Does Listening to English Songs Motivate Students to Expand Their Extramural English?
A Case Study of Swedish Upper-Secondary School Students' Perceptions of Possible Impact of Listening to Vocal Music on Their Extramural English

Author: Liilia Batluk
Supervisor: Diane Pecorari
Examiner: Ibolya Maričić
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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether listening to music as an out-of-school activity, and English songs in particular, motivated a group of Swedish upper-secondary students to learn extramural English. One aspect that comes into focus is whether the students perceived that there were particular aspects of second language acquisition (SLA) that improved as a result of listening to music. The study focuses on the correlation between the needs of the listeners and the nature of their motivation for learning. This is a qualitative study based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews. The results show that all of the students perceived listening to music as an aid in their extramural English acquisition. A majority of the students had the intrinsic motivation for learning as they exhibited curiosity, emotions and internal needs as the primary factors that empowered them to expand their extramural English. The minority of the interviewees showed signs of extrinsic motivation to learn the vocabulary of the lyrics of the songs they listened to. The learning they experienced was linked to the expectancy in improving their academic performances. They may, however, have had a combination of the extrinsic and intrinsic forms of motivation where the former had a dominant position. In both cases the respondents showed awareness of the correlation between their extramural English acquisition and listening to vocal music. It is suggested that vocabulary acquisition was the primary aspect of language learning that benefited from listening to songs, followed by listening skills. The possibility to make their own choice to listen to music is linked to deep language learning, vocabulary learning in context and mastering listening skills.

Keywords: second language learning/acquisition, listening to music, lyrics and language, extramural English, motivation, improving motivation.

Acknowledgement

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1 Introduction

The present investigation of the impact of listening to English songs on the process of incidental learning English as a modern foreign language was carried out in Sweden, the country where many people are relatively well acquainted with English. Besides, Sweden is world-famous for its musicians and works of music. The aim of the present study is to investigate some specific aspects of a correlation between listening to music and *second language acquisition* (SLA) from the students' point of view. The study concerns the out-of school activity of listening to English songs which might affect the motivation of upper-secondary school students to learn English and the probable impact of this on the learning process of extramural English. Since this process takes place beyond the school program, the investigation focuses on the students' perception of the aspects of learning and motivation to learn English as a *modern foreign language* (MFL).

Having chosen a career as a teacher of English, I am interested in the opinion of students, and their perceptions of the possible role of English songs in mastering SLA. Listening to music is broadly seen as an activity of pleasure. The present paper investigates whether the students who were interviewed in this research considered listening to music a source of motivation for learning extramural English. If that was the case, it may be suggested that it was the lyrics in combination with the melodies that interested the students. Such an interest may have improved their motivation for learning the features of English that the songs provided with, for instance, new words and collocations, various accents etc. There could be more aspects that the students perceive as beneficial; therefore they were given the opportunity to express their opinions in semi-structured interviews.

There has been an increasing interest among researchers in the impact of out-of school activities including listening to music on the process of language acquisition and, particularly, in learning modern foreign languages (Falk, Rathcke & Dalla Bella, 2014; Fonseca-Mora, Toscano-Fuentes, & Wermke, 2011; Sundqvist, 2009). There is also an urge among scholars (Cook, 1996; Gardner, 2000; Gee, 2004; Legg, 2009; Woodrow, 2006; Woolfolk, Hughes, & Walkup, 2008) to consider the learner's need and interests when choosing the content and methods in the process of education in order to improve motivation.

There are several reasons for choosing to investigate the possible impact of listening to songs in English on the process of learning English as second language:

(a) While doing training sessions in both secondary and upper-secondary schools, I observed that many students have headphones on in the classrooms and even during lessons. They claimed that listening to music helped them concentrate on tasks because music made them relax and they were not disturbed by other students in the classroom. They also stated that they learned English when they listened to English songs. The teachers in those schools did not intervene in these, being convinced by the students that there was a positive outcome of this behavioral pattern.

(b) While teaching English and/or helping students with their English learning, I frequently utilize English songs in order to give an example of usage of either a word/ collocation, or a usage of a grammar rule. It seems that listening to songs serves as an effective aid to memorize vocabulary and aspects of grammar. My assumption is that when students listen to vocal music, they may incidentally learn English. That might cover such areas as vocabulary, listening skills and, possibly, oral proficiency. The emotional bond that the listener may experience while listening to a song may help improve memorization of the lyrics, which might be strengthened if the song is listened to repeatedly. There may be other factors that affect the process of learning.

(c) The lyrics of the songs reflect the life of the language community and its diversity. Therefore, such a way to learn language may correspond to the listener's need for identity and integration into the community of the target language. This may increase the interest in the context of the lyrics and, as a result, in the language. In other words, listening to songs might strengthen motivation to learn vocabulary in the context.

When speaking of the diversity of the dialects and accents in English, trying to promote tolerance and openness to understand pronunciation of English in various English communities, I frequently refer to a particular song which uses humor in order to display the variety of a spoken form of the language. This song is 'Let's Call the Whole Thing Off' performed by Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. One can even find a video clip on YouTube that demonstrates two transcriptions of one and the same word pronounced in the British English and Afro-American versions. The voices, music and humor may, in my opinion, serve as a good guide on the path of realization of the diversity of the cultures and, in some cases, may even encourage the shy learner to speak out without the fear of being laughed at, which is quite a common issue in the classroom.

 (d) I have met students who showed unwillingness to speak aloud in English in the fear of mispronouncing words or making any other mistakes. I assume that when listening to a song and possibly repeating after the singer, these learners may gain more confidence in their ability to speak English if, in addition to listening to a song, they also sing along. Singing along might influence both their listening skills and oral proficiency. Repetition probably would be beneficial in the process of mastering the language.

(e) According to the instructions of the Swedish Department of Education (Skolverket, 2011a), at upper-secondary school, students should have the opportunity to learn about the social and cultural life in the communities of the English language. Education should waken students' curiosity and should utilize various strategies. The process of learning should contribute to students' metacognitive perception of ways of learning language both at school and beyond school program (Gee, 2004; Saville-Troike, 2012; Woolfolk, Hughes & Walkup 2008).

All these factors encouraged me to do the present research with which I would like to contribute to those who draw attention to the impact of vocal music on students' motivation to learn English. In the literature section below, I will refer to various approaches related to these

ideas in order to support the questions of the present study and possible explanations of its outcome.

1.1 Aim and research questions

The main aim of this paper is to investigate whether, according to the learners' perception, listening to English songs has an impact on their motivation to learn English. If that is the case, the additional aim is to investigate the nature of the motivation and the aspects of language learning that may benefit from listening to vocal music. The study focuses on the following research questions:

- How does listening to English songs motivate the students to learn English? What is the nature of the motivation, if any?
- If any, what are the aspects of extramural English that the students particularly benefit from listening to music?

2 Previous research and theoretical framework

In this section, I will focus on some academic studies and research that concern SLA, music as an aid in learning, and motivation for learning. There are many aspects that these fields cover. I will draw my attention to those which are primarily mentioned by linguists and researchers in relation to the questions of the present study, and the aspects which will be referred to below in the Findings section.

2.1 Some aspects of second language acquisition

Despite having certain similarities, the processes of *first language* (L1) and *second language* (L2) acquisition are quite distinct from each other (Cook, 1996; Saville-Troike, 2012). There are several factors that, to a certain extent, influence the process of SLA. In the postmodern society, at the time of globalization, much attention is paid to the phenomenon of language acquisition rather than language learning. One of the major proponents of distinction between language learning and language acquisition is Stephen Krashen, who insists that the best methods are based on "meaningful interaction in the target language" because they "supply 'comprehensible input' in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students really want to hear" (as cited in Schutz, 2014). Language acquisition is rather subconscious and requires the regular L2 input that extends the learner's current competence in L2 (as cited in Schutz, 2014). Incidental learning is defined as the "unintentional or unplanned learning that results from other activities" (Kerke, 2000, p.1).

