Creative Writers in a Digital Age

Swedish Teenagers’ Insights into their Extramural English Writing and the School Subject of English

Paul Morris

Paul Morris qualified as an English teacher in 1995 and currently works at Persbo skolan, a secondary school in Skultuna, Västmanland. He has taught at inner-city comprehensive schools in England, and for a service for pupils with long-term illness. Before moving to Sweden, Paul was co-ordinator of English at a community special school in London. He has a Master of Education degree from Cambridge University, where he focused on special needs and inclusion. Between 2016-20 Paul was both a lecturer of English at Mälardalen University (MDU) and a doctoral student.

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CREATIVE WRITERS IN A DIGITAL AGE

SWEDISH TEENAGERS’ INSIGHTS INTO THEIR EXTRAMURAL ENGLISH WRITING AND THE SCHOOL SUBJECT OF ENGLISH

Paul Morris

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School of Education, Culture and Communication
For my wife, Anna, and our sons,

for my parents, my brother and sister,

and the memory of my Aunt Ellen (Brenton).
Abstract

The digital age has re-shaped the landscape of creative writing. One example of the changes that have taken place is the way in which millions of young people, globally, now write and share stories as online fanfiction. This is an out-of-school leisure pastime that can also help improve language skills (Aragon & Davis, 2019; Black, 2008). English taught as a second language (i.e. L2) in schools can be less authentic, less motivational and engaging than English used in free-time situations (extramural English, Sundqvist, 2009); thus, there is a need to “bridge the gap” between the English taught in the formal setting of school and the English encountered in informal settings (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011). This licentiate thesis focuses on extramural English creative writing and aims to raise understanding about the ways it can motivate and engage. Also, the issue of L2 English is addressed in relation to pupils’ perspectives of their informal learning as well as their insights into creative writing and challenge in the school subject of English. The participants in the study were thirteen teenage pupils of Swedish secondary and upper-secondary schools who write creatively in English in their free time. Their writing included stories, comics, poems, and songs, and some of this work was published online. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, and it was analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings confirm that writing can be closely related to reading, as participants were motivated by stories they wished to imitate and adapt. Also, the results show how teenage creative writers were able to use networked communication to access a large global readership. There was a strong motivation to write for pleasure – for oneself – and this writing, and enjoyment, could subsequently be shared with others. The free-time writing activity was fun, playful and imaginative, and also aided understanding of the participants’ own experiences and emotions. The state of flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990) was an aspect of the pupils’ engagement with creative writing as well. The activity was rewarding as it brought praise, enabled role-play, involved social contacts, and opened the way to new affiliations and friendships. Moreover, the pupils considered that their language learning was enriched through their free-time creative writing. Finally, the participants offered valuable insights into aspects of English as a school subject: there was some creative writing in English lessons, but there was a need for both more creative writing and more challenge.
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1 Introduction

The English language has been spreading around the world for hundreds of years. While this initially accompanied the expansion of the British Empire, English usage has continued to develop long after the empire’s collapse. The post-empire globalisation of English has been linked to business, academia and culture (Phillipson, 2009). Regarding culture’s role in imbuing English with global life, the screens that people watch, or look at, have played an important part. Cinema’s big screens spread the English of Hollywood and, later, smaller screens took English-language television series and the influential music videos of MTV into homes all over the planet. Today, English spreads with the increased use of the internet, accessed on the screens of devices such as smartphones.

English is often used as the language of communication on YouTube or for computer gaming, with worldwide interaction. Stories in English are now available in many forms online – a place where they are consumed and created. As I use the word place, I am aware that its meaning has had to expand to include the virtual, alongside the physical or geographical, as the smartphone puts a means of access to the world in the palm of one’s hand. Such technological and global changes fuel and transform English usage. Against this background, issues of teaching and learning English in the classroom are also transformed.

This thesis is written in Sweden, where young people generally have easy access to the internet (Sundqvist, 2020; Swedish Media Council, 2019). Many young people in Sweden are learning English online, as a by-product of free-time activities such as computer gaming, alongside the more traditional past-time of reading (Sundqvist, 2009). The English used by pupils out of class, in their free time, is sometimes referred to as extramural English (Sundqvist, 2009). Extramural combines the word murus, Latin for wall, and extra meaning beyond or outside; thus, extramural English refers to encounters with English outside the school classroom, or in free time.

For many young people in Sweden, English is rapidly taking on the status of a second or additional language, as it is often used out of class, in extramural situations (Henry, 2019e). School-based English language education must adapt to keep up, to ensure that it is able to challenge all pupils and be meaningful and relevant. School inspectors in Sweden have reported that teaching of English lags behind this increased familiarity and proficiency with the language, and that classes are often simply too easy for many pupils (Swedish
Schools Inspectorate, 2011). The inspectors highlighted a need to bridge the gap between authentic English encountered out of school and language of the English subject used in class.

There are moves in the teaching profession and amongst researchers to ensure that English teaching in Sweden is motivational, engaging and challenging for all – that the gap is bridged. English teachers in Sweden come together in a variety of forums, including online, to share experiences, discuss teaching problems and solutions. Research projects such as Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE) have studied successful lessons where teaching practice utilises the authentic content of out-of-school encounters with English in the classroom (Henry, Sundqvist, & Thorsen, 2019). Nevertheless, the challenge presented to formal English language education in Sweden by technological advances is formidable and constantly developing. This challenge, this gap, lay behind the justification and reasoning that led to the present study.

This thesis focuses on a specific activity, that of creative writing in English. I report from a study of Swedish secondary and upper-secondary school pupils who are creative writers in English as a second or additional language, in their free time. What do I mean by the term creative writing? It can be argued that all writing is creative, as something new is made in the act of writing, whatever the genre, unless the author is guilty of plagiarism. But the participants in the present study adhere to a definition of creative writing as “personal, imaginative expression in a variety of text types” (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 67). In this sense, creative writing “deals less in facts than in the imaginative representation of emotions, events, characters, and experience” (Maley, 2013, p. 162). The pupils who feature in this thesis are motivated, in their own free time, to creatively write stories, comic strips, poems, blogs and song lyrics.

There is nothing new in creative writing itself, but the technological revolution of the digital age has transformed the landscape for creative writing, as it has with so much of our lives. Recent studies into the phenomenon of online fanfiction, in particular, show that creative writing opportunities are increased through internet use, in ways that can aid language learning (Aragon & Davis, 2019; Black, 2008). These researchers into young people’s creative writing online highlight the need for teachers and formal educational institutions to be alert to the potential for learning and teaching offered by these developments. This thesis will hopefully add to understanding and knowledge about language learning, both in free time and at school, in relation to creative writing in the digital age.

Leading up to the study for this thesis I had noticed, as a teacher myself, that some of my students were engaging with creative writing online in ways that were seemingly helping them to improve their writing proficiency. My own experience and inquiry, in the role of teacher, and a need for research to

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1 Online fanfiction is more fully explained in section 2.2.5.

2
keep up to date with developments, combined to bring the present study into being. In a time of technological change such as this, it was judged necessary to reach out to pupils who were free-time creative writers in English, to seek their perspectives on their activity, in order to develop the understanding of the English teaching profession.

It must be noted that while this study has been spurred by the way digitalisation and the internet have changed the opportunities for creative writing, the study's design has not required, or presumed, that the participants were writing online or using digital writing tools. I asked English teachers in the Mälardalen area of Sweden to help me to contact pupils with a hobby, or free-time interest, of creative writing in English. The aim of the study was to find the perspectives of such creative writers regarding their motivation and engagement. Also, their views on their informal learning of English were sought, in addition to insights into aspects of their formal English education in school.

1.1 The research questions

The following research questions form the backbone of the study. They were formulated to facilitate critical exploration of students’ perspectives about the free-time activity of creative writing, through the lens of seeking what is valuable for English teaching. The questions span the gap of informal and formal contexts, that is – extramural and school encounters with English:

1. What are the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation to write creatively in English in their free time?

2. How are the pupils engaged in this activity?

3. Do they consider that their learning of English is enriched through this activity, and, if so, how?

4. What insights do the pupils offer concerning creative writing and challenge in the English classroom?

The research questions are formulated with the aim of raising understanding of pupils’ perspectives and of generating insights that can hopefully contribute to bridging the gap. The pupils’ answers and discussions engaged me in their interviews, and they have continued to fascinate me during the research process. Their voices have been heard by conferences of educators in Britain and Sweden – stimulating discussion.
After one conference presentation, a Swedish university lecturer approached me and mentioned that his teenage son also wrote and published poetry in English – online. The lecturer said he had asked his son what his school English teacher thought of this. The son replied that his teacher had never asked, nor had he told his teacher. That you are reading this thesis hopefully indicates your willingness to ensure that any light from such creative acts is not dimmed as a pupil walks into a school. I hope this thesis will be of interest to English teachers, but also to anyone who is concerned with the education, or indeed the well-being, of young people.

1.2 Summary of the chapters

The following Background chapter (2) aims to explain the context of this study in terms of formal and informal learning of English. There will be a focus on the situation for young people’s English learning in Sweden, and the governing documents\(^2\) for English in Swedish schools, especially in relation to creativity and creative writing. The chapter will also consider research into, and thinking about, creative writing and learning on- and offline, as well as issues of bridging the gap between free-time English and the school subject of English. Chapter 3 will present the theoretical framework of the thesis, and chapter 4 will describe the materials and methods of the study – its design and processes of analysis. The results will be presented in chapter 5, and the discussion and conclusion of chapter 6 offers a chance to reflect over the results and consider answers to the research questions, in the light of earlier studies. Finally, pedagogical implications will be discussed, along with suggestions for future research.

\(^2\) Governing documents are often termed steering documents. In this case, I am referring to the curricula and syllabuses which are used to govern, or steer, the teaching of English in Swedish schools.
2 Background

The aim of this chapter is to present more information about the background and context of this study. Some of the key terms and concepts used in the thesis, and the main issues from research and thinking that form the wider discourse, will be presented. Section 2.1 contains a discussion of issues of formal and informal English learning, with a focus on Sweden. This will include outlining the challenge of motivating pupils in English classes in contexts of extensive extramural encounters with English. Also, relevant parts of the governing documents for the school subject of English in Sweden shall be discussed. The issues of creativity in general, and creative writing in particular, and references to these in the curricula and English syllabuses in Sweden are considered. Section 2.2 focuses on creative writing (on- and offline) in relation to English learning, motivation, and engagement. Also discussed in this section are changing views of creativity over time, and how creativity is changing as technology develops. Both sections 2.1 and 2.2 discuss studies of attempts to bridge the gap between formal and informal contexts. Section 2.1 focuses on Sweden in this respect, while section 2.2 reports more from international studies in relation to bridging the gap, with a focus on creative writing.

2.1 Formal and informal L2 learning

In this brief introduction to this section, I shall explain some terms that are useful in this thesis: these are L2 as well as formal and informal learning. L2 is used to refer to “any language learned later than the early childhood years” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 25). That is, L2 is a language acquired or studied later than the mother tongue, or first language, which can be referred to as L1. Learning of any language can be both formal and informal. Formal learning is organised within the context of educational institutions such as schools and is steered according to the requirements of curricula. In the case of Sweden, the national curricula are produced by the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket in Swedish). The national curricula contain learning aims and assessment criteria used in educational institutions to facilitate students’ formal learning. In contrast, as Sundqvist (2020) points out, “informal learning generally takes place outside such a context” (p. 323, italics in the
original). This understanding of *informal learning* supports Livingstone’s (2006) statement that “Informal learning is any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (p. 206). The idea that *informal learning* is non-curricular tallies with the *free-time*, or *extramural* English dealt with in this thesis.

Yet, Livingstone’s (2006) definition of *informal learning*, can be sharpened. The idea that learning is being ‘pursued’, which suggests that learning is the purpose of an informal activity, can be limiting. What if the learning might take place by accident, i.e., as an unintended by-product of a free-time activity which was *not* linked to a conscious pursuit of learning? An understanding that *informal learning* can include *unintended* learning is also useful for this thesis. Sundqvist (2009), in dealing with aspects of *informal learning* in a contemporary Swedish context, uses the term *extramural* to describe and include informal learning situations where “no degree of deliberate intention to acquire English is necessary on the part of the learner, even though deliberate intention is by no means excluded from the concept” (p. 25). In this sense, a pupil might write a story in L2 English for fun, and L2 *informal learning* might happen as an unintended by-product. Sundqvist (2009) demonstrated that Swedish year 9 pupils’ interactive engagement with extramural L2 English through computer gaming and reading enabled informal learning of vocabulary and increased oral proficiency.

Sundqvist’s (2009) term of *extramural* is a central term in this thesis and I use it synonymously with *free time* to refer to a time and/or place for creative writing activity outside the classroom or school, or outside school hours. Also, as *informal learning* is beyond the control of an externally imposed curriculum, other terms are relevant such as *free choice* and *agency* (Miller, 2010), and *autonomy* (Holec, 1981). These terms indicate the shift in control involved with moving beyond the settings of formal learning and curricula. Related to these terms, and a useful addition to understanding some of the empowerment that can be associated with informal learning, is the phrase *locus of control* (Benson, 2011, p. 12). The *locus of control* for *free-time* activities or tasks (also, *inactivity*) is in the hands of the pupil, not the schoolteacher. A motivation for the present study was the idea that teachers, who work with curricula and formal learning, ought to pay heed to the challenges and opportunities of informal learning.

The coming sections outline some aspects of formal and informal L2 English learning which are relevant to this thesis. This will include an explanation of aspects of the curricula in Sweden and syllabuses for English teaching. The two sections that follow (2.1.1 & 2.1.2) deal with these formal governing documents. There will be a particular focus on creativity and creative writing, but also issues related to motivation and engagement
2.1.1 Sweden’s curricula: Formally creative

School in Sweden is compulsory between the ages of seven and sixteen.\(^3\) English is taught as a mandatory subject from the pupils’ early years in school and is introduced earlier in the curriculum than any other language, apart from Swedish.\(^4\) In the autumn of the year when pupils reach 16, the clear majority go on to attend upper-secondary school for three more years. The first course of English at upper-secondary school is obligatory. Later courses in English are then studied only by pupils who attend university-preparatory programmes. Twice as many upper-secondary school pupils opt for these programmes compared to the vocational-training based programmes (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019b). English is a core subject for primary, secondary, and much of upper-secondary school in the Swedish curricula.

What is taught in schools, at all levels, is guided by the curricula, and what is taught in the subject of English is guided by the syllabuses. Of relevance for this thesis is that the term creativity is absent in the English syllabuses in Sweden, though it does appear in the wider curricula. Indeed, creativity, alongside play, forms the bedrock of what is seen to drive learning in the Swedish preschool system. The Swedish National Agency for Education has produced a guide to explain the main aspects of formal schooling in Sweden. Available in many languages, it is headed simply *This is the Swedish school system,* and it states:

> In preschool, the children are to be given the opportunity to develop and learn through play and creativity, both on their own, in groups and together with adults. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2020)

Yet, by the time the child goes to school, these twin pillars of play and creativity are not referred to again in the English subject syllabuses. Instead of creativity the word production is used (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013/2018, 2018a).\(^5\) Arguably, production is more synonymous with the realm of business and manufacturing than that of play and childhood (Pope, 2005). The word creativity does appear in the secondary school subject syllabus for Art. Also, the Swedish verb *skapa,* which means create, but with an artistic nuance, appears in the syllabuses for the subjects of Art and Swedish (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a).

According to the curriculum, the development of creativity in the pupil is an important role of the compulsory (primary and secondary) school. Under

\(^3\) A child in Sweden is usually able to attend pre-school, provided by the local authority, from the age of one year.

\(^4\) Secondary school pupils can choose to study another language, such as French, German or Spanish.

\(^5\) Creativity and production are translated from *kreativitet* and *produktion* in Swedish.
the heading Tasks of the school are the following statements which include creative or creativity:

In partnership with the home, the school should promote the all-round personal development of pupils into active, creative, competent and responsible individuals and citizens.

Creative and investigative activities and play are essential components of active learning. In the early years of schooling, play in particular is of great importance in helping pupils to acquire knowledge.

The school should stimulate pupils’ creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, as well as their desire to translate ideas into action and solve problems.

They should also be encouraged to try out and develop different modes of expression and experience emotions and moods. Drama, rhythm, dance, music and creativity in art, writing and design should all form part of the school’s activities. Creative ability is a part of what the pupils should acquire. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, pp. 7-9, my emphasis)

While creativity is repeatedly espoused in the curriculum of the primary and secondary school, it is mentioned only once in the curriculum of the upper-secondary school:

The school should stimulate students’ creativity, curiosity and self-confidence, as well as their desire to explore and transform new ideas into action, and find solutions to problems. Students should develop their ability to take initiatives and responsibility, and to work both independently and together with others. The school should contribute to students’ developing knowledge and attitudes that promote entrepreneurship, enterprise and innovative thinking. As a result the opportunities for students to start and run a business will increase. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2013/2018, pp. 5-6, my emphasis)⁶

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⁶ The reference provided is for the English language version of the curriculum for the upper-secondary school in Sweden, published in 2013. The curriculum was updated in 2018 to include additions regarding digitalisation. Changes were implemented to the English syllabuses (amongst other subjects) for upper-secondary school in the autumn term of 2021, and are to be implemented for secondary school in the autumn term of 2022. These changes do not alter the fact that the terms creativity, and creative writing are not used in the English syllabuses. The Swedish National Agency for Education’s website states that “The goal of the revision is that the syllabuses shall be a better tool for teachers.... The criteria for teaching and assessment shall provide better support when teachers grade and assess.” (https://www.skolverket.se/omoss/var-verksamhet/skolverkets-prioriterade-omraden/reviderade-kurs--och-amnesplaner/vi-8
Creativity, in the above extract, is used in a commercial, rather than an aesthetic, context. There can be room for innovation, which is synonymous with creativity, but there is a business and entrepreneurial focus. Nevertheless, the term creativity is present in the curricula, one might even say that it is prevalent in the curriculum for the primary and secondary school. So, it is rather strange, perhaps, that creativity is not used at all in the English syllabuses, in Sweden.

2.1.2 The English subject syllabuses

If the term creativity is notable for its absence in the English syllabuses in the Swedish school system, the term communication is notable for its presence. Communication is a central concept of the syllabuses for English in Sweden (Lundahl, 2019). For example, the syllabus for secondary school states, as an aim, that “through teaching, pupils should be given the opportunity to develop all-round communicative skills. These skills involve understanding spoken and written English, being able to…. adapt use of language to different situations” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 34). In the syllabuses for English, listening and reading are termed reception. The syllabuses require that a variety of genres of texts are used for reception, and pupils need to learn to “adapt” spoken and written output for “different situations”. The Swedish National Agency for Education produce ‘commentary material’ to explain the thinking and intention that lies behind the syllabuses. For example, one such ‘commentary’ document explains the meaning of genre:

Genre refers to a type of text or presentation, typified by particular features of form or content, which often have a particular use. Business letters, recipes, podcasts, romantic comedies and comic strips are some examples of genre. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017, p. 13, my translation)

Genre, as outlined above, accords with the idea of how language is adapted according to the context and purpose of communication. Spoken and written output, and adaptation, on the part of the pupils, is termed production in the syllabuses. I referred to the absence of creativity in the syllabuses in the previous section, but it is useful to discuss this further.

Of course, the absence of the word creativity does not mean that creativity, as a concept, is not recommended in the syllabuses. After all, a rose by any other name smells just as sweet, as Juliet declared – wishing that Romeo’s
surname was of no matter. Indeed, the syllabuses suggest that stories be read in class, and these are creative works. For example, the syllabus for secondary school states that input, or reception, is to include songs, poems, oral stories, drama, and film (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 37). Similarly, for upper-secondary school, the syllabus instructs that “literature and other fiction” ought to be read (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 3). Hult (2017) argues that there is room in the upper-secondary English syllabus for teachers to provide a great deal of varied, creative input to inspire and educate:

The syllabus creates space for a potentially broad scope of source materials ranging from the British and American literary canon to post-colonial literature, graphic novels, and fanfiction, from classic films to YouTube clips, and from major international newspapers to grassroots citizen journalism. (Hult, 2017, p. 271)

The variety of materials that can be used for reception, as input, indicates how the syllabus is far from overly prescriptive. Such a lack of limitation allows the scope of the subject to be wide ranging, with much room for creativity.7

There is also ‘space’, in what the syllabuses advocate, for creativity in the pupil’s written and spoken output. For example, the syllabus at secondary level lists different types of texts to be produced by the pupils, which include “oral and written narratives, descriptions, and instructions” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 37). Of relevance for this thesis is that such criteria can be taken to implicitly include creative writing. “Narratives” are synonymous with stories, and so there is ‘space’ for a teacher to invite pupils to write them. Also, the syllabus’ invitation to produce “descriptions” can be picked up by a teacher to develop an ability in a class to work with imagery, for example. Yet, it is open for discussion about why creative writing is not spelt out explicitly, and in more detail. Why not include an encouragement to write poetry, for example? Arguably, the older the pupil, the more the syllabuses point the way toward more factual writing and away from creative writing. For example, the word “descriptions” that, as I stated earlier, is present in the secondary syllabus’ production recommendations, is absent from the list for output at upper-secondary level, but the word “instruction” remains (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 4).

7 The idea that English can be a wide-ranging school subject is not a new idea. The potential breadth of the English subject was asserted by the UK Government’s Newbolt Report of 1921. This report established English at the core of the curriculum in England, where English was described as a subject which: “connotes the discovery of the world by the first and most direct way open to us, and the discovery of ourselves…. For the writing of English is essentially an art, and the effect of English Literature, in education, is the effect of art upon the development of the human character” (Department Committee of the Board of Education, 1921, p. 20).
There are discussions that point to the different ideologies that lie behind the shaping of the formulations in the governing documents. Despite the largely positive appraisal of Hult (2017), there is some criticism of the norms which are promoted. Lundahl (2019) refers to a “tension between steering by state and local freedom” (p. 22, my translation). Another commentator, Liedman (2011), was concerned that changes to the curricula, carried out in 2011, occurred when phenomena, such as ‘New Public Management’ and ‘time management’, pressurised schools to be efficient according to the criteria of commerce (p. 71). Liedman (2011) suggested that teachers were encouraged to boil teaching down to what could easily be measured and quantified, and that this took place in a context of shrinking time and resources. It is possible to consider the syllabuses through the lens of Liedman’s criticism. Arguably, written “instructions” might be easier to assess than “descriptions” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 4). Could instructions be more factual than descriptions and have clearer stages to measure and grade? Or do they have more to do with the world of work and business? It is also interesting to note the order of genres named in the commentary material, referred to earlier in this section, which listed “business letters” first and “comic strips” last (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2017, p. 13, my translation). This suggests a ranking in line with Liedman’s (2011) accusation that the demands of commerce were to the fore.

Nevertheless, the freedom from over-preservation in the syllabuses for English, as indicated by Hult (2017), means that there is ‘room for manoeuvre’ for the teacher to be creative in the planning of lessons and schemes of work. This room for teachers to make choices, take initiatives, and even limit governmental control or restriction, is what Hornberger (2005) refers to as “ideological and implementational spaces” (p. 605). These “spaces” can, in turn, open the way for pupils to be creative. Room for creativity is enhanced by the way in which the scale of the English language, and thereby, the school subject, is acknowledged in the governing documents. From the very start, in the opening comments of the syllabuses, the scope of English is made clear:

The English language surrounds us in our daily lives and is used in such diverse areas as politics, education and economics. Knowledge of English thus increases the individual’s opportunities to participate in different social and cultural contexts, as well as in international studies and working life. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 34)

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8 I think that assessment of ‘instructions’ can be more straightforward than assessment of ‘descriptions’, especially when description moves into more ‘poetic’ areas, such as imagery, in creative writing. Nevertheless, I want to emphasise that assessment of creative writing is possible. Indeed, criteria is available for assessment of creative writing in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020).
Knowledge of English can also provide new perspectives on the surrounding world, enhanced opportunities to create contacts, and greater understanding of different ways of living. (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 1)

Here, the subject of English is presented in a positive light, as one with opportunities, presumably many of them creative, in terms of input and output – for reception and production. It is noteworthy, that in the first of the two extracts above (from the secondary school syllabus), participation in “social and cultural contexts” is referred to, as well as academic and work contexts.

Similarly, Hult (2017) maintains a largely positive view of the upper-secondary syllabus, particularly when he states: “the subject of English is framed in ways that tend to align with contemporary scholarly perspectives on English” (p. 278). Certainly, the globalisation of English is acknowledged in the syllabus, so that there are no references to British or American English. Instead, the upper-secondary school syllabus refers to “parts of the world where English is used” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 2). The secondary school syllabus does not refer to a country specifically, but rather “different areas and contexts where English is used” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 35), and Hult (2017) points out that there is scope in the syllabus for pupils to reflect on how English is used in Swedish contexts (p. 270). Hult (2017) paints a favourable picture of a syllabus which is up to date with a contemporary research-based understanding of global English, and this adds to what he sees as freedom for the teacher to introduce a wide array of source materials for study.

Despite the positive claims by Hult (2017), the absence of the term creativity in the syllabus is, nevertheless, in contrast with its presence in the curricula. More specifically relevant to this thesis is the absence of the term creative writing: its absence from the English syllabuses in Sweden contrasts with its presence in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020). The Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket) has previously translated and jointly published the CEFR, together with the Council of Europe, and included creative writing as an element of what is considered to be written production. Furthermore, the document also includes assessment descriptors specifically for creative writing (Council of Europe/Skolverket, 2007, p. 63). Yet, the term creative writing is absent from any syllabus for English in Sweden currently in use, or currently planned to be in use. This point applies to both the changed syllabuses of July 2021 and July 2022 for upper-secondary school and secondary school respectively (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2021, 2022).

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9 The original document referred to here is in Swedish and so the term creative writing is written in Swedish – kreativt skrivande.
Another dissonance between the English syllabuses in Sweden and the CEFR is that the CEFR now highlights the process that occurs between the reading of creative texts and the way a written response can result from such reading (Council of Europe, 2020). The CEFR includes descriptors to aid assessment of written personal expressions as a response to creative texts (Council of Europe, 2020, pp. 106-107). However, there are indications that the advocated reading of creative texts, and thereby the potential to respond to them in writing, has increased, if slightly, in the new English syllabus to be implemented for the first year of upper-secondary school in Sweden. Although the term creative texts has not been used in the syllabuses for 2021/2022, it is noteworthy that “songs and poems” have been added to the reception, or input, recommendations, for the first year course, in the new upper-secondary syllabus (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2021). Their appearance in the syllabus, as a recommendation for reading and listening, may be a step toward teachers inviting their pupils to write songs and poems.

Regarding the syllabuses for English, creativity is not the only issue of relevance for the present study. This thesis is also concerned with motivation and engagement in relation to creative writing. The syllabuses for English contain formulations which touch on both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Extrinsic motivation relates to external rewards and can be facilitated by the grading system included in the syllabuses. However, the syllabuses also demand a motivational role of the teacher in the subject that will hopefully spark the pupil’s intrinsic motivation. This type of motivation is based on the idea that learning a language can be interesting and enjoyable in and of itself (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). In the syllabus for English, for primary and secondary school, an onus is placed on the teacher to “encourage an interest in languages and culture, and convey the benefits of language skills and knowledge” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 34). The syllabus requires that the teaching aims to stimulate the pupils’ interest in the subject (the Swedish term used is stimulera). This points to an expectation that effort, and imagination, is put into planning and practice, by the teacher, in order to capture pupils’ attention, and maintain their engagement.

It is noteworthy that the term stimulate is not used in the syllabus for upper-secondary school, and phrases such as “English teaching should aim at helping students to develop” and “students should be given the opportunity” indicate a mentoring and facilitating role for the teacher (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 1). Attendance at upper-secondary schools is not compulsory in Sweden, and perhaps an expectation of a greater intrinsic motivation is implied by the lack of a requirement to “stimulate” the pupils’ interest. This understanding of the different needs of younger secondary school pupils, in relation to those who are older and in upper-secondary school, can also be seen in the way the secondary school syllabus spells out the need to relate content to the interests of the children themselves. That is, for pupils aged between 12-16, at secondary school, the teacher is advised that appropriate “content of communication” includes: “current subject areas familiar to the
pupils. Interests, everyday situations…. Views, experiences, emotions and plans for the future” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 36). However, for the older pupil at upper-secondary school, the syllabus demands that the content is “functional and meaningful” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018b, p. 1).

An understanding of the governing documents is useful in outlining a context for formal L2 English learning in Sweden, but a key issue that lies behind this study is that the formal learning arena is being challenged by informal learning. Sundqvist (2009) demonstrates that learning takes place outside the class walls, extramurally, and that the educational institutions representing formal learning need to pay heed to it.

### 2.1.3 A growth in informal engagement with English

Young people in Sweden have increasing opportunities to use and learn English informally, in their free time, aided by the technological developments of the digital age. Technology’s relation to language is nothing new; Shakespeare’s works, for example, which have entertained and fascinated generations, were written in a time of rapid technological progress, according to Smith (2019), who states:

> Shakespeare lived and wrote in a world that was on the move, and in which new technologies transformed perceptions of that world…. The Telescope, in the work of Galileo and other astronomers, brought the ineffably distant into the span of human comprehension, and theatre tried to process the cultural implications of these changes. (Smith, 2019, p. 3)

In Shakespeare’s time, not only did the language of drama expand and respond to increased understanding, underpinned by technological developments, but also the printing press and printed books were relatively new, and opened new vistas for literacy (Hiscock, 2017). Though born several centuries later than Shakespeare and Galileo (both 1564), the pupils interviewed for this thesis have also been born into a world that is moving rapidly in terms of technological changes. Distant countries which were once difficult and expensive to communicate with are now just a free, or relatively cheap, click away. Pupils today have their own new tools for access to immense amounts of information, and global digital publication. Thus, the technology of the digital and internet age opens new vistas for L2 English learning – informally and formally.

The technological revolution of the internet permits a whole new behaviour pattern in terms of leisure activities, and even lifestyle. The Swedish Media Council (2019) reported average use of the internet, for over 25% of 17- and 18-year-olds, to exceed six hours a day. Indeed, the length of time spent on
the internet leads the Council’s director, Anette Novak, to pose the following question in the foreword to the report:

If the development continues and if we no longer feel that media use is an activity, but rather that it becomes life itself, then questions are raised of an almost philosophical or ethical character: Is there a boundary between digital and real life? (Novak, 2019, p. 3)

That such a question can be posed is an indicator of the scale of the technological changes, and their lifestyle repercussions. Novak (2019) adds that the only certainty of intensive digital use is that “we do not know the long-term consequences, if they are positive or negative” (p. 3, my translation). One certainty, at least, is that the English language has become heavily used by some Swedish youth. Olsson’s (2011) thesis, which examined the impact of extra-mural English on Swedish 16-year-old pupils’ writing proficiency, included a pupil’s declaration in the title: “Everything I read on the internet is in English”. These informal online encounters with English can overlap into informal language learning. Indeed, Ushioda (2011) writes of a role reversal between pupils and teachers in L2 education where pupils more familiar with the potential and use of digital technologies can rise rapidly to expert, rather than novice, status and learn online.

The arrival of the internet, hand-held devices, and other earlier media and communication developments such as satellite TV and MTV have coincided with a rise in the global use of English, and a resultant cultural impact. Crystal (2008) suggested, at the time of his writing, that the number of global speakers of English was heading toward two billion. The scale of this figure was presumably felt to be so huge that Crystal uses the title of his article as an aid to comprehension, with the billions put into more familiar figures: Two thousand million? Crystal (2008) adds that, over the preceding 25 years, the proportion of English speakers had risen, from a fifth, to a third of the overall global population (p. 5). Most of the world’s speakers of English are not native speakers and this has led to a growth of global Englishes, driven by a complex and dynamic process of transcultural flows which involve a creative resistance (Pennycook, 2006). Creative resistance refers to the ways that differences in Englishes can be created in response to societal, cultural, and political flows. Pennycook (2006) writes:

When we look at the global spread of English in relation to the global spread of subcultural style, then, this can also be seen in terms of an emergence of English from below, of the wilder shores of English bubbling up into everyday life. (Pennycook, 2006, p. 2)

Many Swedish youth have been caught up in what is referred to in the above extract as a “global spread”. This spread of English lies behind the terms Swenglish or Svengelska, used to describe English used by Swedes. It might
be argued that Swenglish is a developmental stage on the road to high proficiency in English by Swedes. However, the globalisation of English is so well established that Modiano (2017) suggests that second language users of English, amongst whom he includes many Swedes, can “claim ownership” of the language (p. 363).

The term *ownership* in relation to L2 language skills suggests mastery, confidence, expertise, a lack of deference and even a license to be creative and inventive. What this *ownership* might fully entail in terms of the growth and impact of English, in a Swedish context, is still being grappled with. Henry (2019) argues that the prevalence of English in daily life, usage, and aspiration means that English is embodied in pupils’ very identities (p. 24). Henry uses the idea of *lingua emotiva* (Phillipson, 2009) to describe the free-time English used by young Swedes. As a *lingua emotiva*, English becomes involved with individuals’ verbalising of emotional understanding, due to English transmitting the emotional and cultural references of popular culture. When Phillipson (2009) uses the term *lingua emotiva*, he does so alongside the term *lingua cultura*, in the sense of a global language of popular culture, which frames identities and provides references for emotional understandings. Phillipson (2009) points to the “70%+ of films on TV and cinemas” from Hollywood and labels the youth as “Coca-colonised, and more familiar with U.S. products and norms than others” (p. 336). Henry (2019e) states that “English shapes and conditions the ways in which young people see themselves in a globalized world” (p. 24) – a comment in accordance with Phillipson’s (2009) thinking.

The development of the internet and of computer games has arguably increased the ability of young people to engage with this *lingua emotiva*. Henry (2019e) adds:

> Encountered in activities that are stimulating and entertaining, for many children the attractiveness of the language and the desire to be able to use it for self-expression can fuel high-speed acquisition processes. For older children and young people – particularly those who are engaged in on-line activities that take up significant proportions of their leisure time such as digital gaming and fanfiction writing, and which involve high levels of creativity and the development of genre-specific knowledge and skills – encounters with English take place in contexts that are highly identity congruent. (Henry, 2019e, p. 29)

That such increased interactive engagement with English has helped boost learning, as described by Henry, is also supported by Sundqvist (2009). She found that the more interactive the *extramural* English, the greater the impact on English learning. For learners’ development of oral proficiency and vocabulary, playing video games, surfing the internet, and reading were “more important for learners’ English than listening to music, watching TV, or films”
(Sundqvist, 2009, p. 203). The use of the internet has certainly had repercussions for use of the English language in free time by Swedish youth, and this has consequences for the school subject of English.

2.1.4 Extramural English – a professional challenge

Pupils who are engaged with extramural English can be less engaged in school English lessons. Henry (2019e) states that in the case of pupils “who have confidence in their skills (and the manner in which they have been developed), providing motivational teaching constitutes a major professional challenge” (p. 33). In this section, I explain this ‘professional challenge’ further.

A challenge facing formal education is the disengagement of pupils who are confident in English and feel assured that they can get their English in ways other than via the teacher – in their free time. Olsson (2011), a language teacher in Sweden, was able to reflect over how her pupils learned French in comparison to English. She could follow her pupils’ progress in the subject of French and could see it was in relation to her own teacher input. Yet, her English teaching was in the shadow of pupils’ informal learning, so that her 16-year-old pupils “amazed” her with their fluency in English, and she added:

The two hours of English provided by school every week could hardly explain the level of some pupils’ proficiency; it seems likely that they have also benefitted from contacts with the language outside of school. This group of pupils seems slightly bored at school; it is not always easy to create challenging English lessons on different levels at the same time. (Olsson, 2011, p. 1)

Indeed, the level of proficiency in L2 English in Sweden is particularly strong: In a report on pupils’ language development across Europe, Sweden was seen to be ahead of all the other European countries in English (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012). The report’s authors pointed out that the formal education system was not able to take the credit for these results, but that encounters with English out of school aided performance in English (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2012, p. 44). Only one year before this report came out, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate’s report on English teaching stated that the majority of lessons were “easy” for some pupils and offered “few challenges” (2011, p. 6, my translation).

For the many pupils who are learning English through informal opportunities, English lessons in school can sometimes fail to offer a fully rewarding and positively challenging experience. Part of the difficulty for Olsson (2011), in planning lessons which challenged her pupils, was that she was not the only facilitator of English learning for her pupils. If she had been their only source for English learning lesson planning might have been more straightforward; she would have known what she had taught in their last lesson and exactly
how that ought to lead to the next challenge. However, many pupils in Sweden have reached a high proficiency level because they have learnt English outside of their class in informal ways – ways that might be unknown to the teacher.

Nevertheless, the Swedish Schools Inspectorate’s report (2011) suggested that the authentic English which pupils said they engaged with, and understood, outside of school, ought to be seen as an opportunity to be seized. The report’s authors argued that free-time English, such as film dialogue or song lyrics, was not used enough in school; they emphasised the need to bridge the gap between two cultures, in and outside of school (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011). The absence of authentic English left classes rather bereft, according to the report, which stated:

Many lessons have a plan based on textbooks and the tasks which the pupils are to complete are usually the same for all pupils. They work a good deal but without great enthusiasm in many lessons. (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 6, my translation)

The report concluded that a lack of challenge, and a lack of the authentic English which many pupils were familiar with out-of-school, needed to be resolved with extreme urgency (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011, p. 8).¹⁰

2.1.5 Widely different proficiency levels

Not only is the need to bridge the gap between extramural English and the school subject a challenge for teachers of English in Sweden, another is the potentially wide gap in proficiency levels in a class (Olsson, 2011; Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011). The differences in proficiency levels can be extreme. On the one hand, for those pupils who spend many hours online, actively using English, proficiency might be such that English can be considered as “an additional language that a child or young person might acquire on a parallel basis to their first language (L1)” (Henry, 2019e, p. 29). Indeed, one of the Swedish secondary school pupils Henry interviewed described their English as a “second mother tongue” (Henry, 2019b, p. 29, my translation). On the other hand, there may well be pupils in a classroom who have low proficiency levels in English, who might feel low in confidence in the subject and possibly compare themselves with many of their fellow pupils (those learning English out-of-school) who may seem far ahead of them in terms of levels and achievement. In such a situation of extreme mixed proficiency, the

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¹⁰ It ought to be noted that the report on English as a subject by the Swedish Schools Inspectorate (2011) does refer to evidence of some successful lessons, though only 23 out of 293 received the top grade of “mostly strong” (p. 7, my translation).
teacher’s task to motivate, engage and challenge all pupils is far from straightforward. It requires differentiation (Haydey, 2009) beyond the one-size-fits-all lesson planning which so concerned the authors of the inspection report referred to earlier (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011).

