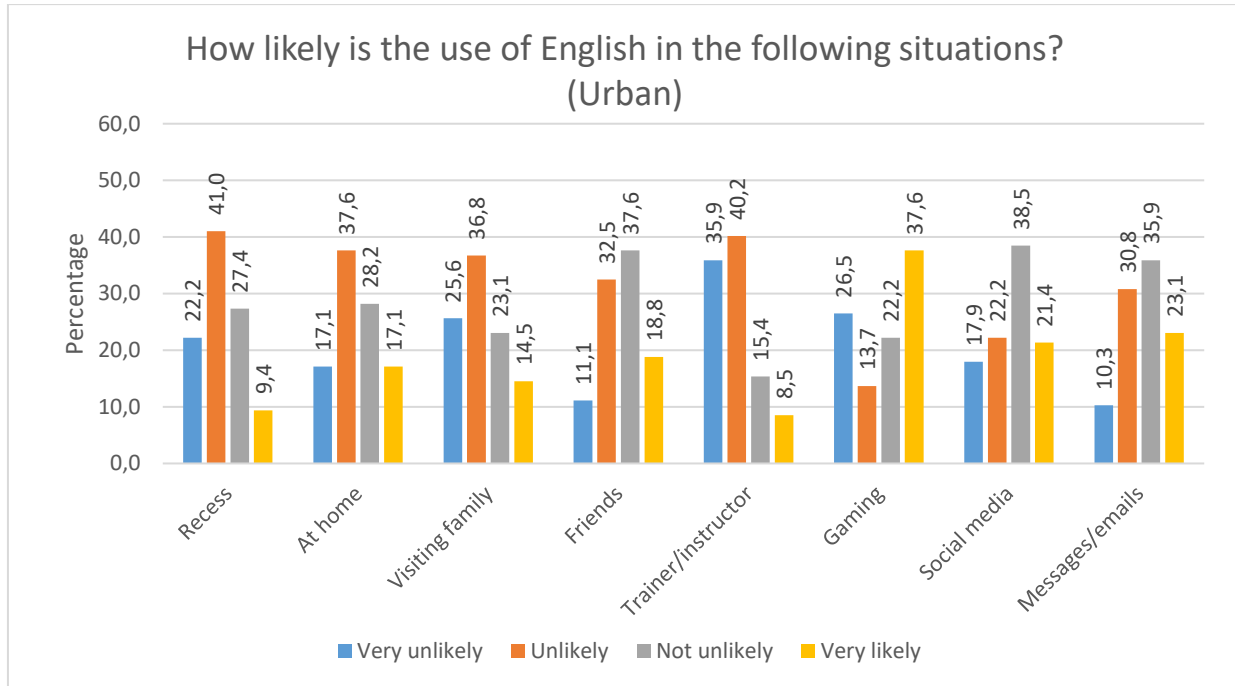
Figure 3. A graph illustrating the urban respondents' response to how likely it is that they use English in various situations.

Observing urban pupils' responds to how likely they use English in the provided options show interesting results. Many of the urban pupils do not seem to use English during recess, but there are some that reports that they occasionally might use English and even fewer reports to often use English. There are similar reports of the usage of English at home, but with more pupils stating that it happens often. While visiting family, there more reports of English never being used or unlikely to be used. With friends, English is 43,6% most unlikely and unlikely used, while not unlikely and most likely used are reported by 56,4% of urban pupils. In contact with trainers/instructors, English is very unlikely used. Among the urban pupils, gaming is shown to be most engaged with English with 37,8% in the 'Most likely' option and 22,2% in the 'Not unlikely' option. In social media and writing messages/emails, above 50% use of English is reported among the urban pupils. It should be noted that the questionnaire did not specify how the

pupils were to interpret the phase "use English". Some may therefore have interpreted it as instances where English is the main language in use, while others may have included instances where some English words are in use.

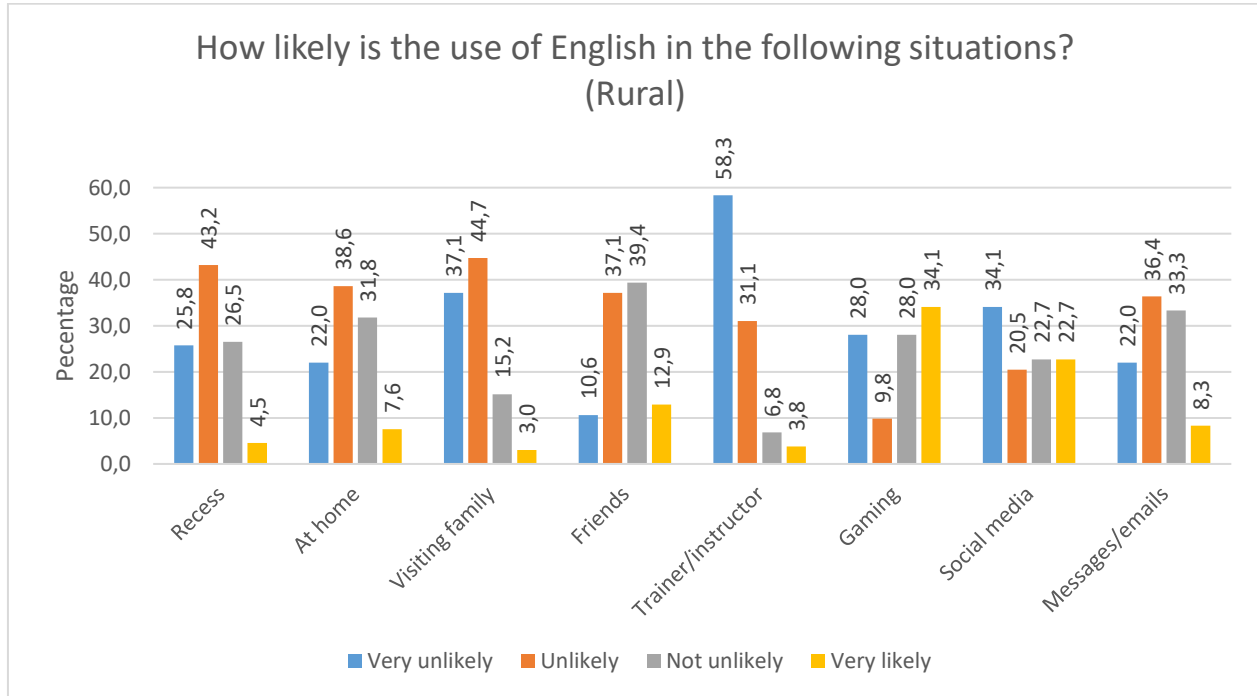Figure 4 presents the same overview as figure 3, but with responds from rural pupils.

Figure 4. A graph illustrating the rural respondents' response to how likely it is that they use English in various situations. As described in figure 3, this graph contains the same respond procedure and options.

Much of the responds from rural pupils resembles the ones from urban pupils. As seen during recess, 69% of the pupils indicates that English is unlikely to be used. 31% of rural pupils believes English is not unlikely and most likely used during recess. At home, 60,6% of rural pupils respond that English is unlikely to be used, with 39,4% responding that it is likely to be used. While visiting family, the majority of rural pupils says it is unlikely that English is being used. However, it is more likely that English is used while in contact with friends as 39,4% find it not unlikely and 12,9% find it most likely. These numbers are quite similar to how the urban pupils responded regarding English use in contact with friends. While in contact with trainers/instructors during leisure activities, a total of 89,4% of rural pupils report strongly that English is highly unlikely to be used. In union with urban pupils, 62,2% of rural pupils also report high usage of English while gaming. It would be interesting to investigate what or how the remaining 37,8% of rural pupils' use in gaming. Roughly less than 50% of rural pupils respond

that they do use English while making content for social media, and 54,6% say they do not use English. An important note regarding the making of content for social media, it is highly unlikely that all pupils make content. 58,4% of rural pupils state that they do not write messages or emails in English, but 33,3% find it not unlikely and 8,3% find it most likely.

Figure 5 presents an overview of the informants' experiences regarding the use of English with various people in their local community.
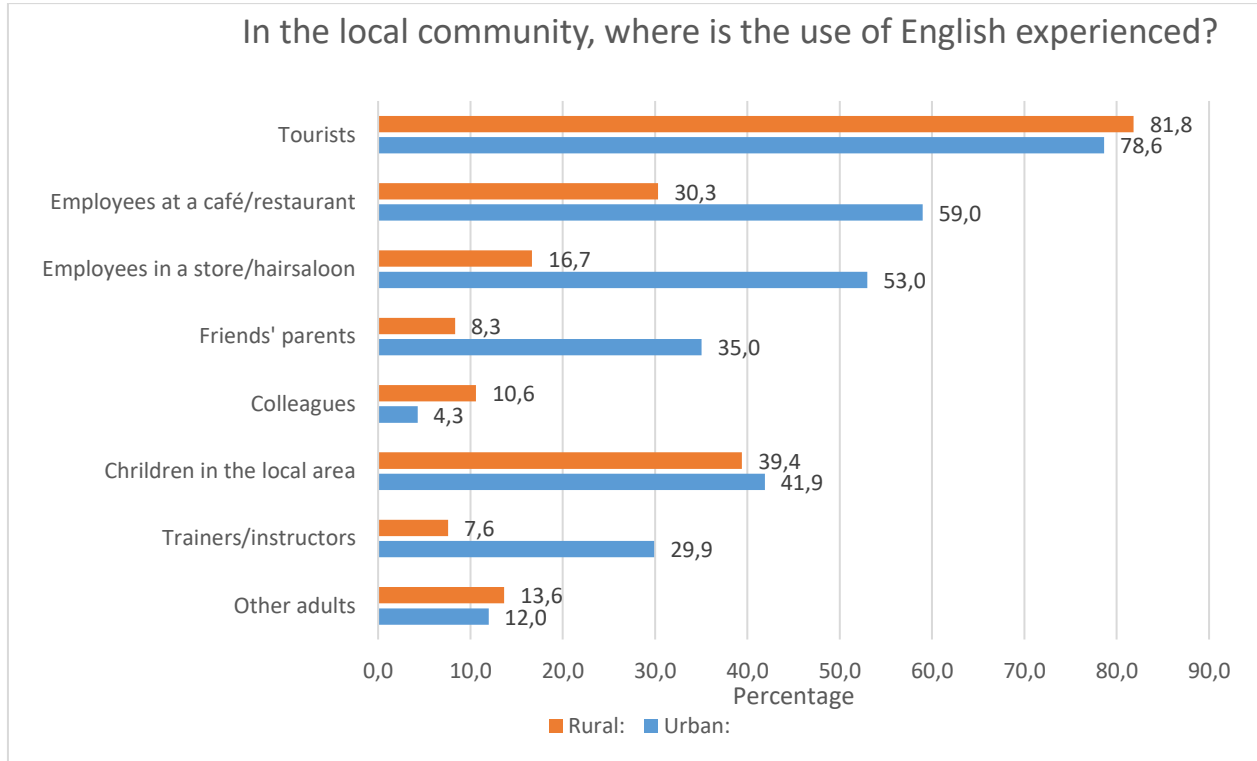
Figure 5. A graph illustrating what experiences the respondents have having to speak English in various situations with various people.

