We don’t need no education

A study on the motivational effects of cultural media in ESOL education

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Abstract

This essay poses the question of how the use of cultural media in the ESOL classroom can promote motivation with students. Building on existing theories and research within the field, this study surveys opinions from students and teachers through interviews and questionnaires, and also includes a case study in the form of a music project conducted with students attending Swedish upper secondary school. The results point to the beneficial aspects of implementing cultural media, but also to a reluctance among teachers to use tools to which they are not accustomed. The study concludes that teacher education needs to be reformed to include a wider variety of cultural material and ways of working with it pedagogically in order to meet student needs.
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1. Introduction

Petter Alexis Askergren, to Swedes better known by first name only, is one of the pioneers of Swedish hip hop and a household name within the genre. In his autobiography named *16 rader* (16 bars, [my translation]), Askergren recounts how hip hop music, and the lyrics therein, became his gateway to literacy. At the age of 16, Askergren started writing his own rap lyrics, inspired by artist such as Linton Kwesi Johnson, Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five, and Thomas Rusiak. His writing was fragmental, consisting of lines written on post-it notes which later were compiled into 16 bars. A bar, in musical terms, signifies a rhythmic measure of beats, and 16 bars is the conventional standard length of rap verses (Askergren 2013, pp. 17-20). Apart from his own experiences, having had a troubled childhood and barely getting by in school, Askergren mentions literature as one the biggest sources of inspiration for writing, stating that “the more I read, the better texts I write”. As he missed out on a lot of reading in his youth, he strives to make up for it as an adult, turning what he once viewed with disdain into a catalyst for his own creative process. As reading became something to which Askergren could relate, a new world of literacy opened up to him. He now hopes to help young people who are in a similar situation as himself at that age to discover the beneficial effects, and indeed joy, of literature. “I discovered the value of reading through music. Reading is my very best tip for developing and growing as a writer” Askergren says (Askergren 2013, pp 24-25).

Motivation is an important factor in any kind of learning situation, and one which educators must judiciously adhere to when planning their courses. And with the entertainment industry steadily promoting media of incrementally decreasing duration, how can teachers hope to maintain students’ interest in time consuming activities such as reading? Could it be that a new paradigm of teaching material must be instated in order to appeal to students and, thereby, make sure that they are motivated? Or is there still merit to the discipline of reading of which even the most diligent of binge watchers of any TV-series could only hope to achieve? These are questions which this essay attempts to answer.

In the same vein as that described by Askergren, this essay aims to find ways to promote motivation and literacy in ESOL learners through cultural media. As most students, as most people in general, consume different types of media in their spare time, would it not make sense that the language of the songs, films, games or books would imprint on the listener and affect their language, consciously or subconsciously?
1.1. Basis of the study
The reason behind researching the implementation of cultural media in ESOL education, and the potential benefits thereof regarding student motivation, stems from a personal interest in culture and the effects of motivation.

Another inspiration for this essay is the study conducted in Bogota, Colombia by Nilsen Palacios and Claudia Marcela Chapetón. In the article, titled *Students’ Responses to the Use of Songs in the EFL Classroom at a Public School in Bogota: A Critical Approach* (2014), the authors present a project carried out with eleventh graders at a south Bogota school where music was used as a backdrop to discuss social issues and promote literacy in an English class. The study is based on an action research approach, which the authors describes as a teacher-lead, classroom based form of research focused specifically on teaching practices. The research was carried out in public school with students who for the most part came from low-income households with parents who had not had access to education. Using questionnaires, field notes, interviews and student artifacts, qualitative data could be collected from 42 students. In their findings Palacios and Chapetón conclude that music helped students to take a more participatory approach to English learning as well as a more critical perspective, as it offered them a platform for expressing their perspective on real-world issues (Palacios and Chapetón, 2014).

1.2. Aim
The purpose of this essay is to investigate the motivational benefits of using cultural media as a tool for ESOL teaching. This is a subject of the utmost relevance for teachers of English as the media landscape for students has shifted greatly over the previous few decades, and the methods traditionally prescribed by veteran teachers might be construed as too archaic to be fully grasped by students in the 21st century. Furthermore, this essay gives suggestions for a series of assignments using music as a central theme which can be used by teachers in order to motivate upper secondary students in their learning and acquisition of a second language.

1.3. Research questions
In what way can cultural media be used to promote motivation for ESOL learners? What other benefits could the implementation of such media be for ESOL learners? What opinions do ESOL learners and teachers have regarding the usage of cultural media in ESOL classrooms? Which didactic implications can be drawn from these results?

2. Theoretical background
2.1. Essay outline

In the introductory section, central terms and theories which will be used for the analysis will be presented. Thereafter, an overview of existing research within the field, and associated fields, will be presented. Lastly, the research methods, consisting of a case study of a music project run in two upper secondary English classes, a questionnaire study, and a small scale interview study, are addressed.

The results section gives an overview of the outcome of the three studies.

The analysis will compare the results of the studies with the theory and previous research, and will also include cross-study analysis in order to detect similarities and differences in the outcome of each study.

2.2. Terminology

For the purposes of this essay, a few terms need to be defined in order for their intended meaning to be properly conveyed.

**Media and mediation**

Roger Säljö is a senior professor of pedagogic psychology, learning, development and human communication at the University of Gothenburg. The central focal point of Säljö’s research is the process of learning and the effects of cultural media on learning as well as on society overall. In his book *Lärande & kulturella redskap. Om lärandeprocesser och det kollektiva minnet* (Translation: Learning and Cultural tools; on the process of learning and collective memory), Säljö defines mediating tools as utilities and techniques for information gathering in which we put faith, and which supports learning. As a metaphor for this description, Säljö uses the imagery of a blind person trying to read a newspaper. Naturally, without any outside interference, this would be impossible, but with the aid of text-to-speech programs or braille, working as a mediator between the information of the newspaper and the receiver, it can be solved (Säljö 2005, pp. 23-24). Another example of mediation could be the use of body language and onomatopoeia when attempting to converse with someone who does not speak the same language as one does. As such, mediation could simply be described as finding a common point of reference in order to bridge information gaps between two or more recipients. In this paper, when referring to the term “media”, this is the type of mediation intended.

**Culture and cultural media**

The term “culture” is not easily defined, as its connotations range from merely that which has to do with the finer arts to encompassing the general understanding of society as a whole. For the purposes of this
essay, the intended meaning goes more along the line of the former, namely different forms of artistic expression which carry meaning for one or several groups in a specific society. As such, the notions of “finer” or “lower” arts become irrelevant as these can simply be artistic expressions catering to different demographics. Furthermore, this definition bypasses the notion of canon, instead focusing on the content of the medium rather than its status in its cultural field.

**Literacy**

This essay will discuss the matter of literacy with students. In order to define the term literacy for the purpose of this essay, definitions from linguists Geoff Barton and Bo Lundahl will be used. Barton describes literacy in the fairly basic terms of being able to read, write, and communicate through speech (pp. 11-17). In his book *Don’t Call it Literacy*, Barton gives suggestions for methodology for English teachers to work with reading, writing, and communicating for different purposes and in different styles. Bo Lundahl (2012) adds that literacy can be divided into three terms; informational, critical, and media literacy. Lundahl defines informational literacy as competence regarding the search and use of information, media literacy as the ability to convey a message in various ways as well as being able to interpret these ways, and critical literacy as the ability to critically assess material of different kinds (p. 63).

2.3. **Motivation**

Stephen D. Krashen is a highly influential researcher within the field of linguistics. One of his contributions to the field is his input hypothesis, also called monitor model. In his publication *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications* (1985), Krashen defines his theory as not only one, but five interwoven hypotheses connected to the acquisition of a second language. The first hypothesis, dubbed the “acquisition-learning hypothesis”, defines the term “learning” as the conscious effort to master a language, and the term “acquisition” as a subconscious process in which language is learned though exposure. The second hypothesis, the “natural order hypothesis”, states that the rules of language are acquired (although not always learnt) in a specific and predictable order. The “monitor hypothesis”, which is the third of Krashen’s hypotheses, defines how production is governed by acquisition and learning. Specifically, Krashen claims that when producing utterances, the learnt knowledge of the language acts as a monitor, editing the utterances to adhere to the rules of the language. The fourth hypothesis is called the “input hypothesis” and states that the way language is acquired can be defined by the formula i+1, where “i” stands for the current level of proficiency in a language, and “1” stands for the next level attainable through natural progression. The final hypothesis, the “affective filter hypothesis”, states that in order to acquire language, the recipient needs to be “open” to receive input. Based on the current affective factors
of the learner, a metaphorical filter can block any input from being acquired at the time (Krashen 1985, pp. 1-32).

