Language-related computer use: Focus on young L2 English learners in Sweden

# Keywords

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## Sample

Young English language learners (YELLs) in Sweden in 4th grade (N=76, aged 10–11).

## Implications For Educators About

Other

## Implications For Stakeholders About

Researchers

# Abstract

This paper presents findings from a study investigating young English language learners (YELLs) in Sweden in 4th grade (N = 76, aged 10–11). Data were collected with the help of a questionnaire and a one-week language diary. The main purpose was to examine the learners’ L2 English language-related activities outside of school in general, and their use of computers and engagement in playing digital games in particular. A comparison is made between language-related activities in English, Swedish, and other languages. Another purpose was to see whether there is a relationship between playing digital games and (a) gender, (b) L1, (c) motivation for learning English, (d) self-assessed English ability, and (e) self-reported strategies for speaking English. In order to do so, the sample was divided into three digital game groups, (1) non-gamers, (2) moderate, and (3) frequent gamers (≥4 hours/week), based on diary data (using self-reported times for playing digital games in English). Results showed that YELLs are extensively involved in extramural English (EE) activities (M = 7.2 hrs/w). There are statistically significant gender differences, boys (11.5 hrs/w) and girls (5.1 hrs/w; p < .01), the reason being boys’ greater time investment in digital gaming and watching films. The girls, on the other hand, spent significantly more time on pastime language-related activities in Swedish (11.5 hrs/w) than the boys (8.0 hrs/w; p < .05), the reason being girls’ greater time investment in facebooking. Investigation of the digital game groups revealed that group (1) was predominantly female, (2) a mix, and (3) predominantly male. YELLs with an L1 other than Swedish were overrepresented in group (3). Motivation and self-assessed English ability were high across all groups. Finally, regarding the self-reported strategies, code-switching to one's L1 was more commonly reported by non- and moderate gamers than frequent gamers.

# Outcome

Besides those mentioned in the abstract, "the 4th graders examined here devote more hours to English outside of school than there are hours in school devoted to English.... [W]hen sitting at the computer, the boys use English to a greater extent than the girls, who tend to rely more on their L1." (Authors, 17)