Both urban (78,6%) and rural (81,8%) pupils report to have used English in contact with tourists in their local community. They also report similar answers to whether they have used English with other children within their local community (roughly 40%). However, when it comes to contact with employees in various service establishments, more urban pupils report to have used English compared to rural pupils. The same is true of interaction with friends' parents and trainers/instructors. The values between urban and rural pupils are quite similar in contact with other adults.

Figure 6 presents an overview of the informants reported contact with English in various situations and activities a week prior to participating in the present study. The respondents were asked to mark any of the provided options in which they came in contact with English.
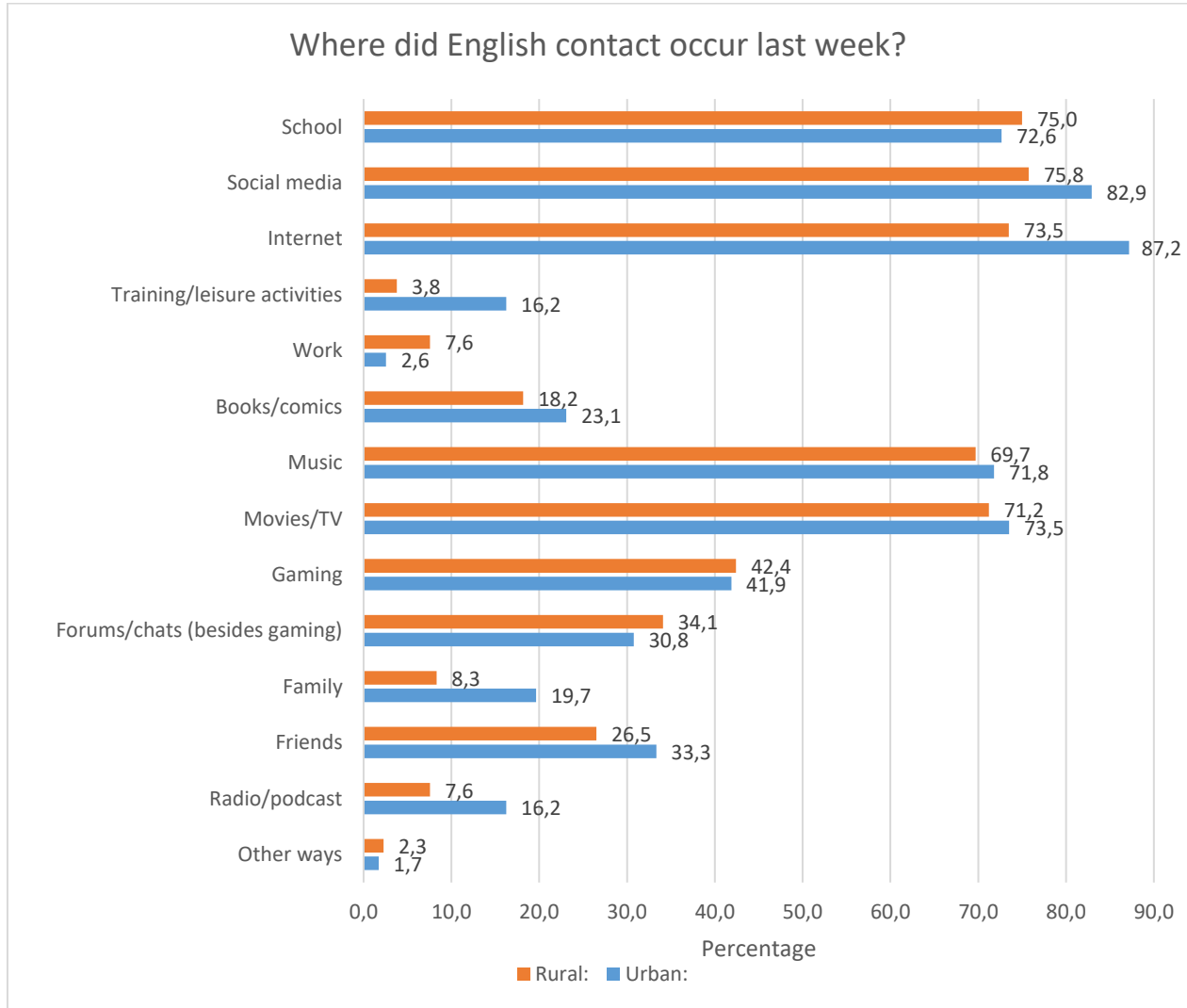
Figure 6. A graph illustrating the respondents perceived contact with English in provided activities from a week prior to responding to the questionnaire.

In this graph, it would seem that the respondents are most in contact with English at school, on social media, on the Internet, through music and movies/TV. At school, reports show a relatively similar contact with English (72,6% from urban pupils and 75% from rural pupils). Urban pupils report more contact in social media and Internet (82,9% and 87,2% respectively) than rural pupils (75,8% and 73,5% respectively). The level of English contact is quite similar between the urban and rural pupils in music, movies/TV, and gaming. The least reported contact with English from

urban and rural is in the activities such as training/leisure activities, work, books/comics, family, radio/podcast, and other ways. However, urban pupils report more contact with English in training/leisure activities, family, and radio/podcast. During social interactions with friends, seemingly more urban pupils report that they are in contact with English (33,3%), in contrast to rural pupils (26,5%).

Figure 7 presents an overview of how the informants will use English in various contexts in the future when they become adults.

As adults, what will English be used for?

Category	Rural:	Urban:
For studies	48,5	70,9
At work	68,9	65,8
At home with family	5,3	14,5
On vacation	93,2	89,7
Talking to people where I live	18,2	29,1
Leisure pursuits/hobbies	17,4	29,9
Reading fiction	22,0	37,6
Reading about things that interests me	49,2	71,8
Reading the news	45,5	59,8
Watching TV, movies and social media	80,3	83,8
Making content for social media	29,5	40,2
Gaming	36,4	37,6
Other	4,5	1,7

Percentage

■ Rural: ■ Urban:

Figure 7. A graph illustrating the respondents' thoughts of their use of English in various activities/situations in the future as adults.

In this graph, it would seem that urban pupils report generally higher use of English across the various situations and activities for when they become adults. Studies, at work, on vacation, reading about interesting things, and watching TV, movies and social media are reported as the highest use of English among urban and rural pupils. At work and on vacation are the only situations in which rural pupils report slightly higher values than urban pupils. Interestingly, for

studies, the use of English among urban pupils is reported 22,4% higher than rural pupils. Quite similar are the reports regarding reading interesting things, with urban pupils reporting 22,6% higher than rural pupils. The use of English while gaming is reported interestingly low, with urban pupils reporting 37,6% and rural pupils reporting 36,4%.

Figure 8 presents an overview of the informants perceived importance of being able to communicate orally in English.
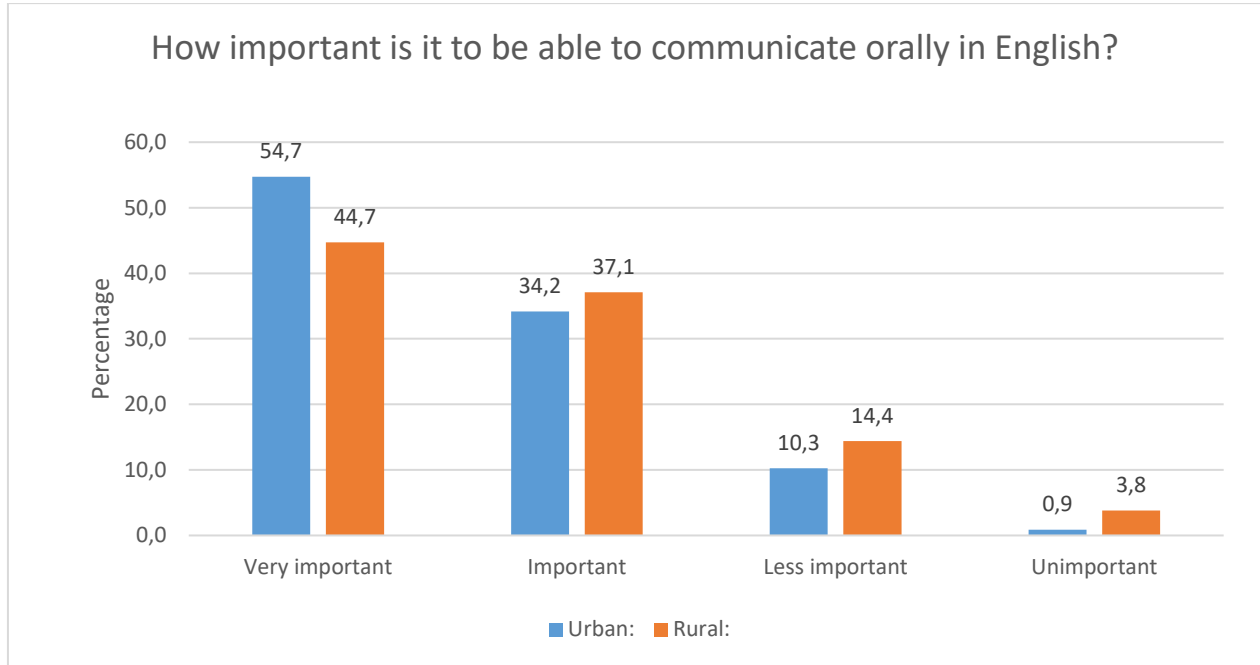
Figure 8. A graph illustrating how important it is for urban and rural pupils to communicate orally in English.