Weiner 1992 portrays a perspective on motivation as a part of human evolution, referencing such researchers as Freud and Darwin. Regarding Freud’s psychoanalytical theories, Weiner describes the concepts of Id and Ego, the former being the primal want for pleasure and basal needs, whereas the latter is a mental representation of what is real. These two psychological structures are in constant conflict, and are therefore, managed by a third structure; the superego. This final structure rationalizes between the two former structures in order to distinguish a proper response to outside stimulus (31-33).

Robert C. Gardner discusses a concept with he calls integrative motivation in his article Integrative motivation and Second Language Acquisition (2001). Basing his theory on the assumption that second language learning is the attempt to reach near-native proficiency in a language of which the learner has a model language community to strive towards, Gardner defines integrativeness as the genuine desire of the learner to master the language in order to integrate with the community. Gardner claims that a multitude of variables collaborate to form this type of motivation, and also distinguishes it from another term; integrative orientation. This term is defined as the desire to become proficient in order to lay claim to indirect rewards, for example, learning a language in order to get good grades and, thereby, increasing one’s chances for a good job in the future.

Lev S. Vygotsky is one of the most influential pedagogic thinkers of the modern age. In his book Imagination and Creativity in Childhood (1995) he debates the development of imagination throughout childhood and into adolescence. When writing about the imagination of pubescents, which is the age range specifically targeted by this essay, Vygotsky states that teenagers easily drift away into daydreaming, as the mindscape of their imagination offers much more gratification that reality (pp. 44-45).

In their article Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation (2000), Roland Bénabou and Jean Tirole defines these two types of motivation as motivation toward different types of goals. Whereas extrinsic motivation is motivation prompted by potential rewards for completing tasks assigned by outside forces, intrinsic motivation is defined as tasks being rewards in and of themselves (490). Another way to view the differentiation is “genuine” and “compulsory” motivation. For the purposes of this essay, the types of media consumed by students when not in school will be viewed as intrinsically motivating, and the media used in schools as generally extrinsically motivating. For example, a book prescribed by school might not pique the students’ interest by itself, but they will be motivated to read when it is brought to their attention that reading it will affect their grade.
The notion that novel reading as a leisure activity is on the decline is supported by research. In their study, Ulf Fredriksson and Karin Taube (2012) present results from research carried out among Swedish students, and in their findings they indicate that only 32.4% of Swedish students read novels at least a few times per month. This can be put in relation to the percentage who read newspapers which is 71.6% (p. 101). The authors also report a difference in what type of reading male and female students engage in. For example, where the percentage of female students who claim to read novels is 45.1%, the corresponding number for male students is a mere 20.1%. The only form of reading where males outnumber females in the study is the reading of comics, where the number of male students is 28.7% and the number of female students is 16.1% (p. 76).

2.4. Literature review

The subject of learning through culture is one that has seen its share of research throughout the years. This, no doubt, springs from the want and need for educators to update the material which they use with students in order to meet societal as well as cultural development. On this topic, William Kist (2011) describes the ever-changing landscape of media consumption from the perspective of teachers. Kist points out how different types of media have had the stigma of ruining the linguistic correctness of English learners throughout the years, naming the inception of motion pictures, comic books, and videogames as examples. The article examines how teachers have tried, with varying success, to implement these types of media. Connected to this, Jeffrey Fischer (2006) conducted a project on intertextuality; the notion that texts and narratives exist in an interwoven connection and relation to each other. In the project, students were given three written depictions of war and killing at close range, from different time periods, in order to discover similarities. Through this process, Fischer aims to engage students in discussions about whether texts throughout history are similar because of the universal nature of the human experience, or because of the conventional parameters for narration established by the existing works of text. Both of these articles, though vastly dissimilar in topic, share the theme of media acting as a receptacle of language and are, thus, a useful tool to utilize in language teaching as a way of bridging communication with learners.

The impasse ESOL teachers are faced with of presenting English in standard British or American, or to use a more varied representation of the language is described by Nancy Hornberger (2004). This notion, in Hornberger’s article dubbed the “standard/non-standard dilemma”, makes educators hesitant of using non-standard variations of English for fear of making the language learnt inapplicable in academic practice. Hornberger states, however, that research on the matter would instead indicate that students presented with non-standard English would be better equipped to conceptualize academic language. This is due to the fact that such language often proves to be inaccessible to students, whereas non-standardized
English can work as a mediating factor (p. 163). Hornberger further states that the utilization of different forms of media not only helps students acclimatize to them, which could prove beneficial in their future endeavours, but also hones several of their communicative skills and understanding, as the students will, through their consumption of a plethora of media variations, also be subjected to a multitude of standard and non-standard variations of the language.

Music has been a part of academic tutelage for several hundred years, and has been known to influence other subjects of learning throughout history. The fruitful symbiosis of learning language and music simultaneously has been observed repeatedly in scientific research. Among the studies, A.J. Speh and S.D. Ahranjian (2010) state that by using music as a tool for language learning, and vice versa, performance anxiety can be lowered, while patterns, both linguistic and musical, can more easily be retained. It is, therefore, important for teachers, whether they are teaching language or music, to be resourceful and keep a dialogue going with their students. The beneficial relationship between language learning and music learning is supported by Yvette Coyle and Remei Goméz Gracia (2014), who in their article present the results of a project carried out with preschool children where traditional children’s song were used to teach the English language through the use of images. Using traditional English children’s songs, and using pictures as a mediating tool, the authors wanted to examine the linguistic effect on non-English speaking children. The outcome of this method, though small in scope, indicates that the use of music supported receptive abilities with the children.

The effect of alleviating pressure from key factors in language learning that music has also has an inverse effect on music learning. Cape Breton university researchers Peter D. MacIntyre, Gillian K. Potter, and Jillian N. Burns (2012) investigate the use of the socio-educational model proposed by Robert C. Gardner, which displays the motivational gains resulting from the integration of music into language learning, to instead promote motivation in learning how to play a musical instrument. Using a path analysis approach which aims to examine how well a set of variables correlate with another set within a structure, the researchers wanted to establish whether or not the model for promoting motivation in language learning was applicable in instrumental music learning as well. Building on the results from a questionnaire study consisting of 107 students attending school band lessons at three different schools, the authors could find a correlation in answers between motivation, integrativeness, and attitude. Finding this to be the core of Gardner’s model, the authors reported that the model was well-adjusted to allow students to manage such a task. This further solidifies the notion of an interconnection between linguistic and aesthetic learning. Another study based on the theories of Robert C. Gardner was carried by Zoltan Dörnyei in the article *Conceptualizing Motivation in Foreign-Language Learning* (1990). This study, also in the form of a
questionnaire, was carried out with 134 Hungarian students who participated in an optional English course. The questionnaire was divided into two parts. The first part aimed to investigate in which fields English was used by the respondents, and in the second part different factors such as values, interests and attitudes were studied. In his results, Dörnyei concludes that instrumentality and integrativeness are vital for motivation in language learning.

The concept of language learning through the consumption of cultural media is one that has been utilized in education in many forms and over many years. However, as stated by Kist (2011) and commented on by a number of other researchers, the constant shift in cultural perception carries with it the need for continuous research within the field. In doing so, researchers and educators can ensure good language education well-adjusted to the needs of the modern society of which student will become part.

Richard Grünert (2009) suggests that language learning is not so much the acquisition of knowledge as it is the honing of an integrated system of skillsets. Much in the same way as riding a bicycle involves mastery of balance, motor skills, and speed management, the practice of speaking or reading a language involves several skills, such as pronunciation, syntax, and vocabulary, which all need to be honed if the language is to be mastered. However, in order to obtain these skills, the learner needs to find a tangible necessity for using them which correlates to their own interests and preferences. This is a way to circumvent their affective filter. In an attempt to do so, Grünert states that music is a suitable medium for such work, as it spans generations and encompasses much of the personal preferences that make up individuality. Grünert bases his proposed method on established theories such as the “input hypothesis”, and the theories regarding natural input and approach, all devised by Krashen.