Swedish learners of English as MFL experience many incidental encounters with the target language which lead to incidental **vocabulary** learning (Sundqvist, 2009; Sylvén, 2004). According to Sylvén (2004, p.9), in many cases, systematic learning is overlapped by incidental acquisition of the target language; hence, there hardly exists purely systematic or incidental SLA (p.26). The term *extramural English* which is defined as "the English that

learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom" (Sundqvist, 2009, p. 24) seems to be preferable for the present study since it does not particularly distinguish systematic and incidental encounters with the L2 since it is uncertain how, if at all, the listeners improve their English. According to Sundqvist (2009) and Sylvén (2004), vocabulary acquisition is particularly affected by leisure activities.

Discussing the subject of **vocabulary** acquisition, Cook (1996) emphasizes the context in which a word is utilized, the importance of "not just knowing how it is defined in the dictionary, but how it relates to all the other words in the language, and how and when it may be used in the sentences" (p.49). Learning the vocabulary of L2 is far from simple memorization or learning a list of words. This is not always a very effective way of language acquisition since vocabulary is "the material to put in the patterns" that are provided by grammar (Cook, 1996, p.49). A word in English does not necessarily have an accurate translation in another language and may have different definitions (Cook, 1996). Learning vocabulary is more effective in context (Gee, 2004; Saville-Troike, 2012). Saville-Troike (2012) notes that not every word needs to be translated by the learner providing that L1 and L2 are related, which is the case for Swedish learners, whose native language has many words that sound and are written in a familiar way for the learner. According to Gee (2004), there is a need for a situational learning when the learner may identify themselves with a certain image and decode the information.

Newton (2013, pp.165-167) suggests that vocabulary learning, as a part of the incidental learning of English, particularly benefited from working on communication task, where the students encountered unfamiliar words and worked out their definitions without any access to external sources of information. According to Ehsanzadeh (2012, p.36), both breadth and, particularly, depth of lexical knowledge improved as a result of incidental vocabulary acquisition through reading. According to these two studies, the process of incidental vocabulary acquisition may benefit from both consulting glossaries and working out definitions of words.

Phonology is another component that receives much attention from researchers whose interest lies in the field of incidental language learning, e.g. Cook (1996), Falk, Rathcke and Dalla Bella (2014), Fonseca-Mora et al. (2011), Legg (2009), Sundqvist (2009). The learner needs both to recognize the word produced by others within a certain community and to master recognition of different accents. Students of upper-secondary school should be able to comprehend different dialects. Songs are sung by artists from, virtually, every language community, which reflects both the lexical chain and phonological features (Falk, Rathcke & Dalla Bella, 2014).

Second language learners tend to transfer some aspects of L1 onto L2 (Cook, 1996, p.46). There are various ways in which the learner masters the phonemes of the second language. In the classroom it is often the teacher or audio sources that introduce the pronunciation of words. Although Cook (1996, pp. 46-47) emphasizes the role of repetition, he questions the effectiveness of a common teaching technique when the teacher corrects wrong pronunciation since it may cause the learner's embarrassment. Cook (1996) assumes that the learner may

have "temporary rules of their own" (p. 47) and, eventually, achieve the desired effect. Listening to songs and singing along might be considered an aid in the process of mastering oral proficiency as well as listening skills.

Cook (1996) pays attention to intonation since misunderstanding of differences in intonations of L1 and L2 may give the learner a wrong "idea of the range of intonation and the extent to which they can deduce meanings from the actual words in the sentence" (p. 48). One of the examples is a compound that is defined as "a word formed from a combination of two or more words" (Greenbaum, 1996, p. 619). Cook (1996, p. 48) states that the learner acquires the right intonation mostly by practicing, imitating and repeating words in various contexts. A word that appears in compounds may have a different meaning from its origin; hence, it is the intonation, some say the melody of the language, which reveals the right definition of the word (Cook, 1996, p.46).

Can listening to songs in English be considered an aid in learning English as a modern foreign language? In the following insight into the link between music and language acquisition, it seems that there are certain common aspects between them.

2.2 Music and learning of modern foreign language

Music has many values for human beings. According to the report of Art Education Partnership (2011), music affects capabilities of young students beyond the frames of art helping them to develop essential skills in other academic subjects and may affect further learning processes. Studying music proves to be advantageous to language learners. It sharpens attentiveness and prepares students for achievements (Art Education Partnership, 2011). The report also states that "musical training develops the region of the brain responsible for verbal memory - the recall and retention of spoken words - which serves as a foundation for retaining information in all academic subjects" (p. 4).

The interest in the correlation between listening to music and memorization of words has been growing for the last decade, which may be explained by growing numbers of people learning L2. It seems that what attracts the listener primarily is the combination of rhythm, melody and lyrics (Fonseca-Mora et al. 2011). The cue to memorization of the lyrics may lay in the link between the structure and the syntax of the melody and that of the language (Ahlback, 2004). The researcher highlights that "in vocal music, lyrics may easily serve as a more forceful structural cue than pitch and rhythmic structure" (Ahlback, 2004, p. 468). Taking into consideration the link between the rhythm and the meter, he compares melody with the language that "we all understand, but in our own individual way" (Ahlback, 2004, p. 469). That individuality of the perception of vocal music may serve as a key role in the joy of the activity when a person may seek and find their own identity with a certain community of the target language.

The emotional aspect of music turns language acquisition into an enjoyable activity for both children and adults (Fonseca-Mora et al. 2011; Sundqvist, 2009). Beasley and Chuang (2008) investigated the impact of listening to music on learning English in web-based learning environment, which might correlate with out-of school activities when the learner listens to

songs repeatedly and in accordance with her or his mood. The result of the study suggests that providing that the students like the songs, understand the lyrics (which is likely for the upper-secondary students), repeated listening to songs increases motivation to learn English and has a positive impact on the result of learning English. Beasley and Chuang (2008) underline the importance of the content of the lyrics, which should correspond with the listener's interests which, in turn, contributes to repeated listening to the song. Repetition is argued be important in incidental SLA as it contributes to deep knowledge (Beasley & Chuang, 2008; Falk, Rathcke & Dalla Bella, 2014; Sundqvist, 2009)

Another interesting aspect is timing in out-of-school activities is provided by Sundqvist (2009, p. 144) who suggests that the participants of the research she conducted spent more time on listening to music than on any other activities that were suggested to be sources of extramural English. Sunqvist (2009, p. 146) argues that the respondents had improved their oral proficiency and vocabulary in English as a result of a number of out-of-school activities including listening to music. Listening to songs in French by teenage learners of French as a modern L2 had, according to Legg (2009, p. 10), a positive effect on memorizing words and phrases in context.

The popularity of music as an aid in SLA may be explained by Gardner's (2000, p. 69) view of music as one of the forms of the innate intelligences. In his perception of education, Gardner (2000) suggests that choosing a content of learning material should take into consideration three factors: truth, beauty and goodness. Listening to songs, therefore, may be seen as an element of (a) truth, because its features are authentic; (b) beauty, as it has been perceived traditionally; and (c) goodness, as it is a source of one's development in both cognitive and social ways. The choice of materials used for language learning is crucial for a process of identity and decoding the information, which in turn, awakens an interest in the listener and may improve their motivation for learning (Cook, 1996; Gardner, 2000; Gee, 2004; Townsend, 2011; Woolfolk et al. 2008).