Figure 8 illustrates that a majority of pupils in both urban and rural areas find it important to be able to communicate orally in English. In total, 88,9% of the pupils in urban areas describe this as important or very important, while the corresponding number for pupils in rural areas is 81,8%. However, it should be mentioned that the percentage of pupils who find oral communication in English less important is somewhat higher in rural areas, with 18,2% compared to 11,2% of the urban pupils.

Figure 9 presents an overview of how important it is for the informants to be able to read and write well in English.
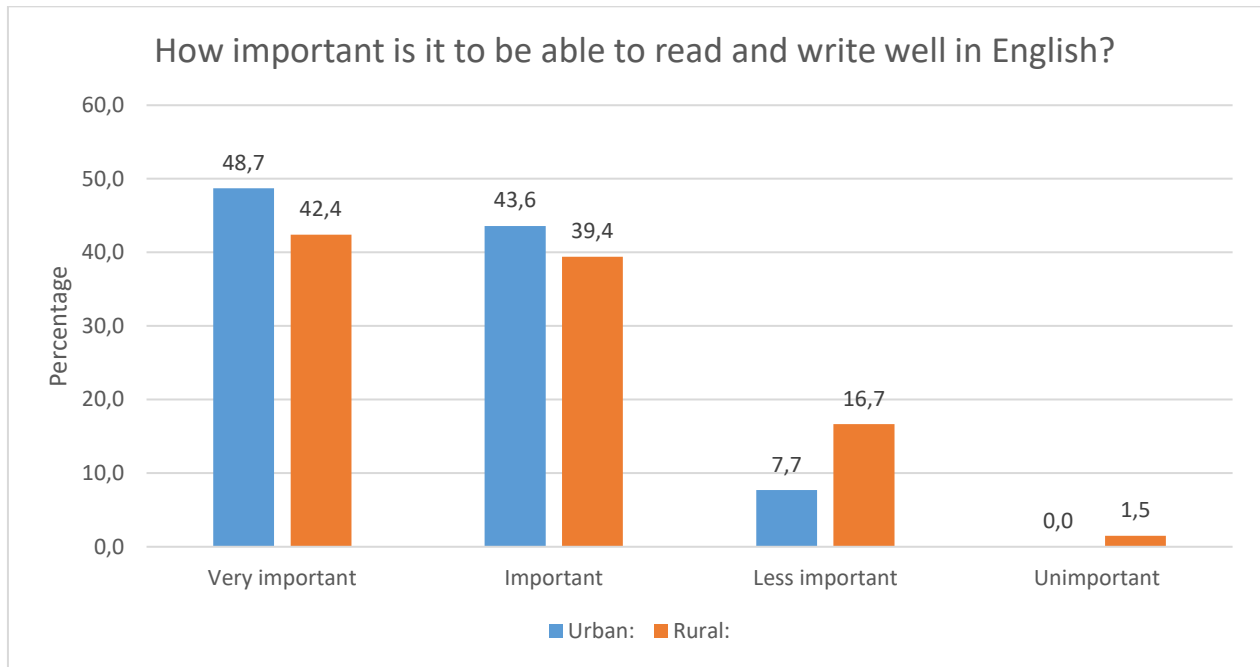
Figure 9. A graph illustrating the importance of reading and writing well in English among urban and rural pupils.

In figure 9, the numbers are roughly the same as the numbers illustrated in figure 8. In total 92,3% of urban pupils find it important to read and write well in English. In comparison, 81,4% of the rural pupils find it important to read and write well in English. However, as in figure 8, the percentage of pupils who find reading and writing in English less important, is somewhat higher in rural areas, with 16,7% compared to 7,7% of the urban pupils.

Figure 10 presents an overview of how satisfied the informants are with their own English skills.
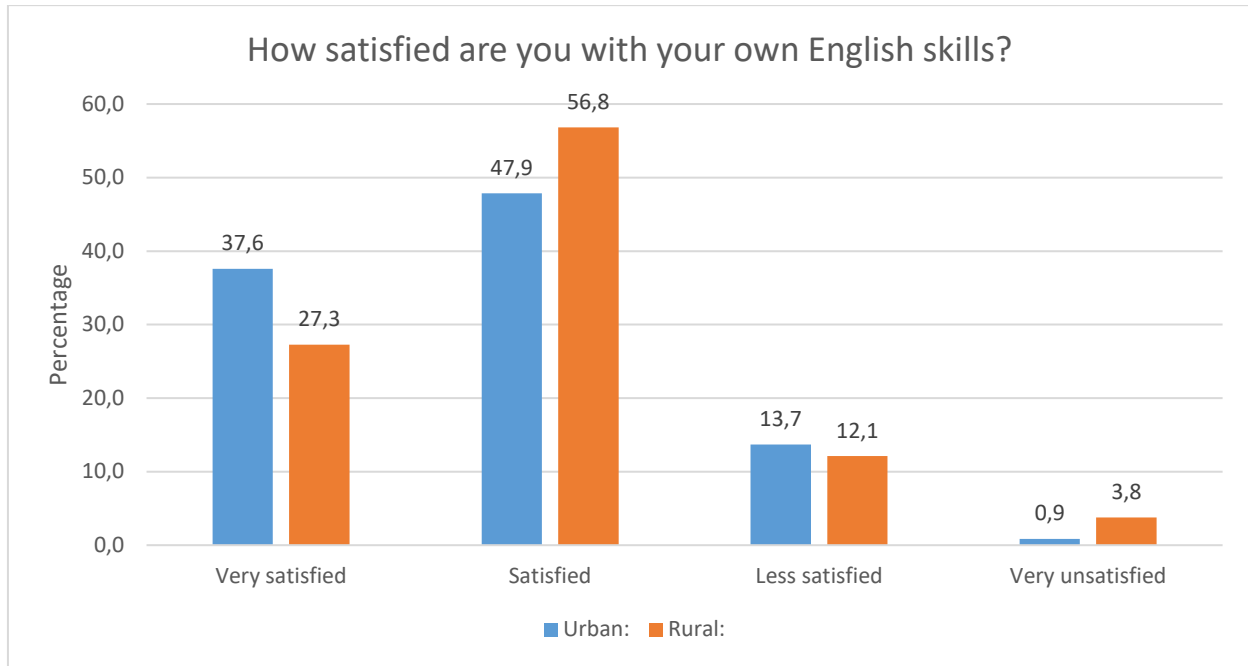
Figure 10. A graph illustrating to what degree urban and rural pupils are satisfied with their own English skills.

Most of the pupils in the present study seem to be satisfied with their own English skills. 37,6% of the urban pupils are very satisfied with their English skills, with 47,9% are satisfied. In contrast, 27,3% of the rural pupils are firmly confident in their English skills and 56,8% are satisfied. 13,7% and 12,1% of urban and rural pupils are less satisfied with their English skills, which makes one wonder if with proper support, they would become more satisfied.

Figure 11 presents an overview of if the participants imagine themselves living close to where they live today when they become adults.
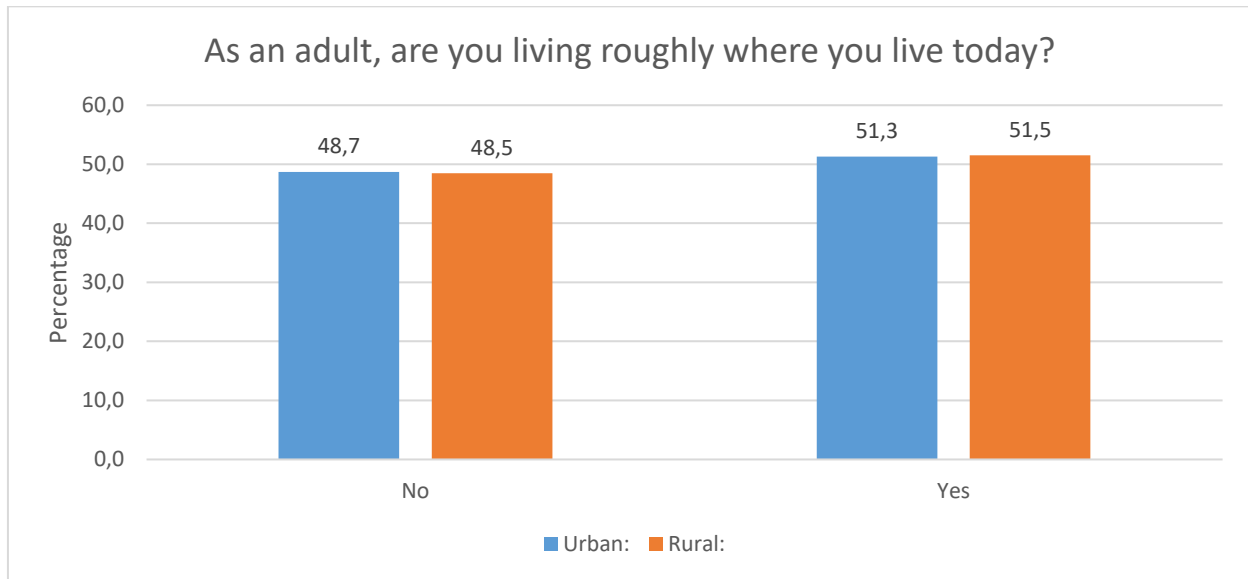
Figure 11. A graph illustrating if the urban and rural pupils see themselves as adults living in close proximity to where they live today.

The urban and rural pupils in the present study seem to be in an agreement to their future living situations in their respective areas. A roughly 50/50 percent of the pupils see themselves living in the current area when they become adults. It should be mentioned that of all the questions in the questionnaire, this question provided the most equal responds from the informants.