A number of methods for working with cultural media in an English teaching environment have been proposed by researchers. For example, Carla Chamberlin-Quinlisk (2012) presents a model for how to work with media in language learning. Her method, called critical media analysis, or CMA for short, strives to make learners reflect on the representation of themselves in contrast to native level English speakers presented in media. As people of different genders, ethnicities, nationalities, creeds, and socio-economic backgrounds are represented in media, they are often ascribed attributes based on cultural perceptions, and by examining these the learner can critically assess the media, its message, and its validity. This method suits the purposes of Swedish education, where students are to be taught “to think critically, to survey facts and relations, and realize the consequences of different alternatives” (Skolverket 2011, p 7). By working with a multi-media approach to language learning, students can be made aware of cultural perceptions about themselves, other non-native English speakers, and the English speaking community at large.
Another example can be found in a recent article in the English Language Teaching Journal, where Carmen Herrero introduces a project initiated by the Film In Language Teaching Association (FILTA) (Herrero 2016). Through the project, ESOL teachers from a variety of nations cooperate, discuss, and pool data regarding the use of visual media in the second language classroom. Since its inception in 2010, the project has led to a multitude of successful teaching experiences, and the interest from other educators has increased prominently, states Herrero. Another similar project is the newly started Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, EPALE for short. The platform is meant to function as a community where teachers from all of Europe exchange experiences, share knowledge and pool resources in order to improve education for European adults. Although relatively new as a platform, the site already offers blogs, news, resources, a calendar of events, and a function for finding international co-workers for projects and cooperation between counties. One specific feature of the platform which may prove invaluable to teachers is the partner search function, which can be used either to search for co-workers from all over Europe by language or teaching subject, or to post a short description of a proposed project in order to find partners in other countries. This form of professional cooperation not only works to strengthen professional proficiency and status, which in itself is a current concern within the teaching community, but also helps teachers in the planning, execution and evaluation of lesson, making for better education in general.

3. Method
3.1.1. Case study

The elected method for this essay was a case study. This method of research is defined by Runa Patel and Bo Davidsson (2011) as survey on a limited group of individuals, often compared to a similar survey carried out on another group. The aim of a case study is to encompass a good deal of information and to exhibit changes and processes over time (pp. 56-57).

During a teaching internship at a Swedish upper secondary school, a case was observed where a music project was tested in two ESOL classes. Both classes were attending a practical electronics program and were in their first year of non-mandatory education. The classes had, for reasons of individual student needs, been limited to ten students per class, and a vast majority of these students were male. A general disinterest for the subject of English, or more accurately a lack of motivation thereof, was identified beforehand, and the goal of the project was, therefore, to promote motivation.

What follows is a summary of the project which ran for five weeks in total. Connections to the Swedish national curriculum for English will be presented with the description of each section of the project.
The first stage of the assignment required students to choose a song which they wished to work with for the duration of the project. They were given the choice of working individually or in pairs, a choice which they were informed would affect their expected workload. The criteria that the songs had to meet were, perhaps self-explanatory, that they had to be in English and that they had enough lyrics to be able to be analyzed and worked with. Before actual work with the chosen song could commence, the songs had to be brought in to be validated as classroom appropriate material by the teacher. While profanity was accepted to a limited degree, songs which included explicit or subtle references to narcotics, obvious sexual allusions or other subject matters not suitable for teenagers were denied for the project, and students were in these cases forced to choose a different song. In cases where students found it hard to choose a song, the teacher would attempt to give suggestions based on student interests and musical preferences.

The first actual task with the song was to make a full, comprehensible translation from English into Swedish. This was a part which proved to be a difficult task for the students, as in many cases words or phrases are not directly interchangeable or have no direct translation in the target language. Students would, therefore, constantly have to be reminded to focus on finding the overarching meaning rather than trying to find an exact match when translating. One such occasion was when a student was arguing for having the line “you turn me on” translated into the Swedish phrase “du sätter igång mig” (“you start me up”). The phrasing was in this case altered to the more pragmatically corresponding “jag tända på dig” (“I get turned on by you”).

This first task connects to the point in the central content for the subject of English, published by the Swedish department of education in 2011, regarding processing oral and/or written work in order to create clarity (Skolverket 2011, p. 55). As several students would find out through the task, the structure of the English language differs from that of the Swedish language, and as the assignment asked students to make their translation coherent, they would need to restructure and reword the text when writing in Swedish. Depending on the contents of the song, the goal of bringing up living terms, attitudes, values, and social as well as political and cultural issues is also met.

For the next part, students were to go through the lyrics of their songs and pick out words from different word classes. The predetermined number of words that the students were to find was seven nouns, seven verbs, and seven adjectives or adverbs. The second connects to the point which states that students shall be taught words and phrases which create meaning and structure in both spoken and written language. By understanding the way these basic word classes function, a basis for a functional understanding of English syntax can be established in order to expand it further as the students’ progress in their learning.
Next, students were asked to go online to find information about the artist or band that made their song. This information was to be used for the two tasks to follow; an article and an oral presentation. In order to help students look for relevant information, questions about basic facts and the students’ personal opinions were handed out. The third task, looking up information about the artist or band in preparation for tasks to come, offered the students the chance to work on their ICT skills which is an educational imperative as stated by the national curriculum (Skolverket 2011, p. 10). Also, if the information they found was in English, they would have to do some reading, which would advance them in that skill as well.

For the next part of the assignment, students were to take on the role of a journalist for their local newspaper. In the article they were tasked to produce, the students would give a short introduction to the band or artist that made their song. They were also asked to give a few reasons to suggest why others should consider listening to the artist or band. As such, the nature of the article was both descriptive and argumentative. In preparation for this task, the students were given introductory assignments revolving around the structure and script of articles in order to ensure their understanding of that specific writing genre. The fourth task, being the article for which the said information was used, had the students work with their argumentative and descriptive writing, both being part of the curriculum (Skolverket 2011, p 55).

The final task was an oral presentation where student were asked to talk about the song and artist in a similar fashion as in the aforementioned article. For this task, students were also asked to prepare a version of the lyrics where words had been replaced with blank spaces. The purpose of this “fill-in-the-blanks” test was to be used after the presentation, as students would play the song which they had chosen and their classmates would attempt to listen out for the missing words and write them down in the correct spot. The final task was the oral presentation coupled with the fill-in-the-blanks-tests. This task was modelled as a learning experience both for the presenting party and the listeners. As for the students presenting their work, they would again work with description and argumentation, but in oral form this time. They also got to work with their oral production as a whole. The listening students, in turn, worked with their listening skills, forming strategies for listening as stated in the curriculum. The fill-in-the-blanks-test offered another such exercise, as the function of listening is different than that of listening to a classmate making a presentation. (Skolverket 2011, pp. 54-55).

After the music project was finished, students were asked to evaluate the assignment in its entirety through a questionnaire. As the students had grown accustomed to the use of formative assessment methods, a
method called “Two stars and a wish” was used as a template for assessing the assignment. This method was devised by Dylan Wiliam (2013, p. 153), and is based on a simple pattern of naming two positive aspects and one aspect which is negative or which needs to be reworked.

3.1.2. Interviews

Two ESOL teachers, both teaching at upper secondary school level, were interviewed on their views on cultural media in teaching. The questions aimed to investigate how cultural media—especially music—was used by the aforementioned teachers, what effects could be construed thereof, and what the believed preferences of the students were with regards to cultural media consumption. For the sake of anonymity, the genders of both teacher will be withheld, along with any mention of specific schools or other information which could potentially lead to their integrity being compromised.

3.1.3. Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered among students belonging to four classes. This questionnaire aimed to ask students the same questions as those asked of the teachers in the interviews. Using a few questions with closed answers to start the students off, the questions then took a more analytical approach which required the students to give longer and more precise answers. The questionnaires were handed out as optional tasks for students who were finished with the mandatory work for the specific lessons that they were having at the time. This meant students did not feel pressured for time, and would carefully consider their answers and thereby give fully reflected answers.