2.3 Motivation

Motivation is a complex subject in the field of educational psychology. There are various theories that aim to explain the nature of motivation. Woolfolk et al. (2008) define motivation as "an internal state that arouses, directs and maintains behavior" (p. 438). Such a state is possibly reached when the listener of the music becomes interested in the context of the lyrics and takes a deep look into it, which often requires learning the language features such as words, a possible variety of their definitions and pronunciation, idioms, and grammar.

Many theories focus on either intrinsic or extrinsic nature of motivation (Harlen, 2012; Woolfolk et al., 2008). The former "is the natural tendency to seek out and conquer challenges as we pursue personal interests and exercise capabilities" (Woolfolk et al., 2008, p. 438). Intrinsic motivation is linked to curiosity, interests developed by the person, and the joy that the person experiences when she or he performs an action in order to achieve the goal. According to Hon-keung, Y., Man-shan, K. and Lai-fong, A. (2012), a higher level of curiosity "leads to higher intrinsic motivation and in turn, improves students' learning and

academic performance" (p. 303). Extrinsic motivation, also known as behavioral or instrumental, arises from the expectations of external rewards when pursuing the goal. Subsequently, it may result in either various forms of praise and awards or punishment. In education, it is often related to assessments and the learner's aim in the future career.

It is probably difficult to overestimate the impact that an aspect of competence in social issues has on the process of SLA which targets interaction. With the increasing usage of digital technologies, the phenomenon of interaction includes both direct interaction, such as interpersonal, and indirect interaction, for example, via the mass media. Cook (1996, p.42) argues that the learner's internal need for interaction, which leads to learning the culture of the target language, is the most advantageous means to successful SLA.

While learning environments are often designed as learning communities, learners with intrinsic motivation need space for themselves in their search for identification. Thus, the learners find themselves in the position when they "need to feel competent and capable in our interactions in the world" and, at the same time, they need autonomy in order to fulfill the desire for their "own wishes, rather than external awards or pressures" (Woolfolk et al., 2008, p. 445). This state is known as self-determination and is one of the few primary qualities in the subject of intrinsic motivation. There is a need to find balance between external expectations and the internal need for identity; otherwise, according to Cook (1996, p.42), if the learner feels diminished by the input in the process of SLA, they may not succeed.

Harlen (2012, pp. 270-271) argues that students with intrinsic motivation have a higher level of self-determination that leads to deeper learning than those with extrinsic ones. He emphasizes the impact that various forms of feedback may have on developing self-efficacy and an interest as components of motivation. Cook (1996, p. 42-43) suggests that some learners have a need for achievement, a need for success in the eyes of the society, which may serve as a generator of motivation. Thus, there are also theories that take into consideration a combination of cognitive and behavioral attitudes.

The learner needs contents and means of SLA that are easy to relate to in order to "establish close emotional bonds and attachments with others" (Woolfolk et al., 2008, p. 447). That is, presumably, the point when integration happens, when the learner may identify themselves with the subject of the culture of the target language.

There have been attempts to integrate various motivation theories into a coherent model. One of them is made by Townsend (2011), who discusses the impact of three components, namely goal, personal agency beliefs, and emotions on motivation. The researcher argues that the realization of these three aspects is important to a successful learning process.

Among various types of goals Townsend (2011) focuses on mastery and performance goals, that are particularly applicable in the present research. Mastery or learning goal refer to internal needs and are close to those described above as curiosity and the need for exploration for they "focus on understanding, personal improvement and accomplishment" (Townsend, 2011, p. 121). The nature of performance goals is likely to be linked to behavioral form of motivation and originates in expectancy of receiving a valuable award (Oxford & Shearin,

1996). According to Townsend (2011), such goals "focus on demonstrating superiority over others" (p.121). Referring to other researchers, Townsend (2011) argues that students with mastery goals, in general, show higher result in achieving their goals than students with performance goals, since the achievement of their goals is "a result of greater self-efficacy, greater persistence in the face of obstacles, greater appreciation of the value of their personal effort" (Townsend, 2011, p. 121).

According to Sundqvist (2009), listening to music, among other out-of-school activities, contributes to learners' self-efficacy. It is possible that listeners pursue a mastery goal when learning the lyrics of the songs they like, since it is the desire to learn what the song is about that may strengthen their interest in the lyrics. One should not, however, exclude other components such as status in society and the feeling of superiority that may be provided by the knowledge of certain aspects of the language and social life of the cultures of English-speaking communities; that is what indicates the performance nature of the goal.

Personal **beliefs** reflect mental processes that may develop from low to high and are referred to as "self-evaluative thoughts" (Townsend, 2011, p. 125). These thoughts evaluate previous experiences as being successful, less successful or failure and may encourage or discourage one's performance. Analyzing the previous experiences and evaluating the present task, one sets out expectations on possible outcomes of the planned performance (Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Townsend, 2011). High expectations are likely to lead to more intensive performance and, as a result, to a more successful achievement of the goal than low expectations. Such expectations or beliefs in one's capability are also known as self-efficacy, which Townsend (2011) views as:

> the conviction that one can successfully accomplish a specific task; that is, one has the prerequisite skills or can acquire them, has the necessary self-regulatory skills to evaluate progress, can modify goals when necessary, can persist when faced with difficulty, can find solutions to obstacles, and so on. (p. 125)

Beliefs in the value of the task are linked to one's desire to fulfil it. According to Townsend (2011), there are four types of value:

- intrinsic value as "enjoyment experienced in doing a task" (p. 127);
- attainment value referred to as progress of the performance;
- utility value defines potential benefits in other tasks;
- cost belief considers possible loss of effort, time etc. while performing the task.

Thus, the belief that the performance is enjoyable, and the result is achievable may have impact on other future actions. It is possible that when the student listens to the song she or he likes, they may be motivated to learn the lyrics in order to understand the message of the song. The success of this action may depend on the belief that the student's level of English is high enough to pursue the goal, which is likely for an upper-secondary school student.

Emotions experienced before, during and after performing the task play one of the most significant roles in the patterns of motivation. Positive emotions and their development are

likely to lead to a higher degree of self-efficacy, and, as a result, that "increases the extent and quality of engagement with learning" (Townsend, 2011, p. 129). Negative emotions may cause anxiety, lack of interest in the subject, and decrease in motivation.

3 Method

In this section I will describe the method I used for collecting the empirical data of the present research, the process of data collecting, and the materials I used during it.

3.1 Qualitative research

The data collection of this research aimed to provide evidence of students' perception of the possible impact of listening to songs in English on their motivation to learn English. The assumption that the students learn English beyond the school program led me to the idea to carry out an investigation which would give the participants the opportunity to express their points of view on the issues that the research questions aim at.Therefore, the procedures and methods associated with qualitative research are preferable in comparison with quantitative methods. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) argue that in the field of SLA, an experimental framework of qualitative research is often based on comparison, which gives little room to new ideas. Hence, my preference for qualitative methods over quantitative ones was based on the assumption that "although qualitative research methods do not control for variables, the development of rigorous methods for data collection and analysis have produced results that would not be possible through experimental design" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 119). Since the questions of my study consider incidental language learning, qualitative research methods would presumably allow me to diminish possible preconceptions about what information the interviews would supply me with, according to Bogdan and Bikle (2006).

The semi-structured interview as a method was chosen because it involves interaction, which is essential in an open dialogue. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), it may give the researcher a greater opportunity to "discover phenomena such as patterns of second language behavior not previously described and to understand those phenomena from the perspective of participants in the activity" (p. 120). This method would give me the opportunity to follow the guideline of the questions of the present research as well as to discover some aspects related to the student's experience in learning English and their individual perceptions of such experiences.