Figure 12 presents the responds on the follow-up question to the question illustrated in figure 11. The informants were asked to select one of the options provided to where they see themselves

living as adults. It should be noted that this question was not marked as obligatory since the question regarded the ones that selected 'no' in the previous question.
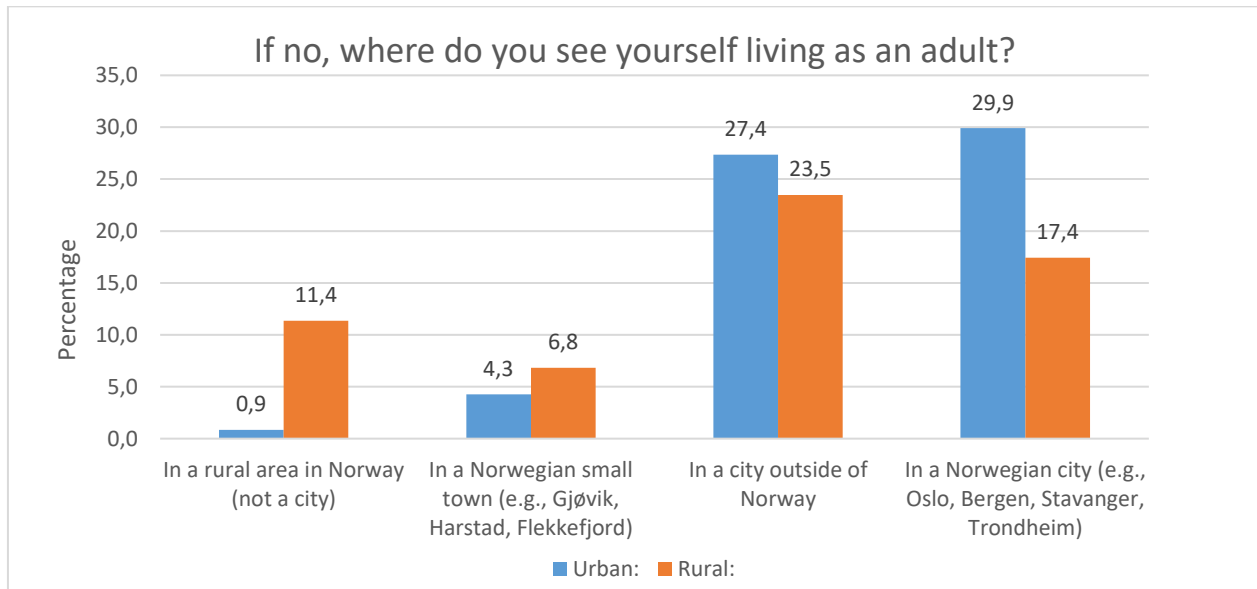
Figure 12. A graph illustrating the perceived living situation among urban and rural pupils in the future as adults. In the questionnaire, this question was issued as a follow-up question after the question in figure 11.

In the follow-up question to the question in figure 11, there are varied responses between the urban and rural pupils regarding where they see themselves living as adults. It should be noted that this question was not pinned as mandatory, so roughly half of the respondents answered. This graph shows that most of the urban pupils see themselves settling in urban areas, both in and outside of Norway. Roughly 14 rural pupils see themselves living in an urban area in Norway, while roughly 18 of the rural pupils see themselves living in an urban area outside of Norway. In contrast, roughly 23 urban pupils see themselves living in an urban city in Norway and 21 of the urban pupils see themselves living in an urban city outside of Norway. Small percentages of both urban and rural pupils see themselves living in a small town or a rural area as adults.

Figure 13 presents an overview of what the informants want to do after finishing lower secondary school.
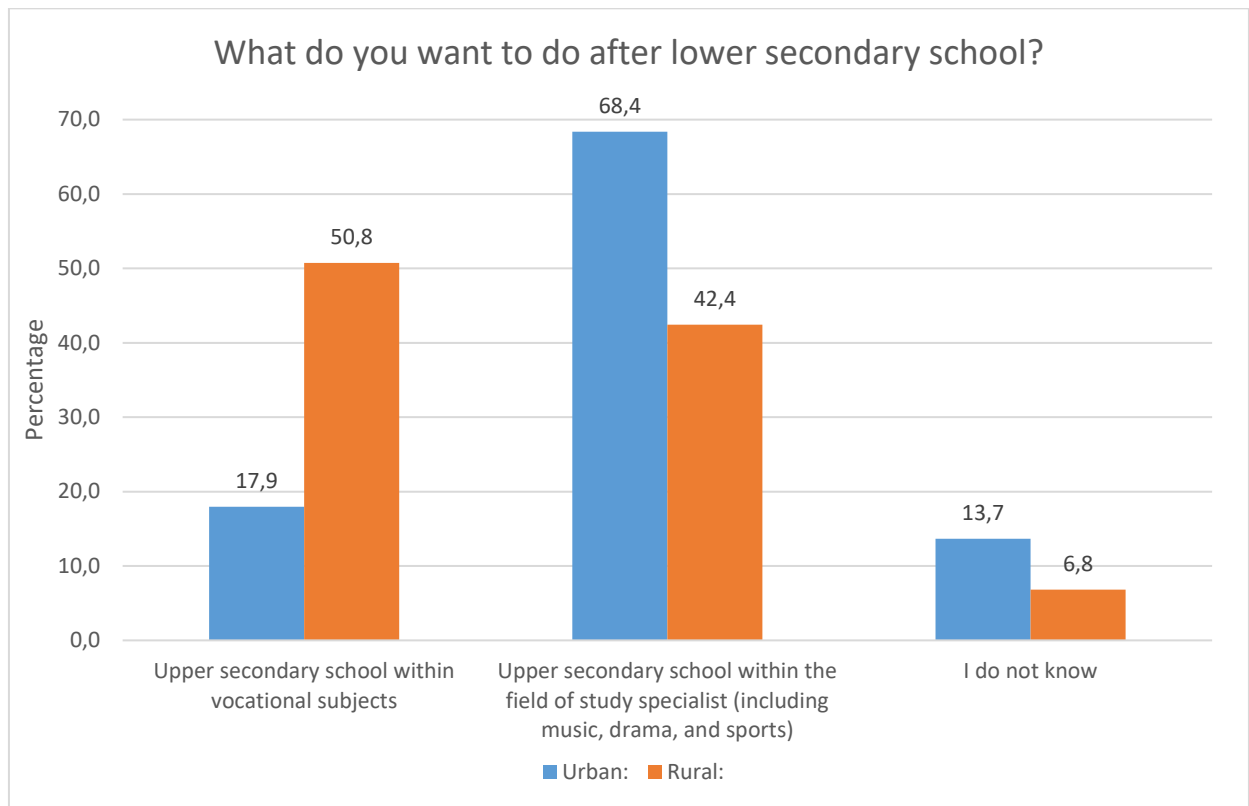
Figure 13.A graph illustrating the urban and rural pupils academic pursues after finishing lower secondary school.

As seen in this graph, there seems to be a divide between urban and rural pupils in their academic pursuits. According to the graph, urban pupils (68,4%) are more inclined to pursue subjects such as study specialist, music, drama, and sports than the rural pupils (42,4%) after they finish lower secondary school. In contrast, more rural pupils (50,8%) wants to pursue vocational subjects than the urban pupils (17,9%). The numbers illustrated in this graph are intriguing as it would seem that the geographical areas somehow affect the pupils' interests and academic goals.

Before I discuss the forementioned illustrated data, I would like to present the mean between urban and rural pupils' reported thoughts of where they learn English the most. Question 4 in the online questionnaire asked the informants if all the English they know today constitutes 100%, how much (in percentage) would they say that they have learned at school and how much would they say that they have learned outside of school? The informants filled in percentages for how

much they learned at school and how much they learned outside of school, and a mean were calculated from the values.
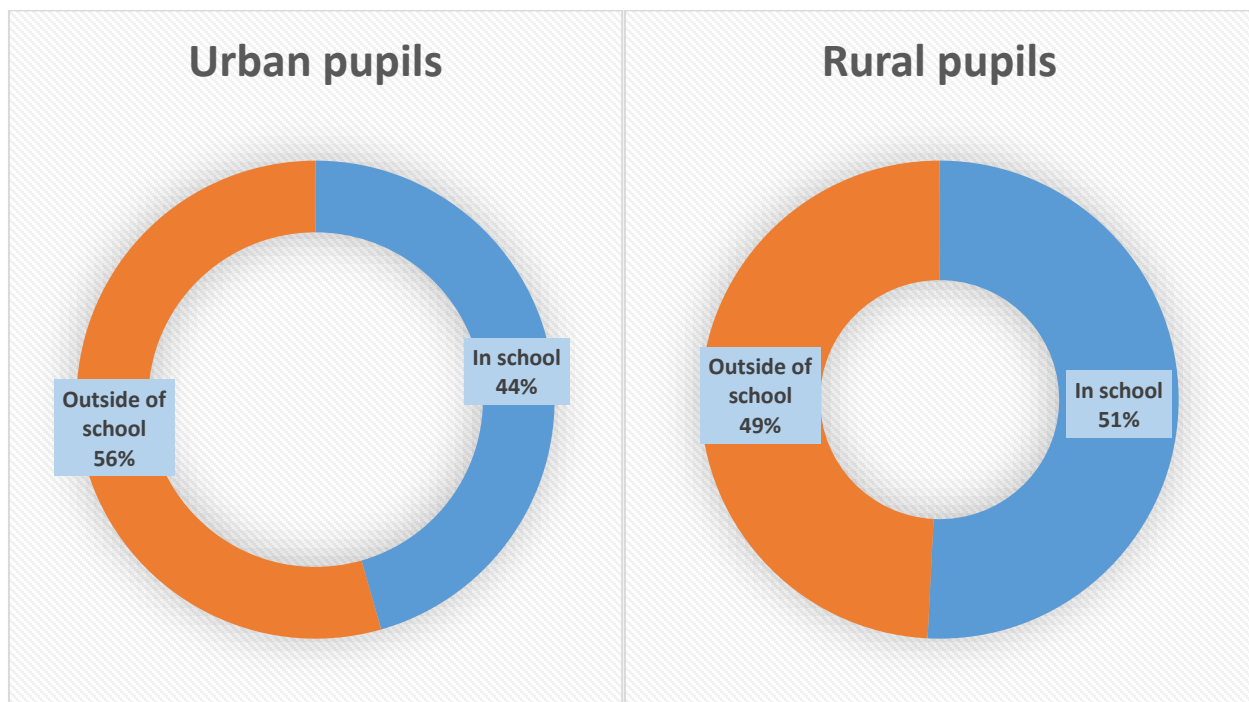
Figure 14. Figures showing the mean calculated from the responses on question 4 'if all the English you know today constitutes 100%, how much (in percentage) would you say that you have learned at school and how much would you say that you have learned outside of school?'