3.1.4. Critical method assessment

Patel and Davidsson state that the method of a case study, given its limited scope of only one or a few selected groups, the level of generalization which can be read from the results greatly varies depending on the group or groups selected (Patel & Davidsson 2011, pp. 56-57). Given the rather small scale of the music project, and the limitations in data to be expected as a result, the study was expanded to also include the interviews and the questionnaires. This was an effort to ensure that the data presented was reliable, weighing in the opinion of educators as well as students. Another possible way to incorporate the teacher aspect could have been observation of lessons followed by brief interviews pertaining to the use, or non-use, of cultural media and the effects thereof. However, given that such observations would have to be announced beforehand, and that the intentions of the observations would need to be submitted, the
likelihood was that the lessons would have been altered to include activities which made use of cultural media. Therefore, interviews with teachers and questionnaires from students were chosen to broaden the scope of the survey without infringing on the reliability of the data.

As the initial purpose of this study was to research the use of music and its motivational benefits thereof specifically, the questions in both the questionnaires and the interviews had a slant towards that subject in particular. In hindsight it became apparent that the data collected would not be enough to draw any reliable conclusions regarding the use of music, but instead had to be broadened to include all types of cultural media. One might ask if the results might have been biased by the fact that special focus was put on music, and such criticism would not be uncalled for. However, it is my belief that the use of different types of observation, as well as the number of submitting participants, still provides a triangulation of the issue of motivation through cultural media, and can as such be seen as valid.

4. Results

In this section, the outcome of the three research methods will be presented.

4.1. Case study

During the initial phases of the music project, the students were generally very eager and diligent as it seemed that the assignment was intrinsically interesting to them. This enthusiasm dwindled somewhat for a few students as the weeks progressed, and it, therefore, proved necessary to check student progress more rigorously than what had previously been decided. This phenomenon, and the possible underlying reasons for it, will be discussed in connection to the theories presented by Gardner and Säljö in the analysis.

In the evaluation, most students claimed to be content with the outcome, but also stated that the workload had been slightly too heavy. This also became apparent by the fact that a large number of written assignments were not handed in on deadline. However, the overall feedback on the project was positive. It had been a learning experience as well as a chance to show a more personal side of themselves than other methods would allow.

The quality of the written work that nevertheless was handed in showed examples of decent to quite advanced levels of literacy, taking into account that the course was at an upper-secondary introduction level. While the many of the articles had misspelling and incorrect grammar, such as incorrect subject-verb agreement, the overall linguistic level was more than satisfactory given the level of the course. For example, in more than a few instances, more advanced vocabulary was chosen when conveying a message, for example the use of “as time progressed” instead of “as time went on”, or “on various topics” instead of “about different things”. What could be said about the descriptive part of the assignment, however, is that
the texts produced by the students felt fairly dry and lacking in linguistic flair. This could be the result of being inspired by the information which they had gathered, but simply not knowing how to put these rather blunt facts into an engaging reading experience. This could indicate the lack of experience managing different types of texts and subject matters in the written form, as the students would simply mimic or copy their sources when such were available. This also indicates that the lessons on the structure and style of article writing had insufficiently prepared students for the task of writing such a text.

As part of the assignment meant having to write about the students’ personal discovery of and relation to the artist or band, they were faced with the choice of revealing something potentially private, or to simply make the material up. For almost all of the submitted texts, students had chosen the former, giving personal accounts of finding songs through radio shows or automated lists produced from their listening habits, and even from parents eager to share the music of their youth with the next generation. For this part, the creativeness lacking in the explanatory section was much more prevalent. This also was the case with the translated texts, which in many cases had been written without the intent of simply finding a corresponding word, but instead seeking to match the poetry and atmosphere of the original lyrics. In contrast to the tendencies when writing descriptively, this shows that the students were much more equipped to write from personal opinion and for lyrical purposes. As lyrics often fall into what Hornberger refers to as non-standard English (Hornberger 2004, p. 163), being closer to the way conversations are carried out over the internet, this demonstrates that learners do need to be aware of different text types. While informative writing has instrumental value, and as such has an extrinsic purpose for the individual, opinion writing and lyricism are intrinsically valuable as they hold a platform for self-expression and personal betterment, and as such, hold an intrinsic value which has the power to motivate.

Having finished the music project, a difference could be observed within the class regarding their social interaction as well as their inclination to speak during lessons. Some students who had been silent except for occasions when directly spoken to would therefore find the courage to comment and even interject in classroom discussions. The way that students placed themselves in the classroom had become less fixed and, when entering and leaving the classroom, the constellations of students leaving for recess activities had been altered. This would indicate that the class as a whole had become more open and welcoming than before. Again, this will be discussed further in the analysis.

### 4.2. Questionnaires

A total of 19 questionnaires were completed by students all attending the first year of upper secondary school, who all answered anonymously. The questions were constructed to inquire about students’ habits
regarding cultural media, the perceived effect the media had on their language learning, and how the media as well as subsequent learning differed from the material used in school.

On the question of what types of cultural media the students take part in, a majority answered movies, TV-shows and music. 10 out of the 19 students claimed to watch videos on YouTube and other video sharing sites, and the number of gamers also appeared to be quite numerous. 3 students answered that they read books and magazines. Nearly all students claimed that the media which they consume is in Swedish or English, in varying combinations. One student also mentioned picking up some German and Estonian through online gaming chat. The majority of students, 12 out of the 19 who participated, believed that consumption of cultural media affects their language in a positive way, although a significant percentage of 7 students disagreed, claiming that the effect was slim if any.

When asked which types of music they listen to, students gave a variety of answers, ranging from Swedish “dansband” to the very niche genre of “nightcore”. Some fairly common examples, however, were rock, metal, hip hop, and rap music. The lyrics, for most students, were in Swedish or English, and many students were aware of what is actually sung, with some even actively looking up lyrics to fully grasp the meaning a song. One student claimed that the lyrics were the main attraction when listening to music. 13, about two thirds of the students, stated that music offers learning experiences, while the other third disagreed or saw music as a break from learning.

When asked what types of media are used in school, an overwhelming majority of students, 16 out of 19, said that movies are used. Other types of media which were mentioned were online resources such as video clips. Students claimed that most of the material was in Swedish, except for the cases when another language was being taught.

One of the questions asked students if they thought that there was a difference in what they learned from the cultural media used in school as opposed to the media that they took part in in their spare time. A majority consisting of 15 students agreed that there was a discernable difference, but for slightly differing reasons. Some students felt that they did not learn any language from leisure time activities as they were not in that mindset when doing something for fun instead of doing it as an exercise. Others stated that they did learn language in their spare time, but that the language learnt in that time was different from the language learnt in school, naming for example slang and other forms of informal language. Throughout the answers, a common theme was differentiating between types of media in which students had an intrinsic interest in, and media which was mandatorily digested in school.
While several students were content with the current way they were taught, there were a few suggestions for the incorporation of more cultural media. The most suggested medium was movies, although genres and further classroom activities varied from student to student. There was also mention of using more music, as one student said that it had a calming effect. Another suggestion was YouTube clips, although no more specific suggestion of types of videos was offered. No true consensus could be found on whether teachers would agree with these changes, as some students claimed that more cultural media would promote focus, motivation, and subsequently better results while others felt that the disconnection between students’ and teachers’ preferred types of entertainment was too wide.

4.3. Interviews

What follows is a summarized version of the two interviews conducted with teachers. For a more detailed overview, view the translated transcripts in Appendix 2.

4.3.1. Interview with Sam

The first teacher, here called Sam, had been a teacher of English and history for 15 years.

Sam claimed to use cultural media several times per semester, and said that the frequency of usage varies depending on what kind of theme the class is working with at the moment.

On the question of what types of cultural media Sam used, a clear focus was put on books. Sam said that s/he wanted to make a case for the practice of reading on the whole, and gave an example from their own teaching. Sam’s class was working with a dystopia theme, and the students were to compare two depictions of dystopia; *The Hunger Games* and *The Divergent* franchises, written by Suzanne Collins and Veronica Roth respectively. With the promise of getting to watch the movie adaptations, the students would read the first forty pages or so in the novels of the series. The class would then watch the films, but pause a few minutes in, where the events of the first few chapters had transpired, and compare elements such as setting, characters and motivations. Students would then engage in a discussion on which dystopian society would be quot-unquote “better”.

Sam also claimed that shorter texts or extracts from novels were to be preferred over reading entire books. By doing this, the multitude of texts could be analyzed in depth rather than reading a larger body of text and not having time to fully analyze it.

Sam also mentioned a few types of media which s/he had not used as much. Among these were theatre plays, videogames, and music to a certain degree. The few times that Sam had worked with music involved assignments in which students would analyze their favorite song or artist. Sam stated, however, that this
was an uncommon occasion, and the implementation of such an assignment would depend on the group at hand.

As Sam also taught history, s/he had tried to run projects that intertwine history and English. One such example was when Sam had the students read articles on the atomic bomb for the seventieth anniversary of the bombings of Nagasaki and Hiroshima. Sam remembered this assignment to have been met with hostility from the students, as they felt that they had already had history class for two hours and would now have to endure two more, and now in English. Sam states that, in his/her experience, students want to keep subjects separate.

Sam thought that the types of media that students consume in their free time are movies, videogames, and music. “Some read, but not… But then you could say that they read in the videogames. And that’s noticeable. But some don’t read very much”, Sam said. When asked if there is a discernable difference between students depending on which type of media they consume, Sam generalized that boys are much stronger when it comes to reading and listening, and reasoned that this could be attributed to gaming, which often requires these skills. Sam claimed, however, that these same boys are a bit lazy when it comes to finishing assignments. Girls, by contrast, are much more diligent, but lag behind the boys in reading and listening as they are not as likely to be interested in gaming, Sam said, again admitting to generalizing between genders.

Given the choice of any type of cultural media, Sam wished for the school to buy classroom collections of good classical works of literature, so that all classroom work could be based on fiction. Sam acknowledged, however, that the students would probably not agree with this. But Sam persisted in his/her vision as s/he wanted students to discover the “coziness” of finding a nook in their homes and curling up with a good book. Sam thought that students, if given the same scenario, would want to watch movies and subsequently not use them for any classroom work. Sam also mentioned videogames and regretted not being more knowledgeable about the subject.

When asked about the use of music in their education, Sam said that s/he had used music to some extent. Sam’s rule of thumb was that students would get to experience music in classroom situations at least once during their time at upper secondary school. For his/her classes, Sam had for example compared different depictions of the USA in songs like the national anthem and Bruce Springsteen’s “Born in the USA”. Sam had also had students analyze, translate and present their favorite artist. One issue with this task that Sam remembers is when a student picked the song “Call on Me” by Eric Prydz, a song which in total contains eleven unique words (“call on me, I’m the same boy I used to be”), repeated over again in a varied pattern. It had, therefore, been necessary to make the student pick a different song. At the request of the students,
Sam had also once used a rap song from the movie “Menace to Society” in their classroom. Sam claims that music can be motivational to some students, but that movies in his/her experience are more universally motivational to students.

4.3.2. Interview with Chris

The second teacher to be interviewed, in this essay named Chris, had been a teacher for roughly 30 years, and had work at several schools of different levels of education. Aside from English, Chris also taught French.

Chris had used a lot of digital resources, like YouTube-clips and podcasts, in his/her classroom. In his/her other subject, French, Chris had used smartphone applications designed for language learning, but as s/he felt that the level of language for such applications in English was much too simple, Chris had refrained from using them in English classes. Like Sam, Chris felt too inexperienced with videogames to use them in his/her education. However, Chris did enjoy bringing roleplay into the classroom, both in controlled forms such as the card game “Loup Garou” – a roleplaying game where players are given a role which only they know, and have to discover who has what role before the players playing the werewolf role kills all other players -, or in more deliberative forms as described in different source books. As an example of such an exercise, Chris mentioned the students portraying a court scene, having to rule the fate for one of their classmates. In Chris’s experience, some students abhorred these types of exercises while others loved them and blossomed with the task.

Regarding motivation, and the difference between factual and cultural types of media, Chris stated that such distinctions were hard to make as most textbooks, and subsequently most teaching, mixed the two types equally. However, Chris had formed the impression from students that language subjects such as English or Swedish worked as a “breathing space” for students as they included a level of escapism which subjects like mathematics could not achieve as easily.

Chris emphasized the importance of using different types of media in ESOL teaching as it teaches students different stylistic levels, which is an integral part of the Swedish curriculum for English learning.

In contrast to Sam’s thoughts on movies, Chris stated that students seem to have migrated from the movie format to media of more comfortable duration, for example clips on YouTube. Chris attributes this change to the fact that movies are longer in duration and tend to require the viewer to watch from start to finish in order to get the full story, whereas bloggers and gamers on YouTube produce material which viewers often can start watching at any time and is shorter in duration than a feature length film. Similarly
to Sam, Chris was of the opinion that male students generally watch gameplay videos (so called “let’s plays”), and girls generally watch makeup tutorials and fashion videos. Chris believes that students pick up a lot of language depending on what they do in their spare time. For example Chris has noticed that American accents have become more prevalent since Youtube blogging became popular. Similarly, students who have been playing games such as World of Warcraft and League of Legends have vocabularies heavily influenced by a more archaic form of English as these games are set in a medieval fantasy setting. For example, a student might know the expression “excessive force” as a damage-dealing ability used by the character Vi from League of Legends, but not know what the expression means when reading a text about improper police procedure.

When asked what media Chris would want if the option was completely free, s/he said that s/he would want a good collection of magazines, in both Swedish and English, in the recess areas of the school. Chris thought this would serve as a good complement to the types of media that the students took part of as s/he did not think that students have magazines at home. Chris also thought this would promote reading and literacy among students. The students, however, would according to Chris not find this as enjoyable as s/he would.

When asked what they do with music in their teaching, Chris claimed to often use it when starting up or capping off a theme or area. One such example was using the Weird Al Yanchovic song “Eat It”, a parody of Michael Jackson’s “Beat It”, to attract the students’ attention. Chris also said that in place of working with creative writing, which can be a time consuming task, there are many songs which carry narratives to be analyzed and deconstructed. As examples of this, Chris mentioned Tom Jones’ “Delilah”, where the narrator is revealed to have killed his lover, and The Kinks’ “Lola”, in which the eponymous woman is revealed to be transsexual. Chris also stated that most textbooks will not include artists or songs as the publishers fear that the material will become dated and boring to students.

Finally, Chris thought that music can motivate, but hedged by saying that anything which is relatable to students can be a motivational factor.

5. Analysis/discussion

5.1. Music project

In the evaluation of the music project, the general consensus was that the students were happy with the project on the whole, but felt that the number of tasks in it was too high. This also became apparent in the
number of written tasks being handed in after the due date, which would indicate a lack of time to finish the task on time, or the lack of interest or motivation to do so. One possible interpretation of this result is that the intrinsic interest which the students had had for using music in school had turned into extrinsic motivation when they realized that the theme also meant a lot of hard work. As such, it could be argued that the integrative motivation for culture through music which students felt initially had been interchanged with integrative orientation as the proposition of using those same songs as means to an end rather than an end in and of themselves. The notion from Vygotsky, that teenagers tend to phase out and daydream, might also be relevant to this phenomenon.

As many students would discover a new found interest in English learning after the project had run its course, it could be assumed that the project had worked to improve student motivation in regards to language learning. This contradicts the conclusion drawn from the previous example, and indicates that students did indeed find the project interesting and enticing. This could be attributed to the fact that the presentations had offered a chance for the sharing of highly personal aspects of their own identity, and, thus, had made members of the class open up to each other. This could also explain why the social climate in the class had measurably become better after the project was finished. The students who previously had only spoken when directly addressed would now be more talkative, and there was a sense of camaraderie which had not been there initially.

As the project had made obvious that the students lacked the necessary skills and knowledge to write argumentatively and informatively, the need for further education on such genres of writing, as well as others, also became apparent. By learning how to effectively write in different genres, styles, and registers, the students would not only increase their linguistic proficiency, but also develop strategies for better understanding different types of media. This will, in an extended perspective, leave the student better equipped to face the challenges of modern society, as they will be more adaptable in a constantly changing world.

5.2. Interviews

The interviewees had some differing, sometimes diagonally opposing opinions regarding the media habits of their students. One such example is Sam stating that viewing movies are among the main pastimes of the students while Chris claims that such a statement would have been accurate were it uttered a decade or so ago. Setting aside any speculation on prejudice or misinformation on part of the teachers, the reasons for this difference in standpoints could be many. As both teachers had many years of experience teaching, several different classes have been taught by them, and different archetypes of students have, therefore,
manifested for each teacher. As such, none of the teachers would per se be incorrect in their analysis, but simply have come in contact with different kinds of students.

Both teachers could see potential in the use of interactive media, seeing as many of their students had an intrinsic interest in them, but felt that they lacked proper knowledge and interest to be able to implement these forms of media. This indicates an unavoidable problem regarding generational gaps which entails a gap in knowledge regarding technology. This is a field in which much research is being carried out, and because of the demand for an effective implementation of videogames into education is present, any scientific development made in this field should be welcomed by pedagogic personnel at any and all levels of education.

Both teachers felt to differing degrees that music could work motivationally for ESOL learners. It was, however, believed by both that it is not the raison d’être when it comes to motivation through culture, as most students would respond more favorably to movies, for example. This somewhat goes against the notion from Sam that students, when watching movies in school, do not want to do any actual classroom tasks connected to the film. As such, it could be said that the motivational benefits of the viewing of films in class only extends so far as the actual viewing of the film, but not any form of discussion or assignment in order to turn the media consumption into a learning experience. However, there could be truth to the claim that film is a more motivational tool than music, as the same tendencies could be identified when music was used as the focal point in the music project.

What this seems to boil down to is the matter of mediation. When using media types which students are not accustomed to, such as novel reading, teachers have found motivation to be lacking, and vice versa when the teachers have tried in vain to grasp media types preferred by the students only to find their own interest failing. This would indicate the need for media which is well-known by both students and teachers from which a common basis for bridging information can be established in order to make teaching and learning a shared effort from both parties.

5.3. Questionnaires

Tendencies could fairly easily be identified in the answers handed in by students as several answers were, at least in spirit, identical. The most popular types of media with the students were movies, music, videogames, and online video clips. This conforms with the assumptions made in the interviews with the teachers Chris and Sam. Another similarity in the answers from the two groups is the conviction that language is being learned through pastime media consumption, although consensus might not be met regarding whether or not that language learning differs from that which is mandated by the teacher.
The students express the desire to work more with movies in school. There were no clear suggestions given for approaches to work with the movies, but it was evident that the medium in itself held much appeal to the students. Again, this confirms ideas presented by the teachers in the interviews. A parallel can be drawn here to the notion of the Id, Ego, and Superego (Weiner 1992). Seeing as how movies seem to have an intrinsic value to students, it appeases the Id of their consciousness. Classroom work, on the other hand, represents the instrumental value of which the positive effect can only be interpreted by the Ego. This creates a clash in the mind, and the conclusion when this conclusion is resolved with help of the Superego is that the path of least resistance, namely keeping to simply watching the movie, is more rewarding than having to do tedious analyses and boring reviews connected to it.

One interesting factor to consider is that while several of the students confessed to enjoying playing videogames in their spare time, there were not many who mentioned it as something which they would want to do as a learning experience in school. What could be the reasoning behind this? Two possible interpretations can be made either the students feel that the teachers, as the teachers themselves claim, are not fully equipped to handle such activities, or students feel that they want to conserve gaming as an exclusively leisure activity, unsullied by the demands of learning and examination. As the data is insufficient to back either claim, I shall not profess either as true. However, the latter would imply that students are, at least to some degree, aware of the mechanics of motivation and orientation as described by Gardner (in Dörnyei 2001). As such, students choose not to include the proposition of gaming in school for fear of turning it into an orientational tool rather than a motivational pastime.

5.4. Comparative analysis

Both students and teachers seem to agree that movies are highly popular and helpful in English teaching, although the motives behind this differ slightly. Whereas teachers promote the use of movies for motivational purposes, using it as a lure to engage students in other classroom activities, students seem to enjoy watching films in school for different reasons; some simply for having an excuse to relax during lesson time, others to engage in activities connected to the viewing. This indicates a difference in the perspective on films. Some seem to be of the opinion that films hold an intrinsic value in and of themselves, while others view the value of movies as something instrumental: the means to an end. As such, it could be claimed that the teachers, as well as a proportion of their students, have an integrative orientated perspective on the viewing of movies while other students view them as integrative motivational.
The notion that reading was not a very popular activity with students was confirmed by the questionnaires. This confirms the media paradigm shift mentioned by the teachers, additionally supported by Fredriksson and Taube (2012), and begs the question of why reading as a leisure activity is being shunned in favor of movies, television shows and videogames. Furthermore, it raises the question of what effects this phenomenon will have on the students’ learning and proficiency not only in English, but in their literacy on the whole. Further research into this topic, in a similar vein as the projects proposed by Chamberlin-Quilsk (2012) and Herrero (2016), is needed in order to guarantee that students receive the best possible schooling in order to become productive and well-adjusted members of society.

There was a perceived difference between language learnt in school and language learnt at home from both teachers and students. If it is to be assumed that the language taught in school is more formal in nature than that acquired at home, one might also inquire as to the difference in value of these forms of English. Claims could be made that since the language acquired elsewhere consists, at least in part, of profanity and slang that such things should be cast aside in favor of a more formal linguistic schooling. However, in the spirit of promoting critical assessment in all things, this claim can be answered by stating that students should be exposed to all types of words and expression in the target language in order to make critical decisions regarding language use on their own. Through this, students can receive a more holistic and nuanced understanding of language and can make informed decisions on which type of language to use in a variety of situations.

5.5. Didactic implications

The results of the research methods of this essay indicate the need for educators to know how to effectively use mediation in their teaching. This factor is vital in order to promote motivation, which in turn is essential for all learning. One important step towards procuring such competence is for teacher education to diversify the methodology taught to aspiring educators at all levels. After all, what good is teaching how to read novels with a class if the students will take the easy route and watch the film adaptation instead? The more effective way to ensure student engagement would instead be to find ways to teach the same material, but through a different media so that the learning opportunity is not squandered.

Another important factor to acknowledge is the willingness of students to include their favorite leisure activities in education, running the risk of making students disinterested in something for which they had genuine affection instead of motivating them. In pursuit of this willingness to open up something potentially very personal for the students, the need for a functioning teacher-student communication is apparent. Student interests should ideally be brought up in the initial stages of any course in order to plan
out their potential implementation into classroom work, and any such implementation should be done with student consent. Doing this, teachers can expect more motivated and cooperative students as well as a lighter workload from not having to come up with ideas for activities since such ideas can arise from the class itself.

6. Conclusion

As has been demonstrated in this essay, culture in different forms can work as motivational tools in ESOL education. One of the hurdles for teachers to overcome is to work out a functional pedagogical methodology, to keep up to date and to keep an open mind towards different types of media, as well as their implementation in the classroom. In order to keep motivation high, and to make sure that the subject of English does not fall out of relevance in a steadily advancing world, the material taught, as well as the methodology used to teach it, must advance to meet the requirements of what students need to be taught as opposed to what has been arbitrarily chosen that they should be taught.

The findings of this essay also indicate the need for teacher education to be reformed so that more unconventional types of media, such as music, film, and games, can be mastered by teachers and subsequently used in classrooms. This will make sure that students are prepared for the technologically progressive world which they are schooled to be part of and contribute to, and also helps teachers keep their students interested and motivated in their schoolwork. Projects meeting this increasing demand, such as the FILTA and EPALE projects as well as the CMA model, are already in progress, and while the results of their work are still not set in stone, it would be fair to assert that the development of multi-media approaches has paid dividends among ESOL teachers.

Finally, my hope is that this essay will inspire more teachers to find new, exciting ways to motivate students to learn. In order to make a lasting impact on the lives of these youngsters, who will go on to shape the very society which we are part of, teachers need to give them a solid basis upon which they can build their lives, and for this to be possible, it is essential that student are able to find tangible need for the knowledge that they receive in school. This is not an easy task, as the landscape of cultural media is always in flux, and students’ preferences will change drastically over time. However, I urge my colleagues within the teaching profession to give it a try, as it is an endeavor which might prove fruitful for all parties involved.
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**Articles**


**Websites**

https://ec.europa.eu/epale/
Appendix 1

English assignment: Pick a song!