The semi-structured interview, according to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), is a more flexible form of interaction than a structured one since it "consists of specific and defined questions determined beforehand, but at the same time it allows some elaboration in the questions and answers" (p. 167). Therefore, the interviewer's task is to create an atmosphere during the interview where the interviewee feels comfortable enough to be open so that not only would the prepared theoretical concepts be covered, but it would also facilitate the evolution of the dialogue. I followed the advice given by Seliger and Shohamy (1989) and Flick (2014) not to

be preoccupied with the question guide, but to focus on the flow of the interaction around the aspects related to the issue. I also adopted everyday language in order to develop a dialogue of trust with the informants as it is recommended by Flick (2014, p. 210).

The method of the semi-structured interview of this research is narrowed to the **focused interview**. Flick (2014) defines the following criteria as essential for designing and conducting such an interview: "(1) non-direction, (2) specificity, (3) range, and (4) the depth and personal context shown by the interviewee" (p. 212). Non-direction may be achieved by utilizing a variety of forms of questions ranging from unstructured to semi-structured and structured (Flick, 2014, p212). However, the semi-structured interview unlike the unstructured interview is always, to a certain extent, directive since it has a topic to discuss and based on a combination of structured and unstructured questions (Bryman, 2002, pp. 300-301). It is details that the interviewees may provide the data collection with that is valuable in such a study (Bryman, 2002, p. 300; Merriam, 2009, p. 91). Flick (2014) argues that "the interviewer can and must decide during the interview when and in which sequence to ask the question. Whether a question has already been answered en passant and may be omitted, can only be decided ad hoc" (p. 209).

The purpose of the structured questions of the present question guide is to get straightforward answers which would allow me to avoid ambiguity in interpretation of the subjects of the questions. The unstructured questions as well as the corresponding questions aim to receive explanations to the answers and to share the thoughts on the subjects of the questions. While conducting the interviews, I frequently had to either omit some questions from the question guide or reformulate them since the interviewees had mentioned the subject of the interest before being asked about it. There were a few cases when unexpected issues came into a view, which caused questions and comments that were not prepared for the interviews.

Specificity ascribes to deepening the questions from general to more specific and conducting the interview so that to "encourage retrospective inspection" by, for example, asking corresponding questions (Flick, 2014, p. 213). Another significant aspect is the design of questions, which gradually become more and more specific. Hence, the balance between explicitness and openness should be achieved. Every interview of the present study started with a question of a general format, namely, the question of whether the informant learned English apart from school. Gradually, the questions became more and more specific regarding the issue of the present research.

The range of questions of the focused interview applies to "ensuring that all aspects and topics relevant to the research question are mentioned" as well as giving the interviewee "the chance to introduce new topics of their own in the interview" (Flick, 2014, p. 213). Thus, some of the questions were designed with the aim to receive a straightforward answer with the intent to discuss the attitude to the subject of every particular question.

Depth and personal context may be shown in the interview by "going beyond simple assessments" and giving an emotional, self-revealing responses and comments (Flick, 2014, p.213). In order to achieve these criteria, I started every interview with talk that helped to establish a personal contact. The flow of the interview would follow the informant's pattern of

thoughts. I tried to encourage the participants to give their points of view which could be wider than the frames of the question guide. The questions were frequently reformulated if I had the feeling that it was needed for the interviewee's better perception. Some spontaneous questions were inserted in several interviews as well in order to receive more detailed answers, or as a stimulus to the dialogue.

3.2 The procedure of the interview

Every interview was conducted in the school that the students attended during scheduled English lessons. The main language of the interviews was English since it was customarily spoken in the classroom between me and the students which gave the learners the opportunity to practise it. However, the interviewees were not restricted to English and could switch to Swedish if they liked. There were a few inserts of Swedish words made by two interviewees during the data collection. All the interviewees were learning English as a modern foreign language at a Swedish school either the level English 5 or English 6 which refer to the first and the second year of studying English at upper-intermediate level. During my training session, I had the opportunity to teach English to and communicate with the students of the school classes the participants attended and observe them in order to develop a certain degree of communicative interaction before the interviews took place. I also tried to encourage the students to be open by saying that it was their personal opinions that were valuable to me, not other factors like proficiency in English.

The first group of four of the students that I interviewed from form English 6 were concerned with the issue of anonymity and were willing to participate in interviews provided that I noted their answers in writing but did not audio-record them. Probably, the high sensitivity of the idea of being audio-recorded was a novelty to the students with whom I had not spent enough time yet to develop relationships based on trust and understanding. Another reason might have been an aspect of solidarity or group pressure, when one student expressed the concerns and others did not want to interfere. Therefore, the interviews of those students were not audio-recorded but put into a transcript form during the interviews, and some memo was added straight after the interviews.

The other eleven students had no concerns with being audio-recorded; instead all of them showed willingness to be interviewed and audio-recorded. This may be explained by the fact that the interviews were conducted several weeks after we had first met; by that time, relatively trusting relationships had developed. Another possible factor was that that particular class had more friendly relationships within the groups of students, according to my and many other teachers' opinion. I would not, however, distinguish the validity of the answers to the questions of the interviews of one group or the other since, during the interviews, the students expressed their points of view in various degrees of enthusiasm from being calm to getting interested in the subject and becoming emotionally involved in both cases when the interviews were recorded in writing form and audio-recorded.

Neither the ethnic origin of the learners nor their mother tongue concerns the questions of the present study. The gender question lies beyond the scope of the study which utilizes the

perspective on music as a universal phenomenon (Gardner, p.69). The durations of the interviews was within the frame of five minutes.

 Most of the interviews took place in a separate classroom; however, due to the lack of vacant rooms, a few of them were performed in a waiting hall of a small department which had quite comfortable sofas to sit on and two desks to place a computer for data recording on. This hall was used by the regular English teacher for having personal talk with the students in order, for instance, to give them feedback on their assessments. I had a feeling that those students who were interviewed in the hall were more at ease than the others probably since the room was familiar to them to have a conversation with a teacher. Besides, the school was relatively small, with the total number of students under two hundred and fifty, and consisted of a few detached buildings; hence, there were few activities around or not at all which could distract the interviewees. To be precise, during one interview a few people from another classroom passed by. Their voices as well as the door slam can be heard on the audio recording. However, it did not seem to distract the interviewee who continued the conversation. Apparently, facing the choice of either excluding this particular interview from the study or not, I chose the latter. The argument for such a decision was that the information that the interviewee provided the research with was as valuable and worth investigating as the others. Having listened to the recording several times, I did not find any signs that would diminish the validity or reliability of the interview in question. Hence, it is included in the present study.

The structure of the interviews used in the present research has certain similarities such as every interview started with a common, general question and gradually became more focused on the aspects related to the questions of the present research. Most of the questions were designed with the aim to receive a straightforward answer with the further urge to analyse the choice of, perception of or attitude to the subject of the question. As an interviewer, I tried to have all the questions of the question guide answered. As it is recommended by Bogdan and Biklen (2006), in some interviews, I tried different techniques such as sharing experiences with the interviewee and gentle challenging. Some of the interviewees being open-minded provided the study with more information than the others though all of them answered the questions of the question guide.

All of the interviews were put into the protocol form as recommended by Flick (2014). In the transcriptions below, the interviewer is indicated by the capital letter *I* related to the word interviewer, while the interviewees are indicated by the capital letter S related to the word student and the number in accordance with the order the interviews were conducted from 1 to 15.

3.4 Ethical considerations, validity and reliability

The fifteen informants were students ranging in age from 16 to 18 years old attending an upper-secondary school in Sweden. I was familiar to them as a trainee teacher of English as I was doing a teaching practice session of ten weeks at that time.