As seen in figure 14, urban pupils report a slightly higher value in English learned outside of school than in school, with 56% outside of school and 44% in school. More equal values are reported with a slight favour towards English learned in school by rural pupils, with 51% in school and 49% outside of school.
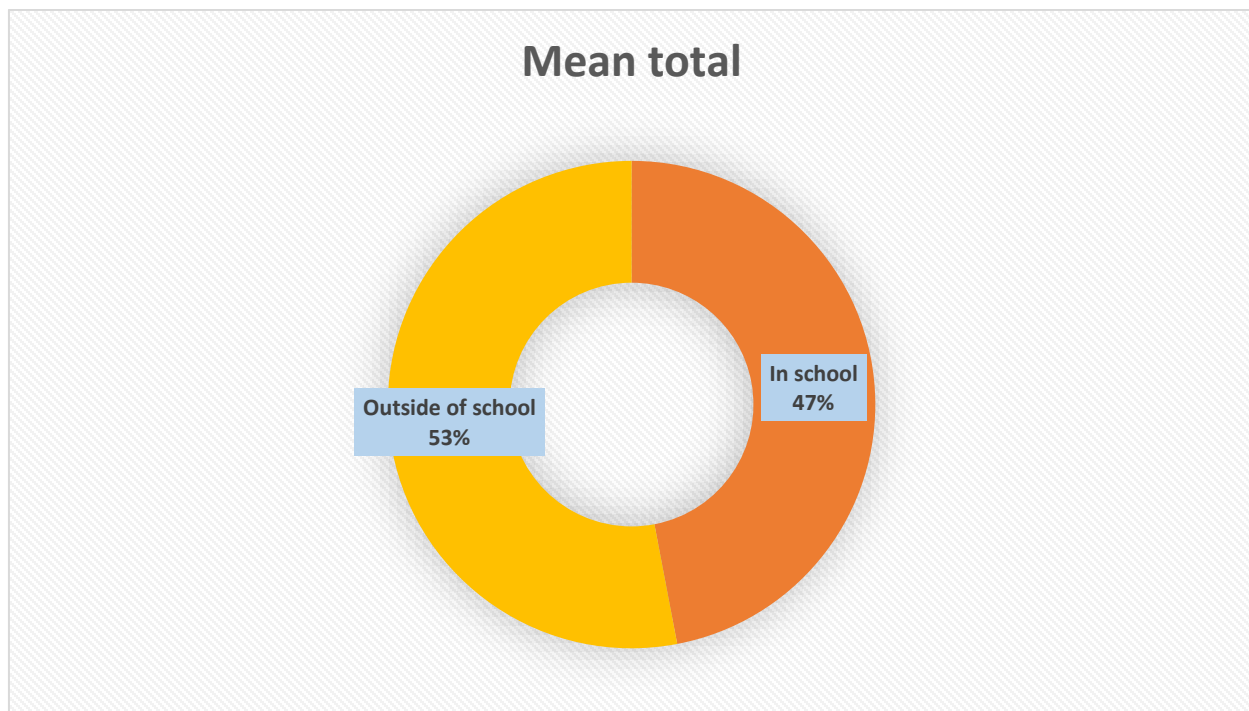
Figure 15. A figure showing a total mean of the combined urban and rural values presented in figure 14.

Figure 15 illustrates the total mean, combining the values of urban and rural pupils presented in figure 14. 53% of the pupils reported to have learned more English outside of school than in school. 47% of the pupils report to have learned English in school, resulting in a 6% difference.

5. Discussion

The following chapter will discuss tendencies found within the data depicted in the Results chapter (4). Further, implications for teachers regarding EE engagement among lower secondary pupils will be presented. To summarize, some main tendences in the material were that there are no major differences between the urban and rural pupils' responses. However, there are certain tendencies found in the data material which I would like to discuss further.

1. The participants found the English language to be very important, they have learned English (according to themselves) in similar ways, and they use EE activities partly similar.

2. Urban pupils are generally higher on all parameters in the collected data regarding use of English (experiences) and probability of using English in the future.

3. Future ambitions and thoughts regarding English between the urban and rural pupils seem to deviate. Urban pupils seem to be more oriented towards using English in studies and for reading and learning, while rural pupils are more oriented towards more practical use, such as work and vacation.

Before I address the tendencies, I believe it is necessary to conduct discussions of the graphs in the Results chapter (4).

5.1 Discussions of figures 1-6

The findings presented in figure 1 indicate that the majority of pupils in the present study speak Norwegian at home regardless of whether they live in urban and rural areas. However, there are some differences in the language use pattern between these two groups. For instance, more pupils in urban areas speak Norwegian in combination with other languages, while more pupils in rural areas speak a language other than Norwegian. The difference in language usage between urban and rural areas could be attributed to various factors, such as cultural diversity, migration patterns or access to language learning resources. For example, urban areas may have more cultural and linguistic diversity, which could explain why more pupils speak Norwegian in combination with other languages. On the other hand, rural areas may have a higher concentration of immigrants who speak a language other than Norwegian, which could explain why more pupils in these areas speak another language only. Furthermore, the findings that very few pupils in the present

selection speak English at home is intriguing. English is widely regarded as a global language and is often used as a means of communication, especially online (Internet-World-Stats, 2020; Statista, 2023; W3Techs, 2023). On another note, this finding suggest that English may not be as prevalent in Norwegian households as some might assume and could also indicate that the pupils' families have limited exposure to English language.

The results illustrated in figure 2 indicate that there are small differences between the reports of urban and rural pupils concerning the EE activities that they view as having contributed most to their English language learning. Both urban and rural pupils report similar EE activities as influential toward their English language learning. An interesting connection to the pupils' report is that the activities they have listed as most influential toward their English language learning (see figure 2), are the same activities shown to be most engaged in. Listening to music, watching movies and TV shows, and social media are the most engaged EE activities among young learners (Avello et al., 2019; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Gaming is also shown to be beneficial toward language acquisition and have high engagement among young learners (De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Sletten et al., 2015; Sundqvist, 2009; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012). On another note, there is a notable difference in the percentage of urban and rural pupils who reported that listening to music contributed the most. While 50% of rural pupils reported that listening to music was the most influential activity, only 34,2% of urban pupils reported the same, providing a 15,8% difference. The difference in the reported influence of listening to music could be of different factors, although it would be hard to pinpoint exactly why especially this activity showed such a difference. Some factors could be that rural pupils are in fact more inclined to listen to music in English than urban pupils or that they view music as a potential easier and effective way of learning English. Other activities such as traveling or reading were reported as having little influence on English learning by both urban and rural pupils. The little influence of the activities traveling, reading, interaction with friends and family are also the activities reported as English usage unlikely to happen (see figure 3 and 4). According to Avello et al. (2019); Coskun and Mutlu (2017); Jensen (2017); Muñoz and Cadierno (2021); Zhang et al. (2021), there is less engagement amongst young learners in productive activities. However, reading is regarded as an important skill according to data illustrated in figure 9, which in some ways contradicts the pupils' statement that reading have little influence on English learning. Although, there might not

be a connection between perceiving reading as an important skill to possess and finding it influential for English language learning. It is interesting that contact with friends and family are listed as having little influence, but one might think that the use of English in these situations are mainly for entertainment purposes and thus, regarded by the pupils as not influential for language development.

The provided data in figure 3 and 4 on the use of English among urban and rural pupils in Norway show interesting patterns. While there are some similarities in how they use English in different contexts, there are also some notable differences. One of the striking findings is that many pupils, both urban and rural, do not use English during recess or while visiting family. This suggests that English may not be seen as a necessary language for socializing with each other or family members. However, it is noteworthy that a significant proportion of pupils, especially urban, report using English frequently or occasionally at home. An indication that English is more often used at home, may be that pupils tend to use English for individual pursuits such as watching TV or movies, listening to music, or playing video games (Avello et al., 2019; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). Another interesting finding is that English is more likely to be used among pupils while in contact with friends than trainers/instructors. This suggests that social factors play a significant role in determining the use of English in these situations. For example, it is possible that pupils who have friends who speak English are more likely to use the language themselves, while those who do not have such friends may be less motivated to use English in social contexts. The data also show that gaming is the EE activity that is most associated with the use of English, with more than one-third of urban and rural pupils reporting that they are likely to use English while gaming. This finding may reflect the fact that many popular video games are developed in English and require players to interact and communicate with others in the game using English. This data is supported by De Wilde and Eyckmans (2017); Jensen (2017); Sundqvist (2009); Sylvén and Sundqvist (2012) whom also found that gaming is often engaged in and often associated with English use. Finally, it is noteworthy that more than half of urban pupils use English when writing messages/emails and using social media. One might reflect that digital communication has become an important context for the use of English among pupils as they often share English videos and social media content between them, especially in urban areas. In contrast, less than half of the rural pupils

report using English for these purposes, which may reflect differences in interests, motivation and access to and use of digital technology in rural areas.

Much of recent studies adds credibility to the data collected in the present study. Research has shown that lower secondary pupils in Norway tend to engage more in receptive EE activities, such as listening to music and podcasts, watching TV and movies, interacting on social media and gaming. According to Avello et al. (2019), lower secondary pupils are in the early adolescent stage of development, which is characterized by a heightened focus on social relationships. Receptive EE activities can be seen as social activities that provide means for pupils to connect with each other, share interests and experiences, and participate in popular culture. Thus, lower secondary pupils may be more likely to engage in these activities as a way of building and maintaining social relationships. Moreover, as pointed out by Coskun and Mutlu (2017), lower secondary pupils may have more free time to engage in EE activities, and as a result, spend this time on receptive EE activities. Additionally, EE activities are often engaged as a means of relaxation, and receptive EE activities can provide a form of stress relief and entertainment. Receptive EE activities are also suggested to provide pupils with a sense of escapism from their daily routines, such as school, homework and potential tasks given by their parents, and offer them an opportunity for relaxation and entertainment (Zhang et al., 2021). The forementioned research indicates that engagement in receptive activities is higher than productive activities due to the various factors explored above, such as the pupils' developmental stage, the social nature of receptive activities, the availability of free time, the stress relief and entertainment value, the motivation and inspirations that these activities provide, and the sense of escapism and exploration they offer. Another argument could be that the popular culture affects the interests and motivation among learners, as the social media and Internet often promotes various English music, podcasts, movies, TV shows, and computer games.