This assignment lets you discover more about the music you listen to and the artists who make it. It also provides an opportunity to practice the four basic skills of language learning: reading, listening, writing and speaking.

1. Pair up with a partner, or if you want to you may work alone. Pick a song which you enjoy, or would like to learn more about. Make sure that it is a song with lyrics. When you have picked a song, bring it to me so that I can check if it’s okay for this assignment.

2. Go online to find the lyrics of the song. Good sources for song lyrics are for example letssingit.com or azlyrics.com. When you have done this, make a translation from English to Swedish. In order to make the translation correct, don’t use Google Translate or similar tools except for translating individual words or phrases.

3. Next you will use your song to practice word classes. Go through the lyrics and pick out words of the following categories: seven nouns, seven verbs and six adjectives or adverbs. That is a total of 20 words. Write them into their respective categories and save the them for later.

4. Find out as much as you can about the artist who sings your song. As a minimum, try to answer these questions:
   - What are the names of the members?
   - Where are they from?
   - When did they start making music? Are they still active?
   - What are their most famous songs and albums?
   - How has their career been? Has there been trouble along the way?
   - How did you discover their music?
   - Why do you enjoy them and the song you have picked?

   This information will be used for two parts of the assignment.

5. Write a text where you pretend to be a music journalist for your local newspaper. You have been asked to write an article where you describe your artist and explain to people why they should listen to them. The text should be about 1-1,5 pages, Times New Roman size 12, 1,5 line spacing.

6. Prepare a presentation of your song and the artist who sings it. This presentation is going to be held in front of your classmates, and should give them a good idea of who the artist is. For the presentation, you will also prepare a “Fill in the blanks” test which is described on the next page. All in all, your presentation should take roughly 15 minutes.

7. Hand in all the written parts (the translation, the words and the article) to me. This can be done either physically in class, or electronically to my email address: freerl11@student.hh.se
This is an assignment that lets you and your classmates practice your listening skills.

1. Take out the lyrics for the song you have chosen.
2. Remove 20 words and replace them with a ________ space. Make sure to pick words that can be heard clearly when listening to the song.
3. During your presentation, play your song and have your classmates listen to it in order to find the missing words. For this to work, you need to make sure that your song is available for listening, either by bringing it with you or finding it on Spotify or Youtube. If you need help copying your test, tell me in advance.
Interview 1
Sam
English and History
Fifteen years of experience

What kind of cultural media do you use?

I use books. Sometimes they get to read a whole, which they’ve chosen for themselves, and write reading logbooks. Right now with my first graders, we are reading 40 pages of the Hunger Games, and then we read 40 pages of Divergent and then we compare. The setting, characters, that kind of stuff. And then we also watch the movies, Hunger Games and Divergent, and compare. You know, dystopia, which dystopia is the quote-unquote “better one”?

I want to make a case for reading. We’ve also read a bit of The Faults in our Stars. In English six they’ve read parts of Pride and Prejudice. Sometimes, I feel that you don’t need to read an entire book, but just read shorter snippets and dig deeper instead of reading an entire book.

I’m not that good at using music. A few times they have gotten to analyze their favorite artist and song, but that hasn’t been something that has happened every year. It varies from group to group.

I haven’t really used theater.

Videogames, I have never done. Actually, but that was when I started teaching, about ten or fifteen years back... I think it was with a natural science class with a lot of boys who loved to play this card game. It wasn’t really computer, but it was some kind of live game with cards. And almost all of the guys... They got to do that for one lesson, in English, and they thought that was a lot of fun (laughs). But otherwise, no videogames as far as I know.

How often do you use cultural media?

Maybe not every lesson, but very often I would say. Right now I’m working on that Divergent versus Hunger Games thing, so my first-years are having an intensive period of it right now, and then they’ll let that go and work on something verbal instead. But otherwise... it’s at least... what should I say? It’s hard to say, but several times per term, at least.

What effect can you see in students when using cultural media as opposed to factually based media?

Well... I want to make a case for reading overall, because I’ve seen that there are a lot of students who are good speakers, but they fall short when it comes to reading, and then they lose their writing because they can’t read well. So I’ve really made a case for reading. I try to use many types of texts, and students find that demanding. I’ve had to sell this Hunger Games thin in with “we’re going to see
the film!” “Oh, are we going to see the film?” “Yeah, but we’ll be reading, like, 80 pages first!” “Oh no, well, fine then…”, and so you lure them with the film and work a bit harder with the texts.

I teach history as well, and I’ve had some classes in both history and English, so for some classes we have brought in… Like, we talked about the atom bomb since it was the 70th anniversary this August. So I did that during my history hours, and then I had the group for English 6 too, and so I found some articles in English. It wasn’t that… in one class… it wasn’t that popular with all students… sadly. I’ve gotten some criticism because I have too much history in my English. […] some students just want it […] divided.

**Are all of your material in English? You never use Swedish material?**

No, no I don’t.

**What types of media do you think students take part of in their spare time?**

Movies. Movies and videogames. Some read, but not… But then you could say that they read in the videogames. And that’s noticeable. But some don’t read very much.

Also music, naturally.

**Is there a difference in which types of media they take part of and which students are more proficient in the subject?**

Well… Generally speaking, the boys are very diligent, they take in the English language very easily, both in reading and listening. They are very good at reading and listening because they play videogames so much. However, they… generally speaking, now I am generalizing heavily… they are a bit lazy when it comes to assignments. You can see that they are doing very well in reading and listening, but they are not as good at producing written work. Some are good speakers, but there is a huge resistance when it comes to writing. And if I generalize, many girls work very hard, but they are still lagging behind the boys because they don’t get the reading from videogames. So generally I think that boys are better at writing and listening than girls. Heavily generalized, though.

**Let’s say money was not an issue. What cultural media would you want the school to have in order to motivate students?**

Well, I mean, as a teacher, part of my job is to make them motivated for whatever. But I would want – I don’t use any textbook – I would want to do it purely fiction based. We have a few class collection, but it’s not that many, but I would like for us to read a lot more fiction. And then – but this is just because I find it enjoyable (laughs) – I like it when several people read the same books and discuss them. […] So I’d want whole class collections of some fun fiction. That’s my dream. But then, maybe that isn’t what the students are dreaming of (laughs).

**Do you think that your students would agree with you?**
No, I don’t think they would, really. Some of them, when they read, are like “well, this wasn’t so hard”. I want to create that coziness, that they realize how cozy it is to curl up somewhere with a cup of tea and a book. I prefer that they read at home so they can find that cozy spot in their homes. And sometimes you can find the books on Youtube so that you can listen along. […] well, that’s my dream, not the students’, but you have to be varied. Sometimes you do something you like, and then sometimes you find something which appeals to the students.

What do you think students would wish for in their learning?

Most of the time when you ask them, they say movies. And preferably not having to do any work with it (laughs). They just want to watch it. Like, now we’ve read the first two chapters of The Hunger Games, and then we saw… when we had worked with them, we started watching and then I stopped it about 17 minutes in, because by then they have shown just about the first two chapters. “What? Aren’t we going to watch it further?” “Yeah, but now we are going to compare first.” […] So I think movies is what they enjoy the most. And not working with them (laughs)

Also debates, if you can call that a cultural medium… For example right not we are going to have a debate on the US elections. One student is going to be Bernie Sanders and another Donald Trump.

Since I am not so well-versed with videogames, it’s very likely that they would love that, if I were more knowledgeable with that, but I’m not.

My study is mainly focused on music. Do you use music in your teaching?

We’ve listened to a few different kinds of depictions of the USA, for example Born in the USA and the national anthem. What kind of depictions do we get from them? So I’ve used it in that way… Also the British national anthem.

Also, they’ve gotten to work with lyrics, present their favorite artists and maybe also analyze songs. It varies from year to year. Sometimes we’ve just translated lyrics.

One time there was a boy who picked that song “Call on Me”, and I said “this is not really okay, you’ll have to pick something a little bit more complex”.

Sometimes I want to know what they are actually singing. One year, this class wanted to watch “Menace to Society”, I think it’s called. And there was some kind of rap song in it, which we brought up and listened. And one think I noticed is that they are a lot better at slang than I am, so sometimes they have to explain to me.

Sometimes I have the same class for English 5 and 6, and then I make it so that the get to encounter music at least once during those two courses.

Do you see any difference in motivation?

Movies are a motivational factor. That’s noticeable. Music can be for some. Some students just love it. […] Some of them didn’t bite. But I think it is a great gateway. Like when we talked about Born in the USA… not everyone realizes that it’s pretty critical towards the USA. They have been thinking that
it is like a tribute too the US, but when you look closer, you realize that “oh, is that what he is singing?”.

This was a reminder for me to use it more often (laughs).

Interview 2

Chris

English, French and Latin (no current courses)

30 years of experience.

**What kind of cultural media do you use?**

Everything pertaining to the internet, everything from Youtube clips to podcasts. For example, BBC Six minutes has short clips made for schools.

I also use the occasional movie, for example when beginning or finishing up a theme or subject. Or some kind of show. In my French I have used shows which are tailor-made for entry levels of French. For English it’s much easier to use original sources.

In my French class we’ve used an app. They enjoyed that a lot. But there are limitation to those. [...] I feel like you don’t need those kinds of apps as much for English. Swedish youths are so advanced in their English, so it’s not really the case that they need to practice those relatively... in the apps, the grammatical phenomena are pretty basic, and upper secondary school should be a bit more advanced.

I haven’t really used gaming. I was at a lecture by a teacher who had used gaming exclusively throughout their courses. As for myself, I feel a bit uninterested and it wouldn’t feel natural for me use gaming as a basis for teaching.

But I have used, for example, this game called Loup Garou, a werewolf game, a classroom roleplaying game. I enjoy that. Roleplay in the form of cards, or in the form of... There are a lot of books which I’ve used. I have done for example courtrooms, where you take out six people and put them in the front. All of them are criminals and accused of something, and one is going to be release, “now speak for your case”. And the audience are now judges or jury or whatever, and have to agree on who to set free. Those kinds of things are a lot of fun. Some students detest it, but some of them really blossom with it.

Not videogames, except for maybe on glosor.eu, where you can drive cars and hit the correct words. I guess that’s one type of game, but it’s not really their form of gaming. It’s more like learning trough playful interaction.

**How often do you use cultural media, put in contrast to factually based media?**

It’s hard to say. But when you use textbook, or this digital library of textbooks which we use called Digilär, there are often themes where about half of the texts are factual and half are fictional. And I think that’s sort of what we do in school as a whole.

Also, I think you can experience all kinds of culture, even if you don’t call it culture, as a type of escapism, that you can escape reality for a while, and I think that is appreciated. I think English can work as breathing like that. Math can’t really do that. Swedish can do it, English can do it.
Do you only use English sources?

Yes. They are at such an advanced level that it becomes easy to find material which is easy enough for them.

How do you think the cultural media affects students’ language?

They get to hear different types of English. [...] I think there is a need for different types of media to showcase different styles of English. The subject has a focus towards learning different stylistic levels. [...] As you use many sources, the wider the language presented becomes.

What types of media do you think that students take part of in their spare time?

A few years back, I would have said movies, but I don’t think they watch that many movies nowadays. Ten or fifteen years back, I had students who would watch four movies a day, But that’s not how it works anymore. They don’t watch movies like that anymore. Instead they watch Youtube clips. They watch gamers who play games and comment themselves. I think all of them do that, and it’s also bloggers, a lot of girls listen to and watch other girls.

But also, there are a lot of podcasts. That surprised me the most, because I thought that this generation would want to both see and hear. But I’ve gotten the feeling that they have grown tired of images, and they vastly enjoy just listening instead. I thought that was something old-fashioned, I thought that the radio was on its way out. But I think that they listen to podcasts, and I think that they do that in English as well.

You mentioned that students have migrated from movies to shorter clips. Why do you think they have done this?

I think that that it’s the availability of information that has changed. Because, I mean, I don’t think that people have been commenting themselves, like for example Pewdiepie [the most subscribed Youtuber in the world, comedian with a focus on videogames] and so on, for very long. My son has been playing Wow [World of Warcraft, a massively multiplayer online roleplaying game] quite a lot, and to just sit and watch someone else play WoW and comment over it is a fairly new concept, I think. People have been playing WoW for about ten years, but for how long have people commented themselves playing it on Youtube? I don’t really know, but maybe five years?

Sometimes, even an action movie can be construed as boring, and you need to watch it from A to B, from start to finish, otherwise it loses its purpose. But with blogs, you can just jump straight into it, and it is much more like a constant stream. It doesn’t have a clear dramaturgy, no clear beginning or end.

Do you think that the language they learn at home differs from what they learn in school?

Yes, absolutely. We can see that English is the only subject where the boys outshine the girls. They know so many words. Maybe they aren’t as popular as they used to, but earlier with students who would play LoL [League of Legends, a multiplayer online battle arena game] or WoW there would be
a lot of words for shields and swords and different kinds of combat strategies. Really advanced, sometimes arcane language picked up by the creators of the games to create a framework for the story.

Maybe I’m being presumptuous, but among the girls it has become immensely popular to watch makeup tutorials and such things. And American accents in those types of videos really leave their mark. Even if they’ve mostly watched American movies before, when hearing spoken American English like that, they start throwing around phrases like those bloggers.

And another upside of those blog posts is that they come out extremely frequently, so they become exposed to a lot of English by listening and following these blogs, and longing for the next post to be published.

**Let’s say money was not an issue. What cultural media would you want the school to have in order to motivate students?**

I may sound old fashioned, but right now at this school – or rather this department – we don’t have a proper library. [...] I think that schools should offer a complement to what they get via for example the internet. So I picture having students sitting in recreation rooms surrounded by good, fresh magazines in their areas of interest. Everything from gaming magazines to... Because there is a lot of magazines in English as well. I could be fashion magazines or music magazines or whatever. In my experience, they’ll at least flip through magazines, and that’s fun. And they don’t really have magazines at home, and I think that what you get – and this might be just because I have a personal interest in music – What you get out of a music magazine is knowledge and depth, as opposed to just opinion. They’re surrounded by opinions everywhere, and that can be taxing. And that’s something that they react to when reading magazines in English; that it’s very difficult, very advanced.

**Do you think your students would agree with you on this?**

No, I don’t think so. I wish they would, but I don’t think so. I don’t think they see the need for it. But I feel like some would find it enjoyable [...] because it is a complement of what they normally do.

But also, I know that a lot of them read magazines online. So that’s one thing. But online, it’s more like you scroll up and down, then you get bored and do something else. Maybe you do that with a magazine as well, but with a magazine it’s easy get a visual confirmation of “oh, now I’m halfway through the article”, and you get a lit enticed to turn the page and read an image text or something.

**My study is mainly focused on music. Do you use music in your teaching?**

Well, I would say that I’ve had a lot of it, as it is my area of interest too. I’ll always have them listening to songs, fill in the blanks... [...] If we’re working with a theme, for example when we’ve worked with food I’ve played something silly like Weird Al Yankovich’s “Eat it”. It’s a bit funny, and they know the song and the wordplay. Or sometimes I just want to create a feeling.

You rarely get to work with creative writing, but with a song you can tell a very dramatic story. Just take something silly like “Delilah” by Tom Jones. “I felt a knife in my hand and she laughed no more”. Where did that come from? Or “Lola” [a 1970 song by The Kinks]. “She was a he”, or is it “he was a she”? I mean, there is so much music around us that we don’t really listen to fully.

Now a days, you have textbooks for so long that they don’t dare to put artists in them for fear of becoming dated.
Do you feel like there is a difference in the students, for example their motivation, when you use music in your teaching?

I think that everything that makes it feel closer to them is seen as something positive. However, I sometimes feel like it’s challenging... Since the work in English is divided up into subject areas, [...] and with this method you could have students [...] who worked with music every darn year. And sure, we are supposed to plan together with them, but since they come to upper secondary school from different schools, that could happen. And if nothing else, for your own sake. “Oh, I worked with this last fall. I think I’ll do that again”, and then you’re stuck in a rut. So you have to challenge them, as well as find new perspectives so that you’re not just using the same material over and over.