The ethical considerations of the present study followed the regulations of The Swedish Research Council (Forskningsetiska principer inom humanistisk-samhällsvetenskaplig forskning, 2013) as follows:

(1) The Requirement of information (Informationskravet). The students of three school classes had been informed that I was doing a research for my university studies three weeks prior the interviews took place. They were informed verbally about the main principles of the document in question which was followed by discussion.The students were also informed that the topic of the study concerned English as MFL which meant that those who considered English as their L1 would not be able to participate in the study. There were two students in total who claimed that English was their L1; thus, those students were not asked to take part in the present research.

(2) The Requirement of Consent (Samtyckeskravet). Since all of the students were over 15 years old and none of them, according to the school administration, had a request for special treatment, they were able to submit consent to participate in the study. They were informed that the participation was voluntary and they were free to abort it at any moment without giving a reason for such an action. Their regular English teacher was present at the time when the students were informed and agreed that the interviews would be conducted during regular English classes.

(3) The Requirement of Confidentiality (Konfidentialitetskravet). Anonymity was guaranteed. The names of the informants, classes and school are not released in any section of the present study. No other people, except the researcher and the informants, were involved in the process of data collecting.

(4) The Requirement of Usage (Nyttjandekravet). All the information related to the data collecting was promised to be used in the interests of scientific research. No school personal had access to the information obtained during the interviews.

Every research is concerned with the extent to which it is trustworthy. The design of the qualitative research depends on the author's perception of the issue of the investigation which is one of many different viewpoints. Therefore, validity and reliability are often based on "a perspective congruent with the philosophical assumption underlying the paradigm "of the case being investigated (Merriam, 2009, p.211). One of the important factors of trustworthiness is *internal validity* which "deals with the question of how research findings match reality" even though reality can never be captured by the researcher (Merriam, 2009, p.213). However, there are a number of strategies that the researcher can use in order to enhance the internal validity of the study, for instance, by receiving feedback from the participants of the study which is called *respondent validation* that aims to avoid misinterpretation of their words in the finding of the research (Merriam, 2009, p.217).

The interviewees of the present study were asked to give their opinions on whether the analysis of their perceptions was accurate, or whether there were some misinterpretations and, therefore, some actions should be taken. Every interviewee was shown the parts of the

sections of the findings of the present study which utilized her/his words in order to evaluate of my interpretation of their words and make possible suggestion. The evaluation took place at school during English classes. All the fifteen respondents evaluated the analysis positively, namely, "I agree with your interpretations of my words" with no suggestion for further actions.

Reliability in social studies is, to some extent, problematic since it refers to the replication of the results of the study based on human's behavior which is rather dynamic (Merriam, 2009, pp. 220-221). The case study investigates a phenomenon which is related to a current tendency within a certain group of participants. Therefore, the findings of the present case study do not aim to be replicated but rather investigate a particular case of a current phenomenon and contribute to further academic studies. Theoretical background and correlation with current research support the discussion of the analysis of the present study.

4 Findings and discussion

In this section, I will analyze the data which is a set of interviews with fifteen students. The data collection determined the analysis technique, which is a system of coding of the obtained information. I reread the interview protocols and distinguished the answers that followed certain patterns which became categories of the further data interpretation and analysis (Merriam, 2009, p.188). The lines taken from the transcripts of the interviews are original; that is to say, they were not changed for the sake of grammatical accuracy or other reasons.

4.1 Music as a source of incidental learning of English

All the interviewees claimed listening to music to be a source of extramural English. Some of the students noted it themselves without music being mentioned by the interviewer, whereas others confirmed it after having been asked. Nonetheless, many of them showed enthusiasm in being involved in the conversation on music.

Six students mentioned music as a source of incidental learning of English without music being mentioned before in the conversation that preceded the interview, that is to say, they mentioned music in the answer to the first question of the question guide: *Apart from school, do you learn English? If so, how?*

Music was mentioned along with other activities such as reading, playing games, watching TV, TV-shows and movies. In the cases when the students mentioned music without a certain reference to vocal music, I asked them whether they meant songs in English. In all these cases the answers were positive. Hence, listening to music referred to listening to vocal music.

Nine students first named other activities which they thought were the sources of incidental learning of English including the Internet, the computer, traveling, communication with both native and non-native speakers. These students answered positively about music as a source of extramural English after having been asked about it. Their statements are sub-categorized

in the present block as either firm or very firm. The following are the answers to the sub-question: *Do you listen to music? English songs, I mean.*

a) firm: *yes/yeah*

Three students gave a short answer such as yes or yeah.

b) very firm

Six students gave a positive answer which was supported with:

    (1) repetition:
     S 9: *Yes, yes*. (In the audio-recording, the intonation reveals strong confirmation.)

    (2) affirmation:

      S 6: *A lot. I listen to English music a lot*.

      S 12: *Yes, really much.*

    (3) comments:

      S 2: *Yes, yes. And it's all in English.*

      S 13: *Yeah. I listen to English music all the time.*

      S 15: *Yeah, that's like the only thing I listen to, I think. Yeah.*

4.1.1 The language of the lyrics as a choice

The students were asked whether they listened to songs in other foreign languages. They also were asked to explain their choice of listening to music. Eight interviewees claimed that they only listened to songs in English apart from their native Swedish language. They indicated their own choice of listening to songs which does not automatically mean that the informants did not at all listen to songs in other languages when not making a choice. The restrictions to listening to only English songs were the following:

    (1) not understanding other languages:

     S 4: *I want to know text in every song, it's not only music. I want to know what the song's about.*

     S 7: *I know what they're singing. If I listen to French songs, I don't know what it's about. And I can't sing along. And it's boring*.

     S 11: *I think it's more fun to understand what's in the songs*.

     S 14: *I don't know what they're saying so I don't know if I can relate to it.*

(2) the sound of the English language as more likeable:

S 5: *It sounds funny.* (Speaking about other foreign languages.)

S 7: *I think English sounds better.*

 (3) listening to songs both in English and other foreign languages:

The other seven respondents listened to songs in other foreign languages beside English. All of them explained their choice and restrictions by the following:

(4) interest in other cultures (two students):
 S 9: *I listen to Danish music and things like that and... Yeah, language is almost the same and cultures.*

S 12: *May be Afrikansk[1] and Spansk, or something like that. But most Afrikansk because I find them really interesting, how they are regularly take their old culture and do something new about them.*

The interest in the music of those cultures lies beyond the school program and indicates the listeners' emotional bond with the music and/or language. I would not draw any conclusions related to SLA since it would need a more detailed study in these particular cases, which lies beyond the frames of the present work.

(5) the language was the one that the student studied either in a present course or in a previous one (four students):

S 8: *I studied German.*

S 10: *I just learn English at school and I learn Finnish.*

These remarks relate to learning a modern foreign language at school as an explanation for the familiarity with the languages of songs the respondents listened to.

(6) lack of the interest in songs in the languages that the students were not studying at present:

S 3: *I am not as interested in German songs as I am in English* (This student had learned the German language at secondary school but did not do it at present upper-secondary school.)

S10*: When I tried to learn Spanish, I listened to Spanish songs, tried to analyze the vocabulary, sing about and stuff like that, and learn more words. But I don't think I need to listen to songs in German, Spanish and that kind of stuff while I really need to learn Finish and English, I think.*

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[1] Hereafter, the excerpts from the interviews are reproduced in their original forms.