The use of English by pupils in various social contexts has been examined in the present study, including the contact with tourists, other children, employees in service establishments, friends' parents, trainers/instructors, and other adults. The data illustrated in figure 5 report high values of contact particularly with tourists. This could be attributed to the increasing globalization and the importance of English as an international language. It is worth noting that the level of English proficiency and confidence in using English in real-life situations might vary among the pupils. Furthermore, the data found that a higher proportion of urban pupils use English in contact with

employees in various service establishments, friends' parents, and trainers/instructors than rural pupils. One could argue that there are more service establishments in urban areas, and that the likelihood of the employees speaking English as their first language to be high. However, both urban and rural pupils report similar levels of usage of English in contact with tourists and other children, and the values between them are quite similar in contact with other adults. The findings suggest that pupils' use of English in various social contexts may be influenced by the nature of the context itself, as well as other factors such as location and socio-economic status.

The results provided in figure 6 indicates valuable insight into the prevalence of English language usage among respondents in different contexts. Based on the graph, it is evident that the majority of respondents report the highest level of contact with English at school, on social media, on the Internet, through music and movies and TV. It is worth noting that respondents from both urban and rural areas report similar level of English contact at school, indicating that the school system is an essential factor in promoting English language proficiency in both settings. However, there are some significant differences between urban and rural pupils in term of their contact with English in social media and the Internet. Urban pupils report more exposure to English in these areas than their rural counterparts. The results in figure 6 also illustrates that more urban pupils report being in contact with English during social interactions with friends than rural pupils. This finding may reflect differences in social networks and patterns of social interactions between urban and rural areas, and one might think that urban areas may have more individuals who speak English as a first or second language, which could lead to greater opportunities for English use in social settings.

5.2 Discussions of figures 7-15

The graph in figure 7 presents interesting findings on the use of English among urban and rural pupils across various situations and activities in adulthood. The data suggest that, in general, urban pupils tend to report higher use of English than their rural counterparts. Interestingly gaming engagement as adults is reported low, but the decline may be due to the fact that gaming in general is less engaged when young people grow up and have other more urging obligations and responsibilities. However, there are a few situations where rural pupils report slightly higher use of English than urban pupils, namely, at work and on vacation. One possible explanation for

this difference could be the varying exposure to English language environments and resources between urban and rural areas. The lack of resources between urban and rural areas is also debated in Hargreaves et al. (2009), where they debate that rural school's educational provision is inferior to that provided in larger urban schools.

The presented data in figure 8 and figure 9 provides insight into the importance that lower secondary school pupils in urban and rural areas in a certain region attach to their English language proficiency. Specifically, figure 8 demonstrates that 88,9% of urban pupils and 81,8% of rural pupils view oral communication in English as important. The similarity of these figures suggests that pupils in both areas perceive the development of oral English skills as crucial. However, it is noteworthy that a higher percentage of rural pupils rated oral communication in English as less important (18,2%) compared to their urban peers (11,2%). This may reflect differences in the local language context, where pupils in rural areas may have less exposure to English or perceive fewer opportunities to use English in their daily lives. Further possible reasons for this difference could include variations in language exposure, cultural attitudes toward English, or that pupils in rural areas may have different priorities or face different barriers in developing English language proficiency. Overall, the findings presented in figure 8 highlight the importance of oral communication in English for pupils in both urban and rural areas, while also pointing to some differences in emphasis between these groups. Further research is needed to better understand the factors that underlie these differences. The findings in figure 9, on the other hand, indicate that a large majority of pupils in both urban and rural areas find reading and writing in English important. The data indicate that urban pupils place slightly more emphasis on reading and writing in English, with 92,3% rating it as important compared to 81,4% of rural pupils. While the exact reasons for this discrepancy remain unclear, possible explanations could include differences in language exposure, resources, or cultural attitudes towards the English language. Nonetheless, it is important to note that the percentage of pupils who find reading and writing in English less important is higher in rural areas, with 16,7% compared to 7,7% of urban pupils. This finding suggests that while many pupils in rural areas recognize the importance of English language proficiency, a minority may not perceive it as a priority or essential or face greater challenges in developing these skills. Future research could explore the factors that contribute to these differences and meet the needs of diverse communities.

The statement in figure 10 suggest that the majority of pupils in both urban and rural areas are satisfied with their English language skills. However, there are some interesting differences between the two groups that are worth exploring further. In urban areas, a higher percentage of pupils are very satisfied with their English skills, with 37,6% reporting this level of confidence. It is possible that these pupils have a greater exposure to the English language, either through their educational experiences or through media and technology, and as a result, have developed a stronger sense of proficiency. Although, it is also worth considering whether the remaining 47,9% of urban pupils who report being satisfied with their English skills feel that they still have room for improvement. If this is the case, it may be important for English teachers to focus on providing opportunities and scaffold for these pupils to continue developing their skills. In contrast, a lower percentage of rural pupils report feeling very confident in their English skills, with 27,3% indicating this level of satisfaction. However, it is noteworthy that a majority of rural pupils (56,8%) still report being satisfied with their English skills. This suggests that despite potential barriers to language learning in rural areas, such as limited access to resources or fewer opportunities for language immersion as stated by Hargreaves et al. (2009), many pupils are still able to develop their skills to a level that they feel is satisfactory. In addition, it is interesting to note that a small percentage of both urban and rural pupils (13,7% and 12,1%, respectively) report being less satisfied with their English skills. While it is unclear from these results why these pupils feel less confident in their language abilities, it raises the possibility that targeted language support and intervention could help these pupils improve their skills and become more satisfied with their proficiency. Overall, the findings presented in figure 10 suggest that there may still be opportunities for improvement.

The results presented in figure 11 indicate that there is a relatively even split between urban and rural pupils when it comes to their future living preferences. Around half of the pupils in both groups envision themselves living in their current area when they become adults. This finding is interesting, as it suggests that there is not necessarily a strong desire among pupils to move to more urban or rural areas in the future. Moreover, it is worth noting that this question received the most equal responses from the informants compared to other questions in the questionnaire. This may suggest that there is a similar level of contentment with their current living situation, or perhaps that the decision to stay or leave an area is influenced by factors other than living in a urban or rural environment. For instance, it is possible that pupils who express a desire to remain

in their current area do so because of strong community ties or family connections, while those who envision themselves living elsewhere may be motivated by factors such as career opportunities or personal preferences for a certain type of environment.

In the follow-up question presented in figure 12, results indicate that there are bigger differences between urban and rural pupils in term of their future living preferences. While most urban pupils see themselves settling in urban areas, both inside and outside of Norway, the majority of rural pupils see themselves living in a rural area or a small town. But the indication of a larger proportion of rural pupils seeing themselves living in urban areas outside of Norway is noteworthy. This may reflect a desire for greater opportunities or a different lifestyle that is not available in rural areas.

The graph in figure 13 highlights the differences in academic pursuits between urban and rural pupils. The numbers indicate that the urban pupils seem to have more interest in subjects such as study specialist, music, drama, and sports compared to the rural pupils, who, on the other hand, show a higher inclination towards vocational subjects. This could be attributed to the differences in the socio-economic and cultural backgrounds of the pupils residing in these areas. Urban areas may offer more exposure to diverse cultural activities and opportunities that promote creative and artistic pursuits, while rural areas may provide more practical and technical opportunities. The differences in academic pursuits between urban and rural pupils could also reflect differences in the available job opportunities and the local economies of these areas.

The data presented in figures 14 and 15 is interesting as it sheds light on the sources of English language acquisition for lower secondary pupils in Norway. The mean values show that a majority of the pupils have learned more English outside of school than in school. This suggests that informal language learning environments, such as exposure to English social media and music, gaming, surfing on the Internet or social interaction with English speakers, plays a significant role in the development of English proficiency among Norwegian pupils. As mentioned in section 2.5, frequent exposure of and engagement in EE is beneficial towards language acquisition (Brevik & Holm, 2022; Coskun & Mutlu, 2017; Jensen, 2017; Muñoz & Cadierno, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). It is also worth noting the difference in means between urban and rural pupils. Rural pupils report a slightly higher percentage of English language learning in school than urban pupils. Overall, the data highlights the importance of both formal

and informal language learning environments in the development of English proficiency among Norwegian pupils, which is also supported by Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016). However, it should be noted that the mean percentages reported do not provide information about the quality or effectiveness of the English language learning in or outside of school. It is possible that some pupils feel that they have learned more outside of school because the perceive the English language instruction in their schools to be uninteresting, irrelevant, or ineffective. Conversely, other pupils may report learning outside of school simply because they are more motivated to improve their English skills and seek out opportunities to do so on their own based on their own comprehension. It also suggests that there may be differences in the sources of language acquisition between urban and rural pupils, which could have implications for English teachers and their language instruction.

To summarize thus far, EE is shown to be a complex phenomenon. Overall, the research conducted in the present study have found that there are no major differences in the urban/rural divide. The data collected and presented in the Results chapter (4) have found tendences that, for the most part, there are mostly similarities in how urban and rural pupils engage in English outside of school, how English is viewed as important, and how satisfied they are with their own English language skills. However, it is important to note that the participants perception of their English language proficiency may not necessarily reflect their actual level of competence.

5.3 Discussions of the three tendencies

The first tendency suggests that the participants in the study recognize the importance of the English language and have similar ways of learning it. The data collected depicts that listening to music, using social media, watching movies and TV, playing video games, and YouTube are the most engaged activities among the pupils. This tendency is supported by Avello et al. (2019); Brevik and Holm (2022); Coskun and Mutlu (2017); Jensen (2017); Muñoz and Cadierno (2021); Zhang et al. (2021), whom all found that receptive EE activities, such as the ones found in the data, to be the activities young learners engage in the most. One could debate that the similarity in how lower secondary pupils engage in English outside of school, is heavily impacted by popular culture and social media. Social media can affect which movies, music and digital games are popular, and affect what is popular to engage in among the younger social milieus. It also

provides an indication that the everyday life among pupils is not so very different in Norway today, meaning that urban and rural milieus are not so different as one might expect.

The second tendency indicates that urban pupils generally have more experiences with using English and are more likely to use English in the future than their rural counterparts. Hargreaves et al. (2009) states that the educational provision in urban schools is superior to that in rural schools. This could be a contributing factor that could explain why urban pupils seem to be generally higher on all parameters in the data collected. Another explanation could be that urban areas potentially have greater exposure to English-speaking environments and possibly more opportunities to use English language outside of the classroom. It could also be possible that this difference could be attributed to differences in the quality of English language education in urban and rural areas, as urban areas generally has more teachers whom potentially can provide a higher quality in English language education (Hargreaves et al., 2009).

The third tendency suggests that the future ambitions and thoughts regarding English differ between urban and rural pupils. Urban pupils seem to be more oriented towards academic uses of English, such as studying and reading, while rural pupils are more focused on practical uses, such as work and vacation. One could argue that the geographical areas impact the pupils' academic pursuits. In general, it is common that rural areas offer more practical jobs (e.g., carpentering, construction, mechanic, farming, electrician). The availability of jobs in rural areas could be a factor which affects the academic pursuits of rural pupils, as Figure 11 illustrates that 51,5% of rural pupils see themselves settling where they live today as adults. These jobs do not necessarily require a high level of English competence, which could contribute a small part to the overall difference between the future ambitions and thoughts between urban and rural pupils. What this tendency means for teacher implications will be discussed in the following section (5.4).

Overall, the findings suggest that English language education is highly valued in both urban and rural areas, but the approaches to English language learning and future aspirations regarding its use differ between the two groups. It is important for educators and policymakers to take into account these differences when designing and implementing English language education programs in different geographical areas.

5.4 Implications for teachers

Due to the continuous evolvement of digital technology, pupils are more inclined to interact with motivational, interesting, and engaging receptive EE activities. In result, the data provide interesting indications that there is no difference in how urban and rural pupils in Norway engage in English outside of school. As mentioned in chapter 2 (Background and review), the studies by Avello et al. (2019); Coskun and Mutlu (2017); Jensen (2017); Muñoz and Cadierno (2021); Zhang et al. (2021) have reported similar findings like the ones found in the present study that receptive EE activities such as listening to music and podcasts, watching movies and TV shows, social media, Internet and gaming are engaged more frequently among urban and rural pupils. Teachers should recognize the high engagement in receptive EE activities and consider ways of incorporating these activities into educational practice.

As stated in Chapter 2, Brevik and Holm (2022) and Schurz et al. (2022) suggest that there is a growing awareness among teachers regarding the role of EE in pupils' lives. However, the question remains how teachers should act to the knowledge regarding EE. Brevik and Holm (2022) found that teachers can look to students' other outside-school L2 experience as the basis of activities that connect the English students use outside school with their learning in school. For example, teachers can ask students to select YouTube tutorials that align with their language proficiency as a way of increasing their interest and supporting their language development and make a connection between the informal language of the tutorials and the more formal language often required at school (Brevik & Holm, 2022). Implications in the study of Brevik and Holm (2022) include the importance of understanding pupils' informal language learning to rethink L2 teaching practices. Additionally, teachers should also consider the potential benefits of productive EE activities and explore ways to make them more interesting, engaging and rewarding for the pupils. I believe that if one were to find ways to make productive EE activities, especially writing and reading, more sociable, pupils would potentially find them more interesting and applicable resulting in more engagement.

It is important to note that the Internet has made extramural English accessible to people in all areas, regardless of whether they live in urban and rural areas. With the rise of online resources, learners can easily access English-language materials such as e-books, online courses, and social media platforms from anywhere with an Internet connection. Furthermore, Hargreaves et al.

(2009) argues that urban areas may offer more opportunities for EE interaction than rural areas. In some urban areas, there may be a higher percentage of native English speakers who are willing to engage with other language learners. This might be because in urban areas, people may be more likely to be engaged in activities that involve communicating in English in order to understand one another (such as playing football, basketball, ping-pong in the park, volleyball etc.). In urban areas, these types of activities are more likely to involve people that do not speak Norwegian and is therefore needed to communicate in English. A possible important explanation for the similarity in EE engagement between urban and rural pupils is the influence of popular culture. English-language music, movies, TV shows, gaming, and social media are popular worldwide, and learners from all backgrounds may be motivated to engage in EE activities related to these forms. In addition, social media platforms and other online communities can provide learners with opportunities to connect with other learner's and practice their language skills in a supportive and engaging environment.

Much of the data collected and recent research in the present study points to EE offering several benefits for English language learners, regardless of their geographical location. First, EE can provide learners with exposure to authentic language use. In the classroom, learners are often exposed to scripted language (for example via English textbooks), which may not accurately reflect how the language is used in real-life situations. EE on the other hand, provides learners with the opportunity to listen and read authentic language use in a variety of contexts which can improve their language proficiency (Sundqvist, 2020; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Second, EE can provide learners with opportunities for self-directed learning and aid them in becoming autonomous learners (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). In the classroom, learners may be limited to the materials and topics covered by the teacher. The studies of Avello et al. (2019); Brevik and Holm (2022); Coskun and Mutlu (2017); Muñoz and Cadierno (2021); Zhang et al. (2021) found similar results to support that teachers should encourage L2 language learners to frequently engage in EE activities. EE activities are found to allow learners to explore topics and materials that are of interest to them, which can in turn, increase their motivation to learn (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Teachers should also differentiate, to the best of their abilities, the classroom content to accommodate for the pupils that have non-academical pursuits as one of the tendencies in the data collected found that the future ambitions and thoughts regarding English differ between urban and rural pupils.

5.5 Suggestions for further research

For any potential future research investigating the EE engagement among pupils in Norway, they should be encouraged to consider engagement time as a factor. Both Forsman (2004) and Sundqvist (2009) investigated the engagement time in various EE activities. Forsman (2004) found that her urban informants spent a total of 51.1 hours per week and 36.7 hours per week for rural informants. The participants in Sundqvist (2009) study reporting 22.4 hours per week by urban students and 15.9 hours per week by rural students. Forsman (2004) and Sundqvist (2009) found that there are significant differences in how much time urban and rural pupils in Sweden and Finland spend engaging in EE activities. The studies indicate that there is a difference in how much urban and rural pupils which could be worth investigating in Norwegian context. Although, Norwegian research has yet, to my knowledge, to investigate and discover any potential differences in engagement time.

As discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, the phenomenon EE is certainly expanding, which calls for more research investigating various aspects regarding for example engagement time, teachers' view on EE, and how educational context can benefit more from the pupils' engagement in EE. For future research in the field of EE, it would be interesting to investigate if teachers (especially Norwegian teachers) encourage their pupils to engage more in productive EE activities that involves the pupils to read, write or talk. As discussed in the present study, productive EE activities are less engaged, but one could debate that these activities can be more beneficial toward language acquisition.

5.6 Limitations

First, as mentioned in the section regarding data analysis (3.6), the present study did not include statistical analysis of the data collected. As such, the present study can not claim any of the findings to be of any significance. Additionally, the data collected does not provide information about the specific contexts in which the pupils are using English, such as whether they are using it in a professional or social setting, meaning that they use it for either language acquisition or entertainment purposes. To my knowledge, not much, if any, research have been investigating if pupils engage in EE activities for learning or entertainment purposes. As EE is regarded as both intentional and incidental learning, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) states that EE engagement

provides language acquisition regardless if the engagement is initiated for learning or entertainment purposes.

Second, the main purpose of the present study was to investigate if there were any similarities or differences in how urban and rural pupils engage with English outside of school, and as such, the questionnaire did not consider the amount of engagement time in EE activities. Therefore, investigating the interesting aspect of if there are any difference in how much time the urban and rural pupils spend on EE activities has been excluded in the present study. However, if the amount of engagement time in EE activities were included and investigated in this study, it would likely provide more data which could benefit to the exploration if there are any differences or similarities between urban and rural pupils.

Another limitation of the present study is that after reviewing the previous research done on EE activities among learners, it quickly became noticeable that the online questionnaire in the present study did not include enough options for productive EE activities (e.g., writing a text in English, chance conversation with strangers). Since the majority of the questions were closed-ended, it could be beneficial to include more productive EE activities to potentially find more differences or similarities among the pupils.

6. Conclusion

In the present MA thesis, I have investigated the research question: *What, if any, similarities and differences exist between the reported EE engagement of urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway?* Specifically, I have investigated urban and rural lower secondary pupils in Norway's self-reported EE engagement, how they view various English basic skills as important, and how satisfied they are with their own English language skills. Much of the data collected and research reviewed, points toward that there are no major differences in how urban and rural pupils engage in EE activities. Furthermore, no major differences were found in how the pupils' view English skills as important or their self-perceived satisfaction in English language skills. Although there seems to be no differences in how urban and rural pupils engage in EE, it is interesting to see that they are very much similar in their responses to the online questionnaire. In figures 3 and 4, much of the responses resembles each other indicating that there is a likeness in how pupils engage in EE activities. The similarity of engagement is also supported by previous research reviewed in the present study.

Overall, EE is shown to be a valuable supplement to classroom learning, providing learners with additional opportunities to practice their language skills, enhancing learner motivation, providing authentic language input, encouraging intercultural communication, and developing learner autonomy. It should be noted however, that EE should not be viewed as a replacement for classroom learning, but rather as a complementary approach that can enhance and reinforce classroom learning.

6.1 Concluding remarks

Ending on a concluding remark, the previous study reviewed in the present MA thesis suggests that there is much to be gained by mapping pupils' EE engagement and to provide positive interactive environments in the classroom related to EE activities. There is reason to suggest that teachers should encourage their pupils to engage more in EE activities, especially productive activities. The data collected and previous study reviewed in the present research shows that both urban and rural pupils use the somewhat the same EE activities to either learn English or for purely entertainment purposes. This suggest that EE is not limited by geographical locations, and that learners from both urban and rural areas have similar opportunities to engage in extramural

language learning. The findings that both groups engage in the same EE activities, have important implications for teachers. By recognizing the commonalities in EE engagement across urban and rural areas, both teachers and the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training can develop strategies to support and enhance extramural language learning for all learners. As mentioned in section 2.3, the Norwegian curriculum does not refer to EE engagement explicitly, but implementing EE engagement as an own competence aim may be beneficial as it is shown to aid development in English language skills. Furthermore, by promoting appropriate EE activities, recognizing the diversity of learner's needs and interests, teachers can help learners develop language skills in a way that is meaningful, engaging, and effective while also aid pupils that need additional support to achieve their language learning goals. As digital technologies continue to evolve and new extramural language learning opportunities emerge, it will be important for teachers to remain vigilant and adaptable in their approach to supporting learner's language learning goals. In the words of Sundqvist (2009), extramural English matters.

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Appendix 1. Information letter

Vil du delta i forskningsprosjektet

" Lower secondary pupils in urban and rural areas in Norway reports on their English language outside the classroom: A comparative study"

Dette er et spørsmål til deg om å delta i et forskningsprosjekt i forbindelse med mastergraden i mine studier ved grunnskolelærerutdanningen ved OsloMet. I dette skrivet vil du få informasjon om målene for prosjektet og hva deltakelse vil innebære for deg.

Formål
Formålet med dette prosjektet er å se om ulike steder i Norge er med på å påvirke hvordan elever bruker og forholder seg til engelsk utenfor klasserommet. Prosjektet vil ta utgangspunkt i flere skoler i ulike kommuner i Norge, og bruke et spørreskjema for å se likheter og/eller ulikheter mellom svarene til flere ungdomsskoleelever.

Hvorfor får du spørsmål om å delta?
Du vil, som blant ca. 100-300 andre elever, bli spurt om å svare på et spørreskjema som vil hjelpe meg å få nødvendig informasjon og statistikk for å se:
- Hvilke ulike måter ungdomsskoleelever kommer i kontakt med engelsk i hverdagen sin.
- Forskjeller i bruk av engelsk blant ungdomsskoleelever i storbyer og landsbyer.
- Hvor viktig det er for ungdomsskoleelever å kunne kommunisere i engelsk.

Hva innebærer det for deg å delta?
Hvis du velger å delta i prosjektet, innebærer det at du fyller ut et spørreskjema. Dette vil ta deg ca. 10-15 minutter. Spørreskjemaet inneholder spørsmål om hvordan du kommer i kontakt med engelsk i hverdagen din, som gjennom sosiale medier, venner, sport eller lignende. Andre spørsmål vil være om du syns engelsk er viktig å kunne og om du tenker å være bosatt i din nåværende kommune. Din skole vil som nevnt tidligere være en av flere skoler fra ulike kommuner i Norge som deltar på prosjektet.

Dine svar fra spørreskjemaet blir registrert elektronisk og **anonymt**.

Ditt personvern
Det er frivillig å delta i prosjektet. Hvis du velger å delta, kan du når som helst trekke samtykke tilbake uten å oppgi noen grunn, ved å sende epost til **matias.heggdal@osloskolen.no**. Det vil ikke ha noen negative konsekvenser for deg hvis du ikke vil delta eller senere velger å trekke deg.

Prosjektet samler inn bare anonyme data. Det registreres ikke navn eller personidentifiserende bakgrunnsopplysninger i datamaterialet. Jeg vil bare bruke data til formålene jeg har fortalt om i dette skrivet. Jeg behandler deg og data konfidensielt og i samsvar med personvernregelverket. Prosjektet skal etter planen avsluttes 15. mai 2023.

Med vennlig hilsen,

Matias Karsrud Heggdal
Epost: matias.heggdal@osloskolen.no

Appendix 2. Questionnaire in English

1. Are you …

Provided options: Girl - boy - other

2. Which grade are you in?

Provided options: 8th - 9th - 10th

3. Which language do you communicate the most with your family?

Provided options: Norwegian - English - Both Norwegian and English - Both Norwegian, English and another language - Both Norwegian and another language (not English) - Another language (not Norwegian or English)

4. If all the English you know today constitutes 100%, how much (in percentage) have you learned at school and outside of school (through leisure activities, parents, travelling etc.)?

Open-ended answer

5. Which activities outside of school do your think have contributed most to your English learning? (Rank the 3 most important).

Provided options: Conversations with family - Conversations with friends - Watching TV and movies - Youtube - Social media - Listening to music - Gaming - Reading books - comics and similar - Traveling and other stays outside of Norway - Other

6. How likely are you to use English in the following situations? Mark the alternatives most suitable to you.

Provided activities: During recess - At home where I live - While visiting family - With friends - When speaking to trainers/instructors during leisure activities - While gaming - While making content for my social medias - For writing messages and emails

Provided options: Very unlikely (never happens) - Unlikely - Not unlikely - Very likely (happens often)

7. In my homeplace, I have experienced to use English to talk to … (mark the options that fit).

Provided options: Tourists - Employes at a café or restaurant - Employes at a story - hairdresser or similar - My friend's parents - Colleagues (if you have a job) - Children in the local community - Trainers/instructors in leisure activities - Other adults

8. If you think about your last week, where did you come in contact with English? (Select all appropriate alternatives).

Provided options: At school - In social media - On the Internet - At training/leisure activity - At work - Through books/comics - Through music - Through movies/TV - Through Gaming - Through online communications (e.g., forums, chat) besides gaming - Through communication with family - Through communication with friends - Through radio/podcasts - Other means

9. How important is it for you to be able to communicate in English?

Provided options: Very unsatisfied - Unsatisfied - Satisfied - Very satisfied

10. How important is it for you to be able to read and write well in English?

Provided options: Very unsatisfied - Unsatisfied - Satisfied - Very satisfied

11. How satisfied are you with your own English skills?

Provided options: Very unsatisfied - Unsatisfied - Satisfied - Very satisfied

12. In what situations do you think you will have to use English when you are grown up? (Select all appropriate alternatives).

Provided options: For studies - At work - At home with family - At vacation - When talking to people where I live - In leisure pursuits/hobbies - For reading literature - For reading about things that interests me - For reading news - For watching TV, movies and social media - For creating content for social media - For gaming - Other

13. Do you see yourself living in the same area as today when you are grown up?

Provided options: Yes - No

14. If no to the previous question, where do you see yourself settling as an adult?

Provided options: In an urban Norwegian city (for example Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim) - In a city outside of Norway - In a small city in Norway (for example Gjøvik, Harstad, Flekkefjord) - In a rural area in Norway (not a city)

15. What do you want to do after lower secondary school?

Provided options: Upper secondary school within vocational subjects - Upper secondary school within the field of study specialist (including music, drama, and sports) - I do not know

Appendix 3. Questionnaire in Norwegian

1. Er du …

Alternativer: Jente - Gutt - Annet

2. Hvilket klassetrinn går du?

Alternativer: 8. klasse - 9. klasse - 10. klasse

3. Hvilket språk snakker du mest med familien din?

Alternativer: Norsk - Engelsk - Både norsk og engelsk - Både norsk - engelsk og et annet språk - Et annet språk (ikke norsk eller engelsk)

4. Hvis all den engelsken du kan i dag utgjør 100 %, hvor mye (i prosent) har du lært på skolen og utenfor skolen (gjennom fritidsaktiviteter, av foreldre, på reise osv.)?

Åpent spørsmål

5. Hvilke aktiviteter utenfor skolen mener du har bidratt mest til din engelsklæring? (Ranger de tre viktigste)**.**

Alternativer: Samtaler med familie - Samtaler med venner - Å se TV og film - Bruk av Youtube - Bruk av sosiale medier - Å lytte til musikk - Gaming - Å lese bøker - tegneserier og lignende - Reiser og andre opphold utenfor Norge - Annet

6. Hvor sannsynlig er det at du bruker du engelsk i følgende situasjoner? Kryss av det alternativet som stemmer for deg.

Situasjoner: I friminuttene - Hjemme der jeg bor - På besøk hos familie - Med venner - Når jeg snakker med trener/instruktør under fritidsaktiviteter - Når jeg gamer - Når jeg lager innhold til mine sosiale medier - Til å skrive meldinger og eposter

Alternativer: Helt usannsynlig (skjer aldri) - Ganske usannsynlig - Ikke usannsynlig - Svært sannsynlig (skjer ofte)

7. På hjemstedet mitt har jeg opplevd å måtte bruke engelsk til å snakke med (kryss av det som passer).

Alternativer: Turister **-** Ansatt på kafe/restaurant **-** Ansatt i butikk - frisør eller liknende **-** Foreldre til venner **-** Kollegaer (hvis du har jobb) **-** Barn/ungdom i nærmiljøet **-** Trener/instruktør under fritidsaktiviteter **-** Andre voksne

8. Hvis du tenker på forrige uke, hvor kom du i kontakt med engelsk? (Velg alle alternativ som passer).

Alternativer: På skolen - I sosiale medier - På internett - På trening/fritidsaktivitet - På jobb - Gjennom bøker/tegneserier - Gjennom musikk - Gjennom film/TV - Gjennom gaming - Gjennom online-kommunikasjon (forum, chat) utenom gaming - Gjennom kommunikasjon med familie - Gjennom kommunikasjon med venner - Gjennom radio/podcast - På andre måter

9. Hvor viktig er det for deg å kunne kommunisere muntlig på engelsk?

Alternativer: Lite viktig - Litt viktig - Viktig - Svært viktig

10. Hvor viktig er det for deg å kunne lese og skrive godt på engelsk?

Alternativer: Lite viktig - Litt viktig - Viktig -Svært viktig

11. Hvor fornøyd er du med egne engelskferdigheter?

Alternativer: Svært lite fornøyd - Lite fornøyd - Ganske fornøyd - Svært fornøyd

12. Hva tror du at du vil bruke engelsk til når du blir voksen? (Kryss av alt som passer).

Alternativer: Til studier - På jobben - Hjemme med familie - Når jeg er på ferie - Når jeg snakker med mennesker der jeg bor - Til fritidssysler / hobbyer - Til å lese skjønnlitteratur - Til å lese om ting som interesserer meg - Til å lese nyheter - Til å se på tv, film og sosiale medier - Til å lage innhold til sosiale medier - Til å game - Annet

13. Ser du for deg at du som voksen kommer til å bosette deg omtrent der du bor i dag?

Alternativer: Ja - Nei

14. Hvis nei, hvor tror du at du bosetter deg når du blir voksen?

Alternativer: I en norsk storby (for eksempel Oslo, Bergen, Stavanger, Trondheim) - I en by utenfor Norge - I en norsk småby (for eksempel Gjøvik, Harstad, Flekkefjord) - På et lite sted i Norge (ikke en by)

15. Hva ønsker du å gjøre etter ungdomsskolen?

Alternativer: Videregående med yrkesfag - Videregående med studiespesialiserende (ink. musikk, drama, idrett) - Vet ikke