This wide span of proficiency in English in Swedish secondary schools is reflected in the final grades. The national results of spring 2019 reveal that 7% of all pupils who took part in the English examinations failed to reach a pass standard (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019a). That is, their English level was assessed to be such that they were unable to “understand the main content and clear details spoken at a moderate pace and in basic texts” and/or that they were unable to “express themselves simply, and understandably and relatively coherently” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 39). However, 22% of all pupils who took the same examination were awarded the highest grade of A (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2019a). An A grade in Sweden is awarded to pupils deemed to “express themselves with ease”, amongst other criteria (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 41). The amount of A grade attainers in English is higher than for any other subject taken by most pupils in Sweden.

These results offer an indication of the widely different proficiency levels of the pupils, in English. The fail rates show that not all pupils are learning enough English, either informally or formally, to achieve a pass in English at the end of secondary school. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that all pupils are given the best possible chance to succeed. In a context where many pupils are encountering and learning English in informal situations, the classroom can have pupils who find English lessons too easy, sitting alongside those who find English too difficult. It is the task of the L2 English teacher to support, challenge and motivate all pupils.

2.1.6 Bridging the gap between in-class and free-time English

Many teachers have tried, and are trying, to rise to the challenge of ensuring that pupils who are motivated to be active with extramural English also have a school subject of English that motivates them. As I highlighted in the introductory chapter, the research project Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTiSSE) analysed the factors at work in classroom teaching adapted to the particular demands of pupils who have extensive extramural

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11 Original bold face. These particular quotes are taken from the criteria for a grade E for year 9, the final grade of secondary school.
12 Only pupils who studied their first language (L1), or mother tongue, if it was other than Swedish, had a higher proportion of A grades than were awarded in the subject of English.
encounters with English (Henry et al., 2019). In this section, I will further outline some of the successful practice, and difficulties, associated with bridging the gap, which were reported by the MoTiSSE project (Henry et al., 2019). The MoTiSSE project consisted of studies based on observations, interviews and documentary data of sixteen English teachers (Thorsen, 2019, p. 92). The teachers’ lesson planning had to meet certain criteria in order for them to be selected for the study: planning had to be built on an interest/awareness of their pupils’ use of free-time English and offer pupils “rich opportunities to use the English they have learnt outside school when working in the classroom” (Henry & Thorsen, 2019, p. 110).

The MoTiSSE project is highly relevant for this thesis because it demonstrated that English lessons involving creativity and creative writing were motivating and engaging (Thorsen, 2019, p. 101). Yet, although I point to creativity and creative writing, it is important to emphasise that this is only a part (though an important one) of the multi-faceted role of the motivational teachers highlighted in the study. The project’s findings show the crucial role of the teacher in developing “the motivational bedrock of mutually enriching teacher-student relationships” and “classrooms in which there existed a positive social and emotional climate” (Henry, 2019a, p. 289). Upon this foundation, in this positive climate, a motivational and engaging English school subject can be built, which can include activities based on creativity, and, sometimes, creative writing. Some of the classroom activities involved creative aspects which overlapped with other themes, such as “identity work and personal expression”, “opportunities to carry out relevant actions in meaningful ways”, and “the chance to work in a manner bridging between English in and outside of the classroom” (Henry, 2019a, p. 289).

The MoTiSSE project highlights many motivational activities and I shall focus here on a few examples of relevance for this thesis. In year 6, in one new class, the pupils were asked to write *The Book About Me*, which Henry (2019 b) describes as a “low-risk self-disclosure activity which is directed to

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13 The term *out-of-school* is used by the MoTiSSE project itself. The project has a website: https://www.hv.se/forskning/forskningsprojekt/barn-o-ch-ungdomar/motivational-teaching-in-swedish-secondary-english-motisse2/

14 In total there were eighteen school teachers involved in the MoTiSSE project, as two were co-teachers — and sixteen were English teachers. It can be noted here too that in Sweden, the secondary teacher often teaches two subjects. In this project, the teachers mostly taught the subject of Swedish, as well as English (Henry & Thorsen, 2019, pp. 111-112).

15 The teachers whose lessons were studied in the MoTiSSE project are not the only ones who are seeking to ensure that the gap is bridged. Many English teachers in Sweden share ideas and discuss their professional challenges through channels like Facebook, in a rather ironic twist of using informal means (voluntary social media use) to discuss a formal setting (the L2 English classroom) that is challenged by informal developments (pupils’ free time use of English). The Facebook group *Engelska i åk 6-9* (*English in secondary grades 6-9*, my translation) was formed in 2014 by teachers Sara Bruun, Annika Sjödahl, and Mia Smith. The group has 7,300 members (S. Bruun, personal communication, 29 June 2020). A similar group for upper-secondary school exists, with 1,300 members, as of 29 June 2020.

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relationship building” (p. 139). Henry (2019b) points out that the written texts of *The Book about Me* were to be accompanied by drawings and that pupils were encouraged to be “as artistic as possible” (p. 139). The written task culminated in a question about “dreams about the future”, as a stimulus to imagination (p. 140). \(^{16}\) While this work was carried out in a class which was still at a level of getting to know each other, Henry (2019b) describes how a more established class, where relationships were firmer, first read and discussed a text called *Life after Life* and:

were then asked to work with the theme of a life that might exist beyond a person’s natural lifespan, and to do this using a form of expression of their own choosing. Specifically, students were given the freedom to express their ideas using an aesthetic medium that they wanted to use, or felt comfortable trying out. In the class where the activity was carried out, students chose to create personal narratives, comic strips, short stories and poems. Several students created scripted and improvised dramas, which were then video recorded. (Henry, 2019b, p. 153)

Here we see a great deal of creativity, which can be expressed in multimodal ways (Kress, 2003) that include creative writing; the task also offers room for agency (Miller, 2010) and autonomy (Holec, 1981). Henry (2019b) points out that freedom of expression allows for pupils’ own identity to be connected to the task, in ways they can develop themselves. The *MoTiSSE* project is not a longitudinal study, but classes with different ages at secondary level were observed. Thus, it was possible to see differences in teacher input as well as pupil engagement, and output, according to the length of time pupils had been in a secondary school. For example, an introductory assignment of creating *The Book about Me* could be observed, as well as activities for older pupils, such as the existential questions of the task following the reading of *Life after Life*. \(^{17}\) According to Henry (2019b), classes in the *MoTiSSE* project show pupils able to work with “existential aspects of identity”, with activities which “create connections between an inner dimension of the student’s sense of self, and the social community within the classroom” (Henry, 2019b, p. 152, italics in the original). Such connections, if they exist, between a pupil’s inner-self and their peers, suggest a deep and profound engagement in class.

Motivational lessons had authentic materials as input – these were defined as “cultural artefacts produced for a purpose other than teaching” (Henry, 2019a, p. 76). The authentic material “included songs, music videos,

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\(^{16}\) Henry (2019b) refers later in the chapter (p. 152) to the concept of future or possible selves (Dörnyei, 2009) in relation to motivation too.

\(^{17}\) Henry’s (2019b) analysis of the motivational and engaging processes at work in these classes, where existential issues are raised, draws on the work of Kristjánsson (2013). Both Kristjánsson (2013) and Henry (2019b) draw on the work of Stevick (1980).
YouTube clips, blogs, internet news sites, films, short stories, poems and online audiobooks” (p. 76). In one study under the MoTiSSE project’s umbrella, where 112 motivational activities were analysed, only one activity involved use of a textbook (Henry, Korp, Sundqvist, & Thorsen, 2018, p. 258). It should be noted that even though the activity started with reading an article in a textbook (about plastic surgery), this was then followed by an authentic internet search about the topic. The study found that motivational input was based on authentic materials or teacher-created materials. In terms of output, creativity could often be online, in multimodal forms, where there could be an authentic audience (Thorsen, 2019, p. 101). The findings of the study by Henry et al. (2018) also show that “personal relevance and choice” are motivational for L2 learning in Swedish “contexts of extensive extramural encounters” (p. 282).

Teachers in the MoTiSSE project reported that other factors that contributed to the creation of a motivational environment included “creating positive relationships, creating security and self-confidence, providing validation and being sensitive” (Henry et al., 2019, p. 113). The type of relationships between teachers and pupils, as observed in the project, accord with the notion of a community of learners (Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996) with “active learners and more skilled partners” (p. 388) suggesting a close and participatory approach. A teacher needs to be ‘skilled’ and ‘sensitive’ to bridge the gap, between the safety and familiarity of informal learning, and the formality of school. Erixon (2004) referred to a “dualism” between the writing of school and private lives and described resolving this as “not unproblematic” (pp. 131-132). Henry (2019a) highlights the dangers, when attempting to bridge the gap, of clumsily asking pupils to bring their personal and private matters into the classroom as it “maybe considered unnecessary encroachment”, or the planned activity may be seen as “lacking credibility”, and therefore not motivational (p. 300). He also highlights how investment and engagement, on the part of a pupil, could lead to situations of discomfort if activities are not responded to in ways a pupil is able to deal with, and they could feel violated or distressed.\(^\text{18}\) Moreover, Henry (2019a) underlines the importance of “maintaining integrity” and “safety in self-disclosure” as pupils need to be have control of what information they reveal about themselves, and how such information is shared (pp. 307-309). Finally, the MoTiSSE project points to a place for creative writing, in a multimodal creative context, as part of a formal practice that is motivational and engaging. The project shows how complex the teacher’s role is, and emphasises the need to be alert to the voices of the pupils, in order to ensure the quality of teaching.

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\(^{18}\) Henry (2019a) reports from an activity where a pupil was asked to go with his group on an imaginary holiday, but the response suggested that the pupil was uncomfortable with that idea. In response to this type of potential scenario a number of prompts as design guides are proposed to aid seeing the task from the position of the student, with empathy, and to also allow for resistance by the student (pp. 303-7).
While this section has examined some issues of formal and informal learning, with a focus on Sweden, the next section will consider further issues of creativity and creative writing in relation to formal and informal learning of English, on a global scale. Research into motivation and engagement, in relation to creative writing and L2 learning, will also be highlighted, as will efforts to ensure formal education is not left behind by the opportunities offered for informal learning, in a digital age.

2.2 Creative writing and English learning

This section will focus on previous research and thinking in relation to creative writing and English learning. Issues of motivation and engagement, as they pertain to creative writing and learning, will be examined too. While L2 English Learning is central in this thesis, there is also a need to include issues related to L1 English learning. Already, in section 2.1, I reported on a Swedish secondary school pupil interviewed by Henry (2019b) who considered their English to be like a second mother tongue. Also Sylvén (2018), in her study of two young sisters in Sweden who are heavily involved in extramural English activities, uses the term of self-selected bilingualism to describe examples of this second mother tongue development. Such language learning opens the need for a researcher in L2 English education, in Sweden, to have an internationalist approach – an approach as global as the pupils are. Thus, L1 and L2 research has been included in this background section. Indeed, a consideration of L1 and L2 studies is necessary if one is to pay heed to the way young people interact online through English, whether they have an L1 or L2 English connection.

Also, this section will consider some motivational and engaging aspects of creative writing related to language learning pre- and post- internet, on- and offline, in and out of school. Section 2.2.1 will focus on studies demonstrating the ability of formal educational institutions (or at least individual teachers) to use creative writing for engagement, motivation, and English language learning. Section 2.2.2 looks at the way views of the term creativity have changed over time and how, even recently, the term has created some disagreement. Section 2.2.3 discusses the role of new technologies in opening access to creative production, as well as how understanding of creativity is being changed. These new understandings are then discussed in relation to the ancient term imitatio in section 2.2.4, which highlights the intrinsic relation of creative writing to reading. Section 2.2.5 outlines the development of online fanfiction and section 2.2.6 covers its potential for language learning. The possibilities and challenges of using fanfiction, along with other aspects of writing associated with extramural English, in formal learning situations, are analysed in section 2.2.7.
2.2.1 Creative writing: Motivational and engaging L2 learning

Creative writing can be motivational and engaging in ways that enrich language learning. Before outlining some of the studies that indicate this, I shall look again at what is meant by the term creative writing. In the introduction chapter, I cited Maley’s (2013) definition of creative writing as text that “deals less in facts than in the imaginative representation of emotions, events, characters, and experience” (p. 162). Creative writing is so various that I lean on Maley’s (2013) approach of highlighting what it is not, so as to clarify what it is. This approach is based on a useful contrast between creative writing and expository writing – that is, writing to inform or explain for a pragmatic purpose. As Maley (2013) states:

> When writing an expository text we are essentially instrumentally motivated. We have a quantum of facts, ideas and opinions to put across…. The aim of expository writing is to be logical, consistent and impersonal and to convey the content as unambiguously as possible to the reader. (Maley, 2013, p. 162)

For Maley (2013), the avoidance of ambiguity in expository writing contrasts with the way creative writing can be “open to multiple interpretations” (p. 162). Creative writing is made with a “unique combination of thought and feeling” and “can evoke sensations” in the reader (Maley, 2013, p. 162). Something creative writing has in common with expository writing, for Maley (2013), is that it is a product of discipline, but the discipline associated with expository writing is aided by the external rules of a genre while creative writing is driven by the writer’s “inner discipline”, and can be freer to challenge genre rules (p. 162).

Yet in wanting to define creative writing, there is a risk of being too categorical. In fairness, it is useful to consider expository and creative writing as being apart from each other on a connecting spectrum, rather than divided by impermeable barriers. Yes, there are differences between the two: expository writing includes texts such as scientific and technical reports, while creative writing includes stories, comic strips, poems, and song lyrics. But there can surely be a crossover with some texts such as blogs or autobiography, or persuasive writing? An entirely new scientific concept might only be understood through use of an imaginative metaphor or analogy – aspects of creative writing might, in this way, be drawn into expository writing. I stated in the introductory chapter that all writing can be seen as creative, in the sense that something new is made in the act of writing, and expository writing can cause sensations in the reader too. I think here of scientific writing about climate change, for example, and how one might respond as a reader – logically and with feeling. Also, as creative writing can come “in a variety of text types”
(Council of Europe, 2020, p. 67) it needs to be noted that some creative writing genres can have strict rules for form.

In a study of Indonesian students learning L2 English, Tin (2011) found that “engaging in creative play tasks with high formal constraints could initiate the emergence of complex language” (p. 215). The formal constraints in this case were those imposed by the challenge and demands of acrostic poetry. Tin’s (2011) study indicated a paradoxical relationship between creativity, in terms of invention on the part of the students, and the tight, fixed demands of the highly restrictive form of the acrostic poem.

In another study, Wang (2019) used a series of creative writing tasks with secondary-school pupils. The pupils reported that the exercises “facilitated their English skills, creative thinking, classroom participation, and interaction” (Wang, 2019, p. 58). The majority of the creative writing tasks were connected with advertising tasks, serving as a reminder of a crossover between and commercial advertising and creative writing (Marshall, 1999). These studies by Wang (2019) and Tin (2011) add to what Maley (1987) describes as the way in which creative writing tasks afford “a sandpit where guiltless children can try out their constructions” (p. 94). In other words, opportunities for play and experimentation contribute to enjoyment of creative writing activities in language learning.

Several studies point to the motivational and engaging aspects of creative writing programmes. Here, I will look at studies by Symonette (2018), Arshavskaya (2015), and Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017) from the USA. Symonette’s (2018) study involved 75 grade 10-11 students of color at a Miami school, who completed a year-long creative writing class in place of their standard programme of English language arts education. As a result of the creative writing-based input, students gained improved writing skills and growth mindset skills (p. 91). Growth mindset is a term used by Dweck (2006) to refer to how an individual needs to see the relationship between their own efforts and their potential for development. That students benefit from creative writing in areas linked to personal development, as well as academic performance, serves to indicate how rich the motivations, and rewards, for creative writing engagement can be. The school featured in the study was in an economically deprived area where, according to Symonette:

In addition to having to master academic content, the students coped with social injustices, such as sexual abuse, sexual definition issues, homelessness, violence, parental drug addiction, mental illnesses, and suicide. (Symonette, 2018, p. 59)

19 The term students of color is taken from Symonette’s (2018) text.
20 Language arts is a term used for the teaching of English in a US context: “language arts n. Education (originally U.S.) skills such as reading, writing, spelling, and grammar, taught in order to develop proficiency in the use of language” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2020).
Students on the programme were taught using creative writing tasks influenced by the Freedom Writers Foundation (2016). This is a US based organisation which claims to have a global mission to enable teachers to include and empower all students. Symonette (2018) used some of their tools to design a programme involving journal writing, narratives and slam poetry. These writing tasks were used together with the mindfulness activities of breathing, yoga, and contemplation exercises. Thus, writing tasks were not delivered as an isolated activity, but carefully woven into a holistic programme to meet a variety of pupil needs, for the greatest motivational impact and learning result. Symonette (2018) argues that these mindfulness activities combined with the writing tasks to “increase motivation to succeed in students, in spite of the many difficulties that they may experience at home, at school, and in the community” (p. 94). In this way, it could be claimed that creative writing was motivational in a challenging educational situation.

In an earlier study, Arshavskaya (2015) demonstrated how a group of students of L2 English, who she had considered to be “less motivated”, could become motivated and engaged through the introduction of creative writing assignments, within a university-based academic writing course. Nine international students, from a range of countries, took part in the study, which was based on three research questions relating to the development of critical consciousness, the students’ attitudes to the use of creative writing tasks, and the use of critical pedagogy. Arshavskaya (2015) states that, overall, the students found the creative writing tasks to be “engaging and beneficial” (p. 73).

Both the Arshavskaya (2015) and Symonette (2018) studies examined creative writing and language development using pedagogical approaches critical of contemporary societal power structures. In the case of Arshavskaya (2015), she examined how creative writing mediated students’ development of critical consciousness and student perceptions of use of critical pedagogy in an L2 writing course. Arshavskaya (2015) introduced texts which promoted a critical discourse and Symonette (2018) used slam poetry (amongst other genres), which she describes as a “social and protest type of art” (p.35). Symonette (2018) studied the creative writing of a group of students of colour, who, she states: “endure social difficulties precipitated by academic, economic and achievement gaps” (p. 95). She adds that:

The study findings suggest that facilitation of environments that are influenced by mindfulness, growth mindset, and creative writing strat-

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21 The term critical consciousness relates to developing empathy and understanding for those treated unequally in society (Stillar, 2013).

22 The term critical pedagogy has been used earlier in this thesis with reference to Pennycook (1992) and Arshavskaya also refers to the critical pedagogy of Freire (2000).
egies can help minority students to advocate for themselves and encourage their activism within schools and communities. (Symonette, 2018, p. 95)

In this way, the creative writing in the study by Symonette (2018) is related to a pedagogy that is both holistic and empowering. Both Symonette (2018) and Arshavskaya (2015) carried out their studies in the dual role of teacher-researchers. Symonette (2018) had been prepared to develop herself professionally with extra skills as a teacher, adding mindfulness and the growth mindset skills that helped keep the instruction at what is described as a “high level” (p. 97). Both studies were based on creative writing initiatives which were motivational, engaging, and perceived as beneficial for language learning, in formal educational settings.

A study in possibly a less formal educational setting examined the motivations of adolescent creative writing students on a residential summer course. Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017) asked the students to rate phrases about their motivations for writing creatively, via a questionnaire. The phrases used were authentic in the sense that they were formulated by earlier students, who had left written evaluations of the creative writing course the year prior to the study. The list of motivations was wide-ranging, suggesting that creative writing can be a highly rewarding activity. The 20 motivations most commonly rated were (with the most frequent first):

(a) release powerful feelings, (b) feel free, (c) work with words, (d) have an emotional outlet, (e) capture moments in time, (f) be their true selves, (g) create characters, (h) use their imaginations, (I) create tangible things from ideas that began in their imaginations, (j) explore parts of themselves, (k) explore their own feelings, (l) respond artistically to the objects and sensations around them, (m) follow their destiny, (n) express their thoughts, (o) be emotionally nourished, (p) express their feelings, (q) engage in self-therapy, (r) make up stories, (s) like the effect their final products have on other people, and (t) learn about themselves. (Harrington & Chin-Newman, 2017, p. 445)

The most common motivational phrase was ‘release powerful feelings’, suggestive of emotional expression, hinting at emotional enjoyment and possibly even a therapeutic aspect. The second most common motivation was ‘feel free’, suggesting an enjoyable, pleasurable autonomy. The third was ‘work with words’, suggesting that the effort entailed by challenge is motivational in the act of creating with language.

Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017) argue that their findings both confirm earlier theoretical understandings of creativity and possibly add to them. They argue that motivations like ‘be their true selves’ confirm ideas of self-actualisation theory (e.g. Maslow, 1970) – that people are driven to act on their potentials, including those that are creative. Also, it is felt that the findings
confirm competence/effectance motivation theory (e.g. White, 1959), suggesting that people have an innate desire to use and improve skills to create actual products and effects, which can be shown to others. The third motivation theory which Harrington and Chin-Newman argue their findings confirm, but also add to, is that of intrinsic motivation theory (e.g. Amabile, 1983; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). This is because the creative writers are very strongly motivated by satisfying and pleasurable processes as a result of their engagement. While such pleasurable processes are not new to intrinsic motivation theory scholars, Harrington and Chin-Newman feel that their study highlights the role of imagination use as motivational, something they consider is not emphasised in intrinsic motivation theory (2017, p. 448).

Some of the findings of Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017) are echoed in the findings of the MoTiSSE project (Henry et al., 2019); for example, both studies serve to emphasise the importance of students producing artefacts. Just as the creative writing students in Harrington and Chin Newman’s study (2017) felt motivated by the chance to “create tangible things from ideas that began in their imaginations” (p. 445), so the MoTiSSE project found that “outputs increase investment” (Henry et al., 2019, p. 78). In other words, it is motivating to imagine a story and write it, and also, producing such artefacts, in turn, motivates effort to be put into further creativity. Finally, the studies referred to in this section indicate that creative writing can be motivational, engaging, and contribute to learning English.

2.2.2 Creativity changing

The findings of studies referred to in the previous section indicate that creative writing can be a rewarding activity. In this section, I examine the fluid and dynamic nature of definitions and understandings of the term creativity and, flowing from that, creative writing. Understanding of what creativity is has changed over time, and still today there is disagreement – controversy even – over whether it ought to be welcomed in formal educational contexts (Marshall, 1999; Robinson, 2011). Also in this section, I consider the opportunities for creation and creative writing afforded through digitalisation and the internet (Kress, 2003; McCallum, 2012).

That the study I carried out for this thesis entailed asking pupils about their creative writing assumes a democratic and egalitarian view of creative writing. That is, if one values the perspectives of pupils about their own creativity, a framing has taken place in line with McCallum’s (2012) understanding of the trajectory of what has constituted, and does constitute, creativity in English. As he states:

Where once creativity was seen as lying in the hands of a few great writers capable of giving the rest of us an insight into a ‘true’ existence, it now offers a way of describing the transformative processes
by which anyone can work with existing materials in order to bring new meaning into being. (McCallum, 2012, p. 18)

This definition points to a creativity that is non-elitist and democratic – that everybody and anybody can create. A climate whereby everyone can be creative in their free time is helped by digitalisation and the internet. These developments have empowered people by greatly increasing creative writing and sharing/publishing capabilities. This ability for everyone – or at least many more people – to be so creative has not always existed.

It is useful to look back at earlier understandings of creativity. McCallum (2012) states that the Romantic poets of the early nineteenth century were the first to introduce “notions of ‘creative art’ as a human activity” (p. 9). According to the Oxford English Dictionary Online (2020) the earliest uses of the term creativity (the earliest referred to is 1659) suggest that it is something in the hands of God – humans are not mentioned in a context of creativity.23 Yet, it would be widely understood today that Shakespeare had also been in possession of skills which foster creativity in years prior to 1659. The Oxford English Dictionary Online (2020) cites a reference to Shakespeare’s creativity, but that quote is from 1875.24 McCallum (2012) suggests that even if capabilities for creativity were possessed by humans by the 19th century, they were perceived to be only in the hands of an elite. He argues that this elitist understanding of creativity continued into the early 20th century in relation to the teaching of English and literature. The first book to be produced in England solely on the school subject of English, entitled English for the English (Sampson, 1922), reveals its elitist view of creativity:

We want students to understand that there are two kinds of writing, the statement and the creation: the ability to state is expected from them, but not the ability to create, though we are ready to give them genuine credit for genuine attempts at creation. (Sampson, 1922, p. 64)

In the above extract, Sampson argues that creation is beyond the reach of school students. His remarks echo a view of literature (it might sometimes have a capital L), which can still exist today – that adults write it and children read it (Wesseling, 2019). McCallum (2012) argues that “to Sampson, then, a ‘creative education’ is one in which creativity is brought to students, primarily in the form of literature” (p. 11). But further on in his text Sampson (1922) does acknowledge that pupils are capable of “creative activity” and that this should be focused “towards the story and the play” (p. 65) – writing of them,

23 “1659 G. Lawson Theo-politica I. viii. 39 In creation we have God and his Creativity (as Occam and Bacon express it) and the thing created.” (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2020)

not just reading. So, in this sense, some difference is being indicated as regards a creative process and a created product. The idea of process and product within creativity is well established today (Tsai, 2012, p. 15).

A look back at the history of English, as a subject, finds that while there might be some reticence or even denial of the creativity of pupils, there is some reference to classroom practice, which might today be described as creative. Despite Sampson’s assertions about the students’ lack of creativity, he does describe active lessons involving story and role-play:

Children know what a story or play is long before they know what an essay is. They can understand writing a story for the class magazine, or a play for the class performance; they cannot understand writing an essay for the wastepaper basket.

The collective composition of a play can be attempted by quite young pupils. As soon as the boys are old enough to enjoy a ballad or a story in verse, they should try to translate it into action .... But action without words is only half the fun .... The sentences [are] approved by the teacher (who is merely the humble scribe) and when something like a scene has been achieved it can be tried over and its shortcomings detected and corrected. (Sampson, 1922, p. 66)

A somewhat less than elitist understanding of creativity can be seen at work in the class – the teacher is ‘a mere scribe’ of the class’s creative language. And the creative product that the scribe/teacher writes up is a result of a creative process involving play, imagination, collaboration and talk. So, even during the time of the founding of English as a school subject, when the capacity for creativity was considered (by some at least) to lie exclusively in the hands of an adult artistic or literary elite, the pupils’ activity in the class (at least in terms of Sampson’s report) is creative. The pupils were encouraged to interact and discuss creative writing by Sampson (1922) as they were in the study by Tin (2011), referred to in the previous section (2.2.1). Also, a study by Elabdali and Arnold (2020) asserts the value of what they term as mutuality – students collaborating in talk, with a scribe, to write stories. This is exactly what is going on in the class described by Sampson (1922), with the pupils seen as collaborative creators and the teacher reduced to the deferential role of ‘humble scribe’. My point here is to emphasise that contemporary studies highlighting the usefulness of creative writing tasks for learning English (Elabdali & Arnold, 2020; Tin, 2011) confirm a tacit or implicit understanding of creativity’s role in English as far back as Sampson (1922), even though creativity as a term was used as if it was only to be associated with literary greats – artistic adults – as opposed to school children.

This idea, that the elitist definition of the term creativity might in fact be some way removed from an actual non-elitist practice that involved pupils’ creativity in the early days of the subject of English, is echoed by a study of L. Smith (2019). She has studied what she terms the Blue Books (due to the
Colour of their covers). These were a series of publications produced by The Board of Education (UK) offering advice and suggestions for teaching in public elementary schools25 between 1905 and 1959. Although creative writing, the term, is not referred to in the series, the books, argues L. Smith (2019), encourage a love of literature to stimulate creative work – “creativity spawning creativity” (p. 55). In this creative approach, the child is seen to be included, to the extent that L. Smith (2019) refers to it as “child-centred practice” (p. 62). She adds that such views were later supported scientifically with the spreading of Vygotsky’s writings outside of the Soviet Union in the sixties (see chapter 3). The child-centred practice involving inclusion of the child’s imagination and expression – their creativity – also coincided with ideas seen as progressive in the 1960s, of personal growth through English (Gibbons, 2017). L. Smith (2019) qualifies her detection of suggestions for creative teaching in the Blue Books by adding that there is little evidence of their advice being heeded; instead, inspection reports pointed to rather uncreative and bland teaching (p. 58). Nevertheless, the idea that pupils’ creativity could offer sustenance to the formal learning of English is in evidence in writing regarding these early days of the English school subject.

Creative writing was perhaps in Sampson’s (1922) thinking when he also suggested that “as a means of creating ‘class consciousness’ (of the right kind) a class magazine is invaluable” (p. 67). This patronising and sardonic allusion to the labour movements of the time was a prelude to another elitist view to come, this time from the literary critic, F.R Leavis. According to McCallum:

Much of Leavis’s work is directed toward training an elite corps of teachers, able to hand on the benefits of studying literature to the mass of the population (though the masses would never ‘get it’ to the same degree as the elite). Thus access to creativity becomes staged, teachers providing critical commentary in acting as intermediaries between writers and readers, guardians to the creativity locked within great works. (McCallum, 2012, p. 12)

Creative writing, in Leavis’s view (according to McCallum, 2012) exists only within the pages of “great works” of literature; it can be criticised, in the literary sense, but that is not something that everyone can do, or is capable of. Of course, such elitism, as purveyed by Leavis, had opponents. Amongst them was Dixon (1967), who was head of the English department in a London school. Of course, there were much earlier opponents to Leavis than Dixon, but Dixon’s view of literature is of particular relevance to the present study,

25 According to L. Smith (2019), “Public Elementaries educated students up to 14 years old who were not destined for grammar school or university” and “they educated three quarters of the population – the working class” (p. 54). The final Blue Book of 1959 was aimed exclusively at primary age schools, reflecting the process of turning the buildings of the public elementaries into primary and secondary modern schools following the 1944 Education Act.
about pupils’ creative writing. He argued there could be a ‘literature of the classroom’, where works are created, shared and enjoyed by all pupils in a class. Tensions persist within discussions around literature with regard to who can create it, as opposed to only being an audience for it. As referred to earlier in this section, Wesseling (2019) argues that there is a norm relating to literature – that children read, and adults write.

Despite tensions over the term *creativity* and its place or role in school, the views of creativity I have referred to so far have all agreed that creativity is a good thing. For example, even if creativity was perceived as existing exclusively in the hands of God, it was written of in a rather awe-inspired way. Even McCallum’s (2012) outlining of the elitism of Leavis’s view of literature and creativity can arguably be positive – in the sense of arguing that creativity is good (it is in books of high quality), but only some people (an elite) are good enough to criticise it. Yet, there are negative understandings or definitions of *creativity* which need to be acknowledged. In fact, the most recent example of historic usage offered in the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (2020) provides a pejorative view of the word:

1986  *Professional Photogr.*, Oct. 42/2  Creativity wasn’t mentioned – in fact it was discouraged because of the over-indulgent ideas of some of the students. (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2020)

Robinson (2011) acknowledges this fear of ‘overindulgence’ when transferred to the context of schooling:

Creativity is sometimes associated with free expression, which is partly why some people worry about creativity in education. Critics think of children running wild and knocking down the furniture rather than getting on with serious work. (Robinson, 2011, p. 4)

Or, as Marshall (1999) puts it:

Creativity has not had a good press for at least twenty years. Part of its decline has arisen from its close association with so-called progressive education and in particular the notion that standards have been sacrificed on the altar of the personal growth of the child. (Marshall, 1999, p. 56)

Thus, creativity can be something undesirable, non-rigorous, and unfocused – something inappropriate for the formalities and discipline of schooling.

In contrast, advocates of creativity insist that it relies on qualities such as focus, critical judgement and work, which are to be welcomed in school. Robinson (2011) argues that negative views of creativity are unfounded, when he states:
Being creative does usually involve playing with ideas and having fun, enjoyment and imagination. But creativity is also about working in a highly focused way on ideas and projects, crafting them into their best forms and making critical judgements along the way about which work best and why. In every discipline, creativity also draws on skill, knowledge and control. It’s not only about letting go, it’s about holding on. (Robinson, 2011, p. 5)

This idea of holding on and letting go is a useful metaphor. It is an idea which suggests the study of skills is necessary for successful creativity. In this sense, the study of a subject, be it academic or vocational, and learning of knowledge, through application and dedication, can be seen as holding on, and letting go can involve imaginative consideration of future possibility, and creative invention.

Powerful creativity involves a response to something, a re-invention. One hand can be holding on to the past and the other can be reaching (letting go) into the future; here we have the basis for originality too. For example, in understanding language through genre, and different styles and contexts, one can learn to be original or creative by tweaking the genres, or using them in new ways. In order for genres to be tweaked or played with, they first have to be understood, and so genre pedagogy (Hyland, 2007) can provide a useful basis upon which to be creative. Some play and originality can be used in a pedagogical situation to stimulate pupils’ interest. For example, if Freire’s (1970/2000) description of the banking system of education, which suggests a rather crude transmission, is applied to the teaching of genres, it would entail that the teacher merely informs pupils, or fills up their accounts, with knowledge of different genres. In this way, a CV, in a business context, can be shown to a class and they are asked to note the features of that genre. Alternatively, and more creatively, a teacher might build on the way in which pupils have capital of earlier knowledge, that they can, in turn, use for the effective learning of the CV format. They might have read some of Genesis in the Bible, for example, and write God’s CV using the style of Old English as applied in a business manner. Alternatively, a song can be written in the style of a CV, or a written CV can be shifted over into a film form; the possibilities for creativity and adaptation are increased with the developments in digital technology.

2.2.3 New technology, new terms and new understandings

Opportunities to be creative increase with developments in technology (Kress, 2003; McCallum, 2012). Digitalisation and internet use are changing the way the English language is used and identified with by many young people. The way stories are being read and produced is also changing. Stories that were
once on the pages of a book can morph into stories in computer games, where the player of the game acts in the role of a character in the action (Gee, 2007). Alternatively, what once might have been written in the pages of a diary can become vlogs – video logs. In this digital context, new technology for creativity has laid the basis for terms such as remediation (Bolter & Grusin, 1999) and multimodality (Kress, 2003). Remediation, a remaking of stories in different media, is commonplace in the digital age. Cimasko and Shin (2017) studied an L2 student’s experiences in remediating a written text into a film format and found that the activity afforded greater access to semiotic resources. Multimodality describes the way in which communication can take place in various modes. In the case of stories, digital media allow them to be told in many ways and challenge the dominance of written or spoken language. Visual and audio imagery can be easily produced and communicated in the digital age. The creative means are literally in the hands of millions of people, in the form of handheld devices – devices with global reach via the internet.

The somewhat new terms multimodality and remediation reflect new ways of creativity, afforded by digital technology. Yet, new understandings are being added to older concepts and terms. For example, literature and also reading and writing can be redefined in a digital age. Misson and Morgan (2006) point to, and agree with, a widening of the concept of literature to include “movies, TV programmes, hypertexts, popular publishing (comics, magazines, newspapers) – indeed any kind of text that is read for leisure purposes” (Misson & Morgan, 2006, p. xiii). They also use the term reading to “cover viewing, game playing, or any other kind of decoding and responding that relates to making sense of or taking pleasure in the range of texts covered by the term literature” (p. xiii). Similarly, Misson and Morgan (2006) suggest that “the term writing can be taken to cover the production of all such texts and so could include such things as creating a hypertext, performing an improvisation, or producing a video” (p. xiii).

Although this thesis primarily focuses on issues around writing and creativity, it needs to be noted that creativity is not merely seen as related to output in terms of writing in response to a story. The act of reading can itself be a creative task. Pope (2002) argues that readers can “weigh what they [texts] are or seem to say in relation to what they are not or might have said differently” (p. 169) and that this is not only a critical approach, but an act of creativity.

This flexibility and expansion in terms of forms of stories, and media, relates to both the reception (or consumption) and production, input and output,

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26 With regard to the term writing, as used by me later, in chapters 4 and 5, I have taken a more traditional approach to its use – that is, typing and handwriting, in the analysis for the present study. However, I was aware, when I came to the interviews, of a broader, multimodal approach to use of the term writing. I ensured I listened to the pupils’ accounts of making films, and publishing on YouTube, for example, so as to be fully aware of their perspectives.
and reading and writing. However, for McCallum (2012), the directional dynamic is toward creative production. He states:

Discussions of multimodality are often accompanied by calls for an increased focus on the production rather than the reception of texts in the classroom. Creativity is transferred away from the material for classroom exploration into the hands of students themselves. New technologies mean they can film as readily as watch, print as readily as read and record as easily as listen. The borderline plagiaristic practices of contemporary cultural production, of sampling, cutting and pasting, mashing, downloading and mixing (Kress 2010:24) point towards the multiple ways in which it is possible to re-create existing cultural materials so that the first considerations in responding to a text need no longer be about what it means but instead can focus on the particular mode in which a response is to be fixed. (McCallum, 2012, p. 17)

Creative production, or re-invention can be so closely entwined with reception or input that new terms have emerged which point to this process. The technological changes of the internet and digitalisation have formed the basis for terms like wreader (Landow, 1997), with its mixing of reading and writing, and prosumer (Toffler, 1980), as consumption quickly morphs into production. The pupils of today are armed with powerful devices in the form of smartphones and iPads which allow them to rapidly fulfill a rather less modern – ancient even – practice of emulation, also called imitatio.

2.2.4 Imitatio

Technological developments are happening so rapidly that they can be rather dazzling and eye-catching. I have placed this brief section on the term imitatio here as a reminder that some of the relevant undercurrents at work in creativity are in fact ancient, and have survived many improvements and changes in technology. The term imitatio was used in ancient Greece “to designate a later writer’s relation of acknowledged dependence upon an earlier one” (The Oxford Classical Dictionary, 2012). Of importance too is the idea that the “imitatio principle is more about developing a text rather than merely reproducing a text” (Olin-Scheller & Wikström, 2010, p. 46). Inherent in the term is a link between reading and writing – writing inspired by reading. In a contemporary context, the same link is there in the newer terms of wreader (Landow, 1997) and prosumer (Toffler, 1980), which were referred to in the previous section (2.2.3).

Writing and reading are paired in an intrinsic relationship which existed long before the internet. For Barrs (2000), reading is crucial in order to master writing. She states:
Writers are never completely absent from their texts .... Reading is always an act of relationship between reader and writer with the text as a meeting, and this relationship may be particularly important for young reader/writers .... It’s the very personal nature of this communication, direct from mind to mind, that makes reading such an act of intimacy. (Barrs 2000, p. 54)

It is maybe this ‘intimacy’ which fuels the desire of the reader to emulate, to imitate, and to follow a role model – become a wreader or prosumer, and thus continue the ancient tradition of *imitatio* into the digital age. It is worth noting that *imitatio* can also be used to refer to an unintentional imitation (Conte, 1986). The term can be used as well to refer to re-invented stories that were originally in film form but get adapted to writing, or vice versa, as this flexibility across media has become even easier with digitalisation.

This wide view of texts in terms of input and output is useful when considering the phenomenon of online fanfiction. Wesseling (2019) points to the historic drive to emulate authors by children and suggests that while this is seen most strongly in the amount of *Harry Potter* fanfiction, written by children, it is simply what “every author does, namely seeking entry into the republic of letters by imitating and emulating inspiring examples” (Wesseling 2019, p. 4). She acknowledges that the internet offers forums for growth and change in the field of reading and writing. This change is clearly seen with the development of online fanfiction.

### 2.2.5 Online fanfiction

In order to understand how pupils are engaged with creative writing in their free time, in a digital age, it is vital to pay attention to the phenomenon of fanfiction. Sometimes referred to as *fan fic* or written as *fan fiction*, it is, as the name suggests, fiction created by fans. The following is a useful definition of fanfiction: “Fanfiction is the creative appropriation and transformation of existing popular media texts by fans who take stories, worlds and/or characters as starting points to create their own stories” (Reißmann, Stock, Kaiser, Isenberg, & Nieland, 2017, p. 15). Of relevance for this thesis is the consideration of motivation to write fanfiction, engagement with it, and how this relates to learning English. However, I cannot assume that all readers of this thesis are familiar with fanfiction and so I provide some background here.

There might be a misconception that, because *fan* is juxtaposed with *fiction* in *fanfiction*, the term refers to fans of literary fiction, such as a famous literary author like Jane Austen, or of a famous literary character like Sherlock Holmes. These types of fans would be included in the understanding of *fan* in *fanfiction*. However, the fans of fanfiction range far and wide in terms of what
they are fans of: from football clubs, to singers, to Sherlock Holmes, Jane Austen, and the most written about of all – Harry Potter. Fans in fanfiction take Harry or other established characters, or settings from established stories, and build new stories around them. Authors of fanfiction create by adding to, or adapting, that which they are fans of. They might take a band of musicians and build a fictional tale around them. They may even place themselves in the story. The possibilities for creativity in fanfiction are as wide-ranging as the fantasies of those who write it.

Scholarly interest in fans’ culture, participation and production can be traced back to 1992 with Jenkins’ Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Cultures (1992b). This text, together with a number of others from the same year, meant that “fans were treated and viewed as active and creative individuals” and that the study of their output and activity would offer “rich insights into media consumption, identity, textual engagement and communications” (Bennett, 2014, p. 6). The fiction of the fanfiction author is fuelled by the idea of the fan as a devotee. The following definition of fan is helpful: “A fan is a person with a relatively deep positive emotional conviction about someone or something famous” (Duffett, 2013, p. 18). The issue of fame means there is a public sphere and a realm of popularity. Thus, the fan, if moved to create, has likeminded fans as a potential audience for creative output or fan production.

The public sphere for fans to participate in can be referred to as a fandom. This is an interesting term that can include private and public fan response and behaviour. Jenkins (1992a) states that “fans adopt a distinctive mode of reception” (p. 209), but this personal fan reception does not have to move to a productive or outputting mode – what Jenkins calls “social and cultural activity” (p. 210). The visible public production of the fandom belies a private and personal reception akin to what Barrs (2000) terms “intimacy” (p. 54) between reader and author, as referred to in the previous section. Participation in the fandom in the mode of reception entails reading not only original texts, but also the works of fanfiction writers. For Jenkins (1992), the fandom offers a forum where fan interpretations are shared, or negotiated, where art works are consumed and produced, given aesthetic values, and, finally, the fandom “constitutes an alternative social community” (p. 213).

Much research into fanfiction is carried out by scholars who have themselves been fanfiction writers (Aragon & Davis, 2019). However, when I first came across fanfiction it was via my own students who were engaging with it. I first encountered them in ones and twos; then this number grew to a handful.

27 Fanfiction.net, when accessed on 18 July 2020, had 822,000 online books written about Harry Potter by fanfiction authors. The next most popular book category was Twilight, with 221,000 books written by fanfiction authors.
I met pupils in the study of this thesis too, and when I told friends and colleagues, I would often hear anecdotes of someone who knew somebody who wrote fanfiction. These initial meetings with fanfiction writers can be likened to the first glimpses of an iceberg. Online fanfiction is a huge phenomenon, involving millions of young people globally. As Aragon (2019) states:

In the past 20 years, over 60 billion words of fan fiction have been written and posted on Fanfiction.net, the world’s largest repository. The site’s 10 million members have collectively authored a corpus about three-quarters the size of the entirety of published English-language fiction. This outpouring of creativity has been generated primarily by young people, with a median age of 15½. (Aragon, 2019)

These figures reveal a significant milestone in the history of English language publishing. Moreover, the numbers of school-age youth engaged with fanfiction writing make it centrally relevant for this thesis and all teachers of English.

When fan studies began to emerge there was some use of the internet, though it was small, and it was not the focus of the studies (Jenkins, 2012). While the ability to share and communicate fanfiction has exploded with the development of the internet, the engagement of fans with fiction, in ways beyond reading, has existed for centuries. Bloom (2016) studied the letters between Samuel Richardson (the eighteenth-century novelist) and some of his contemporary, avid, female readers (of the novel Clarissa). Bloom states of the readers’ communication with Richardson:

They would fill letters with justifications for sparing a character’s life, or for allowing a dashing, dissolute rake to achieve salvation. Our evidence of their protestations has enhanced studies of eighteenth-century literary culture by illuminating that readers’ responses to literary characters were as proprietary as they are today. Richardson’s contemporary readers did not have access to online fan communities through which they could distribute alternate endings and further adventures for their favorite characters, as today’s readers do, yet they share with them a timeless sentiment: that literary characters present more potential for adventure than their authors allot. (Bloom, 2016, pp. 1-2)

While the above extract describes a fanfiction phenomenon from the eighteenth century, Burt (2017) argues that fanfiction could be found in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well, with fans of Sherlock Holmes pushing for more stories and even writing their own and, in the 1930s, fans of science fiction writing formed clubs. Grossman (2013), in his foreword to Fic: Why fanfiction is taking over the world, argues that authors such as Jean Rhys and Tom Stoppard produced works of fanfiction in the 1960s. Both took characters from established works and created new stories and contexts for them. Jean
Rhys created fanfiction with Jane Eyre, the eponymous hero, while Tom Stoppard had taken minor figures from *Hamlet* and placed them at the centre of a new tale. A key year in the history of fanfiction was 1966, as it brought us *Star Trek*. This television programme would inspire a community of fans called Trekkies, and flowing from that, with the arrival of the internet, a basis for an online community of fanfiction (Geraghty, 2007).

Fanfiction is a form of creativity in accordance with Robinson’s (2011) idea of holding on and letting go – where something of the past is held onto and also something of the past is let go, so as to allow a reach into the future for innovation and creativity (see section 2.2.2). New stories are created from old, but fanfiction online is also a new form of ancient imitation. That fanfiction holds onto a past tradition is in line with the idea that stories borrowing from and adding to earlier tales are central to the creation of literature. This is put forward by Jamieson (2013):

Fanfiction is an old story. Literally of course: fanfiction takes someone else’s story and, arguably, makes it new, or makes it over, or just simply makes more of it, because the fan writer loves the story so much, they want it to keep going. But fanfiction is also an old story in that people have been doing this since – to borrow a phrase I absolutely disallow my students – the dawn of time. Reworking an existing story, telling tales of heroes already known to be heroic, was the model of authorship until very recently. (Jamison, 2013, p. 17)

Jamison’s comment – “telling tales of heroes already known to be heroic” – is helpful in providing a reminder of fanfiction’s roots, and storytelling’s roots. Nevertheless, in terms of letting go, and understanding the innovation at work, fanfiction needs to be seen as a relatively recent phenomenon – related to media technology development. Storytelling’s earlier media shifts were from speech to handwriting, and then into print, but the early fan studies work by Jenkins (1992) follows the shift of stories onto screens that were easily available in many homes. Thus, fan studies are rooted in the participation culture of creative fans responding to popular television shows such as *Star Trek* and other programmes.

The idea of creative responses to texts has been, and still is, used by some language arts teachers in a formal learning context. Such a task leans on the concept of *intertextuality*29 whereby created texts borrow from previous ones (Doecke & McClenaghan, 2015, pp. 36-37). The new added ingredient of relatively recent years is the internet, which has allowed an explosion in terms of the numbers of such creative responses. The popularity and accessibility of online fanfiction is perhaps most clearly demonstrated by its scale, with 10

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29 The term *intertextuality* was originally used by Kristeva in response to Bakhtin’s theories of language (Booker, 1996, p. 481).
million users on Fanfiction.net (Aragon, 2019). Although this is the most popular of the fanfiction websites, it is not the only one. Another, Archive of Our Own (launched in 2007), claimed to have 2,964,000 users with 6,814,000 works and 40,220 fandoms (as of November 2020). Fanfiction is a global phenomenon involving many young people in Sweden – possibly some individuals in most, or all, schools (Olin-Scheller & Sundqvist, 2014).

In conclusion, I have intended to show how fanfiction is engaging millions of young people in creative writing in their free time; also, I hoped to highlight the roots of fanfiction, in terms of earlier story adaptations, so as to steer away from a wholly technological focus on the opportunities provided by the internet. Are there motivational forces driving creative writing which technological developments have somehow built upon? I ask this because perhaps it is possible to see the scale of online fanfiction and consider that the online issue is the driving force. Rather, it might be better to consider that the internet has allowed a mass conveyance of a force for imitatio which is as ancient as the ancient Greeks, and maybe older. What is relevant for this thesis is that fanfiction exists, and it is linked to issues of motivation and engagement with creative writing for many pupils. This thesis is centrally concerned with the learning of English and fanfiction is relevant to focus on in this area too.

2.2.6 Fanfiction and learning: Challenging and rewarding

Several studies have been carried out into fanfiction and other fan practices, with the aim of assessing opportunities for language learning. The studies reveal that participation in fan culture and practices is challenging and rewarding for language learning in several ways. I use the concept of challenge here as something positive, in the sense of offering stimulation and motivation. A study of fanfiction by Black (2008) examined the “patterns of participation in informal online spaces” (p. 29) through a focus on one writer who engaged with sites based on anime and manga. Black (2008) built on the work of Gee (2007) who had studied online affinity spaces. These are online sites that afford opportunities for people with similar interests, such as fans, to interact. Gee (2007) had highlighted the low threshold for participation in affinity spaces, where a novice could join, feel included and contribute, without the burden of having to have years of apprenticeship before being seen as an equal.

Opportunities for language learning through engagement with online fanfiction are numerous (Aragon and Davis, 2019). Black (2008) argues that the members of affinity spaces use “digital literacy skills to discover, discuss, and solve writing and reading-related problems, while pursuing the goals of de-

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30 These figures come from https://archiveofourown.org/ (accessed 21 November, 2020)
veloping social networks and affiliating with other fans” (p. 117). Furthermore, Black (2008) states that the learning environment was “designed” by the fan author in her study to facilitate the achievement of “the online identity of a successful writer” (p. 117). Despite the ease of entry into the affinity space, such an achievement, in terms of writing skills, requires time and dedicated engagement. Black’s (2008) study highlighted the crucial role of positive feedback and how L2 English language learning benefitted from the “immediacy of reader response via online channels” (p. 117). These findings concurred with the understandings established by research into the key effect of feedback (P. Black & Wiliam, 1998).

In a later study, Olin-Scheller and Wikström (2010) interviewed 31 Swedish fanfiction writers (aged between 12-28, all female). The findings indicated that engagement with fanfiction was fertile ground for language learning:

There are several facets of the learning which takes place. First, the contributors become highly aware that knowledge develops gradually. Second, they are conscious that they learn by actively imitating and sharing knowledge with one another. Third, the contributors actively imitate things such as genre, forms and style of narrative and language. They develop an understanding of the principle of intertextuality as well as a meta-language about narrative. Moreover, they create interpretive and discourse communities which are important for the development and construction of literacy, gender and identity. All of this together gives the fans tools to be powerful actors within formal as well as informal learning settings. (Olin-Scheller & Wikström, 2010, p. 52)

These conclusions point to a learning experience where several processes reap rewards – in the plural – as style and form in writing develop, as well as a meta-language for thought and communication about the writing. These findings have been echoed and added to by a research team led by Aragon and Davies (2019), who, in a series of studies spanning over five years, set out to gain insights into the key themes at work in fanfiction in terms of motivation, mentoring and learning.

The scale of Aragon and Davies’ (2019) research and the importance of their findings requires that I elaborate upon their work in some detail here. They used mixed methods of research with ethnographic studies, interviews, and computational analyses of vast data sets. Their research moves from individual autobiographical accounts which provide valuable qualitative insights, to macro quantitative sweeps of the statistics to reveal key patterns of the processes at work. They discovered, through interviews, that most writers found their engagement to be fun and enjoyable (p. 58). Indeed, the overall nature of the atmosphere of communication was one of positivity and encouragement. One of the students in the research group, Ruby Davis, contrasts her positive
inclusion in fanfiction circles with her awkward isolation as an autistic and queer\footnote{The term queer was used by Ruby Davis, in her account.} middle school pupil. She describes how she was able to overcome her struggles with verbal communication in the digital world of writing (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 3). Aragon and Davis describe the affinity sites offered by fanfiction as “an oasis” (p. 106). They point to the fact that over 70% of the reviews on the fanfiction sites they studied were positive. This was from a study of 4,500 reviews of stories. Only 1% of the reviews could be considered wholly negative, or what is known in fanfiction circles as flaming. Positive reviews can be divided, into what Aragon and Davis (2019) term as, shallow positive, or targeted positive. Shallow positive refers to where words of encouragement might be offered such as ‘amazing’, but no specific feedback or passage of text is highlighted; 35% of the feedback was of this character. 30% of the feedback was categorised as targeted positive, which refers to feedback where encouragement or praise was focused on specific aspects of the text. Another type of feedback was termed update encouragement, for reviews which included appeals for authors to write more; 27% of the feedback was of this character. Targeted corrected or constructive reviews, where “critical or neutral feedback on specific aspects of the text, e.g., grammar and plot suggestions” were provided, amounted to 16% of the feedback (Aragon & Davis, 2019, pp. 56-7).

As well as indicating the positivity of feedback, Aragon and Davis (2019) also highlight ways in which mentoring in affinity spaces is radically different from earlier models of one-to-one, or teacher-to-class mentoring, from a pre-internet age. Digital networks afford opportunities for distributed mentorship which, in turn, drives the learning of English in free-time creative writing contexts. Distributed mentorship is a theory that describes the informal educational processes operational in encouraging and developing young writers online, in a community of fellow fanfiction writers (Aragon & Davis, 2019; Campbell et al., 2015). The theory highlights various features, or characteristics, at work in the process of teaching. Amongst these characteristics is abundance, which means that instead of peer support it might be useful to think of peers’ support, in the plural, because the network allows connectivity beyond one-to-one. Indeed, abundance leads to another characteristic, that of an aggregation of support, as mentors lean on a variety of educational sources and media to encourage a fellow learner writer (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 39). The sheer number of reviews and comments contributes to distributed mentoring as a multilayering of comments builds even greater impact from the overwhelmingly positive input. Also, a bank of educational material is built up, so that many previous comments are there to be absorbed and learnt from. Moreover, some fanfiction sites have lots of writing guides or tutorials, as well as options to ask questions of more experienced authors. A further insight
from the range of studies carried out by Aragon and Davis (2019) is that extended work with fanfiction led to “an increase in lexical diversity among fanfiction stories as authors receive an increased abundance of distributed mentoring from others in the community” (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 95).

The recommendation given by Aragon and Davis (2019), based on their findings, is that teachers, parents, and anybody working with adolescents need to consider the implications of their study for formal education. They are “under no illusion that it is a simple matter to export”, but they insist the findings are too crucial to ignore and that no child should be discouraged from fanfiction engagement (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 98).

That the affinity spaces are largely positive and encouraging comes as a welcome relief for budding writers, as in publishing online, there is a risk of failure. This risk of failure entails rising to a challenge by publishing online. Challenge in this sense is used as something exciting, stimulating and motivational, something seen as positive in learning (Johnson, Smith, Smythe, & Varon, 2009). As one member of the research group led by Aragon & Davis (2019) states:

It’s an emotional process to publish your first piece of fanfiction. I think we were all reluctant, probably even scared, to put that first story out there. It’s like putting a piece of yourself on public display. It meant a lot to me to get comments from people who weren’t my friends. And it was incredibly validating to know that people all over the world were reading and enjoying something I wrote. (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 74)

To give an indication of the rapidity of feedback for writers of fanfiction, Lee (cited in Aragon & Davis, 2019) analysed a random sample of ten thousand stories and discovered that 15% of first chapters received reviews within two hours of publication and 42% after one day. The median time from publication to review was three days (Aragon & Davis, 2019, p. 90). Given that over 70% of reviews are positive (p. 56), it is possible to see that taking a risk and rising to a challenge are rapidly rewarded. The adolescent author may well shift from an unsure state regarding the publication to a state of pride, with a sense of achievement, over several hours or days.

As a further example of a fan study, Vazquez-Calvo, Zhang, Pascual, and Cassany (2019) researched fan translation activities and were able to show learning through peer-to-peer activities and autodidacticism. The researchers took hundreds of screenshots of learning situations online between their three participants: an English-Spanish translator of games, a Japanese-Catalan fansubber of anime, and an English-Spanish translator of fanfiction. A study of the screenshots, together with interviews, gave a deeper understanding of the

32 A fansubber is a fan who subtitles video films.
language learning opportunities and practices at work. The games translator had a collaborative style, leaning on people to proofread his translations. The fansubber used a range of technologies, including Google Translate, to aid translation from Japanese to Catalan. The fanfiction translator was felt to have more scope for a creative adaptation than the other two translators, as the games and anime videos offered less room for change or additions.

To conclude this section, the issue of identity or, more accurately, multiple identities, arises in much of the research on fanfiction (Thorne, Sauro, & Smith, 2015). The creation of narrative is wrapped up with role playing and identity, confirming that “the self is dynamic, changing and plural”, as Eakin suggests (1999, p. 98). These points are echoed in the work of Lammers and Marsh (2017), who carried out a case study of a highly enthusiastic teenage creative writer. The longitudinal study of “Laura” allows insight into, what the study authors term as, her identity positions in formal and informal spaces. The ambitious self-identification with writer and adulthood – “A writer more than a child” (p. 89) – relates to, what the authors describe as, a lamination of identities involving risk-taking, expertise, perfectionism, and learning.

“Laura” speaks of fanfiction in a rather patronising tone and she voices a desire to leave fanfiction behind and become a more original author. A wish to develop in terms of artistic independence, and move further away from the text which had first been inspirational, was also expressed by some of the respondents in the study by Olín-Scheller and Wikström (2010, p. 49). There is a sense that, in writing stories, fanfiction writers are writing a story of themselves, and maybe in trying to make a break for originality they are searching for a unique identity.

### 2.2.7 Affinity spaces go to school

Some studies have been conducted that have involved working with online affinity spaces in more formal, or semi-formal, educational settings. Such studies are highly relevant to this thesis’ concern with bridging the gap between informal and formal learning. The studies show both the potential for continued exploration of this bridging type of activity, and some of the pitfalls.

Padgett and Curwood (2016) carried out a study which involved four US high school students (aged 14-17) being requested to participate in the poetry affinity space Figment at figment.com. The pupils were keen on developing their poetic skills but had not previously worked in this affinity space. The study found that all the students were able to draw inspiration from texts from poets “considered canonical, such as Edgar Allen Poe and Emily Dickinson” (amongst other, more contemporary poets), although one student qualified her...
positivity by adding that she was “afraid of copying” (Padgett & Curwood, 2016, p. 402). One student had 60 poems published on the site; he had received the most praise and was most positive about the site as a place to develop poetic skills. Another reported positively that “having others give feedback has been instrumental in crafting my poetry”. However, two respondents commented negatively: one stated that the online Figment community was a “lost cause”, and the other, who had received the least praise, reported having the best relationships on the site with users she already knew outside of the online space (Padgett & Curwood, 2016, p. 404). Given these negative comments, only a tentative conclusion of the study was formulated: that the affinity space “had the potential to harness their enthusiasm and shape their poetic development” (Padgett & Curwood, 2016, p. 404). Yet, all the participants were able to “adopt the identity of a poet, drawing on the practices of role models to develop their craft”, and they all “displayed critical awareness of how these authors influenced their poetry” (Padgett & Curwood, 2016, p. 402). The somewhat mixed findings of this study are similar to others that attempt to bridge the gap between informal affinity spaces and formal settings, in that they highlight what Magnifico, Lammers and Fields (2018) term as “tensions and opportunities” (p. 145).

Some of these tensions and opportunities were highlighted in a study carried out to examine what happens when pupils receive teacher support for critically analysing and participating in an online creative writing space (Lammers, 2016). The study was based in a US school around a course for 9th–12th graders entitled Fanfiction and Creative Writing: Sharing Your Work in Online Spaces. Although a pre-course survey had revealed “familiarity with various online writing spaces (e.g. Fanfiction.net, Wattpad, Booksie.com)”, during the initial week “the instructors facilitated students’ initial exploration of many different spaces, both familiar and new to the students, leading students to select spaces in which they wanted to share their writing” (Lammers, 2016, p. 5). It should be noted that students were not left to encounter the spaces alone here, but according to Lammers (2016):

> teacher-directed activities guided students through a systematic analysis of the type and quality of writing shared and the modes and content of feedback available, within online writing spaces. Students worked in pairs to complete these analyses, compiling what they found in a Google document and then sharing these insights with the rest of the class. (Lammers, 2016, p. 8)

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34 Students chose the course, along with two other concurrent courses, from a range of choices during a “Maymester”. Twelve students were on the course and eight agreed to take part in the study. The course totalled 990 minutes teaching time (Lammers, 2015, p. 5).
In week two, the students participated in their chosen space as readers, writers, and reviewers who provided feedback to others. The students who wrote fanfiction did so in response to the following: Pokémon, Rizzoli & Isles, Once Upon a Time, Lady Gaga and Grease. Of these students, four were female and one was male. These fanfiction writers used the following sites: fanfiction.net, Wattpad and Tumblr. Working with prose, but other than fanfiction, two students wrote what was termed in the study as original fiction, using WordPress and Wattpad. Another student wrote poetry using Powerpoetry.org and WordPress (Lammers. 2016, p. 6). One finding of the study was that pupils were able to shape their writing according to reader expectation online, with guidance from the teachers (Lammers, 2016, p. 8). In this sense, both the course and the study can be seen as an opportunity that highlighted the possibilities of using fanfiction and other online forums in school in the future. In terms of the tensions, two issues were raised in the findings. Firstly, some students were reluctant to share their work in class. This was because the students on the course had benefitted from the freedom offered by the safety of anonymity in writing online. For some of the students it was felt to be unfair to then be expected to show their work to other students in class. Secondly, some students were disappointed by the lack of feedback they received after posting their work online (Lammers, 2016, pp. 9-12).

In reflecting on the ‘tensions and opportunities’ of using affinity spaces for formal education purposes, Magnifico et al. (2018) highlight other difficulties in bridging this gap. One problem can occur because the online spaces often contain drafts, which are simply left unfinished. They suggest that this goes against what can be seen to be an expectation of “drafting to completion” in the formal school setting (Magnifico et al., 2018, p. 149). Moreover, they suggest that the anonymous nature of participation in an affinity space is such that it can be difficult for the teacher to judge if the pupils are participating fully. However, in describing these ‘tensions’ they raise a fundamental question:

Users’ trajectories may take meandering paths, beginning by contributing content (a more central form of participation) or by commenting or liking others’ projects (a more peripheral form). Further, a key feature of UGC affinity spaces is that participation is interest driven. This raises the question: to what degree does scaffolding detract from the essence of what makes the UGC affinity spaces thrive? Even as we encourage broader participation, might we risk stunting youth excitement by forcing them to study a site or take on roles that they do not want to inhabit. (Magnifico et al., 2018, p. 149)

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36 UGC = user generated content
37 Scaffolding is used here in the sense of a teacher designing lesson plans and schemes of work in a formal educational context so as to enable pupils to access, participate in, and, hopefully, learn in the informal affinity space.
This is a dilemma for teachers: while affinity spaces offer affordances for learners, and levels of motivation and engagement that teachers aspire to emulate in their classes, it might be that the attraction of the informal spaces simply cannot be replicated by school, or included in the activities of formal education. In other words, they are voluntary places that lose their appeal when impinged upon by formal schooling. They perhaps ought to be left alone by teachers who are looking for formal educational gains, and be respected as informal spaces. The dilemma is certainly one that teachers need to consider.

However, there are studies where the findings have pointed to rewards in terms of language teaching, outweighing the tensions and difficulties. One such study was carried out by McWilliams, Hickey, Hines, Conner, and Bishop (2011). In this study, students and staff from a US university teamed up with secondary school English teachers to develop a scheme of work involving the use of Twitter and fanfiction, in response to Arthur Miller’s play The Crucible. Pupils had to act as characters in the play, over the weeks of study and, in role, they were required to open Twitter accounts and then tweet accordingly, as events in the play demanded. Also, a fanfiction response was used as pupils were asked to create alternative endings or adapt passages of the play and post them on fanfiction.net. Much of the writing was collaborative but students were asked to create their own beta reader profiles so that they could individually criticise work they read and be openly reflective about their strengths and weaknesses in writing. The students were also required to collaboratively write a formal literary analysis essay. McWilliams et al. (2011) hoped that the writing and engagement with the Twitter and fanfiction parts of the module would help feed into the formal essay analysis task. They state, of Twitter in particular:

This tool also offered the opportunity for students to use reader response approaches to explore characterization, to inhabit the textual universe of the play, and to challenge students to address issues of tone, style, and characterization as they tweeted in character. (McWilliams et al., 2011, p. 240)

Further, McWilliams et al. (2011) argue that tweeting, as a character from the play, facilitated and motivated the finding of textual evidence. They state:

Students’ resolve to successfully embody their characters and appropriate textual evidence to support their characterizations in their tweets is providing them with a tangible and enticing enough purpose for reading that is guiding their efforts to make sense of the text. (McWilliams et al., 2011, p. 242)
This tweeting activity provides a digital-age update to the well-established technique of *hot-seating*, which involves pupils, in role, responding to questions from the class about their motives and actions, within the context of the story. The design of the project, as described by McWilliams et al. (2011) is creative; it holds onto useful, tried and tested, traditional aspects of language art practice while providing the dynamism of some of the aspects of digitalisation.

Regarding the findings, McWilliams et al. (2011) emphasise three themes. Firstly: “Motivation to participate increases when everybody’s participation is essential”; the students tweeted in character as the play reading in class progressed, and all contributed to a performance for all (p. 242). Secondly: “New approaches to assessment can help students demonstrate what they’ve learnt through (and beyond) the development of creative artefacts” (p. 243). The students worked collaboratively in producing even the formal essay and this presented teachers with difficulties when it came to assessment. It was recommended that teachers assess individual students’ reflections on the essay as artefact, “as evidence that they understand the nuances of the practices of characterization” (p. 243). The third and final theme of this study’s findings was that “the teacher’s role cannot be underestimated” (p. 243). Teachers did not have to be experts on Twitter or fanfiction, but are “essential to building participation structures that enable learners to engage with new tools and ideas with a playful and curious attitude and to regularly reflect on the learning that can result” (McWilliams et al., 2011, pp. 242-243). Thus, McWilliams et al. (2011) “designed” a programme using elements of informal and formal practices, to motivate, engage and facilitate learning (p. 242).

It is noteworthy that McWilliams et al. (2011) have used the word *design* to describe how they planned their scheme of work for *The Crucible*. The term suggests a thoughtfulness and craft to their planning of a kind that is surely necessary to approach the challenge of bridging between formal and informal learning. Another thoughtful *design* was put into practice, and studied, by Hendrick (2015). His study found that the technology which allows the dialogism at the core of distributed mentorship could be included in his classroom teaching. Hendrick states:

> Within a very short space of time, the affordances of new internet technologies have allowed teachers to truly give students a new arena for learning, to enter a dialogic space where the limitations of the classroom could not only be arrested but radically reconfigured. (Hendrick, 2015, p. 169)

For the formal class setting, the internet offers the chance to have dialogues and interactions occurring less through the teacher, but instead, from pupil to pupil, with lateral configurations. In this sense, Hendrick (2015) seeks to affirm a type of knowledge that is sought and achieved by the pupils through
their engagement, creativity, and curiosity, as opposed to simple teacher–pupil knowledge transmission.

With this thinking in mind, Hendrick (2015) describes how he used Google Docs with pupils (aged 14/15) in a UK secondary school and created an online forum. Hendrick (2015) states: “The central idea was to get them to pay more attention to what other students were writing and to use the knowledge gained from that as a means of informing their own progress” (p. 169). Writing tasks were set in relation to what was being taught in class, and resources, such as examples of essays and guides to writing, were left in the forum too. Instructions were offered on how to provide a review of peers’ work and even a bank of possible phrases. A wider audience was also established in this case, as not only the teacher could enter the forum, but also parents. Occasionally, Hendrick would offer feedback on a pupil’s work as an example, knowing that it could be seen by other pupils. Hendrick describes pupils’ comments, to each other, as “heartfelt” and “altruistic” (p. 171). This warm positivity harks back to the “oasis” or encouraging “secret garden” of the distributed mentorship encountered by Aragon and Davis (2019). Here is an example of a peer comment from Hendrick’s class’s Google Docs:

I like the way you used really good vocabulary. Such as ‘vivid, linguistic& sinister’. This definitely creates a picture to me that you know exactly what you are talking about. I definitely agree with XXXX expand your work. ntill you have nothing more to suck out. But superb work definitely an A.

Well done! (Hendrick, 2015, p.171, spelling as in the original)

Hendrick (2015) admits that the pupils’ grading of their peers’ work might be “wayward”, and sometimes not especially formative, but he was pleased with the positivity of the feedback they gave to each other. He adds that such opportunities for peer-to-peer encouragement, which the pupils can formulate in somewhat refreshing non-standard language, are too often denied in “the all-too-often monologic dynamic” where teacher-to-pupil feedback is a norm (Hendrick, 2015, p. 171). A caveat can be added here that Magnifico, Lammers, and Curwood (2019) have compared peer-to-peer feedback in formal settings with that on fanfiction sites. Their lexical analyses point to a highly elaborate set of social and rhetorical moves that can come into play on fanfiction sites which involve a deal of relationship building. They also stress that the area needs to be researched much more. Nevertheless, Hendrick’s pupil, in the above block quote, voices an interesting mix of formal language – “expand” with the rather more original “ntill you have nothing more to suck out”. Such originality and authenticity of language is just one positive from Hendrick’s (2015) study of taking aspects of affinity spaces to schools, rather than attempting to use affinity spaces in their entirety, or artificially and crudely implanting the use of these informal spaces into formal educational
settings. Hendrick (2015) adds a sense of optimism to the possibility of bridging the gap between aspects of informal, out-of-school learning experiences and those which can be offered in formal education. It is a sense of optimism which is reflected in the findings of the Motivational Teaching in Swedish Secondary English (MoTISSE) project in Sweden (Henry et al., 2019), as referred to in section 2.1.6.

Nevertheless, despite this positivity, the MoTISSE project did not claim to offer a full picture of secondary teaching of English in Sweden. The project only focused on teachers in secondary schools who claimed to have motivational lessons, nor did the project downplay the challenges involved in bridging the gap (see section 2.1.6). Furthermore, the MoTISSE project did not include the upper-secondary school system in Sweden at all. The technological developments of the digital age, which ease access to informal learning, and lead to challenges for formal L2 education, are rapid and sweeping; therefore, research into bridging the gap is vital. The MoTISSE project has already emphasised the part played by creativity, and creative writing, in English lessons which are motivational and engaging (see section 2.1.6). However, room for creativity and creative writing, in the lesson planning and schemes of work, can be limited by the needs for more easily measurable assignments. It is noteworthy that in the subject of Swedish, which is often taught by the very same people who are English teachers in Sweden, there is pressure on teachers to require more non-fiction writing from their pupils due to assessment demands, and there is perceived to be little room for creative response in upper-secondary schools (Bradling, 2020; Malmström, 2012). A study by Nyström (2000) found that school genres of written output consisted of non-fiction texts, all prose, and that a lot of writing such as poetry and lyrics were seen as private written genres, though they might have assisted students’ abilities in writing, if supported in school. Numerous studies referred to in this chapter (see sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.6) demonstrate the value of creative writing for language learning, and indicate that it ought to be included in the teaching of English in Sweden. The present study aims to find more information, from pupils, about the motivation and engagement associated with extramural English in Sweden, and how it relates to informal and formal L2 learning.

The views of pupil/creative writers need to be shared – as Hart (2000) puts it: “as a resource for reflecting upon and in some cases challenging the perspectives of those who claim to know their [the pupils] needs and to act in their interests” (p. 58). This comment by Hart (2000) guards against simple, automatic transmission of, for example, issues of motivation and engagement relating to L2 English learning from informal to formal contexts; instead, the professional educator needs to “reflect upon” the pupils’ perspectives. Before such reflection is possible, the pupils’ views must be sought. The L2 English teacher needs to be alert to the lifestyles and interests of the pupils, especially where it relates to English usage. The present study can hopefully play its part in building understanding of ways to bridge the gap between extramural English and the school subject. How it was designed and carried out will be dealt
with in chapter 4 on “Methods and materials”. Before that, the next chapter will outline the theoretical foundations of the present study.
3 Theory: A sociocultural framework

In this chapter I outline the sociocultural theory that frames the present study (Vygotsky, 1930/1978). The term sociocultural stems from the understanding that the mind’s consciousness and thought develops through interaction with society and culture. Vygotsky, a Russian psychologist writing in the wake of the 1917 workers’ revolution, developed the theory to show how the mind is influenced by, and influences, the social and cultural context. The concepts of sociocultural theory that are pertinent to the present study are outlined in the first of the two sections that follow (3.1). In the second section (3.2), I highlight other theories and thinking, such as flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990), which complement sociocultural theory in the present study.

3.1 Key concepts of sociocultural theory

Sociocultural theory is concerned with the operation and development of the mind and its relation to the society that it engages with. It can be termed “a theory of mind” (Lantolf, 2004, p. 1), although, as its name suggests, the theory is based on the idea that the wider societal and cultural context is of crucial importance. The theory serves to repudiate arguments that a mind, and with that, an individual’s imagination, can be wholly autonomous and removed from the influences of external factors. As Vygotsky (1930/2004) states:

Typically, imagination is portrayed as an exclusively internal activity, one that does not depend on external conditions, or, in the best case, depends on these conditions only to the extent that they determine the material on which the imagination must operate. The process of imagination per se, its direction, at first glance, appears to be guided only from within, by the feelings and needs of the individual, and thus to be wholly subjective and not based on objective factors. In actuality this is not true. (Vygotsky, 1930/2004, p. 30)

According to sociocultural theory, society and culture contribute to and shape the functioning and development of the mind. The external plane allows opportunities for interaction between individuals, which Vygotsky (1930/1978)
terms as “an interpersonal process” (p. 57). This interpersonal process becomes internalised. The language, and its signs, that are used on the interpersonal/external plane become tools, used in the mind to aid thought.

Much of Vygotsky’s research and writing focuses on the development of children and adolescents; hence, the following extract uses the example of a child to explain how processes on the external plane can be internalised. Vygotsky states: “An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child’s cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level” (1930/1978, p. 57, italics in the original). These two levels, the external and internal, are important concepts in sociocultural theory, and the type of relationship between them is important.

The relationship between external society and the internal, individual mind is not one-directional, but rather dialectical, as both influence each other. Nor is the relationship simply dichotomous in the sense of having two directional currents between two separate entities. Rather, the mind and the society, in dialectical thinking, are two sub-entities of a unified whole. The mind is both individual and together with other minds that form a society. Dialectical thought allows for an understanding of seeming opposites working in a unified way. This understanding of the concept of dialectics is explained by Lantolf and Poehner (2008) in the following way:

Dialectical thinking begins from the perspective of the unity of seemingly contradictory processes or entities and attempts not to disentangle that unity into what appears to be its component parts but to understand how the unity itself functions to achieve a particular end or goal. Indeed, to render the unity asunder is to destroy the very object of study one is attempting to understand in the first place. To be sure, one may undertake to focus attention on the components that form the unity but this must always take place within the scope of the totality that one is trying to explain. (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, pp. 4-5)

In this way, a dialectical understanding of the unified relationship between the individual level of the inner mind (the intrapersonal) and the external society (the interpersonal) operates in sociocultural theory. The relationship, in the theory, of the external plane and the internal plane is central: “the internalisation of socially rooted and historically developed activities is the distinguishing feature of human psychology” (Vygotsky, 1930/1978, p. 17).

This relationship between the external and internal plane means that culture is both of the society and the individual. This idea is alluded to, by the cultural theorist Raymond Williams (1958/1982), when he charts different definitions and understandings of the term culture over time: “where culture meant a state or habit of the mind, or the body of moral and intellectual activities, it means now, also, a whole way of life” (p. 18, italics in the original). All of these different meanings of culture can be correct according to sociocultural theory.
The understanding of a unified relationship between the external society and the internal mind means culture, when defined as “a state of mind”, is something that will have been influenced, in some way and to some degree, by society. Culture, if defined as “the body of moral and intellectual activities”, is a societal sized entity made by minds. One could use the definition of culture as a “whole way of life” and ask: what ways of life are surrounding the mind, and inputting into it? Crucially though, the mind is not a passive recipient, and sociocultural theory has been described as a way to explain how “humans develop the capacity to use cultural means to gain intentional control over their brain rather than being controlled by this biological organ” (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 4). The mind is stimulated by external cultural factors and signs such as language; language can then be developed into a tool harnessed by the mind for internal thought, and external interaction.

An important concept within sociocultural theory which seeks to explain the internalising of information, from the external plane, by the mind, is that of mediation. Through mediation, language becomes both signs and tools in the activities of the mind (Vygotsky, 1930/1978, p. 54). In the introduction to a translated edition of Vygotsky’s (1930/1978) Mind in Society it is suggested that mediation can be thought of as modification, in the way that external stimuli are responded to, and acted upon (Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 14). External stimuli are mediated and can themselves operate in mediated activity of the mind, that is, its reasoning and cognition, and in turn be “externally orientated” (Cole & Scribner, 1978, p. 14, original emphasis). Mediation occurs in the internal mind, but it also impacts on the external plane as the individual communicates and interacts, using the mediated information, with a society and its culture(s). The capabilities of the mind to mediate are related to both the level of development of the individual and the way in which the external level can aid, or scaffold, the development of the individual through support and education. In this sense, mediation becomes related to another concept in sociocultural theory – the zone of proximal development (ZPD).

The ZPD is best understood in addition to the zone of actual development (ZAD). The ZAD is a stage of learning, skills and knowledge which has already been secured and established; it is proficiency reached and it can be demonstrated independently in an examination. The ZPD refers to the learning a student can attain with scaffolding, so as to show something a student is capable of with support (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 15). In this way, Vygotsky proposed a double assessment in relation to learning – of actual and proximal development. The concept of the ZPD can be used in teaching and as-

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38 Sociocultural theory has come to practical use in dynamic assessment, as an antidote to the problem of measuring the ZAD using traditional examination, which sometimes shows only failure on the part of some pupils. Dynamic assessment enables scaffolded and supportive learning environments to be created alongside an assessment procedure, and this has afforded opportunities to highlight potentialities of learning, or pinpoint specific difficulties that can be
assessment in formal situations, but as the present study also encompasses extramural English, it is useful to note how play, in free time, can also relate to the ZPD. As Lantolf and Poehner (2008) explain:

As children engage in play that involves taking on adult roles (parent, teacher, soldier, doctor, etc.) they are performing through imagination what they are not yet able to do in reality and it is through this form of play that they come to appropriate more adult ways of being. Thus, play emphasizes the transformative potential of creativity in the ZPD, a feature of Vygotsky’s work that is often overlooked in the ZPD, research. (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 17)

Of interest for the present study is the understanding, as referred to in the above extract, of the centrality of play and, with that, imagination and creativity, in learning and development. This is one of the ways that sociocultural theory can inform language pedagogy.

Sociocultural theory, when applied to L2 development, offers an understanding of the importance of interactive opportunities for discourse in L2, but also of the significance of L1, in cognition and mediation for L2 learning. The communicative classroom is one where sociocultural theory can guide practice, and where meaningful talk with collaborative work ought to be encouraged – in the target L2 language (Lundahl, 2019). Such L2 use for L2 development, on the social level, co-exists with the theoretical understanding of the role of L1 use too, for mediation. As Lantolf, Thorne, and Poehner (2015) state: “L2 users have a difficult time using the new language to mediate their cognitive activity, notwithstanding high levels of communicative proficiency” (p. 17). Therefore, sociocultural theory, given its span over both the social/external and internal planes (interpersonal and intrapersonal), and its concern with development over time, enables an understanding of the roles of both L2 and L1 use for L2 learning.

Another way in which sociocultural theory can be seen to connect with practical applications of L2 teaching is through the emphasis placed on tools in development and learning. These include the semiotic tools in the form of language used for communication and inner thought, but also other tools of the physical world. As Negueruela (2008) states:

In Vygotskian thinking, humans create tools in order to attain a particular goal and without these tools the goal would be either difficult or completely impossible to attain. Human tools are functional and material. Some are exclusively material: hammers, computers or power
saws, while other tools, mainly semiotic in nature, become ideal and are internalized, achieving psychological status: concepts, schemas, graphs, or formulas. The importance of material and ideal tools is not their objective quality but their functionality. (Negueruela, 2008, p. 191)

Thus, as sociocultural theory is concerned with the functionality of tools, the current period of rapid digital technological development is especially significant. It is noteworthy that although the term sociocultural has tended to come to the fore, the actual term for the theory used by Vygotsky included the word historical (Lantolf, 2004, p. 4). Arguably, this term more easily encompasses an understanding of the significance of the physical, material, and technological developments over periods of history. According to sociocultural theory, the physicality and materiality of the external level are a part of the context within which the mind operates. Technological capabilities at different historical junctures both limit and afford creativity, but they can also be added to through the creative invention of new technologies.

Vygostskian sociocultural theory is very much in line with the focus of the present study, as it relates to the creative production of artefacts – including creative writing. According to sociocultural theory, perception of the external level allows conceptualisation and mediation on the inner level (using semiotic or ideal tools) and, in this way, imagination can lead to creative output (using physical tools). This creative output is related to learning as well. Vygotsky (1934/2012) emphasises that language is central to thought and the development of understanding, and that a key opportunity for learning emerges with the approach of adolescence: “The new significant use of the word, its use as a means of concept formation, is the immediate psychological cause of the radical change in the intellectual process that occurs on the threshold of adolescence” (p. 116). Furthermore, Vygotsky (1931/1991) argues, “the convergence of intellect and imagination is a distinctive characteristic of development in adolescence” (p. 30). Not only is this a process on the inner level, but it leads to the creative production of artefacts (Vygotsky, 1930/1978). The link between internal imagination and creative output is commented on here:

It is precisely human creative activity that makes the human being a creature pointed toward the future, creating the future and thus altering his [sic] own present.

This creative activity, based on the ability of our brain to combine elements, is called imagination or fantasy in psychology…. Imagination, as the basis of all creative activity, is an important component of absolutely all aspects of cultural life, enabling artistic, scientific and technical creation alike. (Vygotsky, 1930/2004, p. 9)

Regarding creative output, Vygotsky (1930/2004) also points to creative writing in particular, by adolescents: “There is one very obvious trait in adolescent
behaviour that is directly related to the propensity for creative writing at this stage – this is the heightened level of emotionality and emotional volatility in adolescence” (p. 53). Indeed, Vygotsky (1930/2004) adds that “Nothing important in life is achieved without a great deal of emotion” (p. 55). This emotion, together with development of intellect, allows for a use of tools for imaginative, creative output – according to sociocultural theory.

In conclusion, all the concepts and understandings referred to so far in this chapter form some of the key notions of sociocultural theory that are relevant to the present study. The central theoretical idea is of an internal level of consciousness and thought which interacts with an external society. Cultural signs and tools from the outer society are mediated by the mind which, in turn, interacts with that society. The relationship between the inner (intrapersonal) and the external (interpersonal) level is dialectical, as they form a unified whole. The concept of the ZPD is based on the possibility of the mind to interact, learn, and develop with the support of others. In the case of L2 learning and development, there is an understanding in the theory that L1 plays a significant role in mediating the individual’s intrapersonal development of L2. However, on the interpersonal plane, much room for L2 interaction is desirable to foster language learning. Finally, sociocultural theory has a focus on imagination and play as means to create and bring about change; such creation can take the form of artefacts like creative writing, particularly in adolescence. These concepts have offered a theoretical foundation for the present study. However, there are other theories and thinking that complement sociocultural theory and that I outline in the next section.

3.2 Complementary theories and thinking

While the present study is primarily founded upon sociocultural theory, it has been influenced by other theories and thinking as well. These include the theories of flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990), social capital (Bourdieu, 1985), and dialogism (Bakhtin, 1981,1987), as well as the notions of entanglement (Barad, 2007), and spectator and participant (Britton, 1970/1992). These ideas serve to complement aspects touched on by sociocultural theory. In this section, I outline these ideas and indicate how they have informed the present study.

A state of consciousness involving pleasurable and concentrated focus on a task can be referred to as flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990). The depth of engagement when in the state of flow – also referred to as being in the zone – is so intense that one has a feeling of being immersed in the challenge at hand and is able to break “free from the tyranny of time” (Csikszentmihályi, 1990,
p. 67). Aspects of the concept of flow overlap with key elements of sociocultural theory too. Just as play, and with that, a sense of what is freely chosen and enjoyable, is central for development, according to sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008), so a feature of the state of flow is pleasure. Once in the zone, it is intrinsically rewarding and motivational. To demonstrate this point, Csíkszentmihályi (1990) uses the example of surgeons who say they would do their job voluntarily because it is so enjoyable, or boat owners who spend huge amounts of time and money to ensure they get, what they call, their unbeatable feeling of sailing (p. 67). Of course, that which is unbeatable, or exceedingly pleasing, is not necessarily the same as that which is very easy.

Flow requires a certain degree of a challenge, as an individual finds a harmonious balance between the states of anxiety and boredom – of what is difficult to attain, and what is easy to achieve. Csíkszentmihályi (1990) explains this balance between challenge and ease here:

One cannot enjoy doing the same thing at the same level for long. We grow either bored or frustrated; and then the desire to enjoy ourselves again pushes us to stretch our skills, or to discover new opportunities for using them. (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990, p. 75)

Flow is not only linked to enjoyment through challenge, but, like the ZPD, it is linked to learning too: “it builds the self-confidence that allows us to develop skills and make significant contributions to humankind” (Csíkszentmihályi, 1990, p. 42). Also, flow has begun to be of interest regarding L2 motivation (Henry, 2019d, p. 48). Flow requires control, or agency, to ensure the balance between challenge (or anxiety) and boredom. While this sense of control is often achieved at the level of the individual, Dörnyei, Henry, and Muir (2015) highlight the potential for group flow as well, where interaction can add energy and motivation.

According to sociocultural theory, engagement on the interpersonal, or social, plane is significant for the development of consciousness (Vygotsky 1930/1978). This understanding is further strengthened in the present study because it has also been informed by Bourdieu’s (1985) idea of social capital. The concept of social capital helps to explain the motivational reward of social interaction and, on this basis, an understanding that social exchange will be sought and maintained. This concept is defined by Bourdieu (1985) in the following way:

Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a “credential” which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the
word. These relationships may exist only in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. They may also be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (the name of a family, a class, or a tribe or of a school, a party, etc.) and by a whole set of instituting acts designed simultaneously to form and inform those who undergo them; in this case, they are more or less really enacted and so maintained and reinforced, in exchanges. (Bourdieu, 1985, p. 21)

The above extract indicates the importance of social networking; also, as group or network membership is sought, it implies a sense of self-identity – even if only as an individual member of a group. This idea of the significance of networking to gain and maintain social capital has been layered on to the sociocultural foundation of the present study. I have tried to find what social networks (if any) motivate and engage in the free-time activity of creative writing, according to the perspectives of the participants.

The networking and group interaction involved with social capital, together with the state of flow, are two ideas that require a holistic frame for inclusion. Sociocultural theory is a holistic theory that offers room for consideration of a range of factors at work in creative writing and L2 language learning. Nevertheless, the notion of entanglement, as raised by Barad (2007), has also played a role in informing the present study. Entanglement is a concept within sociomaterality (Edwards & Fenwick, 2015) that describes the interlinkage between both human and non-human entities. Entanglement underscores the permeability of entities – including the entity of the human individual. As Barad (2007) states:

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating. (Barad, 2007, p. ix)

In this sense, the notion of entanglement can guard against an anthropocentric perspective, or a view of an individual as able to determinedly control and wholly harness outside elements. Instead, as Barad argues in an interview with Juelskjaer (2012), in order to find out about an individual’s identity it is vital to ask the question “what material forces were contributing to the reiterative materialization of this ‘I’?” (p. 11). The significance of material, in the entanglement of creating meaning, is such that for Barad (2007) “it is less that there is an assemblage of agents than there is an entanglement of agencies” (p. 23). Agency, in this sense, is less something that is owned by an individual, but rather, something that is performed together – with and between human and non-human forces. This notion of entanglement requires that a study of a phenomenon is open to considering a multiplicity of factors – human and material.
Barad’s (2007) view is not a paradigm shift away from sociocultural theory, but there is a nuanced shift in perspective. It is noteworthy that when Vygotsky, a psychologist, uses the prefix “intra” the primary focus is within the context of the mind and the “intrapersonal” (Vygotsky, 1930/78, p. 57), whereas Barad (2007), a physicist, uses the same prefix to refer to the “intra-relating” (p. ix) of the world within which the individual exists. It is a shift of perspective that ensures that material factors are considered in the present study too. I was aware that the material and technological developments were opening new possibilities for creative writers. Thus, entanglement has been a useful concept in the design and analysis of the present study. Yet, this focus on materialism is not the only way Barad (2007) has informed the present study.

Barad’s (2007) ideas of entanglement include the researcher, along with the instruments and act of researching, as part of the entangled entities of the world. The researcher is entangled with – and changes – that which is being researched, and cannot merely “peek” at a phenomenon without leaving a mark somehow (Barad, 2007, p. 345). So, a researcher must be alert to the idea that measuring affects the reality being observed. In the case of the present study, this intrusion by the researcher takes the form of me entering into a dialogue with the participants (NB the procedures of the present study will be explained more fully in the next chapter). Any idea of a passive and non-interfering observation by the researcher would be false. Rather, the present study incorporates an understanding that voices in a dialogue influence the responses that follow.

While Barad’s (2007) notion of entanglement adds to an understanding of the need to consider material factors, as well as the influence of the researcher, Bakhtin’s (1981, 1987) ideas on dialogism have been useful, in the present study, for the way in which they emphasise the importance of the interrelations of humans. Dialogism is concerned with the interactions and conversations – the dialogues – on the social level. Here too, as with the arguments in the earlier extract from Barad (2007, p. ix), the notion of the self is not formed independently by the individual, but as Bakhtin (1981) explains:

Our self-concept is formed in part from the social relationships we have with others and from others’ responses to what we say and do.... Because the self is constructed out of our need to balance our own needs with those of others, the self is necessarily dialogic or made in concert with others. (Bakhtin, 1981, p.33)

Not only can the individual not be viewed in isolation, but also language is in response to something that preceded it, and affects and creates a response. Thus, “any utterance is a link in a very complexly organised chain of utterances” (Bakhtin, 1987, p. 69). The writings of Bakhtin (1987) also place emphasis on the context of language, as shaping what is said and how it is said (and what is not said). This idea of context for language has been borne in
mind in the design of the present study, especially in relation to the research questions about motivation and engagement.

As the present study has a focus on creative writing, I have considered some thinking of Britton (1970/1992), who focused his studies on the writing of school pupils in the subject of English in London during the 1960s and 70s. In terms of an academic dialogue, the ideas of Vygotsky and Bakhtin have influenced the writings of Britton (1970/1992). His notions of participant and spectator, as different language roles, have been particularly informative. Britton argues that in the role of the participant one uses language in a work-like, instrumental, and functional manner. He states: “When we use language in the participant role we select and order our material according to the demands made by something outside ourselves, something that exists in the situation” (Britton, 1970/1992, p. 124). This role can be used for “Informing people, instructing people, explaining, planning, setting forth the pros and cons and coming to a conclusion” (p. 122). In contrast, the language of the spectator role is more playful and aesthetic, and it includes “Make-believe play, daydreaming aloud, chatting about our experiences, gossip, travellers’ tales and other story-telling, fiction, the novel, drama, poetry” (p. 122). Such categorisation would place creative writing in the spectator role, rather than the participant role, and, in the present study, this has been useful to consider. Harris (1988) argues that Britton’s notion of the spectator role reminds us that language “is a way for us to be with one another, to commune as well as communicate…. and offers opportunities for play, intimacy and self-expression” (p. 41). Such ideas have been helpful to reflect upon, given that the present study includes a focus on the motivations of young people to write creatively.

In this chapter, I have outlined the key concepts of sociocultural theory, as well as other complementary ideas, upon which the present study rests or is in conversation with. The understanding that the internal mind – and its imagination and creativity – operates in relation to external culture and society underpins the present study. Creative writers, as the study’s participants, are not viewed as responding merely to an inner muse; rather, their own social and material contexts, as they perceive them, are considered to be pertinent to the search for answers to the research questions. The theoretical ideas referred to in this chapter have guided the present study during all its stages, including its design, implementation, and analysis. The design of the present study, and its materials and methods, will be described in the next chapter.

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39 Harris (1988) is critical of what he describes as Britton’s over-categorisation, and suggests that literature can have a practical purpose and can therefore fall into the participant category too, and that scientific theorising can also be of the spectator category. Britton (1970/1992) concedes that the two categories can overlap, and refers to the art of persuasion as an example (p. 123).
4 Materials and methods

In this chapter, I describe the details of the materials and methods employed in the present study. I explain how theoretical understandings outlined in the previous chapter (3) took practical form in the study design and the execution of research procedures. As the research questions are all based on pupils’ perspectives, the thinking behind this approach is discussed here too. Also, the way in which participants were selected is outlined, and their relevant background information is included. I account for all key aspects of the data collection, including the use of semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, I explain how the pre-planned questions at the interviews were decided upon and formulated.

The method of qualitative content analysis was used to analyse the collected data. This method was chosen as it allowed for a sensitive exploration of meanings and intentions, and a way “to distil words into fewer content related categories” (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 108). Qualitative content analysis, and the approaches, moves, and tools that featured in the analytical procedures are all discussed in this chapter. Also, ethical considerations involved in the present study are outlined, as these played a crucial role in decisions which involved the study’s participants in particular.

4.1 A study of pupils’ perspectives

When the present study was first planned, it was as a response to the challenge facing formal L2 English education in Sweden due to pupils’ informal engagement with extramural English (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011). It was hoped that a new study might bring forth findings that could aid understanding of how to bridge the gap between informal and formal learning of L2 English in Sweden (see section 2.1.6). With this gap in mind, the present study aims to critically explore students’ perspectives on the extramural activity of creative writing, to uncover valuable information for English teaching. In addition, pupils’ insights were sought regarding aspects of the school subject of L2 English. Another aim of the study is to increase understanding of the motivation for, and engagement with, the extramural L2 English activity of creative writing.
Surely those pupils who are motivated to be engaged with free-time creative writing in English are a potential resource for English teachers – to listen to and learn from? Aspects related to pupils’ motivation and engagement outside of class may well aid motivation and engagement in class. Also, English teachers ought to be interested in the question of if, and if so, how creative writers learn English in their free time. It is reasonable to consider that pupils who write creatively in their free time are likely to be stimulated and challenged informally; therefore, those of us involved with L2 English education ought to be interested in insights from them, about creative writing and challenge, in a formal school setting as well.

This thinking led to formulation of the research questions for the present study:

1. What are the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation to write creatively in English in their free time?

2. How are the pupils engaged in this activity?

3. Do they consider that their learning of English is enriched through this activity, and, if so, how?

4. What insights do the pupils offer concerning creative writing and challenge in the English classroom?

The first research question is based on an understanding of the centrality of motivation in L2 language learning (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). This flows, also, from the idea that a teacher of the L2 school subject of English needs to keep abreast with what pupils may consider motivational. In this way, formal professional practice can be better informed, and so be better equipped to be motivational. This question opens the way for the present study to go deeper into the issue of motivation, and its dynamic qualities. The question can include more sub-questions, such as what motivates starting and continuing? That is, as a tool of enquiry, this research question opens the way for the participant to be asked about motivational issues in retrospect and prospect.

The second research question aims to find what the activity of free-time creative writing entails. It is formulated in shorthand, as it means What are the pupils’ perspectives on how they are engaged? The question is founded on the understanding that pupils’ engagement is a prerequisite for improved academic attainment (Zyngier, 2008). In order to deepen understanding of engagement in extramural creative writing, sub-questions can be drawn from this research question. These include what is produced, how, where, with what and who for.

The third research question consists of two parts. The first part aims to discover pupils’ self-assessment of their English learning in relation to the free-
time activity of creative writing; the second part opens the way to uncover what participants learn, and in what way.

The final research question is founded on the idea that if classes are to improve, the student voice must be listened to by educators (Hart, 2000; Mitra, 2018). Also, this question enables a useful bridging from the informal to the formal, with its focus on pupil insights into two aspects of their L2 English school subject. Alongside the issue of creative writing in school, the issue of challenge is included. The term challenge is used here in a positive sense, in the same way that it is used in the concept of flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990); that is, that the challenge of new difficulties or problems can be stimulating or motivational, leading to engagement and learning.

The details of the search for participants and the other aspects of the data collection and analysis will be discussed in the sections that follow. The method of qualitative content analysis can be divided into three phases: preparation phase, organisation phase, and reporting phase (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The preparation phase consists of data collection, the organisation phase involves the analysis of the material, and the final phase is the reporting of the findings. In the next section I shall outline the preparation phase – the collection of data.

4.2 Data collection

I outline how the participants for the study were selected in the following section (4.2.1), and in the subsequent section (4.2.2) I present some background information about the participants. In section 4.2.3 I explain the thinking behind the choice of semi-structured interviews for data collection, and outline the selection and formulation of the pre-planned questions for the interviews. Ethical considerations are also outlined in sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2.

4.2.1 Selecting participants

As the research questions are based on pupils’ perspectives and insights, it was necessary to seek and select pupils with a free-time interest in creative writing in English, to participate in the study. A research information letter was sent out to over 100 English teachers (primarily in the Mälardalen area of Sweden) through a network entitled English Teachers Sharing.40 In the letter, I appealed to teachers to ask their pupils if they had a free-time interest in

40 The network English Teachers Sharing, based in the Mälardalen area of Sweden, was launched in spring 2014 at Mälardalen University. Some of the webinars organised by the network can be seen at: https://play.mdh.se/channel/English%20Teachers%20Sharing/258824
creative writing in English and, if so, ask whether they might be willing to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

The procedures for selecting participants were carried out in accordance with ethical requirements of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2017). Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and they were assured that their names would be changed in written texts connected with the study, to respect confidentiality. To this end, letters were sent to teachers to give to all pupils interested in the study, and parents/guardians of pupils who were under 16 years old (see Appendices B, C & D). All pupils who wanted to participate had to sign permission forms and those under 16 had to also have signed permission from parents/guardians.

The research information letters were clear about the ambition to contribute to development in the quality of formal English language teaching. For example, the letters to pupils included the following statement:

The purpose is to understand more about pupils’ creative writing in English in their free time. By listening to you, us teachers can hopefully improve and make English teaching more interesting! (Appendices B & C: Information letters to schools, my translation)

In terms of what might attract pupils to participate, some flexibility was offered regarding whether they wished to be interviewed alone, or in a pair, with a friend. No definition was used in the research information letters for what was deemed to be creative writing other than that it involved writing stories in English. There was no reference to on- or offline writing; nor was any amount of free time spent on creative writing specified as a requirement to take part in the study. In this way, the definition of free-time L2 English creative writing was left largely open to the pupil, although it is possible that teachers in schools, as gatekeepers for the study, might have turned to pupils who they knew had this interest.

4.2.2 The participants

From the time of the research information letter being sent, in December 2016, replies came in quite quickly, and by February 2017 all the participants had responded. In total, 13 pupils, aged 13 to 18 years old, agreed to take part in the study. Eight of the pupils were female and five were male. Of the female pupils, three attended secondary school and five were at upper-secondary

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41 Participants’ names have been changed to pseudonyms in the written transcripts, in this thesis, and any other writing about the present study. In recordings played at conferences, names were deleted. Any pen names or masking identities used by participants, for example on fan-fiction sites, have also been changed.

66
school. The female pupils at secondary school were in year 7, where year 9 is the final year. The female pupils at upper-secondary school were from two schools in different Swedish towns but were all in the second year of three-year aesthetic/art-based programmes, which prepare for study at university. The male pupils all attended secondary school; four of them were in year 7, and one in year 9. All the pupils were receiving formal education in L2 English in school, with approximately two hours a week of classes.

Two of the secondary schools were situated in a large town, and one was in a small, semi-rural municipality. The upper-secondary schools were in large towns.

Finally, the participants had different extramural English creative writing profiles. A brief summary of the participants’ writing profiles is shown in Table 1, which lists the pupils, and their age, in the order in which they were interviewed (all names are pseudonyms).
Table 1: Participants’ extramural English creative writing profile (In chronological order of interviews, pupils in pair interviews are shown together in column 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/age</th>
<th>Extramural English Creative Writing Profile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William 16</td>
<td>Stories offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna 17</td>
<td>Stories offline, live online written role-play</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saga 17, Klara 18</td>
<td>Stories offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online fanfiction, original stories on- and offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia 13, Molly 14</td>
<td>Online fanfiction, blogs, poetry, songs on- and offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Online fanfiction, blogs, poetry, songs on- and offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias 13, Filip 13</td>
<td>Comics, stories, rap/songs offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comics, stories, rap/songs on- and offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel 15, Ludvig 13</td>
<td>Stories offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comics, stories, songs offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella 13</td>
<td>Online fanfiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma 18, Linnea 17</td>
<td>Online fanfiction, stories, songs on- and offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Songs offline</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviews were selected as the data collection method, as they enable participants to offer perspectives and insights (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 174), which were a central element in all the research questions (see section 4.1). The research questions provided the basis for the pre-planned questions for the interviews (see Appendices E & F). The questioning in the interviews was semi-structured because this format offers several advantages: It allows for a certain spontaneity, as questions can be posed which have not been foreseen in advance. Even where pre-planned questions prove fruitful, the semi-structured format allows for “depth to be achieved by providing an opportunity, on the part of the interviewer, to probe and expand the audience’s responses” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 157). The questions were formulated in an open manner to allow the pupils to offer personal narratives about their free-time creative writing.

While giving full consideration to the theoretical framework, a great deal of thought and discussion went into formulating the pre-planned questions (see Appendices E & F).\(^42\) Regarding the first research question, about motivation, pupils were not only asked what motivated them to start and continue their free-time writing activity, but questions were added about issues that could be relevant to motivation, including audience, input/output, tools and identity – social, cultural and material factors. That is, in the interviews, the participants were asked about their motives within their sociocultural context.

I wanted to encourage the participants to talk as much, and as freely, as possible; so, planning went into making the interviews events where the participants felt safe. The order of the questions was important; before the potentially abstract and possibly difficult interview question about what motivated the participants, they were, after a brief presentation of themselves, invited to talk about what stories they wrote. Indeed, talking about their creative writing seemed to provide a pleasing and relaxing way into the interview, and put the participants at ease.

This sense of ease was important to establish as I was conscious of the power asymmetry in the interviews and that they were not egalitarian dialogues (Kvale 2008, p. 33). The very act of interviewing, according to Ball (1983), given that the “interviewee is asked to elaborate, illustrate, reiterate, define, summarise, exemplify, and confirm matters”, is a form of “social strip-tease” (p. 94). The importance of enabling participants to feel comfortable, relied on a number of measures to counter any possible awkwardness. As I stated earlier, in most cases the interviews were held in friendship pairs. The interviews were recorded on an unobtrusive mobile phone, simply left on the

\(^{42}\) The interview guide (Appendix E) was only available in Swedish at the interviews. The English translation of the interview guide (Appendix F) was made for this thesis.
table, and written notes were taken during the interviews. The notes were returned to later for deeper reflection and analysis, but the act of notetaking helped active listening on my part, and aided the earliest stage of analysis as well. Further, note-taking was a performative signal to the pupils that active listening was taking place, along with other verbal and physical communicative signals. These performative gestures of active listening were not only offered as polite signs of respect, but also to ensure the fullest engagement and contribution from the participants.

Another measure to put the pupils at ease was that they had the chance to talk in Swedish if they preferred. The interviews started in Swedish unless participants stated in advance that they wanted the interview in English, which some of them did. Offering Swedish as the default choice of language for the interviews was an ethical consideration. I had wondered if some students might worry that their English was being assessed. Alternatively, they might feel frustration that they could better express themselves in the interview in Swedish, and might regret having chosen English. Also, the pupils were given the list of pre-planned questions before the interview – in Swedish. Any move to English as the language of the interview was led or initiated by the pupils themselves. In most cases the interview was shifted into English by the pupils (see Table 2).

After the interviews, the recordings were listened to repeatedly, and written transcriptions made. Transcription enabled the texts to be read, marked, annotated, and passages could be cut and pasted in the later organisation phase. Overall, interviews were transcribed in such a way that only manifest content was written up. Latent, or non-verbal, communication, such as gestures and silences, was not transcribed, although occasionally laughter or laughs (as appeared in interviews 1 to 5) was written in brackets next to the spoken words. This was useful for irony to be understood in the transcribed text. On just one occasion, cries (interview 8) was noted to explain a voice which stopped abruptly, mid-sentence. The pupil became tearful while responding to a question, as she was talking of something upsetting, but she was not harmed, and she was also laughing earlier, and later, in the interview.

By the end of all of the interviews, there were over 420 minutes of recordings, resulting in almost 45,000 words of transcribed text – about the size of a short novel. Information about the interviews, such as word count and the time for each interview, is shown in Table 2. The reading of the transcripts helped me begin to absorb and fully comprehend the data, but I was keen to bear in mind that the written word was only a symbolic representation of the interviews. So, repeated reading and listening went together to increase my full familiarity with the interviews. This marked the conclusion of the late preparation phase of the qualitative content analysis process. The next stage of the process could begin; this was the organisation phase, or the analysis of the data.
Table 2: Information about the interviews  
(Names are provided in chronological order of the interviews)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name &amp; age</th>
<th>Interview: Individual/Pair?</th>
<th>School form</th>
<th>Interview length (mins)</th>
<th>Word count of transcriptions</th>
<th>Interview language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>William 16</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4,089</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanna 17</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Upper-secondary</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>6,402*</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saga 17, Klara 18</td>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Upper-secondary</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>6,989</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia 13, Molly 14</td>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>8,723</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elias 13, Filip 13</td>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>3,559</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samuel 15, Ludvig 13</td>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>6,928</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stella 13</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4,537</td>
<td>Swedish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma 18, Linne 17</td>
<td>Pair</td>
<td>Upper-secondary</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3,527</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NB Hanna narrated a lot of the plots from her written stories in her interviews, but not all the detail of these were included in the transcription.

Total = 420 mins  
Mean = 52.5 mins  
Total = 44,754 words  
Mean = 5,594 words
4.3 Analytical procedures

In this section, I outline the analytical procedures used to find answers to the research questions. The method of qualitative content analysis was chosen because it enabled the sifting through of large amounts of text so as to highlight the main perspectives and insights expressed by the participants, yet keep the rich detail and description of the narratives (Elo et al., 2014). In other words, it was hoped that identifying the major themes in the analysis process would not be at the cost of losing unique, or more individual, perspectives.

This was an ambitious approach, and the analysis was a long process consisting of different phases and moves. The organisation phase of analysis began with categorisation and abstraction. The details of what this entailed are outlined in the following section. Later, in this chapter, the use of a grounded approach will also be explained. Further, the thinking behind the forming of the themes, as a way to clearly see meaning in the data, shall be outlined, together with an explanation of the process of iteration. Finally, the way in which a conceptual map could be considered, in the later part of the organisation phase of analysis, shall be discussed.

4.3.1 Organisation: categorisation and abstraction

With the data collected, it was necessary to find the material of relevance to the research questions. This required systematic organisation and analysis of the data. Elo et al. (2014) describe this first period of the organisation phase as “categorisation and abstraction” (p. 3). Categorisation consisted of labelling the data – also known as coding – and this enabled similar pupil comments to be identified and clustered together. Thus, it was easier to see where repetition of participant comments, or agreement on perspectives, occurred. The term abstraction suggests movement away from the detail into broader “extraction of patterns and themes” (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 175). This process of categorisation and abstraction was helped by my recognition of similar comments from different participants when listening to the audio or reading the transcripts. It was clear at an early stage, for example, that praise had been motivational for several of the pupils. Comments referring to praise

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43 Some analysis had already taken place in the data collection phase. The boundaries between the phases of preparation (data collection) and organisation (analysis), as described by Elo et al. (2008), can be blurred. This blurring occurs because, as Kvale (2008) emphasises, even during data collection, in the interview process, analytical consideration really begins. An attentive interviewer begins to reflect on meaning and significance during the interviews themselves, as well as in the immediate period after. Also, some degree of analysis in the interview is necessary for relevant follow-up questions to the pre-planned questions in the semi-structured format.
were then marked or highlighted. This rather rough and messy stage was an early part of categorisation.

I concur with Elo and Kyngäs (2008) who state: “No insights or theories can spring forth from the data without the researcher becoming completely familiar with them” (p. 109). My familiarity with the text, alongside reflection, allowed connections to be made between similar comments so as to draw out the key themes and identify relevant detail too.

Themes were formed from the repeated comments of different pupils that chorused around a similar idea, but I was conscious of the need not to lose individual, or non-concurring, voices in this process. Unique differences were drawn out and highlighted. For example, only one participant, Molly, “told” English words which were new to her, that she was going to “fight” with them, so as to learn and master them. While Molly’s “fight” comment was categorised as vocabulary learning, and placed with other participants’ comments on the same theme, it is important to note that the actual passage of text from Molly was saved to preserve the nuanced narrative and message, and was not merely reduced to a number. Similarly, a theme formed of wanting to be an author (with four pupils stating that), but a note was made, too, that Klara remarked how she was “an author, not a girl or child”. Such a comment adds a nuanced difference to the idea of wanting to be an author, as she feels she has already become one, and is also clearly rejecting some other labels or identities.

The keeping of the quotes of the participants’ voices, under the category headings, prevented their narratives from becoming simplified. In this way, the multi-perspectivity and multi-vocality of the data could be maintained (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). Regarding the importance of the unique, or individual view, I re-emphasise that pupils had been informed that their participation would be helpful for improving quality in the teaching of English (see section 4.2.1). Therefore, it would have been inappropriate to ignore a pupil’s perspective simply because it was not repeated by others. The research was being done with pupils as participants, and not on them (Cook, 2012). In this sense, there was an ethical concern to not ignore the individual voice; this might have happened if there had been too much of a rush to exclusively find themes formed from comments that were repeated in the same manner. Although themes were formed from the categories where there was a clustering of repeated similar comments, in the present study there were also categories made of single participant’s comments which were relevant to the research questions. Further, it must be noted that particular comments could be used for more than one category; Molly’s “fight” with new words was a comment which related to both the category of vocabulary learning and also that of reading.

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44 I use this term of chorus to mean when several participants’ comments cluster together at a category.
As the interviews consisted of over 44,000 words, categorisation and abstraction was a time-consuming process. With early annotation, labelling and highlighting on paper, the large amount of material began to be more manageable, as my familiarity with the texts grew. The analysis was later aided by the use of a software tool for qualitative research – NVivo12 (2018). This tool allowed the large amount of text to be more easily broken down, organised, re-organised, and stored during analysis procedures.

### 4.3.2 A grounded approach

The analysis was based on a grounded approach (Kvale, 2008, p. 202), so the categories were drawn from the text inductively (Heigham & Croker, 2009, p. 314). This can be considered as a bottom-up approach, which means that categories were not pre-determined. With pre-determined categories, there is a top-down approach of searching for comments in the data that match category titles that already exist. Instead, the breaking down and organisation of the texts in the present study was determined by the way the participants’ comments shaped and formed the categories. Titles for categories came in response to participants’ comments, not in advance of analysing them. Thus, categorisation was built up in an open manner, from the interview data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p.109). Semantic units (a sentence, or small sections of dialogue) were cut from the text and placed in what is termed a node in the NVivo12 (2018) software tool, but what might be more commonly termed a category (or sub-category). An example of this is shown in Figure 1:

**Figure 1:** An example of a grounded approach to coding using NVivo12 (2018), January 2020

Figure 1 shows a comment of Saga’s that has been coded, or, in other words, how using a grounded approach has led to a comment being categorised. Using the software terminology, what Figure 1 shows is that the comment has been placed into a node of *Imitate and adapt*. The category title of *Imitate*...
and adapt existed as a response to comments such as Saga’s, which indicate how reading had inspired writing.

It is noteworthy that the grounded approach still involves selection and decision by the researcher. For example, a pupil’s comment of “my mum said she liked it” was placed, by me, under the category of praise. However, to help keep the approach as grounded as possible, the titles of categories could sometimes consist of the actual words of the participants. Where the title of a category is formed by the participants’ actual words it is referred to as in vivo coding (Manning, 2017). For instance, the node label “author not a girl/child” was a formulation using in vivo terminology, because it was formed exclusively from the participants’ words. It was not a phrase I had used first in the dialogue of the interview or added in categorisation. An example of an in vivo node label (or category title) as it appeared in the NVivo12 (2018) tool is shown in Figure 2.

The existence of some in vivo labelling in the categorisation shows how the analysis built on the pupils’ voices – their perspectives and insights (in Figure 2, Klara’s words have been used for the node title). Nevertheless, most of the labelling, and indeed the very act of selection and forming of the categories had much input from myself as the researcher. This balance between the agency of the data and the agency of the researcher was reflected in my consideration of the use of terminology to describe how the themes were formed during the analysis.

There is some debate, in the literature about qualitative approaches to coding, as to whether, in the process of analysis, themes emerge or if they are generated. Morse and Field (1995) use the term “emerging” (p. 141) to describe themes arising, or becoming clearly identifiable, from the data. Similarly, Elo and Kyngäs (2008) suggest insights “spring forth” from the data (p. 109). However, Bhattacharya (2017) suggests that such terms load agency.

Figure 2: Example of an in vivo approach to coding, January 2020

number of comments from the interviews). The number, or names, of participants who contributed to a particular node, is not clear from these figures alone. A way I resolved this difficulty is explained in section 4.3.5.
upon the data and deny the agency of the researcher. Therefore, she prefers the term “generation” which stresses agential influence, and interference, by the researcher (2017, p. 151).

I advocate a synthesis of these approaches for two reasons. Firstly, the transcripts in my study are a representation of the pupils’ voices; during the interviews, they often made their point assertively so that they did “spring forth”, as Elo & Kyngäs suggest, or “emerge” as Morse and Field (1995) state. Therefore, to use Bhattacharya’s (2017) term of “generation” risks an excessive removal of the participants’ agency. Secondly, the socio-materialist approach of Barad (2007) points to an agency that operates, or is performed, between the researcher and the transcribed text. I have opted to also use the term form in relation to the emergence/generation of the themes, as the term of form encompasses a meaning of both a formation of the themes on the part of the material (the collected data), or, that I, as researcher, can play a part in their forming or formation too.

Initially, the sifting through and organisation of the data had a somewhat linear character, as semantic units were removed (cut and pasted from the transcripts) and categorised. This involved re-reading the transcripts and re-listening to the interviews, so similar content could be placed under the same node, or new nodes could be formed as required. In this way, the grounded approach led to the formation of a structure, or tree, of nodes, as shown in Figure 3.
Having initially built up the structure of nodes (as seen in Figure 3) it was, later, necessary to re-sweep, or tidy, the categories. This involved going back and re-categorising, so the analysis process became more iterative and less straightforward. This shall be explained more fully in the next section.

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In Figure 3 only the main headings of 1. Writing places, content and tools and 2. Motivation and challenge are “opened” so that more of the nodes underneath can be seen. In the NVivo12 (2018) tool, the minus sign to the left of the main heading shows that the nodes are on display. Headings 3, 4 and 5 are not “opened” and therefore less of the full tree of nodes can be seen. The plus sign to the left of the heading is clicked on to show all the nodes.
4.3.3 Re-sweeps and iteration

As the process of categorisation continued, and the tree of nodes built up, it became necessary to go back, reflect and re-organise. Increasingly, the semantic units, or, in other words, the participants’ comments, began to be moved around in the nodes structure, as opposed to being simply cut from the transcripts, and categorised. *Iteration*, as described by Bhattacharya (2017), is a somewhat circular process, involving reflection, re-categorisation and re-labelling.

There was a practical aspect to the iteration, as a problem of duplication or overlapping of nodes had occurred in some cases. That is, synonymous, or near synonymous title categories had been created, so tidying was necessary. Yet, iteration not only avoided unnecessary repetition, but it also helped with regard to categorisation and abstraction, as the clustering that formed the major themes became clearer. Secondly, iteration highlighted, or pinpointed, rich detail, as categories were drawn out into sharper sub-categories to enable a more nuanced picture to be seen. For example, the relationship between Swedish and English language usage, in creative writing, was a topic commented on by some of the participants. Therefore, a category entitled *Swedish and English*, with some initial sub-categories, had been formed in the coding process, as is shown in Figure 4.

![Figure 4: Coding of extramural writing in *Swedish and English*, October 2019](image)

However, after a process of iteration, the category titling was changed, and the later coding is shown in Figure 5.
What thinking governed this iteration process? Primarily, I returned to the analysis again with a re-asking of the research questions. For example, research question two asks: *how are pupils engaged with their free-time creative writing?* As an answer to this, the category title of *English output in relation to Swedish* is more helpful than the rather bland, earlier (work in progress) title of *English and Swedish*. Although, even the label of *English output in relation to Swedish* serves best as a signpost to the content, and answers, in the sub-categories such as *Emotional distancing and identity play with English*. Indeed, it is useful to look at the numbers next to the heading of *English output in relation to Swedish* in Figure 5. The node has been swept out to the point of emptiness – literally zero – in the iteration process, and has been de-aggregated, or emptied into several sub-nodes. In this way, the answers to the research questions improved as the distillation of the data became more refined.

Not only could the research questions be asked again in the iteration process, but they could be used as a basis to ask further questions. For example, research question two, about the pupils’ engagement with extramural creative writing, led to an inquiry into the data regarding how the pupils’ engagement changed over time. The breaking down of the categories into sub-categories (see Figure 5) allows for a highlighting of changes over time, in richer detail. The iteration and re-sweeping of the data meant that it was possible to see a movement from Swedish to English in output, at the start of the activity, and a smaller, more nuanced moving back to Swedish, at a later stage. Without iteration, this might have been missed.

Moreover, research question one *What are the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation in this activity?* also receives an answer, seen in Figure 5, in the sub-node of *Bigger audience with English*. The fact that both research question one, about *motivation*, and two, about *engagement*, are touched on under the same category was an issue which needed dealing with in the organisation.
phase of the analysis process. The overlap of issues of motivation and engagement required moving, in the analysis process, to a wider consideration of concepts (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and relations (Morse & Field, 1995).

4.3.4 Considering concepts and relations

The final stage of the organisation phase was a consideration of a conceptual map and relations between themes. This later stage in the qualitative content analysis was where the emphasis on categorisation and abstraction shifted to abstraction and conceptualisation (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p. 110). As re-sweeps, re-organisation and re-titling of categories was carried out, the question of relationships between themes arose. According to Morse and Field (1995), such relationships can be considered by the researcher using the method of content analysis (p. 141).

To follow this movement from initial categorisation, through iteration, to a final stage of considering wider concepts and relations, it is useful to see the changes in the organisation of the main headings. Earlier, during categorisation, it had been necessary to organise and structure the tree of nodes, in the NVivo12 (2018) software tool, by using main headings, as shown in Figure 6.

![Figure 6: Main headings in coding, April 2019](image)

The first main heading, in Figure 6, is entitled Writing places, content and tools. At this earlier stage of the organisation phase, some details of the participants’ written products and writing process had been coded first, and ordered first. Later, it was necessary to re-organise the categories to ensure a close accordance with the research questions. As the first research question was concerned with motivation, it was logical to move motivation to the top of the nodes structure. This logical re-organisation of the tree of nodes, and its

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48 The method of qualitative content analysis needs to be used with caution in model construction, and I have been careful to use the rather modest term of consideration in relation to conceptual maps and relations between themes. The following advice has been heeded: “if the aim is to construct a model, the results should be presented as a model outlining the concepts, their hierarchy, and possible connections. Content analysis per se does not include a technique to connect concepts (Elo et al., 2014, p. 6).”
main headings, included beginning with *motivation to start*, then *motivation to continue*. Indeed, consideration of *time* was also useful in relation to pupils’ answers concerning the research questions of *motivation* and *engagement*. With iteration, or re-categorisation, according to *time*, the main headings were organised, and formulated, as shown in Figure 7.

![Figure 7: Main headings of coding after some re-sweeping and iteration, January 2020](image)

The questions of *What motivates starting?* and *What motivates continuing?* allowed me to analyse changes along a time continuum. Earlier in the organisation phase, the simple heading of *Motivation* had not easily allowed for a thorough consideration of this. The re-sweeping of categories, and iteration, aided thinking about the relations between the themes that were forming. It needs to be emphasised that the different stages of the analysis process, from categorisation, through iteration, and the final conceptual consideration of relations between themes, blurred into one another. Bhattacharya (2017) states that iteration is a somewhat circular process; in my study this involved going back to earlier micro-categorisation moves, and also progressed to macro-reflective and conceptual consideration that could involve all the themes, and their possible relations.

As the analysis process moved into a deeper, later phase, it became clearer that motivation was related, indeed interwoven, with engagement. This necessitated the restructuring of the main headings and nodes, shown in Figure 7. For example, when it came to decide the main heading under which to place *flow*, it was clear that participants’ comments revealed a phenomenon which was both motivational and a form of engagement (there were other themes which were motivational and engaging too). So, *motivation* and *engagement* were merged as a main heading in the nodes structure (see Figure 7). Already, concepts, relations and models were beginning to appear in the very act of re-organising the data.49

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49 For the final coding chart see Appendix G.
Consideration of concepts and relations between themes was aided by asking questions of the data. Research questions 1 and 2 were rather broad and were open to sub-questions within them. For instance, *how were pupils engaged?* led me to ask if male or female pupils were engaged in different ways. The question of engagement could also contain the sub-question: *which pupils were publishing online?* I was also able to ask *how* motivation might be leading to engagement. Importantly, none of these additional formulations of questions were beyond the meaning of the research questions, so did not stray into irrelevancy. In other words, the additional questions were part of the research questions in that they were synonymous or formed an intrinsic part of a question. From research question two, on engagement, I asked both *how* the participants were engaged in creative writing, and *in what ways?* Both *how* and *in what ways* are synonymous, but nevertheless the word *how?* pointed more easily to abstract and conceptual thought and also invited a consideration of *how participants had become engaged with creative writing?* – a question that also overlapped with the motivational aspect. Yet, the question of *in what ways?* pointed more easily to practical elements of the engagement, such as tools that were used, and times and locations for writing, the genre of input and output – rather basic facts. Using the research questions, the software tool, and the qualitative content analysis method, enabled themes to form and allowed a consideration of concepts and their relations.

### 4.3.5 Holistic unity and the individual voice

An advantage of the NVivo12 (2018) tool was that it allowed changes to be made to the structure of the nodes while still keeping categorised data together as a whole entity. This was one way a reductionist approach could be avoided. Doyle (Scottish Graduate School of Social Science, n.d.) uses the metaphor of Christmas tree lighting to suggest ways in which themes can be highlighted, without being reduced, or removed, from their entanglement in a larger entity. This holistic unity in the tree of nodes also facilitated a consideration of relations between themes.

A potential weakness of the node structure, in the software tool, was that it only showed the number of transcript files or the number of references (quotes taken from the files) at any node. This meant that the number of participants whose comments had contributed to a category was not visible, as most of the interviews were in pairs. To enable me to see participants at a node, two logistical measures were carried out. Firstly, for those pupils in pair interviews, their individual answers in the interview were selected and kept in an individual participant-named case file. Secondly, with the case files made, I could see which pupils’ comments were at a particular node by asking a simple query (Figure 8).
Figure 8: Highlighting the individual participants at a particular node, December 2019

Figure 8 shows that I was able to see exactly which pupils had spoken of being motivated to start extramural English creative writing because they wanted to imitate and adapt earlier works. Thus, in the present study, I was able to keep track of the analysis of every participant’s perspectives, while also identifying the clusters of repeated views, which led to the formation of the major themes.

In order to maintain an overview of the analysis process I also kept a record of my thoughts, actions, and reading in research journals (one handwritten and one digital). The idea of the research journal is useful, as Bhattacharya (2017) states:

> to reflect on the subjectivities, emotions, hunches, questions that arise, and ways in which s/he [the researcher] is making sense of the data in association with theoretical, methodological, analytical framework, and research purpose and questions. (p. 150)

The research journals were kept for the above list of reasons; for example, in them I recorded the stages of coding and they were useful tools for reflection about the emerging themes, and the individual narratives of each or the participants – all within the whole scope of the present study.

In summary, the method of qualitative content analysis allowed a sifting through and organisation of the data so that themes relating to the research questions could be formed. When using this method it is customary to present the main themes with representative quotes from the participants (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008) and this is done in the next chapter (5) on results. The results, and the conceptual map that was considered, are discussed in relation to the research questions, and earlier studies, in the concluding chapter (6).
5 Results

In this chapter, I report the results of the data analysis. The chapter is divided into sections in line with the research questions. Section 5.1 presents the results most pertinent to research question one, on motivation; 5.2 deals with research question two, on engagement; 5.3 covers question three, on enrichment of English learning; and 5.4 presents the participants’ insights regarding creative writing and challenge in the school subject of English. It needs to be emphasised that the sections and research questions overlap somewhat. This is most notable in sections 5.1 and 5.2, as the participants’ comments on motivation and engagement indicate that these issues intertwine. Hence, the titles of section 5.1, Motivation to be engaged, and of section 5.2, Engagement that can motivate, reflect this overlapping.

The results are presented alongside relevant quotes or passages of dialogue extracted from the interviews. These extracts have been selected to represent the meaning, repeated in the comments of different participants, that formed the main themes. For the sake of clarity, I emphasise that some passages from the interviews contributed to more than one theme. I have also included nuanced differences within the themes, and occasionally, I summarise or paraphrase participants’ comments.\textsuperscript{50}

5.1 Motivation to be engaged

The first research question asks: What are the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation to write creatively in English in their free time? The strongest motivation to begin the extramural activity was imitation and adaptation – stories begot stories. The second strongest reason to start the activity was fun. Yet, extramural creative writing in English appeared to become more profound and meaningful to the participants over time, as the most common motivation to continue the activity was to understand experiences and deal with emotions. These motivational themes are explained more fully in this section (5.1). Other themes connected with motivation to write included flow, and ambition and

\textsuperscript{50} The final coding chart (Appendix G) includes all sub-categories, some of which contain only semantic unit from the data; that is, only one comment from an individual participant.
perfectionism. These motivational themes are explained later in this chapter, in section 5.2, where the participants’ comments on engagement are reported. However, to begin with, three main themes in relation to motivation to start and continue the extramural activity of creative writing in English are presented.

5.1.1 Imitation and adaptation

The most commonly addressed theme in terms of what motivates to start free-time creative writing was imitation and adaptation. Seven participants traced the roots of their extramural English writing back to stories they had read, or heard, or watched. These inspirational stories were not necessarily in English. Saga stated that one of the first books that inspired her was by the Swedish children’s author, Astrid Lindgren. In the following extract, Saga recalls her early wish to write:

Saga: Well, I always read a lot of books when I was younger. I wanted to be a writer and author. Then I just started writing stories. I guess, I wanted to write a book someday. I thought that I would write short stories in the beginning, and then just go on with longer. (Block quote 1)51

After these comments, Saga added that she began creative writing in her free time in Swedish, but by the age of 12 she began writing in English because “it was then you got comfortable with it”.

Yet, books were not the only source of story input at an early age; the oral tradition is referred to as well:

Klara: I’ve always loved storytelling. As a child, my parents would tell me stories, especially our family history, and stuff like that. I always wanted to be able to do the same, to tell a story. (2)

In addition to participants motivated by books in Swedish and oral stories, two pupils named books in English as the inspiration for the start of their free-time writing activity. In the following extract, Hanna names the author:

51 The block quotes from the pupils’ answers are numbered for ease of reference. This is especially useful in the later ‘Discussion and conclusion’ chapter (6) when I refer back to these quotes. After this first block quote they are simply numbered 2, 3, etc. without the ‘block quote’ label. Shorter extracts that are quoted in the main text, rather than as block quotes, are not numbered. As a rule, in this ‘Results’ chapter, I present extracts of over two lines as block quotes, and those with fewer lines are quoted in-text.
Hanna: I read these great books by Lemony Snicket about three siblings. [summarises story] I wanted to write similar stuff. I really looked up to him, this Lemony Snicket. I wanted to — not become him. ‘What makes him write?’ Turns out I really loved it. (3)

Hanna indicated that this particular author was like a role model who, in effect, led her to become a free-time creative writer.

Pupils not only wanted to imitate stories, and emulate authors, but to adapt stories with their own creative output. Here, Emma talks of her motivation to be creative:

Emma: I don’t know — I always liked to make shit up. Am I allowed to swear? [Linnea laughs beside her] Because I always made shit up as a kid — told stories and changed stories. I took stories that already existed and changed them: changed the lyrics to songs, made parodies. And when I started learning English, I wanted to do it in English — I guess that’s what motivated us. (4)

Like Saga, as Emma learnt English, she did in English what she had already been doing in Swedish: she imitated and adapted stories. It is noteworthy that the theme of imitation and adaptation helps to answer both research question one, about motivation, and research question two, about engagement. The participants are inspired to recreate the writing they have read, and in so doing they are engaged with the act of writing as well.

5.1.2 Fun

The second most common motivation to start extramural creative writing was simply that it was fun. Comments from six pupils chorused to form this theme. For example, Elias and Filip agreed that they were motivated by fun, as can be seen in the following extract:

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52 Lemony Snicket is a pen name of Daniel Handler, an American children’s author.
53 I have used the em dash to indicate a pause or hesitation in the participants’ speech. I use four dots to indicate that I have removed text from the extract (though I have not done that in this particular passage).
54 Hanna adopts another voice here; in this case with a rhetorical question. I have used single speech marks in this chapter to indicate the adoption of another voice, mid-quote, by participants. In this case, Hanna acts out the voice of her younger self.
55 “Fun” is an example of an in vivo term (see section 4.3.2); that is, it was a term used initially by the participants (rather than me, as the interviewer) in the interviews, nor was it a term introduced by me, as the researcher, in categorisation. In the final coding chart (Appendix G) I have used quotation marks around such in vivo terms.
I: Motivation for creative writing? Why did you start Filip?

Filip: There isn’t any motivation I get – I guess it’s just because I think it’s fun.

I: Why is it fun?

Filip: Hard to say — I just like it.

I: How does it make you feel?

Filip: Happy, I guess.

Elias: I also do it because it’s fun. And when I’m bored, I just do it. Cos it’s so fun to do, especially with Filip. (5)

The above extract indicates that the initial doing of the writing was motivating enough to begin what has now grown into a pastime. The extract also indicates how the fun of engagement with writing relates to the pleasure of company, as the fun for Elias is greater when writing with Filip, his friend. The fun theme can include sharing laughter too, as Ludvig states in his pair interview with Samuel:

Ludvig: I’ve often just written because it’s fun and others think it’s fun too. If I write funny books, then others laugh and then I laugh too. So, it’s quite simple. (7, my translation)

Ludvig’s comment points to a sense of fun in the act of writing and enjoyment in the sharing of stories.

Fun as a motivation to start free-time creative writing in English could overlap with the theme of imitation and adaption. Molly describes, in the following extract, how she felt writing was fun, but that she was also inspired by The Perks of Being a Wallflower, the novel by Stephen Chbosky. Here, she comments after Felicia in their pair interview:

Molly: Well, I started writing also because it was fun. That’s when I was younger. Then I started writing more when I started reading more. I want to be an author. I just wanted to do what other people were doing. Then I read this book, it was written only in letters, and I was
like: ‘Oh my God, I want to write from that diary form, or just let-
ters.’\(^\text{57}\)\(^\text{(6)}\)

In the above extract, Molly agrees that the activity was fun, but gives a sense of the strength of the inspiration she drew from her reading.

Finally, regarding the theme of fun as a motivation to start creative writing in English, it had seemed fun to try (for the six participants who said so), and this was confirmed when they started. However, when asked about what motivated them to continue with the free-time activity of writing, only one participant said fun. The theme that emerged most strongly in relation to this question suggested something less lighthearted; it was to understand experiences and deal with emotions.

5.1.3 Understand experiences and deal with emotions

The most common motivation for continuing with the activity of extramural English creative writing was to understand experiences and deal with emotions. If fun had been a common motivation when starting, a reason for continuing, in the longer term, was that it was meaningful, and helpful, in terms of the lives of the participants. Experiences and emotions could be understood, explained, and dealt with through writing. For Samuel, his motivation to continue with free-time writing was the same reason he had started: his extended creative writing project concerned a personal loss, of a past friend, from his former homeland, who had gone missing. As he explained:

Samuel: It’s quite simple really. The girl, she was my friend, or she is — was — I don’t know if she’s even alive anymore. She has disappeared. Before she disappeared, like about a year ago — because we didn’t speak for a year; that’s when we’d had an argument. So, we never really got the chance to say anything to each other. Then she just disappeared. So, this is what I believe she would say, about both me and everything. — Clears my mind, you can say. And I never got the chance to say sorry. — It gives me something else to think about. So, I think about something else other than myself — that she doesn’t exist anymore. (8, my translation)

The above extract shows how extramural writing helps Samuel in the wake of a traumatic experience and the resultant emotions. In addition to Samuel, five female participants (Hanna, Felicia, Klara, Molly, and Saga) also stated that they were motivated to continue writing because it enabled them to understand

\(^{57}\) *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* is written in the form of a series of letters, in a confiding style and in chronological order, not unlike diary entries.
experiences and deal with emotions. Molly and Felicia answered the question about motivation for continuing in the following way:

Molly: I have an answer. To me, I feel like it’s more like it’s a diary, but I put myself in someone else’s situation in life. To me, it’s more like writing in my diary but in another character. It’s more like it’s for me to put my thoughts out on paper. It’s more like that for me.

I: Interesting, personal but not personal but some distinct—

Molly: [Interrupts] Personal but anonymous. I’m just putting my feelings out there, but no one has to know.

I: No. Ok.

Felicia: Well, I actually realised that most of my characters that I write about or at least some of them are really similar to me. I guess all my stories are a little personal in one way or another. (9)

These comments indicate that these participants have found a free-time activity that can be used to reflect on experiences and deal with emotions. In the above extract, Molly states how she writes her diary, and thereby about her life, but in the name of a fictional character. In addition, she can create another life for her fictional character and put herself in that position.

Hanna suggests, in the following extract, that putting her fictional characters through miseries and challenges, and subsequently seeing them survive, inspires, and strengthens her:

Hanna: It kind of gives me hope if I can solve their problems. With my depression, I get really sad and I feel like everything is really hopeless, and I just want to dig myself into a hole and just ‘Bye world’. But when I see his stuff, I’m like ‘Yeah I can get by this – he just got tortured for six months but what’s that?’ But then when I write about his stuff, see his world and it is worse, and he gets by, and it gives me hope and it makes me also want to fight to be alive. And then I start to borrow some traits from the character. For example, xxxx\(^58\), he’s very confident and strong, and ‘I’ve got control of everything’, while yyyy, he’s got no idea where he is going, he just goes. I try to get traits like ‘I want to be confident’ and ‘know what I’m doing’ but I still do not simply want to go down a straight path — I want to be able to choose where I want to go. I dunno — I want

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\(^58\) To preserve Hanna’s anonymity, xxxx and yyyy have been used to mask the names of the fictional characters in her story.
to give myself hope while at the same time I give them hope, I guess. (10)

The above extract shows how creativity and imagination can be used to offer optimistic outcomes for Hanna’s characters, and she uses these positive resolutions as a source of inspiration for own life.

Saga, however, is somewhat more directly personal in her writing, as she imagines ideal prospects or outcomes for her own life. As she states:

Saga: Well, I have all these stories in my head. I don’t want to tell them. Like, scenarios that I would like to happen, but they won’t, so I write them down instead.

Klara: So, they did happen, but just not in real life.

Saga: Exactly. I’ve always been shy and stuff. When I was younger, I didn’t even talk to anyone a lot, so I wrote stories instead, and have the scenarios that could happen if I did this or did that. That was always my thing, writing, because I didn't talk to people. (11)

For Saga, in the above extract, the creativity and imagination at work in her writing allow her to depict outcomes other than her real experience, even if she is pessimistic about the possibilities of them coming true. She also used her writing as a means of expression when she felt too shy to talk, even if this was played out in private. Thus, different ways of using free-time creative writing to understand experiences and deal with emotions are commented on by the participants.

This section (5.1) has dealt with major motivations for starting and continuing the activity of extramural English creative writing. The next section will focus on results in relation to research question two, about the way in which the participants engaged with their writing.

5.2 Engagement that can motivate

This section moves on to the second research question: How are pupils engaged in the activity of free-time creative writing? The participants were engaged in several ways and outlining these is important. Nevertheless, this section also continues to be concerned with the first research question, about the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation. This is because, as I related earlier in this chapter, the participants’ comments showed that engagement and motivation were closely inter-related.
The themes connected to engagement with extramural English creative writing include ambition and perfection, receiving and giving praise and other feedback, writing for themselves and wider audiences, social networking, and adopting masks and identities. I present the results for all these themes in the sections that follow, as well as outlining some aspects of what the pupils write, together with the time and place for writing, and the tools and materials for writing. The first of many themes presented in the following sections (5.2.1-9) is the theme of flow and the zone.

5.2.1 Flow and the zone

Participants could be so engaged with their extramural creative writing that they could enter flow and the zone – a state of optimal experience as described by Csíkszentmihályi (1990; see section 3.2). Hanna and William responded to the question about their motivation to continue with the activity of free-time writing in ways which indicated that flow was a key factor for motivation and engagement. Hanna’s comments below indicate a state of flow in relation to successfully overcoming the challenge of creating characters and a story:

I: What gets you to continue with creative writing?

Hanna: Right now, with my story, it’s the characters. I’ve got big plans for the characters. To get to those plans I have to make a smooth line for it – I can’t jump from the shower to a crime scene. I need to get my creative side going to write the story line. I’ve got – I’m so connected with the characters and I come up with stuff all the time. And I just want to give them more and more life — it’s not so much the — Ok the beginning — Ok, it’s awful, trying to come up with stuff at the beginning. Is it ‘Once upon a time?’, or ‘Jump in the story?’, or ‘I went there?’, or ‘He went there?’, or ‘The parents?’, or ‘Whose perspective are we starting from?’ — That’s horrible, to start with, but once you got that done, it just goes smooth and mmmmmm — When you get off that little hill it’s like wooo, amazing’, I love it. It’s like mmmmmm [high pitched]. It’s like when you are on a bicycle and you really try to go up a hill and it’s really hard, and then the downside goes forward and — whish! I love that feeling – wind in the hair! (12)

Hanna’s comment indicates her pleasure (‘thrill’) in having overcome a challenge in her creative process. This was also echoed by Elias, who, when asked if he faced challenges, replied: “When it’s hard yeah, but when it’s easy it’s the easiest thing ever”. Also, William refers to his “fantasy zone”, where he
“just wants it [the text being worked on] to be as perfect as possible”. Here, again, the challenge is touched on as well.

Klara and Saga also refer to a zone in their pair interview. When I asked for a description of this zone, Klara replied:

Klara: I think it is when there’s no barrier between your mind, your idea, and the page you’re writing your words on. It’s like you get your thoughts down on the paper, without having to translate it. (13)

This is somewhat removed from writer’s block, as Klara enters a state of being able to produce her output with an ease and flow, a creative state which she terms as a zone. Regarding flow being like a zone or location, Linnea talks of the “creative world” – a place where “when you get bored, you just come into”. William’s flow can be both a “zone” and like movement too – a “running train”, not unlike Hanna’s downhill cycling metaphor. Moreover, for some of the participants, time seems to pass quickly when in flow; for Linnea, when writing her songs, “time will just disappear. I will be like – ‘Oh my God!’ I haven’t had food on the whole day, because I’m just into it”. Emma said: “I think of something, and two minutes turn into two hours.”

In the following comment, Linnea contrasts her high energy in an extramural situation where she has more autonomy and can use her agency, with how ‘tired’ she can get in a formal educational situation:

Linnea: I lose myself in creativity, but I think it’s like, for example, when I write songs — It’s just like it’s in my mind and then I just write it down. But I think, also, like we go in a choir and then it’s like, after an hour, you’re like tired, because someone is telling you what you should do, and be like: “Sing this! Sing this!”: So, I think that’s kind of — I think that’s sad. You’re creative on your own. I think like, I can sit with my guitar and just a notebook and — like, for hours. (14)

That Linnea, and seven other pupils, could indicate a state of flow when involved with their extramural creative writing is related to the control they have over their own free time. Moreover, they engage with a task in a way that is intrinsically motivational. Overcoming challenges was rewarding for the pupils when they were in a state of flow.

5.2.2 Ambition and perfectionism, and risk

The participants faced a wide variety of challenges in their writing, and many of these were unique to them individually. Challenges voiced by single participants included the danger of comparing one’s work with others, having too
many ideas and not knowing which to focus on, or the particular challenge of writing poetry and songs. There was, however, greater agreement by seven of the participants in relation to ambition and perfectionism. Ambition for quality in writing was such that it could overlap with a desire for perfection. For example, Felicia stated that she was a “perfectionist – an exceeding one”. Klara stated of her motivation to write: “I guess it is because I still haven’t found the perfect book, so I need to write it, and it keeps me going”. This scale of ambition to improve was also conveyed by William, who wanted to “remake the movies”. Klara and Saga also added further to this idea of ambition, in their case related to identity, with the following comments:

Klara: I would like to think of myself as an author, not just a girl.

Saga: I don’t know, actually. I agree with Klara, that I would like to see myself as a writer – an author. (15)

In addition to these comments from Klara and Saga, Molly also declared an ambition to be an author; these ambitions are relevant to engagement and motivation in relation to creative writing.

Ambition and perfectionism related to attention to detail for improving the quality of writing. As Saga stated:

Saga: I’m often very tough with myself, because if something’s not perfect, then I want to change it immediately. If I’m done with something, and then I read it through, and there is something, it could be the smallest thing, but it’s so annoying for me – I change it. It’s often for the better, but sometimes, I just make the things worse, because I’m so hard on myself. I try to be nicer to myself, but it’s hard because I’m a perfectionist. I want everything to be perfect.

Klara: The first draft is never perfect.

Saga: Yes, I know. That’s also part of why I don’t want to show some works to someone else, because I don’t think it’s perfect. Then I don’t want to show it to someone else. When I think something’s perfect, then I can show it to someone. (16)

Saga’s comment, in the dialogue above, of “sometimes, I just make things worse” indicates self-criticism in relation to the re-drafting. As with many of these extracts, several issues are touched on in a brief passage. Not only is a sense of ambition and perfectionism seen here, but also a sense of risk is implied as the importance of the readership’s reaction is also hinted at.
The theme of risk, or more precisely, the willingness to take risks, was generated through comments from three pupils who raised especially strong concerns in relation to publishing work online. For example, Molly said of her feelings prior to posting her first story: “I was really scared”, and Filip stated: “When I have to share stuff on the internet, I’m afraid to spell things wrong and people are commenting on that”. Filip took the risk anyway, he said: “Probably cos I’d worked hard”. The participants’ views about readers’ opinions and responses are also dealt with in the following section.

5.2.3 Praise and other feedback

All the pupils were asked about feedback, both giving and receiving, in relation to creative writing, on- and offline. The strongest theme that emerged was receiving praise, as all but one of the participants had been encouraged in this way by those who had read their work. The next strongest theme was giving positive feedback, which was generated by the comments of seven participants.

Here, Stella comments on receiving praise after having written and published a story on a fanfiction site connected with Miraculous Lady Bug:59

I: Do you get some feedback?
Stella: There are comments under. Many that say like ‘Well done!’ and ‘I can’t wait for the next part.’
I: How does that feel?
Stella: Yes, it feels really good. It is unbelievable that there are actually people that want to offer praise and write.
I: About how many comments?
Stella: There’s like around ten comments.
I: And where from?
Stella: From over the whole world. My friend, she is from [Swedish City], but we talk English with each other. And we met on an English website, so it’s fun that we live in the same country. (17, my translation)

59 Miraculous Lady Bug is an animated television series. Stella wrote her fanfiction about this series on a platform called Aminos.
Stella’s journey into fanfiction has brought praise and positivity from around the globe. Regarding the amount of negative feedback, Stella stated: “Oh, not so much actually – and that is good. I think it is nice to not get much negativity or criticism and stuff” (my translation).

In terms of positive feedback, participants commented on receiving feedback that was more complex than a simple “Well done!”, but instead pointed to a specific section or aspect of a text.

Molly: I mostly get like — Sometimes I get comments like, ‘This is good!’ If there’s something someone finds funny, they will comment at that part like, ‘Ha, ha, this is really funny!’ Then sometimes I get requests, like what to write. (18)

Some participants indicated that they received positive feedback alongside constructive advice about how a detail might be improved:

Felicia: People can say like, ‘This is really good. I really love this.’ Some people say like, ‘I really love this, but you can do this here.’ Well, sometimes just things with grammar. (19)

The tone of the praise, “love”, and how this softens the criticism is useful to note in the above quote.

Participants not only spoke about receiving feedback, but also about giving it. Four of the female participants explained how they sought to be totally, or exclusively, positive in the feedback they wrote in online fanfiction contexts. This stance emerged as the theme of *opposition to negative feedback online*. For example, Emma explained her strategy of focussing exclusively on the strengths of a text, and ignoring mistakes:

Emma: I just wanna give feedback if it’s good feedback like – “Do more of this!”; instead of saying do less of the other things because the other things can usually come into place somewhere else. (20)

In the following extract, Molly offers insight into the diplomacy and tact she employs in online forums, while revealing the ribbing and irony enjoyed between good friends, offline:

Molly: Yes. I read a lot of other people’s stories and give feedback as well. What I think is good. I don’t really want to put criticism on the things because it feels like, when you’re online, it’s so easy… they don’t know how you say it. They cannot see how you look or how you pronounce the words. Sometimes it can seem harsh, that’s why
you have to be really careful with what you write. In that way, if there’s something I don’t – I think like, ‘Oh, this is wrong’, then I will just be like, ‘No, I don't have to really tell the person.’

I: The feedback? —I mean you’ve also got this, haven’t you, feedback to each other?

Molly: Yes. Then we correct each other all the time like, ‘That’s wrong, that’s wrong!’ It’s really fun. Then, ‘You can do this instead, I don’t want that person to die!’ [Both Molly and Felicia laugh] 21

Most comments in relation to feedback related to praise, especially within the context of fanfiction online. Yet, two participants had received negative feedback online. For example, as touched on in the previous section, in relation to the theme of risk, Filip had received feedback on his stories (he had published on Reddit60), of which he stated: “Mostly, people talk about my spelling errors, stuff like that”.

Filip’s negative experience online contrasts with a positive atmosphere of feedback offline. In an encouraging way, Filip says of Elias: “He writes funny songs – with funny lines”. The four male pupils who were interviewed in pairs (Elias & Filip and Ludvig & Samuel) interacted and gave each other feedback offline:

Samuel: I get feedback from Ludvig. He gets to read it and if he doesn’t like something then we change it. I do the same with him. He shows me what he’s written.

I: So, you give each other feedback. Do you get feedback off others?

Ludvig: Yes, off those two who were here before – Elias and Filip. (23, my translation)

Samuel’s comment above indicates that the feedback can be constructive and lead to improvements. It is worth noting that the offline wit and positivity between these male participants (Elias, Filip, Ludvig, and Samuel) was not commented on, by them, as something that was offered, or expected, in online writing situations.

60 Reddit, found at reddit.com, is an online collection of forums where news and content (including creative writing) can be shared and commented on.
5.2.4 Audience: writing for myself, and others

Who were the pupils writing for? Strong themes indicated both writing for themselves and a wider audience. The following comment from Hanna shows how writing for herself did not exclude a desire to share with others:

Hanna: I mostly write for myself to get my feelings out or just to put my creativity somewhere, but I want someone else to enjoy it with me so I kinda write for my mum and my counsellor. (24)

Here, the initial motivation is for Hanna to write for herself, and yet she is also motivated to ask others to share in her enjoyment, so the engagement moves from a solitary action to interaction. Linnea wrote for herself: “It’s just for me because it’s just my passion”. Yet, she also hoped for an audience in the future: “like my dream is to inspire other people” (two other pupils shared this view).

Writing for oneself on occasions did not preclude also having a large audience; Molly wrote for herself, and yet, had the largest online audience of all the participants – as she explains here:

Molly: I have like 3,000 readers right now, I don’t know – 2,900 and something, most in the US and then some in Asia, some in Australia and England and yes, some in Europe. Mostly I’ve gotten a lot of friends from that as well. Then I write in English as well when I text them and then I just post it on this website [writes name of website]. (25)

Molly’s comment, above, usefully highlights a dual engagement with writing, as not only does she write creatively and publish, but she also writes when she ‘texts’ her ‘readers’. Molly wrote fanfiction about both a computer game with a horse-riding theme called Star Stable, and also about famous Youtubers. She was one of seven pupils who published online, for a global audience.

There were other participants, as well as Molly, who indicated a sizeable following online; Felicia stated she could see that she had 500 daily visitors to her English blog, and Stella said she had over one hundred followers of her fanfiction. A weaker theme was friends and family as intended audiences.

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62 Had the definition of writing in this study been widened to include the performance of writing on YouTube, there would have been other online experiences to report. For example, Ludvig had filmed the reading of a story and posted on YouTube. This was not included in the coding for online audience.
63 Felicia also had a blog in Swedish related to gaming. She reported that she could see that there were approximately 250 visits to her blog daily. These were mostly from Sweden, but also Finland and Norway.
Finally, only two pupils included teachers in their intended audiences, for their free-time writing.

5.2.5 Social networks

_Cementing and expanding social networks_ was shown to be a feature of engagement in extramural English creative writing. The idea of _cementing_ was related to how the participants used creative writing as a way of maintaining friendships, as the writing could involve sharing. The idea of _expanding_ social networks was particularly relevant for the online fanfiction writers, with a wide readership, among whom closer affiliations and friendships could be made. In this section, I firstly report the results in relation to the idea of cementing more established friendships and, secondly, the possibilities for expanding social networks.

A strong theme which related to social affiliations was _friendships in the pair interviews_. Eight pupils, in four of the five pairs, interacted in ways which indicated friendship that was related to the extramural creative writing activity. For example, Felicia said: “At least for me, writing songs is personal — mmmm, and that’s why I never showed them to anyone except you” [to Molly]. In the case of the final interview, Linnea and Emma (who had said they were already friends) pledged to write collaboratively. I asked Emma about making friends through her writing, and she replied:

Emma: I don’t think I’ve gotten that many new friends from it, but I definitely come closer to the friends that I already have. Like, you and I, for example, write music. We don’t write together – we should do that!

Linnea: Yeah! We can write together some time. (26)

Also, as was seen in an earlier section (5.2.3, block quote 21), the interview pair, Felicia and Molly, laughed at how they ribbed each other over their writing. The boys’ pair, Filip and Elias, could also include ribbing – behaviour which Elias comments on here: “I don't care if he [Filip] would say something about my mother. Everything is a joke for us, and we don’t care”. Parodying rap was a favourite writing activity which they both shared.

Looking beyond the pairs in the interviews, the theme of _Friendships – along a spectrum of strength_ emerged strongly and was related to _online and_
international affiliations. Comments made by six students indicated a process where looser affiliations in the form of online followers or readers could develop into friendships. For example, Felicia and Molly stated:

Felicia: Well, I know a girl named XXXX, who lives in [Swedish city]. Then I know a couple of persons in other countries as well.

Molly: I have gotten a lot of friends and they’re my closest friends. I just saw their comments everywhere and then we decided to make a group chat. Now we talk there every day. I have Skyped with a lot of them as well. They are from the US and one is from Poland and then some from UK. (27)

Stella spoke of a strong friendship which she made as a result of her activity of writing online fanfiction:

Stella: We discuss ordinary life and what we’ve done that day and that – how we feel and all that friends discuss, like. It feels good to find someone who understands you totally. (28, my translation)

This friendship, as described by Stella, indicates a valued reward from the engagement with extramural creative writing in English.

Although friendships and affiliations grow online, the venture into online publication entails using masks of anonymity. Masks, and related issues of identities and languages, are dealt with in the next section.

5.2.6 Masks, identities, and languages

The taking on of a cloak of anonymity, in the form of a different online pen name, was something I asked about in the interviews. More participants said they adopted such a mask because it was cool and fun (eight) than for reasons of safety (two). Regarding the cool and fun, or pleasurable and playful, aspects of pen names, Saga chose her online name because it “sounded aesthetic”. Cool and fun motivational reasons for choosing a pen name could intertwine with concerns regarding safety and anonymity. For example, Molly stated: “I

64 This theme would have been stronger had I included some of Filip’s YouTube followers, and a friend he made via YouTube too. For example, Filip stated: “We have contact on YouTube with people from America and Canada and stuff”. He had 54 followers (Filip put his own songs/rap on YouTube). Filip also stated: “I have actually made a friend on YouTube who saw… actually it wasn’t really – it didn’t have to do too much with the creative writing – but he saw one of my videos and commented on that”. Misson and Morgan (2006) argue that film production can be included in a definition of writing, although I have not taken such a stance in the present study.
can take more risks and go a little crazy if I want to”. This comment overlaps with the theme of risk referred to in section 5.2.2. The safety of anonymity gave freedom for more role-play. (A not dissimilar process could be seen even with the creation of narrators in stories. William spoke of choosing different narrators with “multiple identities” in his offline stories.)

Online, Hanna had at least two animal identities for her interaction. She had the identity name of a herbivore on sites where she only browsed and read, but had a predator name on fanfiction sites where she added written comments about texts. For Felicia, the taking on of pen names meant: “I can be whoever I want”. Thus, the engagement with writing offered opportunities for experimentation and identity performance.

After cool and fun, the next strongest theme in relation to identities pointed to a future desire – ambition to be a writer (this has also been referred to in connection with the theme of ambition and perfection in section 5.2.2). Four pupils stated that they wanted to be, or be considered as, a writer or an author. A fluidity of identities could be seen with some of the pupils’ comments in relation to language choice. Regarding the issue of L1 Swedish and L2 English, the most common theme was the move from Swedish toward English writing, as they became more familiar with English (six pupils’ comments formed this theme). Two pupils also spoke explicitly of a decision to shift to English for a bigger online audience. Yet, some participants were writing in Swedish in their free time too. Emma and Linnea voiced a conscious return to, or re-appreciation of, writing in their L1 of Swedish, alongside L2 English writing. In the following extract, Klara talks of the relationship between identity and language:

Klara: Well, since I’ve written so much in English, when I think and write in my head now, I think a lot in English as well, and that’s a huge part of one’s identity because you use language a bit differently, depending on what language it is. I think that has definitely shaped my identity, the using of English in my head, because that makes me think in a certain way, that I maybe wouldn’t if I only thought in Swedish. (29)

Emotions are spoken of in relation to language and identity too. The following extract raises the idea of how L2 English can enable role-play or performance, whereas L1 Swedish allows access to an inner core of identity:

Linnea: I have always like been more kind of like going the way to English. So, when I was little and when I did like, did write my first songs, I actually wrote them in English, and they were like so bad. But — I think, I mean I have been more like going in the Swedish step nowadays. So, I mean I think I kind of started actually in English, even
though I was so bad in English, but I also like Swedish and I often write things in Swedish and then I translate them to English.

Emma: Like when you first started to learn English, you were like ‘Oh! This is so cool. It’s another language.’ You wanted to do everything in that, but then you sort of started appreciating your mother tongue a little bit more, because there, there is some things you can’t say in English and vice versa.

Linnea: And you feel so raw when you like sing on Swedish for example, because you feel like, everyone around you…

Emma: [Interrupting] Then it’s really you speaking, it’s not you pretending to be someone who says something.

Linnea: Yeah! Totally. (30)

It is noteworthy that Linnea uses the term *raw* to describe how she feels when using Swedish, suggesting an opening-up and vulnerability. Emma implies that writing in Swedish involves removing a protective mask of English with “it’s not you pretending”.

Similar themes relating to emotion, languages and identities are also taken up in discussion by Klara and Saga:

Klara: I don’t know how to describe it [English use], but it feels less serious, in a way. More like, if I write in first person in Swedish, it really feels like it’s me who’s writing it, because it’s my language. When I write in English, I can distance myself more, I guess.

Saga: I know what you mean, because I don’t like writing in Swedish. I don’t like it because I think it’s easier for me to express feelings and stuff in English.

Klara: Because we’re so used to reading in English.

Saga: Yes, because we know more words in English, it feels like, than in Swedish. (31)

In the above extract too, it is possible to see the affordance of L2 English writing as a means to offer “distance”, as Klara says. Saga agrees that the expression of “feelings and stuff” is easier in English; she adds that writing about such content is also easier due to her extensive English vocabulary, which she “feels” is greater than her Swedish. Klara, points to their familiarity with reading in English as being linked to this ease of expression.
Finally, Klara said that she wanted to write in a way which captures the actual way she speaks, with words taken from a variety of languages:

Klara: I would love to write something, like write a piece that is bilingual, because when we speak to each other, we always mix languages. Like at home, I mix English and Swedish, and German – pool bits from every language that I know. (32)

On this note from Klara, regarding what she would like to write, I turn to the results pertaining to what the participants did write. This is also relevant in terms of motivation to engage with extramural English creative writing.

5.2.7 Creating writing

That the participants spoke of what they wrote was hardly surprising, as the interviews were on that topic. In this section I shall outline, in more detail the results in relation to form and content of written output. Before outlining these findings, I report, briefly, on the stories that the pupils read.

A specific question about reading was not pre-planned for the interviews (Appendix E & F). Yet, the theme of imitation and adaptation was a strong motivation to start extramural English creative writing (see section 5.1.1). Reading stories, in some form, was referred to by all of the thirteen participants. Here I use read in the widest sense that includes listening, watching and the traditional form of reading a written text. Thus, story can be found in books, films, podcasts, blogs, video games, song, etc. (Misson & Morgan, 2006). The participants’ comments indicated multimodal accessing of stories: through reading books and fanfiction (six pupils); YouTube and films (five pupils); music/songs (four pupils); comics (four pupils); computer games (three pupils); and anime and manga (two pupils). One pupil referred to oral stories from within the family.

Pupils had been asked more in the interviews about their written output. The most frequent writing was categorised as stories/prose, which included all but one pupil, Linnea, who focused solely on writing song lyrics. So, while one might speculate that her songs could well be stories, they were not prose. Incorporated within the large grouping of stories/prose were the participants who wrote fanfiction (five pupils). Alternatively, Song/rap lyrics or poetry were written by six pupils (some pupils wrote in more than one genre; it should be noted). Three pupils wrote comics. Finally, with regard to output, two pupils wrote blogs and one engaged with online, written role-playing.

Insofar as the pupils spoke explicitly about the content of their writing, and not all did, insights were offered into several aspects of what at least some of
the pupils were producing. The most common creative output was comedy (including parody), which was ahead of, but also overlapped into mystery/fantasy/science fiction. The creative output in these genres tended to be outlandish and surreal, and sometimes vividly imaginative. For example, Elias said one of his stories was about “superheroes, villains and potatoes”, and he described both his own and Filip’s stories as “weird”.

Ludvig described his own creativity in a way which pointed to a similar imagining of outlandish ideas:

Ludvig: The most fun part [about creative writing] is when I imagine strange ideas, because then it gets so — then I can develop it to something even stranger and — Yes, it is so cool when you get ideas. That’s what is fun. (33, my translation)

Ludvig describes one of his “strange ideas”, with help from Samuel here:

Ludvig: I can give an example of what happens. [Laughs] It’s like, partly in Swedish, partly in English and partly in Ukrainian for some reason, but it…

Samuel: But he can’t speak Ukrainian.

Ludvig: No, I just used translation, the translation thing, but anyway. There’s a guy called Boris. His dad moans at him because he plays computer games too much, so then he goes into a strange parallel world where computer keyboards fly round beating people up [Laughs]. (34, my translation)

I noted a similar outlandishness in Hanna’s story of a girl and boy who were “swapping bodies”. Referring to another story, Hanna spoke of taking logic into the illogical, and described how her fantastical monsters could have real organs and bodily processes – with detailed and accurate descriptions from her biology lessons. Also, Molly spoke of how dreams could influence some of her stories.

A theme of horror emerged too, with three pupils talking of this genre. William used the term “horror genre” to classify one of his stories, about which he added:

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65 The interviews did reveal some of the fanfiction output. For example, Stella wrote extra chapters for the Miraculous Lady Bug and Molly wrote stories about famous YouTubers. Specifically, one of Molly’s stories was about two YouTubers, who had been in a relationship but had split up (in real life), and Molly placed them back together, fictionally. The fanfiction output that was referred to was in prose, though Emma and Linnea implied that they had tried, or at least liked the idea of songfic (fanfiction based on lyrics), because they said they would like it as an activity in school.
William: It’s typically that illusional nightmare; it’s just about one person that has everything turned upside down one night because they use the Ouija board. (35)

Hanna’s horror story was in the form of a live, continuing role-play online:

Hanna: I’m writing a role-play — it’s also in English — I really enjoy it. I have no idea who I am playing with. It’s based on a series about the devil, but he’s on a vacation from hell, so he’s on earth. (36)

Adding to the note of horror, Elias refers to the contents of his tales as “stuff with Satanism in them, like goats and stuff”. The horror genre, by its nature, lends itself to the outlandish, but there were other stories that were more realistic too.

Some stories were rooted in reality but were given imaginative and fictional twists. This description accounted for Samuel’s writing about an imagined, ongoing conversation, with an actual friend, who was absent. Similarly, Saga was writing better – imagined – outcomes of real scenarios from her life.

Molly, described some writing of hers that might be termed social realism:

Molly: The main character is called Sam and I have not decided if they’re going to be a girl or boy yet. I cannot…

Felica: [Interrupting] Or somewhere in between.

Molly: Yes, somewhere — I don't really know. I'm just calling them them with the they/them pronouns. It’s about their best friend Max as well and Sam’s mother is going to marry their stepfather, but they don’t really like the stepfather. Then when they are going away on a honeymoon, they have to go up to their dad’s house far away for like three or four weeks, but Sam doesn’t want to go because they want to stay with Max. That’s how far I’ve come, Sam is really sad, and Max is just comforting. (37)

As to what extent this story might be ‘social realism’, it is useful to at least consider Molly’s comment that, for her, writing was a form of a diary, but with fictional names (section 5.1.3, block quote 9). In this way, Molly combines imagination with realism, like Saga. This writing, in the above extract from Molly (37), also overlaps with a theme of creative writing takes place in English classes, as this story, written in free time, was, at least initially, inspired by a school assignment (see section 5.4.1). The content here also touches on themes of friendships, identity or role-play, and understanding experience and dealing with emotions.
Noteworthy, with regard to writing, was the large *quantity of output*. Elias sometimes termed his writing not simply as “stories”, but also as “books”, indicating the length of text. He adds:

Elias: Once I wrote like a story with 50 pages or something and gave it to him [Filip], for summer vacations. It took a long time to write. I don’t think he’s read it but — I think he lost it. (38)

This extract points not only to the quantity of output, but also to the extensive time spent engaged with a task (and, again, the sharing of writing with friends). In another comment pertaining to the *quantity of output*, Hanna said she had a story of 137 pages, and she had lots of stories – so many that she had “lost count”. One of Stella’s stories reached 43 pages. Saga said she, now that she is older, “likes to write longer stories” that “flow free”. Moreover, there were reports of stories that were long and unfinished projects, in progress, at the time of the interviews. Samuel’s writing about his absent friend was ongoing. Molly’s story about Sam from the family in a process of separation was in progress. Hanna’s 137-page story was also still being worked on. Here, another overlap of themes must be acknowledged, as some of these ongoing stories may indicate experiences and emotions which were in the ongoing process of being understood and dealt with.

Finally, in relation to output, a theme of *originality* emerged. Some pupils made a distinction between their own creative writing and adaptations of other texts. For example, Klara said that she wrote fanfiction “as a kid”, but she added: “I do write my own stuff as well”. She also stated that she wrote fanfiction when she felt blocked from writing her own work. Molly commented: “I write different things. I write both stories and then I write poetry, and then I write fanfiction [chuckles]”. This chuckle from Molly perhaps indicates a view that fanfiction is less serious than, and distinct from, her own “stories” and “poetry”.

### 5.2.8 Time and place for writing

Regarding *time* for writing, most of the pupils were writing at least once a week. For Filip and Hanna, it was daily, as it could be for Emma and Samuel too—*could* because homework might get in the way. Hanna wrote in any spare time she had, and even took her free-time written stories into classes with her. She was worried it was “messing with [her] grades”. 66 Three pupils spoke of writing in the breaks at school.

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66 As well as Hanna, Linnea spoke of English creative writing in the non-free time of non-English classes. In her case, it was in mathematics lessons in school, if she got bored.
Place for writing included both the physical location or situation of the pupil when engaged with writing and the virtual online places for writing. Writing on the bus or train, during the commute to and from school, was reported by three participants. For two of these three pupils, the phone was the writing tool. Filip said he wrote “pretty much everywhere”. The strongest two themes relating to place for writing were alone and calm, and online. Alone and calm most often meant the bed or bedroom; five pupils said this was a favourite place for writing, but the library was mentioned too, as was the forest. In terms of virtual places used, for writing online, the following sites were mentioned: fanfiction.net, Wattpad, Archive of Our Own, Aminos, sites linked to the game Star Stable, and Reddit.

The head or mind, in relation to writing, was referred to as well, so that the place of the imaginative process was highlighted. For example, Klara said: “I do write a lot in my head”. The mind, and thought connected to creativity, was spoken of by Molly and Felicia too:

Molly: I think almost like a movie. You just know what’s going to happen. It’s not like you stop and be like, ‘What’s going to happen?’ You just know.

Felicia: To me, it’s more like a story. I’m telling someone this story and talking to myself. Sometimes it can just be me pretending to be older, looking back at what I’m doing now. Being like ‘That day I went there, and I did that — I felt like that, because of this, but I figure it out later’. I’m trying to talk to myself. (39)

This extract points to the mind as a place of imaginative creation. Molly is able to produce writing without hesitation, as she visualises the story as a film in her mind. Felicia indicates a role of story, or narrative at least, as inner play. She describes a situation where she can give present, ongoing events of a day in her life – actions and feelings – a ‘retrospective’ voice-over by an imagined older version of herself. The imagined voice reminds the younger Felicia that although she feels like this now, because something happened, this will be ‘figured out’ and resolved later. Emma also emphasised the role of imagination when she stated: “I hate the physical act of writing, I just like to come up with the things, but I really hate to write basically”. For Emma, the positive reward of enjoyment of creativity outweighed the negative of the physical activity of writing. Pupils had more to say, too, on the act of writing, and the physical tools and materials they employed.
5.2.9 Tools and materials for writing

All the pupils had access to digital devices which could be used for writing. In many cases this was an iPad, or other tablet, provided by the school and available for personal use. As referred to in the previous section, two pupils spoke of using mobiles to write stories on buses during their commute to and from school. Stella wrote all her fanfiction stories on a mobile phone and Hanna used her mobile phone for a live written role-play. Further, all participants had easy access to the internet.

There were some notable exceptions to the use of digital devices, however. Both Molly and Hanna described the use of pen and paper as more “personal”. Hanna chose pen and blank paper (loose sheets) for all her writing. Here she explains why:

Hanna: I prefer writing the old-fashioned way with paper and pen – it feels more personal. I can see that I have written this, it’s not just a computer. You can identify a lot of things with your handwriting like – ‘Oh here I was really excited because my writing is a little bigger and uneven and I must have really enjoyed writing that’, or: ‘OK, maybe here it was a little boring, I was so precise with how I write things’. And then you can just look at it and you don’t get those red lines underneath – like ‘how do you spell that word?’ (40)

Hanna also stated that she likes to add a little drawing (hence the preference for blank paper) next to her writing sometimes, as a doodle could remind her of the image she had in mind when writing – whether a character, or a place.

In contrast to Hanna, Molly largely wrote her stories on digital devices. Yet, when she turned to writing poetry or songs, she used pen and paper. She said it felt “nicer” and I asked her to expand on that:

Molly: I don’t really know. I like to write down by hand and it feels more personal. It’s easier, I don’t know — even though it’s easy on the computer to edit and stuff, I think it’s easier to just write everything down and then just cross it out, and then start over. It’s more — when I have so many thoughts, and I don’t have time – that I just have to write, and then I can try to read it. I cannot always read it because I’ve written too fast, but then it feels easier to get it out. (41)

This extract suggests that Molly seems to need to “get it out” (her “thoughts”) and the faster it is done is the better. This need to write was echoed by Felicia, who, in the same interview, suggested that the choice of tools and materials was very much secondary to simply writing. She states:
Felicia: Sometimes I get a really, really interesting idea and then I feel like, I need to write this down like right now, and not later. I just grab a piece of paper or I take my phone, or whatever – I just write it down…. One time I didn’t have a paper, but I had a pen I wrote it on my arm instead. (42)

This idea of a need to get ideas out is repeated by Linnea as well:

Linnea: I think creativity is in your mind and sometimes I can be on the bus, for example, and then I just take up my phone and be like – ‘I need to write about this’ or ‘I need to get out my emotions.’ (43)

Linnea, on the bus, with her phone in her hand, has the will to write and a tool with which to do it. Felicia is so motivated to write that she writes on one arm with the other. These are just two examples, from the many in this section, of engagement and motivation.

In concluding this section, as the issue of engagement is so intertwined with the issue of motivation, it is useful to briefly comment on both of the previous sections together. The results reveal that pupils with a free-time interest in creative writing in English can be motivated in a number of ways, including wanting to imitate and adapt the stories they have already come across. For some it is fun, and over time it can offer a way to understand experiences and deal with emotions. Contacts and friends can be made through this engagement with creative writing. These are just some of the answers to the first two research questions, which are concerned with what motivates, and ways of engagement with, extramural creative writing in English. The results will be discussed in the final chapter (6). First, I shall address the results in relation to the third research question.

5.3 Enriched English learning

This section presents the findings that relate to the third research question of the present study: Do the pupils consider that their learning of English is enriched through their free-time activity of creative writing in English, and, if so, how? All the participants stated that their English language skills had developed through the activity. They differed in terms of what areas of English had improved and which aspects of their creative writing activity had led to improvement. Three pupils said that they were already strong in at least some aspects of English before they took up extramural writing, but even they
acknowledged that further development had occurred. Themes indicating areas of development include vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and aesthetic development/art of creative writing.

5.3.1 Vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and punctuation

The strongest theme relating to enriched English learning was vocabulary. Seven pupils said that their vocabularies had expanded as a result of their free-time writing. Here, Samuel describes his approach to vocabulary learning, linked to his writing activity:

Samuel: I look for those sophisticated words and all that I can use, and then I learn them, so they are good to have for the future.

I: And how do you look for sophisticated words, Samuel? What do you do?

Samuel: Sometimes I look for just synonyms. Sometimes I translate, I think from Spanish\(^{67}\) to English. Then the new word comes. (44, my translation)

It is interesting to note that Samuel takes a direct route from his mother tongue into English and does not use the main language of his school and society – Swedish. The following reply to the question about English development also gives an insight into vocabulary acquisition. Molly states:

Molly: Well, I think definitely it has, because this writing I do is also really connected to reading. When I read, I get ideas ‘Oh you can write like this’. Then I have learned so many new words, and sometimes I’m like, ‘Oh, hello word. Now, we’re going to fight a bit because I need to know what you mean!’ And that’s always me. I learn new words and I’m like, ‘I need to write this word. What is it?’ and then I have to search it up, or look in a book. I feel my spelling has definitely become so much better since I started writing in English. (45)

In the above extract, Molly highlights the link between the input of reading, leading to writing, as an opportunity to use and master newly acquired words. As she also suggests, part of the mastery of a word is that one can spell it. Molly, along with Stella, and two other pupils, commented on their improved spelling. In the extract that follows, Stella outlines how her improvement in spelling has come about:

\(^{67}\) Spanish is Samuel’s L1 (mother tongue).
Stella: I have become so much better at spelling, because that, that is one of my weak sides, that I’m not so good at spelling, neither in Swedish nor English. But this has really helped me to kind of spell and know how you spell and that.

I: In which way has it helped?

Stella: When I have written lots, and repeated the same word, and I have seen this — because I’ve got autocorrect on my mobile, and if it has been like autocorrected loads of times, then I learn in the end how it is supposed to be. (46, my translation)

The theme of spelling overlaps with a sense of the amount of time that has gone into repetition, in the writing process. Alternatively, regarding Filip’s improved spelling, he indicated that negative feedback, online, had spurred him on. Ludvig acknowledged that, while he had begun extramural creative writing as someone who was already able to understand lots of English, the activity had improved spelling and punctuation.

Two pupils referred to their improvements in grammar, and another two referred to improvements in punctuation. Firstly, regarding grammar, I asked William, in Swedish, if his creative writing had influenced his development in the English language. He replied in English with the following statement:

William: Yes, it has because when you write you not only sharpen your fantasy, as I called it, the fantasy zone, but you improve your grammar and when you write in English you could probably read it out loud to test your English speaking. (47)

This extract from William overlaps into aspects of artistic and aesthetic development in terms of the “sharpening” of “fantasy” which he refers to. He also mentions grammar improvement, as well as how writing is wrapped up with reading and speaking because he can read his own work aloud. Also, the following quote from Hanna reveals her willingness to learn grammar.

Hanna: I think so yes, because I have written in English for such a long time, I want to make as few mistakes as possible and so I am eager to learn like ‘What kind of grammar do you use here?’ (48)

This extract also relates to the theme of ambition and perfectionism, referred to in section 5.2.2. Hanna’s comment offers a glimpse ahead into the next section, on the school subject of English, as she enjoys learning grammar in school to help her free-time creativity.
Stella also spoke of punctuation, and how she had learnt how to use speech marks. Also, she had learnt “about paragraphs and space between text” and “not to go on – line, after line, after line, so that it is hard work to read” (my translation). Thus, Stella revealed how she was developing as a writer by considering the perspective of the reader of her work.

5.3.2 Aesthetic development/art of creative writing

The second strongest theme, in relation to enriched English learning, was *aesthetic development/art of creative writing*. This formed from the comments of six pupils and overlapped with the strongest theme of *vocabulary*. For example, Emma answered the question about development in English in relation to her extramural writing with this comment:

Emma: It definitely does, especially in the beginning because it motivates you to get better because you wanna have new and different ways to say things. I always strive to come up with new ways to phrase something or new ways to put words together, like new metaphors and stuff. And you notice that to do that you have to develop the language. It has to improve. (49)

Emma’s desire to expand her vocabulary is linked to a creative desire to be original as she searches for new phrases and metaphors; there is a sense of artistry at work. Similarly, Linnea describes how the special challenge of song writing, with the constraints of rhythm, places demands on her to find a particularly appropriate word – with the right number of syllables. She states:

Linnea: I also think like when you write a song and maybe you have a melody but you don’t have really a text and you need to, like, find out some words that can fit into it, and maybe you have like ‘do…doo… doo’, and you need like a word, yeah — for that melody and then you like – ‘I don’t know any words’, and then you like start googling — and yeah. (50)

Another comment which gives a flavour of the theme of *aesthetic development/art of creative writing* is provided by Molly. When she was asked if her English had developed in relation to her writing, she spoke of the demands of poetry, and that she had improved in terms of:

Molly: How to build sentences. I read poetry and I listen to poetry. I love how the rules are not really there. You can write however you want to and form the sentences. I think that has been a development as well — Then you can write it however you want to just as long as it sounds good. I think that’s cool, how you can — sometimes you
can be extremely strict and sometimes — sometimes it’s more of a painting. (51)

This extract shows how Molly is able to respond creatively, to poetry she has read, to produce work that is controlled – “strict” – and, at other times, freer and unbound – “more of a painting”. This comment also shows that Molly is aware that successful creative writing is aesthetically pleasing for a reader, or an audience – “as long as it sounds good”. Also, Felicia claims that, as a result of her free-time activity, she is better able to make decisions about the quality of ideas for storylines, as well as the best ways of writing: “this would make a good story, this wouldn’t” and “this is how you should write a story, and this is how you shouldn’t.”

5.3.3 Practice makes perfect, and other ways to improve

Extramural writing helped the pupils in a variety of ways with learning English. Stella showed that ‘practice made perfect’ with regard to learning spelling (see section 5.3.1). Two other pupils echoed these remarks and commented on how time spent was key to improvement. Klara points out another aspect related to time and writing, in that the slowness of the act of writing can be advantageous, in comparison to speech, for learning. She stated:

Klara: I think writing is one of the biggest parts of learning a language, because then you get to make up your sentences, and you can make a bit more advanced sentences, even if you’re a beginner, because you have time to think, unlike when you speak. (52)

There were many different ways in which the writing activity helped the individual participants improve in English. For some, it was hard to separate what led them to develop in English from what motivated them to write, and from the ways in which they were engaged. In this sense, some of the themes relating to motivation and engagement that are referred to in earlier sections are echoed by a variety of individual voices in answer to the question on the enrichment of English learning. For example, Hanna spoke of how her desire to reach a broader audience helped develop her English, as had her perfectionism. Emma spoke of her need for originality, and Molly commented on freedom and autonomy — a factor that had been vital in allowing the flow that was referred to in the previous section on engagement that motivates (5.2.1).

Finally, I re-emphasise the participants’ unanimity that free-time creative English writing was improving their English language skills. The rather expansive term of _enrichment_ helpfully encompassed the breadth of improvement, in that some of the pupils also suggested artistic and aesthetic areas of learning.
5.4 Creative writing and challenge in English classes

This section will deal with findings relevant for the final research question of the present study: *What insights do the pupils offer concerning creative writing and challenge in the English classroom?* The participants’ comments about the school subject of English formed three overarching themes. Firstly, there was creative writing taking place in most of their schools. Secondly, there was a desire for *more* creative writing. Thirdly, there was a lack of challenge in the English school subject. These three themes are explained in the following three sections (5.4.1-3) which also include participants’ indications for ways to increase creative writing and challenge in the English classroom.

5.4.1 Creative writing takes place in English classes

Creative writing *does* take place in the school subject of English, according to ten participants. Moreover, William was able to trace the roots of his free-time creative writing activity back to his school:

William: Well, I don’t mind writing in school. That’s where I started doing it, but I guess you get a lot of calm surroundings in your home, that’s where I can continue. But originally, I don’t mind actually writing here [school]. (53)

This idea of continuing something that started at school, in the home, is also commented on by Molly and Felicia in their pair interview. Parts of the following extract have been referred to in an earlier section (5.2.7), but it is relevant here too:

Molly: We got an assignment in English, a couple of weeks ago, to write a ‘breaking through the barrier’ thing where we were going to put characters. They find a magical world. I liked my characters that I created because I didn’t really want to write fantasy, so I just said, when they came into that world, I was just like ‘Yes, but that’s another story’, and I ended it there, with a cliff-hanger. But I liked the characters, so I continued the story, and I haven’t really figured out where it’s going to be. The main character is called Sam.

Felicia: Well, it’s the same assignment. I wrote my assignment as a chapter, and I continue to write other chapters at home. I guess I wrote this giant universe around it.

Molly: I love that story.
Felicia: Well, I actually really like it where anything — the characters, again, are really interesting. They are — yours are too. (54)

In this dialogue, the pupils describe how they accepted the frame or stimulus offered by the school task, but applied their own agency in adapting and extending their writing, into an extramural creative activity. Felicia was engaged with the task as formal schoolwork and wrote a chapter on it, in that context. Yet, the task bridged into her free time and developed into a project of her own, as she wrote extra chapters, which were not part of the school task. In doing so, she created a “giant universe” in a story which she shared, much to the approval of Molly. In contrast, Molly turned away from the school assignment idea of ‘fantasy’. She had a more ‘down to earth’ approach and began a story about a young character called Sam. Sam, whose gender identity was being considered by Molly, faced problems related to separated parents, and these troubles were eased by the presence of friends. Molly’s story was more in accord with a genre of social realism than fantasy.

There will be a fuller discussion of the significance of this dialogue extract and the issue of creative writing in school in the next chapter (6). Clearly though, any simplistic idea of only a gap between extramural English and the school subject of English, is not appropriate, given these examples of bridging, which were provided by William, Felicia, and Molly. Also, Klara and Saga spoke enthusiastically of an adaptation they jointly created, and that had been inspired by Shakespeare’s play A Midsummer Night’s Dream. This project also spilled into free time but had its roots in classroom English. In these cases, bridging took place from (formal) school creative writing to (informal) extramural English. Nevertheless, there was a desire for more creative writing in class expressed by the participants.

5.4.2 A desire for more creative writing

Alongside the acknowledgement of the existence of some creative writing in English classes, nine participants indicated a desire for more creative writing. Elias suggested that creative writing had become less a part of English lessons as he got older: “Not so much in seventh grade, more in sixth, and especially fifth – not so much anymore”. Hanna complained that graded assignments were based more often on the analysis of texts, rather than creating them. She stated:

Hanna: I have very rarely been able to use my creative writing as a way to get my grades up. Then it’s just been: ‘Write an analysis of this

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68 Hannah was the only participant in the present study who referred to school grades. This will be discussed in the next chapter.
book – read this book and write what it’s about’ – and that’s it. And I’m like, ‘But it’s just facts, there’s no imagination in it. It’s boring.’ I’d like there to be more imagination, so more creative writing actually. There’s not enough of that. (55)

Linnea, in the following extract, echoes some of Hanna’s frustration and suggests that she feels somewhat underestimated with regard to her own creative abilities:

Linnea: I mean sometimes it is like: ‘Now you need to do this, now you need to do that and you’re going to do like this and you’re going to do like that’. Maybe some people have their own, like, ways to do things. But I think we’re kind of stopped sometimes because we are maybe more creative than people think and if we’re — yeah — if everyone would have the chance to kind of show their own creativity, maybe we could like share, and take some response from each other also. (56)

Linnea’s desire for more creativity in a task also overlapped with a willingness to share work and feedback with her peers.

Of course, such sharing and responding is a feature of fanfiction online, but it is of note that no participants had had lessons which had featured fanfiction. Stella suggested it might be a good idea to write fanfiction in class:

Stella: I think it would be really fun. Everybody watches something, or plays some game, or watches some series. I think the whole class would think it was fun. (57, my translation)

Also relevant to a desire for more creative writing in English classes was the theme of autonomy, which was formed from the comments of four participants. For example, Elias wanted “more creative writing, stories and stuff – to give us more freedom”. Or, as Filip put it:

Filip: Of course, I also want more freedom to write pretty much whatever we want. Nowadays we just write pretty much what a book tells us to write but it would be nice to write whatever we want because we would learn a lot more like that. (58)

This extract from the interview with Filip overlaps with the less textbook theme that was formed from the comments of four participants. Relevant here was Ludvig’s desire for a chance to offer more complex answers with different perspectives and views on a topic. He explains:

Ludvig: Questions should be written more so that you can have different perceptions about them and not be so black and white – so that
there is only one possible answer. Because if there is only one possible answer then there is only right or wrong. There are no questions open to interpretation. It would be good if they existed. (59, my translation)

Ludvig indicates a desire to have more open questions in class exercises. This leads into the next section, on the theme of a lack of challenge.

5.4.3 A need for more challenges

A lack of challenge in the English classroom was referred to by eleven participants. Klara, in the following extract, offers an insight into how the English classwork has become less challenging as she has progressed through school.

Klara: I think it’s too simple. When we began, it was nice. We sang, and we did our words every week, and that worked for the first two years, three years, maybe. Then, we became too advanced. Most people, almost everyone, was too advanced for the material, so we didn't really grow in lessons, we grew outside. (60)

Klara states that extramural English has played more of a role in her development in English than classroom work. Also, she suggests with the use of “we” that her peers would also find the learning “material” of the class unchallenging.

In contrast, William did not suggest that most of his peers would find English too easy, although he indicated that the level can be below his own requirements. He stated:

William: Well, I think the English teaching on this school is very good, but of course, I am good at English. But there are people who cannot even spell anything, or cannot even pronounce anything, so the level — it’s pretty low for my skills, but they cannot do anything about it of course. We are a class; we need to learn on the same level. (61)

In this extract, there is no suggestion that a class can work in a differentiated manner. Instead, William states that “we need to learn on the same level” and this notion of having to work at an unchallenging level, for the sake of less proficient peers, is repeated by Filip: “It’s pretty easy, but for people who don't understand English so… well I'm not scared that they keep it at such a low level”. Filip is not worried by this, and William seems empathic toward his peers with lower proficiency levels than his own.

Not all the participants sounded so patient, however; Ludvig complains, in the following extract, about what he perceives as a lack of challenge in school:
Ludvig: I like the English language, but I don’t like the English subject in school so much actually. It’s just learning loads of words that I know already from really easy texts, and then just writing them in a crossword and stuff. It’s the same all the time and I don’t learn anything from it because these are words I already know. (62, my translation)

This lack of a challenge frustrated Felicia too:

Felicia: Well, I just did everything they told me to. I don’t really know, I just did it, but I was just really, really, really, really bored. Because I didn’t really get a challenge, I didn’t really learn anything and that’s also the reason that I watch anime, which is pretty much Japanese cartoons with English subtitles, so I learn a lot of English from them. Also, I read manga in English as well. (63)

In this extract, Felicia uses the past tense – opening the possibility that she was less bored with her English classes by the time of the interview. Her comments here are not only about a lack of challenge in school, but also point to how she feels she has been learning English informally, with input from anime and manga. Molly enjoyed her English in school, even though she acknowledged a lack of challenge too:

Molly: I like it — how we get to learn, I still don’t think really that we get a challenge right now. I feel like I know everything that we do in the lessons. Just because I think it’s so fun to use English, that’s why I don’t really feel bored because I still feel like it’s fun. I’ve never felt bored in English lessons like you [Felicia] said, you’ve felt bored, but I don’t feel that because I think it’s so fun even though it’s ‘I already know it’, I still love to just do stuff. (64)

Molly’s comments about a lack of a challenge here are slightly qualified with “I still don’t think really”, which hints at some doubt or hesitation on her part. She does say that she knows the words encountered in class, as does Ludvig, but she feels that the activities are enjoyable and even that “we get to learn”.

A theme of customise emerged, with the comments of three participants who wanted to suggest a solution for the lack of challenge in class. Felicia stated: “Well, I think I don’t know how to describe it, but more — I don’t know — customised learning.” In the teaching profession this is usually referred to as differentiation. Felicia and Molly discuss this issue here:

Felicia: If you would say — like the teacher would say, ‘Oh, you need to do this assignment’ and during this week or something like that then
you could — I know it’s not really trying to, but categorise the pupils and know that, ‘Oh, I know if I add this rule to the assignment for this person or these persons, then I know that they are going to well, they can do it.’ I don’t know how to really describe it.

Molly: But I don’t know, it was something with what you said also, like, if you’re closer to the teacher, and the teacher gets to know the students, then they can maybe specialise, yes also customise, like you said, to be more specific to what every person needs, because it’s still hard to do that also, because then it would be like some people would feel like: ‘Oh, am I bad because I’m not with other people?’ I don’t want to categorise people.

Felicia: ‘You’re bad you go there! You’re good you go there!’ [laughs] (65)

In the above dialogue, Felicia points to the potential for a teacher to get to know the individual pupils, to ‘customise’, whereas Molly raises a fear of exclusion, or segregation according to proficiency – with the potentially detrimental consequences of labelling some pupils as less able. Nevertheless, Molly did acknowledge in other comments that she needed, and wanted to be, challenged more. For example, she suggested that English could be a school subject where literature and, as she put it, “the classics” could be taught. Molly also suggested that the subject could link to the theatre projects at her school.

Three participants spoke of a desire to be led to a challenge in their English classes. I asked Samuel and Ludvig what might constitute a challenging task:

Samuel: Write one of those essays or what it is they are called. Maybe three pages, on a special thing, like a water bottle or something. So that we write three pages on it, so formally and so well, with sophisticated words and all that. That is a challenge.

Ludvig: Yes, initially I thought that the ReadTheory website was quite challenging, but then I improved in English so that now I am on level 12 and cannot get higher because that is the top level. Sometimes, I glide down to level 10 or 11, but I keep at that high level and that is like upper-secondary level or something, as far as I know. (66, my translation)

Ludvig’s comments in the above extract overlap with the previous points about ‘customisation’ (or differentiation) made by Felicia. Samuel’s desire to

69 ReadTheory is the name of an online reading comprehension website. After an initial test users are guided to tasks at appropriate levels. With successfully completed tasks users can rise to more challenging levels. https://ReadTheory.org/ (accessed 6 March 2021)
be led to a very specific challenge contrasts with his desire to have freedom when it comes to creative writing. He was not the only pupil who had comments which contributed to contradictory themes of autonomy and a desire to be led to a challenge. This dilemma will be discussed more in the next chapter (6). Also, Saga and Klara specifically highlighted that they would like more challenging vocabulary work, while Hanna said that more grammar work in school would help with her extramural creative writing.

Finally, five participants expressed, empathically, an understanding that the teacher’s role was demanding and complex. Some pupils in class had much lower English proficiency levels than those of the participants (see William’s comment in block quote 61); it was this challenge for the teacher, in particular, of widely varied levels, that impinged upon the participants’ experience of a lack of challenge in classroom English.

5.5 Summary of findings

By way of summarising the results, I shall again highlight the themes that are most relevant to the research questions. Firstly, regarding research question one, the most commonly cited motivation for starting extramural English creative writing was to imitate and adapt existing stories. Stories are read and written, they inspire, and more are created. Some of the pupils described it as fun to write and this motivated them to start too, but as a motivation to engage with free-time creative writing in the longer term, a theme of understand experiences and deal with emotions emerged. Even if fun connotes levity and understand experiences indicates more gravity, the free-time writing continues to be an enjoyable pastime. One of the ways enjoyment is evident is that participants described how they could enter a flow-like state of creative writing. Answers to research question one, about motivation, intertwine with answers to research question two, about how the pupils were engaged with the activity of free-time creative writing in English. This intertwining was evident with flow, which, as described by the pupils, was a form of motivational engagement.

Connected to flow are the themes of ambition and perfectionism, and risk, as these are linked to the issue of challenge. Risk is associated with the sharing of one’s creative writing, especially regarding the threshold of online publication. In the case of fanfiction online, taking the risk of publication is usually rewarded with praise. Receiving praise is a key theme in relation to motivation for extramural English creative writing, not only for writers of fanfiction. Nevertheless, that many participants wrote for themselves underlines that praise from others was not a motivational factor in all cases of writing.
However, participants in the present study were writing for audiences as well, and a feature of these readerships is their scale in terms of large numbers and wide global spread, reflecting the potential offered by online fanfiction. With such a large audience online, praise could be received from multiple readers. Indeed, the fanfiction writers in this study are conscious of how praise online has helped them, and they give praise to other writers online and even voice an opposition to negative feedback online. The theme of giving positive feedback is not exclusive to fanfiction writers, though their giving of praise and diplomatic tact online is to be noted. Offline writers can also give positive feedback to each other, in those cases where the writing is shared.

The issues of praise and feedback are connected to the theme of cementing and expanding social networks, a theme linked with friendship and the idea of identity-play or role-play, or the adoption of masks associated with cool and fun pen names. The imaginative play with pen names and identities echoes the reoccurrence of imagination in both stories read and created. I have also used the term of outlandish to describe the imaginative and even bizarre stories, or story elements, created by some participants.

Imaginative and creative writing benefitted from periods of being alone and calm, hence the popularity of the bedroom as a place for writing. The act of writing might require that the writer withdraws and disengages from interaction for a period, but the withdrawal can be achieved by writing on a mobile phone, for example, in situations where there might be lots of people, such as on a bus. Also, despite the propensity of digital devices for writing, it is important to note that handwriting was still used by a minority of the pupils, and it was the preferred way of writing stories for one participant, apart from when engaging online.

I shall end this summary by highlighting the key themes which relate to the third and fourth research questions: that is, the enrichment of English learning from the extramural activity, and the insights regarding creative writing and challenge in classroom English. All the participants stated that they learnt English in some way through their extramural activity. The comments of the pupils suggest that their enrichment of English is primarily achieved through improved vocabulary and spelling, alongside improvements in the art of creative writing. Important themes are the time spent on improvement and high output which, in turn, both relate to the question of how the pupils are engaged in the task. Finally, it needs to be emphasised that the theme of creative writing takes place in school included pupils who had been given creative writing tasks in school which had inspired extramural creative writing. Yet, the two most commonly repeated insights regarding creative writing and challenge in-class were that there needed to be more of both. Such insights indicate that the gap between informal and formal L2 English learning is such that it needs to be better bridged. All the points touched on in this summary will be discussed in the chapter that follows – the discussion and conclusion.
6 Discussion and conclusion

In this, the final chapter, I discuss the results of the present study in relation to relevant earlier studies, findings, claims, and thinking. I focus on the research questions and consider, also, the overarching aim of my study: to contribute to understanding so as to aid formal L2 English education rise to the challenge presented by extramural English – sometimes formulated as bridging the gap (Henry et al., 2019). The research questions are discussed, in turn, although there is some overlap between questions, especially the first two, on motivation and engagement. Also, in section 6.4 I present a visual representation of extramural L2 English creative writing. In the next section (6.5), I discuss the final research question, about the pupils’ insights into aspects of the school subject of English. The pedagogical implications of the results will be discussed in section 6.6. Finally, the chapter and thesis conclude with suggestions for future studies (section 6.7).

6.1 Motivation to be engaged

Regarding the first research question, the pupils offered several perspectives in relation to motivation. As was pointed out in the previous chapter, perspectives on motivation were often intertwined with the issue of engagement. Thus, answers to the first research question can relate also to the second research question, and vice versa. However, there was one theme in connection to motivation that pointed to inspiration prior to engagement with free-time creative writing: imitation and adaptation (section 5.1.1). Some pupils were motivated to start and continue their creative writing because of their enjoyment of stories they had read. This theme echoed the idea of imitatio, which is referred to by Olin-Scheller and Wikström (2010) in their writings on fan-fiction, and also Wesseling (2019), who writes of the desire of children to emulate established authors. The pupils’ comments indicate a rather simple and linear causal relationship, which would fit with Henry’s (2019c) statement that:
L2 motivation and L2 engagement need to be understood as having a causal relation; language learning engagement is a downstream consequence of a student’s motivational intentions and desires. (p. 55, italics in the original)

It ought to be noted that the initial motivation, gained through inspiration from reading stories, and subsequent engagement with L2 writing, as encapsulated in the theme of imitation and adaptation, is also related to L1 reading and writing. Some of the pupils indicated how their early enjoyment of reading had come from stories in their mother tongue and that they had started to write in that language too. It is also noteworthy that reading stories was not only present as an initial motivator for creative writing, but offered an accompaniment to the ongoing free-time activity of writing. Stories, as input, as opposed to their own written output, was mentioned by all the participants in the present study (section 5.2.7), and the close interconnection between reading and writing suggested by Barrs (2000), amongst others, is echoed. As Molly states: “This writing I do is also really connected to reading. When I read, I get ideas ‘Oh you can write like this’” (block quote 45). The motivation to write that follows from reading can also be seen as a chain of interaction (Bakhtin, 1981). In other words, the creative writing of the pupils can be seen as an imitative, adaptive and dialogic response to earlier texts from author(s) of stories.

The present study indicates a desire to respond creatively to stories. Responding to creative texts, in writing, is an activity that has been included in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – or CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020, pp. 106-107 & section 2.1.2). The CEFR includes assessment criteria for responses to creative texts, such as a simple book review, which the authors suggest might be suitable for younger school pupils, and also criteria for more analytical responses, which they suggest might be more appropriate for literature studies at upper-secondary school or university level. However, neither of these types of responses to creative texts invite students to write creatively, or imaginatively. In my study, stories beget stories. In the case of fanfiction, the stories read are so inspirational that they cannot be left; rather, they are added to through imagination and creativity, with additional characters, or new plot twists, or changes in settings. The creative act of imitation and adaptation, and its potential as a motivator, needs to be fully considered by teachers, which is why it will be dealt with further in section 6.6 on the pedagogical implications of the present study.

Furthermore, as with many of the themes to be discussed here, there are issues of tension, and even contradiction, at work. For example, a tension inherent in the very title of the theme imitation and adaptation lies in the way inspirational work that has been read might be both copied, to some degree, and changed by the creative act of writing for adaptation. This somewhat paradoxical process was highlighted earlier in section 2.2.2 with reference to
Robinson’s (2011) metaphor of “holding on” and “letting go” to describe the creative process (p. 5).

Moreover, there is not only tension within the theme of imitation and adaptation, but the theme also contradicts with another theme that emerged in the present study – originality. While imitation and adaptation may have sufficed as motivation for some participants to engage with their free-time writing, a smaller number of pupils were inspired by the greater challenge of originality. This quality is far removed from, even opposed to, imitation. Originality is, at the very least, some distance from fanfiction, with its seemingly inbuilt quality of imitation and adaptation (section 5.2.7). This tendency of some pupils to shift from writing fanfiction, toward a desire to increase originality in their writing, was noted in earlier studies (Lammers & Marsh, 2017; Olin-Scheller & Wikström, 2010, see section 2.2.6).

In fact, there is not only a contradiction, or tension, between imitation and originality, but between many of the themes that emerged in the present study. Robinson (2011) is not alone in highlighting the significance of a tension at the heart of creativity, in what he calls “holding on” and “letting go” (p. 5). Dörnyei and Kubanyiova (2014) point to a “dissonance” that leads to creative tension (p. 138); for them, the dissonance that drives creativity lies in a potential gap between the vision, of a created goal, and actual progress, so far achieved. Such dissonance can also be seen in the tension between imitation and originality, and the ambition of some of the pupils to be authors.

In the later sections of this chapter, I provide further examples of creative tensions between themes connected to both motivation and engagement. At this point, however, I return to the issue of what motivated pupils to start with the pastime of writing creatively. Imitation and adaptation provided the strongest motivation for starting, but it was not the only important motivator – another was fun. The theme of fun contributes part of the answer to research question one, about motivation, and research question two, about engagement. In this case, an initial engagement with the act of writing is, itself, explicitly given by some of the pupils as a motivation to start the pastime of creative writing. Here, the idea that engagement is a downstream of motivation, as suggested in the block quote shown earlier in this section, by Henry (2019c, p. 55), is less clear. Instead, it appears that fun engagement with writing provides motivation to start the free-time activity writing – engagement engenders engagement. For some of the pupils it was simply fun to write. Moreover, themes relating to fun, pleasure and enjoyment appear often in the findings of the present study. For example, the activity of free-time writing can provide positive rewards in the form of flow, praise, and social contacts – even friendship.

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70 Attridge (2004) argues that there is a hierarchy of artistic output and places originality above creativity.
Like imitation and adaptation, fun as a motivation is an idea referred to in earlier publications. For example, Robinson (2011) states: “Being creative does usually involve playing with ideas and having fun, enjoyment, and imagination” (p. 5). Also, Aragon and Davis (2019), found that fanfiction writers felt the engagement was enjoyable and fun (p. 58). Ludvig, in the present study, stated that “The most fun part is when I imagine strange ideas” (block quote 33). This comment also flags up the theme of the highly imaginative and fantastical written output, which is referred to in section 5.2.6. In this way, the present study supports the argument of Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017, see section 2.2.1), who highlight the role of imagination as motivational; this is an aspect they consider to be neglected in intrinsic motivation theory (p. 448).

In the findings of the present study, this motivational imagination was reflected in many aspects of the pupils’ engagement, including their choice of pen names. Before the study, I had thought that taking on pen names online would primarily have been for reasons of anonymity and safety; instead, the theme of cool and fun in relation to adopting online pen names was stronger than that of safety. Hanna’s imagination was evident with her choice of an herbivorous animal name for use as her pen name on websites where she only read and observed, while she used a carnivorous animal as pen name on fanfiction sites where she wrote comments to writers (section 5.2.6). Saga chose pen names that to her “sounded aesthetic” and Felicia could be whoever she wanted to be (section 5.2.6). This play with the selection of pen names adds to the other perspectives of participants that writing creatively is fun and enjoyable. Finally, in relation to the word fun, it is a word that has associations with lightness and frivolity. Yet, while fun formed the second strongest theme as a motivation to begin creative writing (after imitation and adaptation), it was superseded by an arguably more serious theme as a motive to continue writing.

The theme of understand experiences and deal with emotions emerged as a motivation for continuing with free-time creative writing. As mentioned earlier in this section, there appear to be some contradictions and tensions between – and sometimes within – themes. In this case, there is a tension between this more serious theme and the lighter theme of fun. Understanding experiences and dealing with emotions is not fun per se, but is more sober, even somber, as it is associated with finding meaning, and possibly alleviating emotional concerns or distress. This is the case with Samuel: he is motivated to keep writing about his traumatic experience of having a friend go missing and not return (section 5.1.3). However, Samuel is not the only pupil in the present study who uses writing to deal with ongoing emotional issues. For example, Molly explains her motivation to continue to write in the following way: “It’s more like writing in my diary but in another character” and “personal but anonymous. I’m just putting my feelings out there, but no one has to know” (block quote 9). I used Molly’s explanation of how she put autobiographical content into fiction as a lens to aid my consideration of her fictional
character Sam’s problems of family separation, and also her (and Felicia’s) contemplation of Sam’s gender identity (block quotes 37 & 54).

In Molly’s fictional account of Sam, a sadness and sense of loss after the parents’ separation is soothed by the company of Sam’s friends; it might be that there is an element of catharsis being sought in the act of writing in this case. Kearney (2007) claims that writing a story can be cathartic in the following way:

The recounting of experience through the formal medium of plot, fiction or spectacle permits us to repeat the past forward so to speak. And this very act of creative repetition allows for a certain kind of pleasure or release. In the play of narrative re-creation we are invited to revisit our lives – through the actions and personas of others – so as to live them otherwise. We discover a way to give a future to the past. (Kearney, 2007, p. 51)

Here too, as with the earlier theme of fun, there is pleasure, according to Kearney, though perhaps it best considered as a pleasing relief – a healing of pain. This pleasure is possibly more profound than the pleasing sensation of fun. That said, the application of the term catharsis may be too strong or speculative, and a more appropriate alternative may be the idea of control.

The phrase “a sense of control” was used by participants in a study of creative writing’s therapeutic effects (Deveney & Lawson, 2021, p. 7). Perhaps the gist of my rather lengthy theme title of understand experiences and deal with emotions is better captured by the word control. Be that as it may, the insight that writing is done to gain a sense of control is not new: Symonette (2018, see section 2.1.1), found that creative writing assisted pupils who were facing multiple and severe challenges. The expressive and emotional importance of the extramural writing activity is more serious than simply fun and more than just a playful “sandpit” (Maley, 1987, p. 94). Linnea cried in the interview, at the point where she declared that her emotions had motivated her to start songwriting; Saga said in her interview that she did not speak to people when she was younger and creatively wrote the interactions she wished she had had (block quote 11); and Hanna had found hope through her writing, as a means to fight depression (block quote 10). Deveney and Lawson (2021) found that creative writing enabled “cognitive processing of trauma and emotional difficulties in a gentle yet beneficial way. Writers hand over their personal issues to imaginary characters and, in the process, find an increased sense of detachment and objectivity” (p. 2). It is the imagining of other possibilities and outcomes that offers control, or in Hanna’s case – ‘hope’.

The creation in the writing can be a formulation of the imagination of better outcomes, and this can provide some distance in being able to write about emotions. The present study also serves as a contemporary re-confirmation of Vygotsky’s (1930/2004) statement: “There is one very obvious trait in adolescent behaviour that is directly related to the propensity for creative writing at
this stage – this is the heightened level of emotionality and emotional volatility in adolescence” (p. 53, see section 3.1). The act of creative writing, for some of the participants in the present study, appears to meet a need as profound as that of the late poet Sylvia Plath (2011) when she wrote the following lines to explain her motivation to write, at the age of seventeen:

I write only because
There is a voice within me
That will not be still (p. lvii)

Here, Plath’s poetic urge is similar to Samuel’s need to “clear his mind”, or Molly’s motivation to “put my thoughts out on paper” and put “my feelings out there” (section 5.1.3).

The capacity for pupils’ creativity to be meaningful was also referred to earlier, in section 2.2.8, with the MoTiSSE project’s observations of pupils’ work with “existential aspects” (Henry, 2019b, p. 152). The results of the present study add to the findings of that project, as creative work with room for emotional expression and use of the imagination are confirmed to be motivational. These points will be taken up further in the next section (6.2), which focuses on engagement, and also in the later section (6.6) on pedagogical implications.

6.2 Engagement that can motivate

In this section, I discuss the second research question: How are the pupils engaged with their free-time creative writing in English? As stated in the introduction to this chapter, this question intertwines with the first research question on motivation. This entanglement of motivation and engagement is perhaps most strongly in evidence with the theme of flow and the zone. Participants can be so motivated to write, and so engaged in the act of writing, that time and even hunger can be forgotten. Moreover, the state of flow means they are so focused on the task in hand that some describe themselves as being in a different place (the zone) and even having a feeling of movement and speed. For example, Hanna uses a metaphor of going down a hill (block quote 12) and William uses a metaphor of a train (section 5.2.1). The pupils describe a state of flow in many ways that fit the criteria for the concept as described by Csikszentmihályi (1990). The engagement in pleasurable flow is itself motivational. Flow, as a theme, offers answers to both research questions one and two, in a way that points one question back at the other: “What are the pupils’ perspectives on their motivation?” asks research question one. “They are motivated by the ways in which they are engaged, like in the flow of creativity”
says the answer to research question two. Flow brings pleasurable rewards, but it also necessitates that challenges are taken on by the participants, in their writing.

Regarding challenge, participants were ambitious and wanted to produce the best quality of writing possible. Before Hanna was able to enjoy an easier, later stage in the flow of her writing (she had compared this part to a downhill bicycle ride) she was faced with the more uphill challenge of having to make lots of critical decisions about her writing in terms of character, plot, and the perspective of the narrator etc. The challenge of creativity was raised in section 2.2.2, where I cited Robinson’s (2011) argument that creativity is not only about fun but also “about working in a highly focused way on ideas and projects, crafting them into their best forms and making critical judgements along the way about which work best and why” (p. 5). Once again, the pleasure and challenge of creative flow is indicative of creative tension (Dörnyei & Kubanyiova, 2014). The challenge inherent in the theme of flow is connected to the ambition and perfectionism of some of the creative writers in the present study. This, along with risk taking, accords with the findings of Lammers and Marsh (2017) in their study of the creative writer Laura (section 2.2.6). Laura focused on adulthood and her ambitions to be an author in a similar way to how Klara wanted to be seen as an “author, not just a girl” (block quote 15). Having taken on challenges, the pupils in the present study were able to reap rewards, not only in terms of the pleasurable aspects of flow, but also in terms of winning praise for their efforts.

Praise and other forms of feedback comprised an important theme in the findings. That so many (twelve out of thirteen) of the free-time creative writers reported that they had been praised is not a surprising finding, but rather confirms the importance of positive feedback and encouragement as a motivator of effort (P. Black & Wiliam, 1998). Regarding praise and other forms of feedback in this discussion, I shall focus especially on two aspects of the results from the present study: firstly, the positive feedback and distributed mentoring associated with online fanfiction and, secondly, the offline encouragement and enjoyment of writing between friends. Regarding the results in relation to feedback and online writing in the present study, they echo the findings of Aragon and Davis (2019) who have highlighted the special affordances for learning offered by distributed mentoring in the affinity spaces of online fanfiction (see section 2.2.6). The writers of online fanfiction in the present study receive and give the type of encouraging feedback which would fit into the categories that Aragon and Davies have highlighted, especially shallow positive and targeted positive feedback. For example, Stella demonstrates her pleasure at receiving so much praise from around the world with comments like “Well done!” (block quote 17), and such general positivity is termed shallow positive by Aragon and Davis (2019, p. 56). An example of what Aragon and Davies (2019) would term targeted positive (p. 57) can be seen when Emma states that she zooms in on a particular aspect of a fanfiction text that
is worthy of praise and refers to it specifically with her positive feedback (block quote 20).

Some of the fanfiction writers in the present study emphasised their consciousness of the need to avoid giving negative feedback online; this harks back to findings of early fanfiction scholars who highlighted the positive role of the affinity spaces (Black, 2008; Gee, 2007). This form of engagement with extramural creative writing is of relevance for the second research question, but it also touches on the first question about motivation. Also considered relevant, in terms of participants’ ways of engagement, is that the online fanfiction writers in the present study were all females. This study, of course, has a small sample size, but even meta studies such as that by Aragon and Davies (2019) show that most fanfiction authors are female. In this discussion section, I think it is appropriate to at least begin to raise the question of whether more teenagers, including male pupils, might need support in developing the online diplomatic tact that seems to ease communication in the affinity spaces. The idea of introducing all pupils to fanfiction will be discussed more fully in the later section on pedagogical implications (6.6).

To return focus to the results of the present study, in relation to praise online, it can be seen that fanfiction is a product of a creative tension, as there is risk involved in publishing online (see section 5.2.2). Daring to publish fanfiction online might possibly be met with negative criticism, but instead, it is usually rewarded by praise; praise that comes in the form of multiple comments, possibly from all around the world (see block quote 17). In this way, the present study repeats some of the encouraging findings of Aragon and Davies (2019). However, although the online fanfiction afforded new opportunities for positivity and encouragement, the findings of my study showed how pupils were also engaged with, and motivated by, praise and feedback offline.

The four friends Elias, Filip, Ludvig, and Samuel described how they offer feedback, offline, on each other’s stories and enjoy them in an atmosphere of friendly (if sometimes ribbing) laughter (section 5.2.3, and block quote 23). To hark back to motivation, Ludvig had said that feedback, as response in the form of making others laugh (and then himself), was the motivation to start a pastime of English creative writing in the first place (block quote 7). Filip, who wrote stories on Reddit, had not received praise online, but instead, he reported having been rebuked for his spelling (section 5.2.3). This may well have been useful, to some degree, for his English, but it needs to be noted that his free-time creative writing was also shared amongst the positivity of his friends, in an offline situation. I will also return to this issue when I consider the pedagogical implications (section 6.6).

The importance of such offline interaction was also highlighted by the dialogues in the pair interviews. These included bouts of friendly banter, in contrast to the more careful, though positive, diplomacy of the online fanfiction feedback as described by the participants (section 5.2.3). Given that I have earlier touched on the wit and laughter between the four male friends, it needs to be noted that this type of ribbing was also enjoyed by female participants;
witness Molly and Felicia, in block quote 2, where they explain the reasons for politely adapting their tone for online feedback, only to instantly deliver ironically brutal criticism of each other’s work. This theme of praise, and the enjoyment that can be involved with feedback, echoes the findings of a study by Dewaele, Witney, Saito, and Dewaele (2018) where the authors highlight the importance of “positive emotions and foreign language enjoyment” (p. 677) for successful L2 learning. It is important to note that family members, referred to in the present study, and in one case a counsellor, had also provided encouragement; in fact, teachers figured less than friends and family in this respect. Praise and other forms of feedback, however, as a theme, was only one aspect of the ways in which engagement with the act of creative writing afforded interaction with social networks and friends.

Engagement brought opportunities to make affiliations, even friends, outside the participants’ geographical contexts. This was especially the case for pupils engaged with fanfiction, who were able to develop contacts across the world, and in other parts of Sweden too. In the case of Stella, the activity had enabled her to make a friend, who she could speak with every day, and this was clearly appreciated: “It feels good to find someone who understands you totally” (block quote 28). The possibility of social contacts and networks had been anticipated to some degree when I planned the study; nevertheless, the establishment of such a strong friendship, as described by Stella, was a finding that needs to be particularly underlined.

Stella was not the only pupil who had made new friends through online writing. Molly said she chatted daily with a small number of friends (block quote 27). These findings again echo the results of earlier studies which indicated the positive rewards associated with fanfiction engagement (Aragon & Davis, 2019; Black, 2008). Molly’s small group of friends had been found amongst her large audience of followers/readers online.

Regarding the audience for their writing, two findings stand out and require further discussion. Firstly, the large numerical size of audience reported by some of the fanfiction-writing participants, and secondly, the strong theme of writing for myself. Regarding the size of audience: that Molly, at the age of 14 declared that she had a readership of approximately 3,000, globally, was impressive. Clearly, the internet offers new possibilities for wide publication and global reach. In Molly’s case, the norm which Wesseling (2019) complains of – that adults write, and children read – is challenged. Molly is a teenage writer whose work appears to be enjoyed by a large number of readers.

Of course, in the present study I have not examined or focussed on Molly’s created work – I have not read her stories. But her voice in the interviews reveals a powerful and entertaining communicator; witness the witty personification of the new “word” in block quote 45, which (or who) is directly addressed by Molly and challenged to a “fight”, whereby the new word will face defeat, to be mastered and used in Molly’s expanding vocabulary. She displays controlled use of imagery, dialogue, dramatic tension, and humour, all
perhaps indicating why she attracts many readers. Yet, despite her large readership, Molly also writes for herself, and she described feeling “scared” to go over the threshold of online publication (section 5.2.3). Having got over this threshold, Molly does not indicate that writing both for a worldwide audience and for herself is contradictory. However, despite Molly’s growing ease with online publication, some participants revealed a tension between writing for oneself and sharing with others; Saga, for instance, appears reluctant to share her work with anyone (block quote 16). The question of who one is writing for is relevant in relation to both motivation and engagement, and requires further discussion here.

The notions of the spectator and participant (Britton, 1970/1992) are helpful in understanding the findings of the present study. Writing for myself, which was the single strongest theme amongst the categories of an audience in this study, can be understood with Britton’s (1970/1992) definition of writing in spectator mode, as opposed to participant mode:

> When we use language in the participant role we select and order our material according to the demands made by something outside ourselves, something that exists in the situation…. But in the role of the spectator we operate on a different principle. We select and arrange our material first to please ourselves, and secondly, not to please other people but to enable others to share our pleasure – which is not the same thing. (Britton, 1970/1992, p. 124)

Pupils might write primarily for themselves, for pleasure, but a subsequent sharing of their work also allows a sharing of their own pleasure. This is what Hanna describes when she stated “I mostly write for myself.... but I want someone else to enjoy it with me” (block quote 24). That she wants “someone else to enjoy” her writing with her does indicate an interpersonal or communicative aspect. In section 3.2, I highlighted how Harris (1988)\(^\text{71}\) suggested that language could be for enjoyment in company: that it “is a way for us to be with one another, to commune as well as communicate…. and offers opportunities for play, intimacy, and self-expression” (p. 41). It is useful to note that the aspect of commune, in terms of Hanna sharing her enjoyment of her writing with others, is secondary to her own private uses for her writing (she states in block quote 24 that she needs to get her feelings out and put her creativity somewhere). This ordering of Hanna’s is exactly as suggested by Britton in the above quote, where he states that the writing is firstly for ourselves, and secondly for others – to “share our pleasure” (Britton, 1970/1992, p. 124). Although Britton was writing in the 1970s, there is currently a developing discourse amongst scholars of literacy about the notion of writing for

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\(^{71}\) In the extract cited here, Harris (1998) was reflecting on Britton’s (1970/1992) notion of the spectator.
pleasure, to which the theme of writing for myself relates (see Gusevik, 2020; Young & Ferguson, 2020). This theme of writing for oneself aligns with the strong theme of alone and calm, which refers to when pupils seek to isolate themselves from others in order to write.

Many of the pupils in the present study sought solitude to be creative. This isolation could be found in their bedrooms or, for some of the pupils, writing on the phone meant they could retreat into a more private space when on the bus, commuting to and from school. Arieti (1976) included aloneness as one of the preconditions for creativity, and a study by Bowker, Stotsky, and Etkin (2017) indicated a positive link between what they termed as unsociability and creativity. Highlighting the theme of alone and calm in relation to engagement is useful, as often there is a pressure to encourage group work and socialisation, with the negative aspects of a pupil’s isolation and loneliness often being seen as something to worry about and avoid (Leontiev, 2019). Of course, loneliness can be a major problem, but in the context of the present study, a temporary retreat into a calm creative space was positive in relation to creative writing engagement.

The theme of alone and calm resides in a tense relationship with the theme of social interaction, which is another finding in the present study. Of note, in terms of dissonance and creative tension, is that although Saga writes primarily for herself, her subject matter is often social interaction – a retreat into aloneness, to imagine and write of desired social successes (block quote 11).

The participants in the present study all had access to digital devices for their writing, which were used by all the participants at least some of the time. In fact, most pupils used digital devices, rather than pen and paper, for all their free-time creative writing. Nevertheless, handwriting was preferred by Hanna in most of her writing and she felt it was a better vehicle for self-expression (block quote 40, section 5.2.9). Molly preferred handwriting for writing poetry as she felt it was more personal. In a study by Dahlström and Boström (2017), pupils (who were in grade 4 and thus were pre-teenage, unlike the pupils in the present study) expressed mental processes more in the texts written by hand than in digitally produced texts (which concentrated on actions). This might tally with Hanna’s perspective that she was able to express more through handwriting, and possibly relates to Molly’s poetic writing as well. Dahlström and Boström (2017) raised the idea that “the slower bodily process of writing by hand allows for more thought in writing” (p. 158). The issue of social interaction also emerged as a finding in the study by Dahlström and Boström (2017); they noted that when writing by hand, pupils often went to sit alone, whereas digital writing could include more interaction. Of interest

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in the present study is that handwriting is chosen as an option even though digital options were easily available.

Before concluding this discussion on engagement, I would like to discuss a tension revealed in the findings, which I referred earlier but did not explore fully. That is, the tension between play and seriousness, or between the imagined and reality, that impinges on the identity forming, meaning making and lives of the pupils who write. I am not the first to discuss these important tensions: Bland's (2013) work is relevant for the discussion here. Her use of the paradoxical phrase of “the serious work of children’s play” (p. 163) is particularly helpful. Bland (2013) describes children’s fascination with nonsense literature\(^3\) as a “flirt with disorder and anarchy” so as to “appreciate and learn about order” (p.163). This tension between seriousness and play, or imagination and realism, or outlandishness and our lives, is reflected in the findings of the present study as well. Some of the writings of the pupils are far from realistic; there are intergalactic flying keyboards and ghostly interactions with Ouija boards (section 5.2.7). It would be easy, and wrong, to be haughty and dismiss this, admittedly, unscientific nonsense and child-like play, as of no importance. Instead, Bland (2013) serves to remind us that this fantastic, imaginative unreality is also relevant for the pupils’ reality, as is the theme of *understand experiences and deal with emotions*. Serious play, in the form of juxtaposition of fun and the more profound, is evident in the findings of the present study.

The results indicate that, while the free-time activity of creative writing in English might initially be engaged with for fun, it can be continued over a longer term because it also helps with meaning-making and existential questions, connected to understanding experiences and dealing with emotions. Indeed, the present study contains the voices of pupils who explicitly state that they use writing to imagine better futures developing out of their ‘present’ life situations. These include the hope Hanna gains through her characters’ victories over setbacks, and Saga’s imagined, smart replies, which she had not yet said in real conversations, and Samuel’s absent friend who is brought back into his life through fiction.

Pupils used L2 English to play, or be creative, with their identity, or identities. Performance of multiple identities is referred to in section 2.2.6, as it has been shown to be a feature of online fanfiction in earlier studies (Black, 2008; Thorne et al., 2015). Similarly, I have already touched on the taking on of masks in the form of pen names in this discussion section. Some of the pupils in the present study spoke of how they used L2 English as a way to help in providing some emotional distance, and to take on identities. For example, Linnea said that if she sang in L1 Swedish it could “feel so raw”, and for Emma, her Swedish use was associated with not “pretending to be someone”

\(^3\) Bland (2013) also uses the term *outlandish* to refer to literature of vivid and unreal imaginings (p. 163).
(block quote 30). This comment indicates that because L2 is less close to the core identity voiced in L1, it allows a slightly removed treatment of emotions in L2 writing, which could otherwise be painful and “raw” in L1. L2 language use, here, offers not only a cloak of role-play, but also a protective layer.

Linnea and Emma were amongst the oldest pupils I interviewed for my study. I note that despite their revelation of a core identity at work with use of L1 Swedish, and some of the sensitivities associated with using it, both pupils described how they were returning to an appreciation and re-use of L1 in creativity. This perhaps shows a reduced need for something to hide behind. More certain than this is that imitation and masks are just two of the many factors connected to motivation and engagement in the extramural activity of L2 English creative writing. Also, the findings showed that the participants felt that through this activity they had changed their L2 English abilities for the better – as I shall discuss in the next section.

6.3 Enriched English learning

In answer to the third research question, Do the pupils consider that their learning of English is enriched by extramural English creative writing, and, if so, how?, all of the pupils did indicate that their learning of English was enriched in some way. In particular, some pupils indicated that vocabulary and spelling were areas which had benefitted. Also, many of the pupils felt they developed in terms of aesthetic or artistic output – facets of language connected to story creation. Alongside these main themes, pupils pointed to a variety of ways in which they had benefitted individually, in terms of their English learning. These individual comments included speaking through reading their work aloud and having the time to consider their crafting of formulations when writing, something not afforded by speech alone. The enrichment of English occurred in ways that relate also to the findings regarding motivation and engagement.

I have already recounted Molly’s reported tussle with a new word so as to master it (block quote 45). She was not alone in acquiring new vocabulary through the activity of creative writing; nor was she alone in explaining how her writing was closely associated with her reading. The findings provide some support to Barrs’ (2000) claim that “reading is always an act of relationship between reader and writer with the text as a meeting, and this relationship may be particularly important for young reader/writers” (p. 54), as previously cited in section 2.2.4. Barrs uses the term reader/writer, which echoes the strongest theme of motivation for starting extramural creative writing in L2 English in the present study: that of imitation and adaptation. Both Barrs’ (2000) use of reader/writer, and the imitation and adaptation theme found in
the present study, serve to confirm the usefulness of the terms wreader (Landow, 1997) and prosumer (Toffler, 1980) which point to the close relationship between reading and writing. This is a relationship that, according to some pupils in the present study, facilitates vocabulary acquisition. Within the holistic and general activity of enjoying reading and writing, Molly reports the specific act of looking up a new word. However, another earlier theme related to motivation and engagement also plays a role in vocabulary acquisition. Ambition is at work in motivating Samuel to look up what he calls “sophisticated words” that he says he can use for the future, as well as in his ongoing writing task (block quote 44).

The strong theme of vocabulary acquisition found in the present study was closely related to another finding – that of improved spelling. Stella described in some detail how a weakness of hers, spelling, was being improved through creative writing. She reported how repeated misspellings of particular words and the constant correction by autocorrect on her mobile phone assisted in her improvement (block quote 46). The use of the digital tool and the repetition entailed in the act of writing extended chapters for, in Stella’s case, fanfiction, combined to improve spelling. It is useful to note that this repetition was done in an act with meaning and purpose for Stella; it is this type of meaningful context which allows the repetition to engender language improvement, according to DeKeyser (1998).

The results of my study reveal that extramural creative writing could not only offer a sense of meaning to aid language improvement; specific formal constraints could also present challenges that could aid language improvement. Linnea described how the particular rhythm constraints of her songwriting meant she had to find new words with the exact number of syllables (block quote 50). In a similar way, the constraints of the form of the acrostic poem helped frame creativity and learning in the study by Tin (2011), as described in section 2.2.1. Molly too, suggested that she could enjoy the way poetry could be “extremely strict”, but she also enjoyed how poetry could allow her to change tack altogether and “write however you want” (block quote 51). This somewhat contradictory situation echoes the creative tension advocated by Emig (1971) of “freedoms and establishment of constraints” for writing students (p. 128). When feeling free to write whatever she wants, Molly suggests that the writing of poetry is like a painting. This comment hints at a capacity to develop aesthetically in English, through the art of creative writing.

The theme of aesthetic development/art of creative writing offers another finding in relation to the research question about whether, and if so, how, learning English is enriched through the free-time activity of creative writing in English. This theme is also connected to the theme of vocabulary and that of originality, and these, in turn, are relevant to the research question on motivation. For example, Emma describes how she is driven to try and find new words and new metaphors to make her writing original (block quote 49). She states explicitly that this drive for originality and the finding of new ways to
describe things is motivational; in this she echoes a finding of the study of creative writers by Harrington and Chin-Newman (2017), which is that “work with words” is motivational (p. 445). That Emma is trying to work with new words and images indicates how her English is becoming enriched. She uses the word “strive”, which indicates the effort involved with her quest for originality. Furthermore, the scale of both her determination and confidence is demonstrated with the unequivocal statement regarding originality: “To do that you have to develop the language. It has to improve!” (block quote 49). Emma’s comments also indicate her proficiency in English, as her assertion is so firm, clear, and powerful. Finally, it is worth re-emphasising that, like most of the pupils in the present study, she spoke in fluent L2 English during the interviews, despite my willingness to conduct the interviews in Swedish.

In conclusion, I have discussed the major themes in relation to enrichment of English learning as they appeared in the findings of the present study: vocabulary, spelling, aesthetic or artistic development, and the role of time and repetition for learning. Yet, many of the responses that indicated how the pupils’ English was enriched consisted of comments from one or two participants, rather than multiple or chorused voices that formed very clear themes. These can be seen in the Final Coding Chart (Appendix G). They amounted to a long list of individual headings consisting of only one or two comments. For example, one comment indicated that fantasy and imagination had improved as a result of the activity, and another single comment indicated that the ability to present a text to a reader in a more attractive form (with paragraphs and white space) had improved; another pupil had learnt to use speech marks, and yet another had learnt to use more complex sentences. These indicate that what the pupils learnt from the activity could be highly individual. Similarly, there were a number of single voices regarding what had motivated them to improve in English: one pupil felt that the negative feedback of the internet had driven him on in English, and another had stated the variety of choices of what could be written about was motivating, and therefore led to more English being learnt. The variety of individual responses in relation to learning is important for the section on L2 learning in school (6.5), as well as the section on pedagogical implications of the study (6.6). Before these sections, however, I shall introduce a visual representation to summarise the answers to the first three research questions in the present study.

6.4 A model of extramural L2 English creative writing

To summarise the answers to the first three research questions, I offer a model in the form of a visual representation: Figure 9. It indicates a motivational starting point for beginning to engage with creative writing. As the most common theme of motivation to begin writing was imitation and adaptation, the
model of extramural writing is linked to reading for pleasure. Also, as all the participants in the study read74 and write stories, it has been possible to present the model as a circle to represent the idea that stories beget stories. I have been careful not to indicate direct links and causality between the themes, as the method of content analysis is limited to only highlighting the possibility of connections (Elo et al., 2014).

Figure 9: Extramural L2 English creative writing: Motivation, engagement, and enrichment of English learning

Having begun the pastime of extramural L2 English creative writing because of a desire to *imitate and adapt*, or simply because it is *fun*, Figure 9 shows how activity and engagement continue due to an increase in significance for the participants: they are motivated to engage with the activity, over

74 I use *read* here according to a broader definition used by Misson and Morgan (2006), which can include the traditional idea of reading a story in a book, but also listening to stories, or watching films and other ways that stories can be received or inputted.
a longer term, because it aids understanding of experiences and dealing with emotions, which is rather more profound than fun. Nevertheless, the theme of flow indicates that the activity remains enjoyable, even if its seriousness develops. The activity is driven by challenges and rewards: pupils push themselves to write as well as possible and, in some cases, dare to publish online. While the writing can be enjoyable and rewarding for oneself, for those that dare to show others there is the added reward of praise. The activity can bring contacts and friends, and a chance to play with different identities. The act of writing allows imaginative creativity to go into outlandish areas, although there is room for realism too. During the activity, the learning of English is enriched and, of course, the outcome of the activity is that stories are produced and, in many cases, shared for others to read.

6.5 Creative writing and challenge in English classes

The participants in the present study had many insights about creative writing and challenge in their school subject of English. The three strongest themes were that some participants felt that creative writing did exist in school, but that there was a need for more creative writing and also for more challenge. The participants also offered insights into how there more creative writing and challenge in English classes could be. It is useful to discuss these findings in more detail, in the light of previous studies and the discourse on these issues.

Firstly, regarding the theme that creative writing did exist in the school subject of English, it is noteworthy that writing tasks which had been started in school could inspire extramural creative writing. William stated that his free-time interest in creative writing had its roots in school. Also, at the time of the interviews, a major free-time writing project for both Felicia and Molly had been inspired by a creative writing task set by their English teacher. These examples serve to highlight that the discourse around the need to bridge the gap between extramural English and the school subject ought not to be over-simplified. A picture of school as merely rather stale and outdated, and unable to keep up with more dynamic extramural English, is shown to be inaccurate in the light of this finding. It is possible that earlier inspection reports (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011) have focused on the dissonance between in-class and out-of-class English in ways that have neglected to highlight where extramural English has been inspired by the school subject of English. The capacity of the school subject to inspire extramural English is not a new point in the discourse, as Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) argue that an extramural English activity can “originate as teacher-initiated in the classroom but over time become transformed and develop into an English activity mix that can best be
described as both teacher- and learner-initiated” (pp. 13-14). Indeed, Sundqvist and Sylvén (2016) emphasise that the task of the teacher includes thinking beyond the classroom and encouraging “learner autonomy and lifelong learning” (p.14). The teachers of some of the pupils in the present study appear to have had some success in this matter.

It is worth considering what school assignments so inspired pupils to the extent that the tasks developed into an extramural English activity. Although William did not specify the tasks that inspired him to write in school initially, Felicia and Molly revealed enough about their assignment, and their response to it, to enable some discussion here. Firstly, their creative task had a constraint, although it was modest and not highly restrictive. In fact, the only demand referred to by Felicia and Molly was that their story had to involve breaking through the barrier – a kind of wardrobe door to another world, as in the Narnia75 stories. The idea of limits and controls as an aid to creativity has already been referred to with reference to the study of Tin (2011), in the background chapter (2.2.1). A rigid limit, for an imaginative task, may seem inappropriate in terms of a sense of freedom one might associate with creativity, but constraint does not have to block the imaginative response – it channels it. Thus, Felicia “built a universe”, on the other side of the barrier (block quote 54). Control and autonomy (Holc, 1981) is more subversively exercised by Molly, who turns her back on the barrier, and instead focuses on more down-to-earth, though still fictional, concerns. In this exercise, both Felicia and Molly employed their agency to create their own imagined settings, characters, and plots. Noteworthy too, is the amount of positive encouragement they gave each other. Not only had they read each other’s work in progress, but they cheered each other on, in accordance with what Aragon and Davis (2019) describe as “the positive affect generated by encouragement and support” (p. 42). Molly and Felicia are both fanfiction writers, and it is useful to consider that some of the positive “affect” that they encounter online can be transferred into classroom-based tasks, on- or offline. This example, from Felicia and Molly, demonstrates a capacity for two-way traffic of influences across the bridge between in-school English and extramural English: a school-based task morphs into an extramural writing project that benefits from skills and habits learnt through the distributed mentorship assured by online fanfiction, and returns to school as a piece of writing enthusiastically crafted by pupils with ambitions to be authors, and who already have an international readership of hundreds, even thousands.

Alongside these examples of creative writing in class that had inspired, or spilled over into, extramural creative writing there was a strong theme of a desire for more creative writing and also that of a lack of challenge – themes that overlapped to a degree. The theme of a lack of challenge, in particular,

75 In The Chronicles of Narnia by C.S. Lewis, the children in the story enter a fantasy land by going through a wardrobe in a bedroom.
echoed the findings of the most recent inspection report into the school subject of English in Sweden (Swedish Schools Inspectorate, 2011). Indeed, the gap is particularly wide in terms of the dissonance between the enthusiasm for, and active engagement with, online fanfiction and the indications in my study that no fanfiction had been used in English classes.

It was a fanfiction-writing pupil, Klara, who stated firmly that “we didn't really grow in lessons, we grew outside” (block quote 60), a comment indicative of a wide gap. Stella indicates how such a gap could be bridged, as she argues that not only would she enjoy fanfiction in school, but that it could be suitable for all her class (block quote 57). Her insights provide an individual perspective that supports Aragon and Davis’ (2019) plea that formal education needs to respond favourably to the affordances offered by fanfiction. A study by Sauro and Sundmark (2016) showed that writing fanfiction could be used successfully in a formal setting (the setting was a university course for pre-service teachers) for the development of both linguistic and literary competence. As I pointed out in section 2.2.7, attempts to use fanfiction in schools have had mixed results. Some success at school level with fanfiction appears to be achieved where elements associated with fanfiction are used in the pedagogical design of the teaching project. For example, Hendrick (2015) reported successes in using online peer mentoring with his class, so as to provide feedback for writing. In another study, by McWilliams et al. (2011), a class reading of the script of Arthur Miller’s The Crucible was particularly successful in terms of student participation. The project had included fanfiction writing, but as a collaborative writing task. This pair or group approach seems appropriate given the theme of risk associated with posting online, which has been highlighted in the present study (section 5.2.2).

The issue of fanfiction will be taken up more in the section on pedagogical implications (6.6). However, it must be stated that although the participants voiced that there was no fanfiction in classes, some of the creative writing activities referred to did contain aspects that could be said to overlap with fanfiction. For example, the breaking through the barrier task, so keenly adopted by Felicia and Molly, would be familiar to fanfiction authors of Narnia. Also, Saga and Klara mentioned their creative response to Shakespeare’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and this too overlapped with aspects of fanfiction writing. Nevertheless, from the pupils’ perspective, fanfiction was absent from school; in contrast, something many of the participants wished was more absent from the school subject was the textbook.

Pupil displeasure with aspects of textbooks was voiced in the present study and adds to findings from the study by Henry et al. (2018). The criticism of textbooks, for Filip, lay in that he felt they told him “what to write” and thus cramped his creativity and autonomy (block quote 58). The Henry et al. (2018) study found that motivational class activities drew from authentic materials and not the textbook. Authentic tasks, often specifically designed with a particular class and teaching component in mind, featured repeatedly in the motivational lessons observed in the MoTiSSE project (Henry et al., 2019).
Ludvig, in the present study, the written questions in class demanded only short factual responses, yet he craved the chance to offer more nuanced and evaluative answers (block quote 52). Ludvig’s criticism points to a lack of challenge, but his desire to offer “different perceptions” also indicates a willingness to imagine the views of others – arguably a creative act in writing. It is interesting to highlight the tension that runs through these findings: here, there is a desire for freedom, but sometimes the pupils clearly voiced the need for constraint too.

The contradictory themes of desire for more autonomy and desire to be led to a challenge both included comments by Elias, Filip, and Samuel – so that one could argue that these pupils merely contradicted themselves. Yet, the two themes echo what Emig (1971) described as a need for both constraints and freedoms. It is in the issue of constraint, and the desire to be led to a challenge, instigated by a teacher, that the pupils suggest school can be especially helpful. For example, Samuel wants to be told to write about something very specific, like a water bottle, with a demand for at least three pages of what he suggests ought to be ‘sophisticated’ English (section 5.4.3). This might seem the opposite of autonomy, and even some distance from creativity. However, pupils offer insights that suggest they understand the role of school in demanding effort and rigour in their work with English. These pupil insights offer support for Ushioda (2013) who argues that in the context of challenges from extensive extramural English, the school subject can better include more formal and academic forms of English (p. 234). In a similar way, it is noteworthy that Molly had suggested that a challenge for her would be to be taught literature classics in school, and Hanna sees that more practice with grammar in school would benefit her free-time creative writing (section 5.4.3). On the issue of challenge in class, however, many of the participants were aware that their high proficiency in English was not always matched by the level of their peers.

The participants could show empathy for other pupils who were less proficient in English than themselves. Some of the participants were resigned to sacrificing their own challenge so the teacher could teach the class at one level, for all. William felt nothing could be done about this, as a class had to work at the same level (block quote 61). Some pupils were more frustrated, and others felt English in school was enjoyable even without the sort of challenge that would really stretch them.

There was a theme of wanting customisation, but this was suggested with an understanding that it needs to be done sensitively and not in a way that might discourage pupils with lower proficiency levels (block quote 65). Streaming, whereby class members with lower English proficiency were somehow labelled or segregated, was not advocated; it was even laughed at and seemingly seen as alien in a Swedish context by Felicia and Molly. Instead, they highlighted the potential of good relationships between pupil and teacher, where a central, shared whole-class assignment could be tweaked to meet different proficiency levels. They called it customisation; the teaching profession tends to refer to it as differentiation (Haydey, 2009). That the pupils
here recognise the need for strong relationships between teachers and pupils accords with Henry’s (2019a) description of “the motivational bedrock of mutually enriching teacher-student relationships” (p. 289) also referred to earlier, in section 2.2.8.

Finally, the pupils had many insights about creative writing and challenge in school. Their insights indicated that there was a gap between the creativity, challenge, motivation, and engagement that their free-time writing could offer, in contrast to in-class English. Yet, the findings also showed that there were occasions when the gap had been bridged, with a current of inspiration, and motivation and engagement, that could travel from school to the extramural activity. The pupils could also offer insights about potential ways to bridge the gap; these will be further discussed in the next section, on the pedagogical implications of the present study.

6.6 Pedagogical implications

In this section, I highlight the themes in the findings that I consider to be most relevant for class teachers. I also deal with some of the issues regarding creative tensions that I began to raise in the earlier discussion sections, which indicate some of the dilemmas that teachers might have to face and manage.

Firstly, the theme of imitation and adaptation has important and clear pedagogical implications. Pupils are motivated by stories and writers, poets, rappers, songwriters, filmmakers etc. This theme suggests that stories need to be brought to class and shared, which is a well-established idea. However, that stories are now imitated and adapted, and shared globally by millions of young people, through online fanfiction, is far newer, with newer pedagogical implications. Today, in addition to continuing to work with the local or school library, a teacher ought to consider how they can introduce the world of fanfiction to the classroom. Also, fanfiction needs to be introduced within its historical literary tradition of stories begetting stories. I dealt with the ideas of imitatio in section 2.2.4, and intertextuality in section 2.2.5, and these literary concepts need to be included as practice in English classrooms – as the present study indicates. Teachers need to note, too, that a motivational response to stories, reported in the findings, is a creative and imaginative response, not an analytical one.

The main motivation for starting extramural creative writing in the present study was as a creative response to stories in a way that is typical of, or akin to, fanfiction. That is, a creative response which could take the form of writing an additional chapter for a story that has been enjoyed, or adding a character, or telling the story from the point of view of another character, or wanting to
write in a similar style to a particular story or author. Therefore, creative responses to reading ought to be attempted in classes. These could be individualised responses to what individual pupils are fans of, as recommended in this study – by Stella in section 5.4.2. On this note, one useful pedagogical implication is that teachers need not shy away from sometimes inviting pupils to work on their own. This way, pupils can exercise autonomy and agency in choosing what they are fans of, and in how they engage with the creative writing process – alone and calm. I can add that, in a classroom situation, Stella’s suggestion of allowing individualised fandoms to be chosen also allows for a creative fictional response to what might be a non-fiction narrative involving a football team, YouTubers or musicians, for example.

Alternatively, a shared class story might be found. It might be useful to pick up on some of the texts and authors that have inspired the pupils in the present study: the author Lemony Snicket motivated Hanna, for example. Molly was inspired by the novel *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*, and William was a fan of the film *Balto*, about a dog in the wild. Stella was inspired by the *Miraculous Lady Bug* animated series, and some younger pupils might enjoy working with that. The long and varied list of preferred input referred to in the present study offers a range of ideas about what might motivate and engage pupils in the classroom. The list of input included comics, games, anime/manga, songs, family stories, books, fanfiction, and *YouTube* films. I add a reminder that the class text in the study by McWilliam et al. (2011), referred to in sections 2.2.7 and 6.5, was a modern classic – Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* – brought to life through pupils’ fanfiction writing, and live tweeting in character, in what appears to have been a dynamic and creative pedagogical response.

For teachers, deciding whether to facilitate a creative response to individually chosen stories or a whole class story is just one of the dilemmas they might face. If time allows, one can plan for both ways over the course of studies. Another dilemma is that pupils might benefit from being given a range of options for potential creative responses, or instead, be channelled down a particular path – with one form of response recommended. The range of response options is wide, and I listed some earlier in this section, but it also includes: the new plot twist, the alternative ending, the change of setting, and the merger of stories or genres such as calling Sherlock Holmes to investigate the whereabouts of a missing ring in *The Hobbit*, for example. A pedagogical implication of the present study is that outlandishness and vivid imagination are most welcome. Nevertheless, a restriction in the instructions for this output might benefit pupil creativity. So, a teacher might choose to lead with a very clear target for the pupil, such as: “This week our creative response is the alternative ending”. This clarity might not only help creativity, but also a shared task might help the post-writing peer response.

A close second behind the theme of imitation and adaptation as a motivation to start writing in their free time, creatively, was the theme of *fun*; this too
has profound implications for the class teacher. The word *enjoy* can perhaps be used as a lesson aim. Nobody can be made to enjoy something, of course, but it is important to note the enjoyment that pupils in this study have found in their writing – and their reading. A feature of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) is the idea of reading for pleasure, as a leisure activity, with its own “can do” descriptors (Council of Europe, 2020, p. 58) and the notion of *writing for pleasure* is a focus of much current research (Gusevik, 2020; Young & Ferguson, 2020). These points have been discussed earlier, in section 6.2, but they become especially relevant in this section on pedagogical implications. In the present study, we hear the perspectives of pupils who are intrinsically motivated to write and have ideas for making lessons enjoyable. This is not to suggest that grades – a tool of extrinsic motivation – ought to be removed, but nor do they have to be in focus at all times, if motivational and engaging lessons are to be created. Lessons can employ stories for fun and enjoyment in creation and learning.

However, creative writing can be serious too, in a way that is somewhat removed from the potential frivolity of fun. Listening to the pupils in the present study ought to teach us that creative writing can be of profound importance for some pupils. The *understand experiences and deal with emotions* theme indicates how creative writing can be meaningful, and enable pupils to have a sense of control over their understanding of events and feelings. There is identity play associated with creative writing and pupils enjoy inventing and taking on masks, and finding protection in anonymity; but there is also an element of pupils finding out who they are, in a most serious manner.

Furthermore, the writing of poems, stories and alternative endings to narratives can lead to completed artefacts, and this is motivational. In this matter, the present study corroborates Henry et al. (2018). Yet, a pedagogical implication of my study is that a kind of writing which is not a finished product, and might never be completed, is also motivational and engaging. The ongoing writing described by some of the participants is a reminder that journals and diaries, or ongoing story writing, is important for pupils facing emotional challenges. Such *non-finished* work does not easily fit in with the demands of deadlines for grading, but again, one pedagogical implication of the present study is that assessment does not always have to be central. Formative assessment-based approaches (P. Black & Wiliam, 1998), while highly useful, ought not be all-encompassing for in-class planning and practice. Creative writing’s potential for aiding not only the learning, but also the well-being of young people must be borne in mind. After all, in Sweden, the curriculum for the compulsory school states: “Concern for the well-being of the individual and development of the individual should permeate all school activity” (Swedish National Agency for Education, 2018a, p. 5).

Also, the state of *flow* was a strong theme in the findings of the present study and class teachers should be aware of the rewards it can bring in terms
of motivation, engagement, and learning. Facilitation of the state of flow requires that teachers need to let pupils get immersed in a creative task and, therefore, teacher interruptions and even questions connected with metathinking and analysis might have to wait until a creative phase is over. Although it is hard to predict how long pupils will need for their writing – whether early drafts or final versions – activities will require passages of time that form major chunks of lessons, if not a series of lessons. This will probably vary, and it is possible that some students will need the task to be broken up into small bursts of writing, with a scaffolding of writer frames and teacher (or possibly peer) input and encouraging feedback. It also needs to be underlined that the findings of my study indicate that the pupils learnt from their creative writing in a variety of individual ways (sections 5.3 & 6.3), so teachers ought to ask pupils after – post flow-state – what has been learnt. In this way, a creative task can be set, and followed up with a reflection task. Such an approach is more inclusive than using one-size-fits-all pre-task learning targets. None of this is intended to suggest that a state of flow is easy to enter in class, merely that this study suggests it is desirable to attempt to plan to facilitate it.

Another implication of the present study is that teachers must be fully aware of the value of positive feedback when writing is shared. The study has reconfirmed the importance of praise, and audience. The idea of teachers providing opportunities for group work and interaction is well established. My study serves to remind teachers of the potential to link with colleagues and their classes online, nationally, and internationally, just as some participants (as writers and readers) have done. Once again, the particular positivity of the online affinity spaces for fanfiction needs to be a factor in teachers’ planning. Teachers need to, at the very least, display curiosity and show interest, and ask if their pupils already engage with creative writing online. However, I underline that awareness of the importance of positive and diplomatic feedback on writing online was only demonstrated by female pupils in this study, and class teachers need to consider that all pupils might need education to develop this social and communicative skill.

Another finding of the present study, that pupils often write for themselves, demands sensitivity on the part of teachers with regard to sharing work, or even asking to see all the pupils’ work. If such work is to be shared, the idea of sharing one’s enjoyment of work, with a sense of community, is slightly different to a communicative norm; this perhaps points the L2 English teacher in an aesthetic direction, where work can be produced and shared almost like paintings in a gallery. Appreciation and pride belong in the creative English classroom. Beyond the class, the internet opens the way to a potential global audience. The way in which pupils can publish, and develop in confidence as writers, with a readership, adds extra weight to the idea that teachers need to show an interest in the extramural writing activities of their pupils – not least as some may be on a path to achieving their ambitions of being seen as authors.
The way in which teachers need to be aware that pupils’ writing might be for the pupils themselves and for an audience is just one of the dilemmas educators can face. Another dilemma for the teacher is that planning ought to include opportunities for using both digital writing tools and handwriting. The contradictory themes of a desire for autonomy and a desire to be led to challenge also offer an example of a teacher dilemma and point to the multiple roles that a teacher is expected to adopt as leader and facilitator.

Regarding the role as leader, one pedagogical implication of my study is that, in seeing the rewards from creative writing, there is a need for a variety of writing tasks to be available to pre-service teachers. This would help develop language teachers as writers. I add here that a refreshing feature of the Sauro and Sundmark (2016) study was that trainee teachers were, themselves, writing creative responses through engagement in fanfiction. These student teachers were being introduced practically to the idea that teachers ought to write creatively if they are to lead pupils in creative writing.76

It would be incorrect to assume that the present study implies that a creative school can become a place exclusively for play. The teaching profession can take heart from the finding that pupils wanted school to be able to lead them into more academic and exacting areas of learning. Teachers need to prepare the pupil for high quality language demands of work and advanced study. The theme of time spent and improvement showed how pupils display an awareness of the practice, dedication and effort that has gone into their extramural learning of English. This makes them more aware of the efforts they will have to invest in a formal learning situation.

Some pupils feel frustrated and need to be more challenged by in-class English. The participants in the present study do not question notions of mixed ability or whole-class teaching. Yet, they offer a reminder about the importance of good relationships between teachers and pupils, so that in knowing the interests and proficiency of each pupil, the teacher is better placed to find creative and stimulating challenges for them. This will build a better bridge between a pupil’s extramural English and in-class English. Finally, in a Swedish context, the rewards of creative writing in English are such that consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of stories and other creative forms of output in the Swedish school syllabuses for English. In the current syllabuses, familiar creative genres such as songs and poems are named only as items for reception, not output. The creative L2 English classroom ought to be more explicitly encouraged by the English syllabuses.

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76 The notion of the teacher/writer is a focus of many studies, including Frawley (2015).
6.7 Closing remarks and suggestions for further research

My study brings forth a range of perspectives from the participants regarding their motivation for, and engagement with, extramural creative writing in L2 English. The participants also provided insights into their English learning through their extramural writing, and regarding creative writing and challenge in the English classroom. These findings will hopefully contribute to raising understanding and help bridge the gap between free-time and in-school English. In this final section I shall outline some suggestions for further research to build on the findings of the present study.

Further research is necessary to see whether motivational and engaging aspects of creative free-time writing activities can be employed to help shape educational design, in formal settings. The findings of my study support the theory of distributed mentoring, as described by Campbell et al. (2015) and Aragon and Davis (2019), in indicating how engagement with online fanfiction communities can be motivational and enriching for English language development. Aragon and Davis (2019) have suggested that formal educational institutions ought to pay heed to the affordances offered by engagement with online fanfiction. Yet, no fanfiction in English classes was reported at all in my study. In addition, my study has highlighted how some pupils suggest there is room for more creative writing in English classes. Therefore, further studies are needed which are based around initiatives to design and implement the use of distributed mentoring in formal L2 English educational settings, with a focus on creative writing.

Some of the potential for educational programmes that work with fanfiction in formal settings has been demonstrated by studies such as McWilliams et al. (2011) and Sauro and Sundmark (2016). However, as was reported in section 2.2.7, some attempts to introduce fanfiction in school have taken place in the United States (Lammers, 2016; Magnifico et al., 2018) with mixed results; these studies have been useful in flagging up difficulties associated with transferring use of informal affinity spaces into formal school settings. I suggest a study is needed that examines what design features are feasible or beneficial when key educational elements of fanfiction are used in school. This approach, rather than attempts at a wholesale and simple transfer of the fanfiction phenomenon from one context to another, is probably more practical to implement, in terms of teaching practice, and would be useful to research. The study by Hendrick (2015), referred to in section 2.2.7, indicated the potential for online peer to peer work linked to the classroom. A more ambitious study that utilises the potential of online global networking might be to allow schools to co-operate with other schools internationally through e-twinning, for example. Shared creative writing projects could be designed, which require reading and comment from peers, and possibly teachers too. Such a project may ascertain what elements of distributed mentoring can be used successfully in formal educational settings.
It is important to emphasise, however, that only a minority of the pupils in the present study were writing online fanfiction and the majority were mainly writing creatively offline. Therefore, I suggest future research ought not only focus on possibilities for online development. The Swedish MoTiSSE (2019) project demonstrated that in-class, on- and offline English could also be motivating; this was supported by some of the participants in my study too. Nevertheless, my study shows that despite some pupils referring to creative writing happening in school, there is plenty of scope for more creative writing and challenge. Such improvements are not necessarily easy, of course, as there are many challenges facing the L2 English teacher – not least the wide range of proficiency levels in the classroom.

Such challenges need to be overcome, as the participants’ voices point to creative writing as a rewarding activity which may well motivate, engage, and enrich the learning of more pupils. The extramural creative writing activity consists of much that can enliven the English subject in school. Indeed, the rewards could spread beyond the subject of English to benefit school as a whole. As my study has shown, free-time writing can involve laughter and socialisation – even making friends. But this is only one aspect of a multifaceted activity that can also demand solitude and calmness – even ambition and risk – and all that creative flow can entail. It has been a positive activity for the pupils in this study; therefore, I suggest that future research aims to discover what educational programmes can be designed in formal educational settings to facilitate challenge, engagement, and learning – using creative writing in English on- and offline.

An absence in my study is the actual creative writing of the pupils. There is also an absence of detailed study of the process of drafting. These aspects of writing can be taken up by future studies as well. There is much room for research into the different stages of the creative process, and that quantitatively measures the detail of learning through vocabulary acquisition, for example.

Finally, what the present study has shown is that thirteen Swedish teenagers were motivated to engage with extramural English creative writing in a wide variety of ways. They were inspired to write and learn; they enjoyed it and it was meaningful for them. They offer valuable insights for teachers to think about when designing and leading lessons that challenge, and which enable all pupils to write creatively in a digital age.
Sammanfattning på svenska (Summary in Swedish)

Den digitala tidsåldern har ändrat förutsättningarna för kreativt skrivande så att miljontals människor världen över nu kan skapa och dela berättelser till exempel genom online-fanfiction (Aragon & Davis, 2019; Black, 2008). Lärandet av engelska som andraspråk (L2) i formella utbildningssammanhang i Sverige utmanas idag av ökade möjligheter för unga att engagera sig i engelska i informella fritidsaktiviteter. Utvecklingen av digital global kommunikation har till exempel möjliggjort att man lär sig L2-engelska genom datorspel samt genom mer traditionella fritidsaktiviteter som läsning (extramural engelska, Sundqvist, 2009). Elever jämför skolämnets L2-engelska med autentiska möten med engelska i fritidssituationer; det finns ett behov av att ”överbrygga klyftan” mellan engelska som påträffas i informella och formella miljöer (Swedish Schools Inspectorate/Skolinspektionen, 2011).

Denna licentiatavhandling fokuserar på kreativt skrivande på fritiden i syfte att öka förståelsen för hur det kan motivera och engagera unga människor. Frågan om L2-engelska behandlas också i relation till unga skribenters perspektiv på både sitt informella lärande och sina insikter i kreativt skrivande samt utmaningar i skolans engelskmärke. Deltagarna i avhandlingens studie var totalt 13 elever i tonåren från svenska högstadies- och gymnasieskolor med kreativt skrivande på L2-engelska som fritidsintresse. Deras kreativa skrivande omfattade berättelser, serier, dikter och sånger, varav delar även publicerades online. Data samlades in genom semi-strukturerade intervjuer och bearbetades genom kvalitativ innehållsanalys.
References


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Appendices

Appendix A: Letter to teachers

Information letter to members of English Teachers Sharing

My name is Paul Morris and I am a lecturer in English at Mälardalen University. I am writing to you to appeal for assistance in finding participants for research. I am currently studying for a licentiate degree in didactics (language education); as part of my research for this degree I aim to focus on creative writing in English, as a leisure interest of pupils, outside of school.

I would like to interview pupils aged 12-18, who have such a hobby, so as to learn more about their motivation, activity and engagement.

My aim is that the above study will aid an increased understanding of this area and can lead to a second stage of research which will consider inclusion, participation and challenge for such pupils in school. Also, what can be learnt which might benefit English learning for a wider layer of pupils in a school context? Furthermore, the research will hopefully allow improvements in education and training of student-teachers of English.

Pupils will be informed of the purpose of the study before they give their consent and they will be free to leave at any time, and thereby be withdrawn from the study. It is understood that pupils under 15 years of age will have to be granted parental permission. All names in the study will be changed for reasons of confidentiality and no unauthorised persons will have access to the collected data.

If you know pupils who may be interested in taking part please note that I would be willing to come and talk to classes, groups or individual pupils to provide information and answer questions about the research. Alternatively, feel free to give the following information letter to the pupils concerned. If they agree to participate in the study, they must, after some consideration, sign the agreement slip and mail it to me in the postage pre-paid envelope.

Looking ahead, do you think you might be willing to take part in the second stage of my study where I aim to consider issues of inclusion, participation and challenge in classroom practice?
Finally, if you wish to inform me of pupils who are interested in participating in the research, would like to be involved yourself at a later stage, or have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me at paul.morris@mdh.se, 021-101439.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Morris
Skriver du berättelser på engelska på din fritid?

Om svaret är ja, vill du delta i en forskningsstudie?

Jag heter Paul Morris och jag arbetar som lärare i engelska vid Mälardalens högskola, där jag även är doktorand. Jag är intresserad av hur ungdomar eventuellt lär sig engelska genom att skriva berättelser på sin fritid.

Vad handlar studien om?

Syftet är att förstå mer om elevers kreativa skrivande på engelska på fritiden. Genom att lyssna på er kan vi lärare förhoppningsvis förbättra och göra engelskundervisningen mer intressant. Därför är din medverkan som elev viktig!

Hur går det till?

Om du vill vara med i studien kommer du att bli intervjuad av mig (med ljudinspelning). Du bestämmer själv om du vill bli intervjuad enskilt, eller tillsammans med en annan elev, eller i en grupp. Intervjun kommer att ta ungefär en timme.

Regler för forskningen

Om du har några frågor om projektet (stora eller små! 😊), är du alltid välkommen att kontakta mig! Telefonnummer och mailadressen hittar du här nedan.

Med vänliga hälsningar,

[Signature]

Paul Morris

Tel: 021-101439 paul.morris@mdh.se
Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden

Vänligen fyll i talongen här nedan och lämna till din lärare!

Samtycke

- Genom att kryssa ”Ja” och skriva under ger jag mitt samtycke till deltagande i forskningsstudien Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden. Jag har tagit del av informationen och känner till hur studien kommer att gå till.

Genom att kryssa ”Nej” och skriva under ger jag inte mitt samtycke till deltagande i forskningsstudien Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden.

☐ JA ☐ NEJ

_______________________________________________
Din underskrift

_______________________________________________
Var vänlig texta ditt för- och efternamn

_______________________________________________
Ort och datum

_______________________________________________
Skola Klas
Skriver du berättelser på engelska på din fritid?

Om svaret är ja, vill du delta i en forskningsstudie?

Jag heter Paul Morris och jag arbetar som lärare i engelska vid Mälardalens högskola, där jag även är doktorand. Jag är intresserad av hur ungdomar eventuellt lär sig engelska genom att skriva berättelser på sin fritid.

Vad handlar studien om?

Syftet är att förstå mer om elevers kreativa skrivande på engelska på fritiden. Genom att lyssna på er kan vi lärare förhoppningsvis förbättra och göra engelskundervisningen mer intressant. Därför är din medverkan som elev viktig!

Hur går det till?

Om du vill vara med i studien kommer du att bli intervjuad av mig (med ljudinspelning). Du bestämmer själv om du vill bli intervjuad enskilt, eller tillsammans med en annan elev, eller i en grupp. Intervjun kommer att ta ungefär en timme.

Regler för forskningen


Om du har några frågor om projektet (stora eller små! ☺), är du alltid välkommen att kontakta mig! Telefonnummer och mailadressen hittar du här nedan.

172
Med vänliga hälsningar,

Paul Morris

Tel: 021-101439 paul.morris@mdh.se

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Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden

Vänligen fyll i talongen här nedan och lämna till din lärare!

Samtycke

- Genom att kryssa ”Ja” och skriva under ger jag mitt samtycke till deltagande i forskningsstudien Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden. Jag har tagit del av informationen och känner till hur studien kommer att gå till.

- Genom att kryssa ”Nej” och skriva under ger jag inte mitt samtycke till deltagande i forskningsstudien Kreativt skrivande på engelska på fritiden.

☐ JA ☐ NEJ
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skola</th>
<th>klass</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Informationsbrev till vårdnadshavare

Jag heter Paul Morris och jag arbetar som lärare i engelska vid Mälardalens högskola, där jag även är doktorand. Jag är intresserad av hur ungdomar eventuellt lär sig engelska genom att skriva berättelser på sin fritid.

Vad handlar studien om?

Syftet är att förstå mer om elevers kreativa skrivande på engelska på fritiden. Genom att lyssna på dem kan vi lärare förhoppningsvis förbättra och göra engelskundervisningen mer intressant. Därför är eleverns medverkan viktig!

Hur går det till?

Om ditt barn vill vara med i studien och du samtycker till detta, kommer han/hon att bli intervjuad av mig (med ljudinspelning). Eleven bestämmer själv om han/hon vill bli intervjuad enskilt, eller tillsammans med en annan elev, eller i en grupp. Intervjun kommer att ta ungefär en timme.

Regler för forskningen


Om du har några frågor om projektet (stora eller små 😊), är du alltid välkommen att kontakta mig! Telefonnummer och mailadressen hittar du här nedan.

Med vänliga hälsningar,

Paul Morris

Tel: 021-101439 paul.morris@mdh.se
Vårdnadshavares samtycke

Vänligen fyll i talongen här nedan

☐ Jag samtycker till att mitt barn deltar i projektet Kreativt skrivande på engelska

Datum

............................................

Deltagarens underskrift Målsmans underskrift

............................................ .............................................

Namnförtydligande Namnförtydligande

............................................ .............................................

Skola........................................................................................................

Klass..................
Appendix E: Interview question guide (Swedish)

(NB. This Swedish version was the one handed to participants in interviews)

Paul Morris intervjuguide 2017-03-06

1. **Presentation av mig själv och projektet**

2. **Presentation av respondenten**
   - Vem är du? Beskriv dig själv
   - Hur gammal är du?
   - Vilket är ditt modersmål? Om annat än svenskt, följ upp när respondenten kom till Sverige och när hon började att lära sig engelska i skolan och, eventuellt, i hemmet

3. **Kreativt skrivande på engelska**
   - Berätta om ditt kreativa skrivande på engelska på din fritid. Vad skriver du nu och vad har du skrivit?
   - Kan du berätta mer om att skriva på engelska, nu och när du var yngre?
   - Brukade eller brukar du också skriva på ditt modersmål (eller svenska om modersmålet inte är svenska)?
   - Jag är nyfiken på hur mycket tid du lägger på ditt kreativa skrivande; varje dag, varje vecka, varje månad?

4. **Motivation till kreativt skrivande**
   - Berätta varför började du med kreativt skrivande, vad var det som motiverade dig
   - Berätta också om vad det är som får dig att fortsätta med kreativt skrivande
   - Berätta lite om du har stött på några utmaningar i ditt kreativa skrivande. Vad för typ av utmaningar och vilka är svårast att överkomma?

5. **Identitet och kreativt skrivande**
   - Berätta lite om skrivprocessen; var skriver du (plats), hur skriver du (material) och vilka media använder du (websites)?
     - Byter du websites och i så fall varför?
   - Vem skriver du för (vanligtvis)?
   - Berätta om du får någon feedback I ditt kreativa skrivande och I så fall hur ser denna ut?
• Läser du andra berättelse och ger du dem feedback och i så fall hur ser denna ut?
• Har du en online-identitet och, i så fall, har denna förändrats över tid?
  Har du ett smeknamn eller en falsk identitet (anonymitet)?
• Kan du berätta lite mer om dina kontakter/vänner som du träffat genom ditt kreativa lärande

6. **Språkutveckling och kreativt skrivande**
• Berätta om ditt kreativa skrivande har påverkat din utveckling i det engelska språket
  Om det har påverkats, berätta på vilket sätt och över tid

7. **Skolengelska och kreativt skrivande**
• Berätta lite om engelskundervisningen i skolan; vad tycker du om den, dess innehåll, undervisningsformer och nivå?
• Berätta om kreativt skrivande är en del av engelskämnet i skolan
  Om ja, berätta hur detta märks i undervisningen?
  Var skriver du mest, på fritiden eller i under engelskundervisningen?
• Berätta om det finns något i relation till ditt kreativa skrivande som dina engelsklärare kan utveckla i engelskundervisningen?
  Om ja, kan du utveckla vad som kan bli bättre?

8. **Avslutning**
• Är det något mer du vill saga och som jag har glömt att fråga om?
Appendix F: Interview question guide (English)

(NB. This has been translated only for this thesis and was not handed to participants in the interviews. Only the written Swedish version was used.)

Paul Morris: Interview guide 6 March 2017

1. Presentation of myself and the project

2. Presentation of participant
   - Who are you? Describe yourself
   - How old are you?
   - What is your mother tongue? If other than Swedish, follow up when participant came to Sweden and when they started to learn English in school and also in free time

3. Creative writing in English
   - Can you tell me about your creative writing in English in your free time? What do you write now and what have you written?
   - Can you say more about writing in English, now and when you were younger?
   - Did you usually, or do you usually also write in your mother tongue (or Swedish also if mother tongue is other than Swedish)?
   - I’m curious about how much time you spend on your creative writing; every day, every week, every month?

4. Motivation for creative writing
   - Can you tell me why you started with creative writing, what was your motivation?
   - Can you say what it is that motivates you to continue with creative writing?
   - Tell me if you have come across challenges in your creative writing?
     What type of challenges and what is the most difficult to overcome?

5. Identity and creative writing
   - Tell me a little about the writing process: where do you write (place), how do you write (material) and which media do you use (websites)?
     Do you change websites and if so, why?
• Who do you write for (usually?)
• Tell me if you get any feedback for your creative writing and if so, what is it like?
• Do you read the stories of others and give them feedback. If so, what can it be like?
• Do you have an online-identity, and if so, has this changed over time?
  Do you have a nickname or a false identity (anonymity)?
• Can you tell me if you have made or met contacts/friends through your creative writing?

6. Language development and creative writing
• Can you say if your creative writing has influenced your development in the English language?
  If so, in what way? And how over time?

7. The school subject of English and creative writing
• Can you tell me a little on the teaching of English in school: What do you think of it, its content, form and level?
• Can you tell me if creative writing is a part of the school subject of English?
  If yes, how does it occur in the teaching?
  Where do you write most? In your free time or in the English school subject?
• Tell me if there is anything in relation to your creative writing that your English teachers could develop in the subject?
  If yes, can you explain what could improve?

8. Conclusion
• Is there anything more you would like to add or is there anything I neglected to ask?
Appendix G: Final coding chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coding in NVivo12</th>
<th>Files (Interviews)</th>
<th>Refs (Pupil comments)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Motivation to start</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fun”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitate and adapt</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imitate specifically named English book or author</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuaded by a friend to write fanfiction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand experiences and/or deal with emotions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Motivation to continue (initial responses)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition or perfection</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement of a friend, and followers, in online fan fiction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Fun”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flow and “the zone”</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“New every time”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understand experiences and/or deal with emotions</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Motivation and engagement</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Interaction and intrapersonal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience (writing for…)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future audience (hope and dreams to inspire)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online audience (or followers)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Counsellor”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (offline too)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Myself”</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cementing &amp; expanding a social network, making contacts and friends</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendships and affiliations</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New friend, as in <em>emotional attachment</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair interviews - their friendships inc. emotional</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online international affiliations/friends</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The main headings 1. *Motivation to Start* and 2. *Motivation to Continue* consist of nodes such as “fun” which also appear under a later main heading, 3. *Motivation and Engagement*. This heading (3) contains all the comments which relate to “fun” and motivation. The same procedure has been carried out with other nodes that are under the main headings of 1, or 2, and 3.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving feedback</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting on weaknesses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving positive feedback</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposed to giving other than praise online</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receiving feedback</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received praise</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received mixed feedback</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Received negative feedback online</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity, cloaks, and anonymity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambition to be a writer</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An author, not a child, or girl”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of multilingualism shaping identity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masks are “cool” and “fun”</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masks for safety (anonymity)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple roles and identities</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Motivation and challenge**

| Autonomy and freedom                                                   | 2 | 3  |
| Challenge                                                              | 7 | 19 |
| Challenge of poetry and song                                           | 1 | 2  |
| Comparing to others as danger                                          | 1 | 1  |
| Love and hate one’s work                                               | 1 | 1  |
| Originality                                                            | 2 | 2  |
| Perfectionism and ambition                                             | 6 | 13 |
| Risk                                                                   | 3 | 4  |
| “Too many ideas”                                                       | 1 | 1  |
| Unresolved difficulties                                                | 2 | 3  |
| Creativity and making things happen                                    | 8 | 24 |
| Base story offering scaffolding or foundation for...                   | 2 | 2  |
| Flow and the “zone”                                                    | 7 | 15 |
| Need to imagine and express                                            | 2 | 2  |
| Input stimuli (story, multimodal)                                      | 8 | 36 |
| Comics                                                                 | 2 | 2  |
| Games                                                                  | 4 | 7  |
| Japanese Anime, Manga                                                  | 2 | 2  |
| Music/songs                                                            | 3 | 6  |
| Oral family stories                                                    | 1 | 1  |
| Books and/or fanfiction                                                | 5 | 10 |
| YouTube and/or film                                                    | 5 | 8  |
| Fun                                                                    | 6 | 12 |
| Pride                                                                  | 2 | 3  |
| Procrastination                                                        | 1 | 1  |
| Understand experiences and/or deal with emotions                       | 5 | 14 |
| Stories as models to overcome problems                                 | 4 | 5  |
## 4. Ways of engagement: Content, form, place/time, tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comedy, satire, parody</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drawing alongside writing</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High quantity of output</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horror</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logic into illogical</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Away from fanfiction toward originality</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery, fantasy, sci-fi</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real life based, possibly with more positive fictional scenarios</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traumatic real-life event</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English output in relation to Swedish</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance between English and Swedish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigger audience with English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core identity at work in Swedish</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional distancing/identity play with English</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving from English back to Swedish writing</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving from Swedish to English writing</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Translanguaging</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Form</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comic strips</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanfiction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film on YouTube</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-play online</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song/rap lyrics, poetry</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stories in prose</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing tools</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer, pad, phone</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pen and paper</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Place and time for writing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alone or calm</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mind/head</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel or commute</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in school breaks (and/or other school subjects’ classes)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing websites &amp; fanfiction sites</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Times for writing (frequency/amount)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Creative writing in my free time has developed my English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This activity has developed my English</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Though I was good at English before too…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Learning of English is enriched because...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic development or art of creative writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive to create stories drives my English development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved imagination or fantasy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved presentation of a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer or more nuanced written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Customise” learning/differentiation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7. Insights into creative writing and challenge in school English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desire for more creative writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy - desire for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils to write about their passions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanfiction in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is creative writing in school English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas for challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to be led to a challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature, “classics”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More vocabulary work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less textbook, workbook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for more challenge in school English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longer or more nuanced written texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Customise” learning/differentiation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ReadTheory levels (as an aid to challenge until top is reached)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupil understanding for the challenge to the teacher in teaching all levels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other pupils' English is too weak (for creative writing)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Creativ Writers in a Digital Age

Swedish Teenagers’ Insights into their Extramural English Writing and the School Subject of English

Paul Morris

Paul Morris qualified as an English teacher in 1995 and currently works at Persbo skolan, a secondary school in Skultuna, Västmanland. He has taught at inner-city comprehensive schools in England, and for a service for pupils with long-term illness. Before moving to Sweden, Paul was co-ordinator of English at a community special school in London. He has a Master of Education degree from Cambridge University, where he focused on special needs and inclusion. Between 2016-20 Paul was both a lecturer of English at Mälardalen University (MDU) and a doctoral student.

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