These two respondents indicated the dependence of the choice of the languages of the songs they listened to on their school subjects. This refers to the extrinsic value of the goal, possibly, pursuing the performance goal that is useful in the classroom and is based on the expectancy of the award (Oxford & Shearin, 1996; Townsend, 2011). The responses of these two students show signs of the extrinsic form of motivation in their interest in lyrics which is urged by the need for academic achievement and results in school assignments (Cook, 1996; Harlen, 2012). However, it is possible, that the interviews did not reveal the whole area of interests in music of these respondents due to the limitations of the framework of the present study and the respondents may have had a combination of the extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Harlen, 2012).

4.1.2 Lyrics: social and cultural aspects of motivation

All of the fifteen students stated that songs in English were either preferable to them or the only ones they listen to in a language apart from their first language. The students underlined the importance of lyrics to them, which required the knowledge of the language of the lyrics. In order to understand lyrics in English, they needed to practise their English and, possibly, improved it being led by curiosity, exploratory behaviour and the joy of performance as components of intrinsic motivation (Townsend, 2011). This suggestion is drawn from the interpretation of the interviewees' views on the impact of listening to music on their extramural English. The importance of understanding the lyrics may also mean the need for identification with a certain community. I have distinguished the respondents' statements as follows:

(7) importance of understanding the lyrics in general:

S 1: *I like to learn lyrics. I like to know what the song is about.*

S 4: *Every song is about something. It has a story. Yeah, everyone.*

S 8: *It's more the text in the song that I'm looking for, not so much of melody.*

S15: *When I hear a song in English I understand the lyrics and know what they are singing about. But in other languages I just because the melody or something else, so it's two different things.*

These responses indicate the students' curiosity and their desire to learn what the songs they listened to were about. The listeners were not satisfied with merely listening to music without paying attention to the context of the lyrics; rather, they showed interest in the lyrics and the message of the song as a response to the listener's feelings:

S 1: *It's not just music. Then I live in that song.*

S10: *It helps if it's a good message or if it's something like that. You remember it more better if it's a catchy song and just what it's about and something.*

S14: *I don't know what they're saying, so I don't know if I can relate to it.* (Explaining why she did not listen to songs in other foreign languages.)

These responses reveal that the story of the song and its message is one of the central aspects of the listeners' preferences for music. One of the respondents used the term 'catchy song' to relate to the possibility to memorize the song and, as a result, its lyrics. A 'catchy song' is perceived as a unit of music and language whereas the lack of understanding the message of the song diminishes the interest in the song, as respondent S14 mentioned. Listening to music that the listener may relate to sharpens attentiveness and is thought to contribute to achievements in academic studies (Art Education Partnership, 2011).

(8) external factors:

The interviewees were not asked directly whether their choice of music depended on other people's opinions. Two of the respondents mentioned this aspect themselves. Their responses indicate that they gained social competence when they listened to the songs recommended by their peers. The learning process may occur as a result of the need for interaction with other people (Cook, 1996, p.36). The growing popularity of digital sources for listening to music may have affected more listeners than those who mentioned it. Their choice of music is often shared as follows:

> S 7: (Speaking on her choice for English songs.) *It's recommended. When you listen to Spotify, it's recommended. And play songs that friends listen too*.

This might indicate the need to find a balance between the external expectations of the community and the need to fulfill the inner desire to be competent in certain social issues. The answer indicates the performance form of the goal, which leads to the conclusion that the student had extrinsic motivation when she listened to recommended songs. However, this respondent indicated intrinsic motivation when speaking about her choice of English songs earlier on in example (1); then she claimed that she wanted to listen to songs that she understood, otherwise, it was boring. I conclude that she may have a combination of mastery and performance goals, and that, so far, she has been the third student who showed the signs of having a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (the others are the students S3 and S10).

4.1.3 Improving skills in English

The students' perceptions of the impact that lyrics have on their extramural English may be distinguished in two main categories that indicate curiosity or interest in the message of the song and a conscious way of learning English as a MFL. The weights of these two categories might shift depending on interpretations of the responses. However, there are certain criteria which point at one or the other aspect of expanding vocabulary according to the perceptions of the interviewees.

(9) expanding vocabulary:

All of the respondents claimed that they expanded their vocabulary. The students said that they expanded their vocabulary by working out the definitions of new words in context and/or

looking up words in dictionaries. The students' view on the link between listening to vocal music and learning language correlates with Legg's (2009) statement that the process of memorization of words benefits from such an activity. Some students, who claimed that they learned new words by listening to music, did not reveal how exactly they did it. They gave their point of view as the following:

S 8: *You learn new words all the time when you listen to music.*

S15: *I learn the lyrics because... I don't know. As I said I like the song; if I like the song, I like to know more about what the lyrics is about.*

Others regarded therecognition of the words they had already learned as well as learning new words as a process of learning. I distinguish the following means of learning new words:

a) repeating after the singer:

S 7: *It's just like a text you learn in the head.*

S13: *I'm listening to words and then repeat them.*

b) working out the definitions of words:

There were interviewees who claimed that they learned new words by repeating them and working out their definitions or consulting the glossaries

S 9: *I'm learning new words. They are singing and I learn words. May be I've learned them before and I recognize them and you're training along.*

c) consulting glossaries and other digital sources:

Five students said that they looked for lyrics in various ways. The following are some of the references to the media, such as Google, Spotify, sources in their mobile phones which the students used when they needed to:

S1: *When I don't know a word, I look it up because I want to know what the song's about. Yes, especially when I like the song, I want to know the whole text.*

S 3: *You're always learning the words because I always like to check the lyrics.*

S10: (Speaking about lyrics.) *It's some after words that are quite rare often and, yeah, so I learn. I widen my vocabulary when words are rare, you don't speak those words normally, and you don't use just those words.* (Earlier the students, talking about other sources of informal English learning claimed to have consulted dictionaries.) *I read books in English and look up every word that I don't understand so that I know every word.*

S11: *If I don't know the words, I google it, translate. So, that's good, I think.*

S15: *Maybe google lyrics of this song and learn them by [...] heart.*

The responses above show that the students learned words in context which is considered to be the most effective way of vocabulary acquisition (Cook, 1996; Gee, 2004; Newton, 2013; Saville-Troike, 2012). Besides, learning words from the texts that are of the interest to the learner is suggested to lead to deep learning (Beasley & Chuang, 2008; Ehsanzadeh, 2012). Student S 10 perceived expanding vocabulary by learning the lyrics as a source of learning words that are rarely used in daily life. Another student S 15 admitted learning the lyrics of the songs he liked by heart. The availability of consulting sources reduces the risk of anxiety and time consuming as a cost of the performance, which contributes to the attainment value (Townsend, 2011). According to Sundqvist (2009, p. 202), these factors may contribute to higher self-efficacy and, as it is shown in the responses below, improves the ability to work on the language on their own. Working on their own on learning new words which include consulting digital sources the students improved their chances for deep knowledge.

The exploratory behaviour that the learners showed in these responses reveal their desire to achieve accuracy in the translation of words in English since, as Cook (1996, p.49) points out, a word in one language may have a variety of definitions in another language.

2) improving listening skills:

When asked what skills, if any, the interviewees thought listening to music may have helped them improve, four of the students named listening. It does not mean automatically that the other respondents excluded listening skills as those benefited from such an activity since the question was asked about skills in general. It might be suggested that if the students were asked whether listening to music helped them improve listening skills, the number of positive answers could have been more than four. The question, however, did not focus on listening in particular.

S 1: *Yes. I am very good at listening; it's my best part in English. I do best in listening.*

S 6: *Oh, yes, because you like, err, their tones, err. How do you call it?*

I: *Pronunciation?*

S 6: *Pronunciation, yeah, right. How they say the words.*

I: *Yes, some speak about melody of language.*

S 6: *Yeah, that too.*

S15: *…and the listening skills because songs and artists can be like, can speak different kind of English with accents and have different meaning in the words and so on. I think, I expand my English knowledge from listening to English music.*

These claims correlate with Cook's (1996, pp.46-48) view on the mastering oral skills, in particular in the view that the learners may find their own ways of learning how to pronounce words and combinations of words and, as a result, to achieve the right intonation of L2. This is indicated by interviewee S 6 who expanded the perception of pronunciation to a more

complicated phenomenon related to melody. The link between music and language is thought (Gardner, 2000; Ählback, 2004) to have a natural relation for human's intelligence.

The other respondent pointed out the importance of accent that the listener heard in the songs of various singers. The process of SLA includes learning the culture of the language community. The diversity of the English-speaking community is reflected in the songs that are sung world-wide; hence, the listeners had a possibility to adjust their listening skills to various accents. Learning different dialects and accents may be useful both in communicative skills and academic performance (Cook, 1996; Gee, 2004).

(10) reproducing:

The interviewees were asked if they sang along. Two of the respondents gave negative answers such as:

S 9: *No, not much.*

The other thirteen interviewees said that they sang along either for themselves:

S 3: *For myself mostly.*

or in presence of other people as, for example, student S 12 did when she started singing while being interviewed; or such as the following:

S 11: *My roommate doesn't like it much, but I do it anyway.*

(11) repetition:

The students were asked a direct question if they listened to songs that they liked repeatedly. All the fifteen students gave a positive answer. The frequency may be scaled from intensive to moderate:

S 5: *Yeah, until I get tired of it.*

S 7: *Yes, but don't want to listen to it too often so you get tired of it. Sometimes, it's like you don't listen to it at all because you don't want to get tired.*

S 8: *I have my play-list, so it roll.*

S 9: *Yeah, yeah.*

S 15: *I personally listen to one song over and over again if it's a song that I like.*

The responses of the interviewees indicate the frequency of listening to songs varies in accordance with individual preferences which corresponds with Sundqvist's (2009) findings that the students spent different amounts of time on out-of-school activities. Frequent practice of language contributes to mastery of skills of S2. Hence, it may be suggested that the respondents mastered vocabulary, phonology (as, possibly, working out their own rules of pronunciation), and listening skills. The positive effect of repetition on SLA corresponds with the suggestion made by Beasley and Chuang (2008), Falk, Rathcke and Dalla Bella (2014),

Sundqvist (2009), Sylvén (2004), Webb, Newton and Chang (2013). Moreover, repetition is also considered important in the methodology of SLA (Cook, 1996, Saville-Troike, 2012).

(12)   the urge to take an action:

While some of the responses may be interpreted as indications of improvement of the motivation for learning S2, one of the interviewees mentioned the term 'motivation' without being asked about it. In the following statement the student drew a link between listening to music, its effect on her feelings and the driving force for an action which she named as motivation.

> S 14: *It depends what kind of music it is. I may listen to music that makes me happy and I'm feeling motivated.*
>
> **I: *You're feeling?***
>
> S 14: *Motivated.*
>
> **I: *To learn English?***
>
> S 14: *Yeah.*
>
> **I: *In which way?***
>
> S 14: *I like doing stuff.*

In the dialogue above, the student showed the awareness of the positive impact of listening to music on her feelings which resulted in higher motivation for 'doing stuff' which included learning language. Although the interviewer urged the interviewee to confirm the subject of the motivation, the student agreed with the interpretation of her words in the respondent validation later on. The nature of the student's motivation is intrinsic aroused from the learner's internal state and targeted the mastery goal (Towsend, 2011).

4.1.4 Other aspects of learning

During the interviews the students had the opportunity to express their thoughts on the subjects of the questions. I asked them both straightforward questions and questions that required an analysis of various degrees. The interviews provided some findings that were not directly targeted by the questions of the present research, and, at times, not directly related to the questions of the research. Among such views are the following:

(13)   interest in other cultures:

Three of the respondents mentioned culture as the aspect brought up by music. Two of the students emphasized the familiarity of other foreign cultures to them. The cultures they were speaking about belonged to two different musical and cultural traditions. In both cases, however, the interviewees tried to identify themselves with those cultures even though they did not have direct connections with them. As it has been said above, these responses were not targeted by the research questions and, therefore, are not going to be analyzed from

theoretical perspectives. They rather reveal a broad spectrum that the semi-structured interview may provide a study with. The two of the interviewees expressed their emotional closeness with the cultures they were speaking about:

> S 9: *I listen to Danish music and things like that and... Yeah, language is almost the same and culture.*

> S 12: *In Africa you feel music, you feel rhythm and err, you feel like err, everyone is part of something or because in Africa there can be a thousand people. And in English you can be just one or you can be more. Err, so in Africa you feel like old self. Like you belong somewhere.*

The third respondent said that he liked listening to music of other generations, apparently, different from his own:

> S 6: *I listen to a lot of old music, like on the 50s, 60s and 70s.*

> **I:** ***What attracts you in that music?***

> S 6: *The culture and I don't know. It's good music because they put effort in it and not just like it.* (He knocks on the desk.)

The three statements above correlate with Gardner's (2000) view on music as a subject of truth, goodness and beauty that is universal for human beings, and that is worth being involved into the process of learning.

4.2 Summary

The main findings focus on the interviewees' view on the possible impact of their leisure activity of listening to music on their extramural English. All of the students were interested in the lyrics of the songs they listened to and showed either little interest or none at all in the songs which they did not understand. The interest in the lyrics of the songs indicates knowledge of the language of the lyrics to a certain degree. Providing that the students liked the song, they were willing to learn the context of the lyrics. The appeal of the songs was linked to the following aspects:

(a) curiosity, interest in the message of the lyrics;
(b) feelings and emotions arising from the songs;
(c) social aspects such as the need to feel competent in popular issues.

While aspect (a) was indicated by responses of all of the interviewees, the other two aspects, namely (b) and (c) relate to twelve of the students. Beliefs in the value of the task of twelve interviewees may be interpreted as (1) intrinsic that refer to the enjoyment brought by listening to music and (2) cost beliefs that consider that there is little, if any, possible loss of effort and time devoted to the task (Townsend, 2011, p.127). The emotional aspect, the beliefs and the value of the task define the mastery nature of the goal and, as a result, the intrinsic

motivation of the listeners in the process of improvement of their extramural English. When the learner wants to get a deeper understanding of what is said, he or she may also have a need to be competent in the interactive world which strengthens his or her self-determination in the process of learning (Woolfolk et al., 2008; Cook, 1996). According to Hon-keung, Y., Man-shan, K. and Lai-fong, A. (2012), due to the high level of curiosity which is linked to higher intrinsic motivation, the students may improve their academic performance. Hence, the high level of curiosity of the interviewees may be linked to improvement in their extramural English.

The responses of the other three interviewees showed no interests in social aspects derived from the lyrics which does not mean that they did not have it, but rather that they did not point it out in the interviews as such a question was not asked directly. These students were more focused on the advantages linked to their academic studies such as learning vocabulary from the lyrics. This might indicate personal differences in the value of social aspects. Nevertheless, it is suggested that twelve interviewees developed the mastery goal and, as a result had intrinsic motivation for learning extramural English while three other students pursued the performing goal resulting in extrinsic motivation for improving their academic studies.

All of the interviewees considered that they improved their extramural English as a result of listening to songs in terms of vocabulary learning. There are three major factors that led the listeners to take an action:

- interest in the context of the lyrics of songs that appeal to them which is interpreted as the need for interpersonal indirect communication;
- the desire for social competence;
- the awareness of the impact of vocabulary learning on academic studies.

Vocabulary learning was claimed by all of the interviewees as a prime aspect of their extramural English acquisition. The listeners either worked out the definitions of new words or consulted glossaries as a way to learn new words. The former is supported by the finding of Newton (2013) while the latter of those by Ehsanzadeh (2012). As long as the listeners developed an emotional bond with the music, they listened to it repeatedly and the majority of them sang along. The appeal of the song may be interpreted as the unity of the music and the lyrics, where the rhythm of the music and the structure of the language attract the listener in such a way that the message of the song is easy to memorize (Ahlback, 2004). Repetition is an important aspect of SLA that leads to deep learning (Beasley & Chuang (2008); Saville-Troike, 2012; Sundqvist, 2009). Singing along indicates practicing L2 orally which leads to mastering the phonology. According to Cook (1996), practicing the language orally, leads to the improvement the L2 phonology in terms of pronunciation and intonation.

Three students showed awareness in the benefits of listening to music in their academic studies. What is more, the value of paying attention to the songs was linked to the school subjects they learned. It may be suggested that the dominant belief in the value of the task is attainment which refers to the progress of the academic performance (Townsend, 2011,

p.127). The task was named as vocabulary learning of MFL where English was dominant followed by Finnish, German and Spanish. There was little indication of emotional aspects involved in the choice of music which may be interpreted as pursuing the performance goal when listeners expanded their vocabulary. The nature of the motivation as an internal state of those three students is suggested to be extrinsic which does not exclude the presence of intrinsic motivation but rather as its primary form.

Apart from the answers to the research questions, the responses of the interviewees provided the study with additional information about the impact that listening to music had on various aspects of internal needs including interest in cultures which might be similar to Swedish, e.g. Danish and those which do not have direct relation to the origin culture of the listener, e.g. music of African origin. One of the students was particularly interested in the music of other generations, e.g. music of the 50s. The subject of music was the one that the students seemed to like to discuss and one of them even sang a part of a song she liked in order to support her words. It may be suggested that music has qualities that allow the learners to feel at ease while learning L2 since music and language have universal features which accomplish each other as claimed by Gardner (2000).

5 Conclusion

The present case study aimed to investigate the perceptions of fifteen students of a Swedish upper-secondary school of the possible impact of listening to music on their extramural English. The research questions concern two main aspects, namely:

- whether the students perceived that they were motivated to learn English as a result of listening to English songs and, if that was the case, the analysis of their responses was to show the nature of the motivation;
- possible aspects of the students' extramural English acquisition which were affected by this activity.

All the interviewees perceived the out-of-school activity of listening to music as an aid in their extramural English acquisition. The responses of the interviewees indicate the presence of the following aspects that constitute motivation for learning:

- curiosity that leads to high self-determination;
- emotional factor such as the need to relate to the contexts of the songs;

- the need to feel competent in social issues;
- the need for indirect interaction with the communities of the culture of the targeted language;
- beliefs in the value of the task;
- mastery or performance goal.

The analysis of the responses of twelve interviewees suggests that they were led by emotions, feelings and the internal needs related to social issues in the process of learning the context of the songs. It is suggested that high level of curiosity led to higher self-determination to achieve goals (Hon-keung, Man-shan, & Lai-fong, 2012), and the internal needs and feelings that the learners experienced contributed to higher motivation (Townsend, 2011; Woolfolk et al., 2008). The process of learning had no specific intention to improve the listeners' English but rather to contribute to the pleasure of listening to music. The nature of the goal is defined as mastery and the nature of the motivation is intrinsic.

The views of the other three students display a correlation between the subjects of academic studies and their interest in listening to music. The expectancy of an external award is linked to the performance goal and extrinsic motivation (Townsend, 2011; Woolfolk et al., 2008). However, it is suggested that, in this case, extrinsic motivation may be dominant in combination with intrinsic motivation, and that the dominant position of the motivation may shift.

The second question of the study concerns the aspects of extramural English from which the students presumably may benefit from listening to music. The investigation of the students' perceptions suggests that listening to music of their choice helped the listeners improve vocabulary and listening skills. The majority of the interviewees pointed out factors such as repetition, consulting glossaries, working out the definition of words, recognition of familiar words, singing along as those that contributed to their extramural English acquisition. The improvement was empowered by the accessibility of digital glossaries which provided the listeners both with the lyrics and definitions of new words. The high level of self-determination and the emotional bond with the music that the listeners developed led to memorization of the lyrics which many of them reproduced when singing along.

Vocabulary acquisition was named as the most beneficial by all of the learners. They claimed that it was important for them to understand the context of the lyrics. Not understanding the language of the songs was the major factor of lack of interest for such songs. Hence, songs in English that proved to be of interest of the listeners led to the desire to learn the lyrics, repeated listening to them and, as a result, the improvement of their extramural English. This is supported by the findings of Beasley and Chuang (2008). The majority of the interviewees claimed that *a good message,* which was interpreted as a way of response to the listeners' internal need in indirect communication, contributed to better memorization of the lyrics. Mastering vocabulary as a major beneficial aspect of extramural English acquisition is supported by Sundqvist (2009) and Sylvén (2004). The present study underlines that the vocabulary was acquired in context, which as Cook (1996), Gee (2004) and Saville-Troike (2012) argue is the most efficient way of L2 vocabulary acquisition.

Improving listening skills was viewed as the second aspect of SLA that was influenced by listening to songs in English. Four students claimed that their listening skills improved as a result of listening to music along with other out-of-school activities. The mastery of listening skills may occur without paying attention to it unlike vocabulary learning though. Student S15 mentioned different accents that he learned to recognize by listening to various songs while

student S6 spoke about the tones along with the pronunciation. These views on mastering phonology are supported by the suggestion made by Cook (1996, p.47) that intonation of L2 is as important as pronunciation and that learners may find their own way to master it.

There are some findings that the present research did not address directly. Two participants linked their interest in music with the other cultures than those they could relate to directly. However, they experienced the feelings of closeness that arose from listening to the music of other cultures and generations. The interest in other cultures indicates the universal nature of music and language and their correlation as stated by Gardner (2000).

The results of the present study show the perceptions of fifteen students of the impact that listening to vocal songs has on their motivation to learn extramural English as well as their points of views on the areas that particularly benefit from this out-of-school activity. Due to the limitations of the case study, its results may not be generalized. However, they may contribute to the findings of further studies on the subject of the impact of listening to music on SLA, extramural L2 and motivation for learning. There must be more aspects to investigate such as an emotional bond between music and lyrics and its possible impact on memorization of words, phrases and grammatical issues. Moreover, the semi-structured interview may provide with unexpected findings that may contribute to L2 teachers' understanding of students' extramural L2 acquisition and, as a result, to improvements of classroom communication.

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Appendix 1

The interview question guide

1. Apart from school, do you learn English? If so, how?

2. (If a student does not mention listening to music, I ask the following) Do you listen to music? (Perhaps to clarify the question with the following) English songs I mean?

3. Do you listen to songs in other foreign languages? (I may give examples such as French, German and Spanish)

4. (If the answer 3 is negative) Why don't you listen to songs in other languages? or What attracts you in English songs?

   4. a. (If the answer 3 is positive) What attracts you in these songs if anything?

5. Does it make any difference when you listen to songs in English and in a language you don't understand?

6. If you like a song, do you listen to it again and again?

7. Do you ever sing along?

8. Do you think that listening to English songs help improve your English skills, or that you gain any knowledge from this activity?

9. Tell me, what particularly in learning English you have improved when you listen to music.

Appendix 2

Respondent validation

Please, look at the interpretations of your words/perceptions that are being used in the analysis of the present study and circle/tick the response that you think is the most accurate. Give your comments if you like:

- it wasn't what I meant at all
- partly true
- I agree with your interpretation of my words

Your suggestion to make changes if you have such: