Walk the line

Teaching L2 English and young learners' gaming inside and outside the classroom

Young L2 Learners and Games
University of Warwick, 1 April 2023

Pia Sundqvist

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Warm thanks to Annamaria Pinter for inviting me

Çok teşekkür ederim

Mange takk

Thanks a lot

Tack så mycket

谢谢

Danke schön

Muchas gracias

Merci beaucoup

Spasiba

多謝

Grazie

Kiitos

Today's talk

1. Theory
- Informal language learning
- Extramural English (EE)
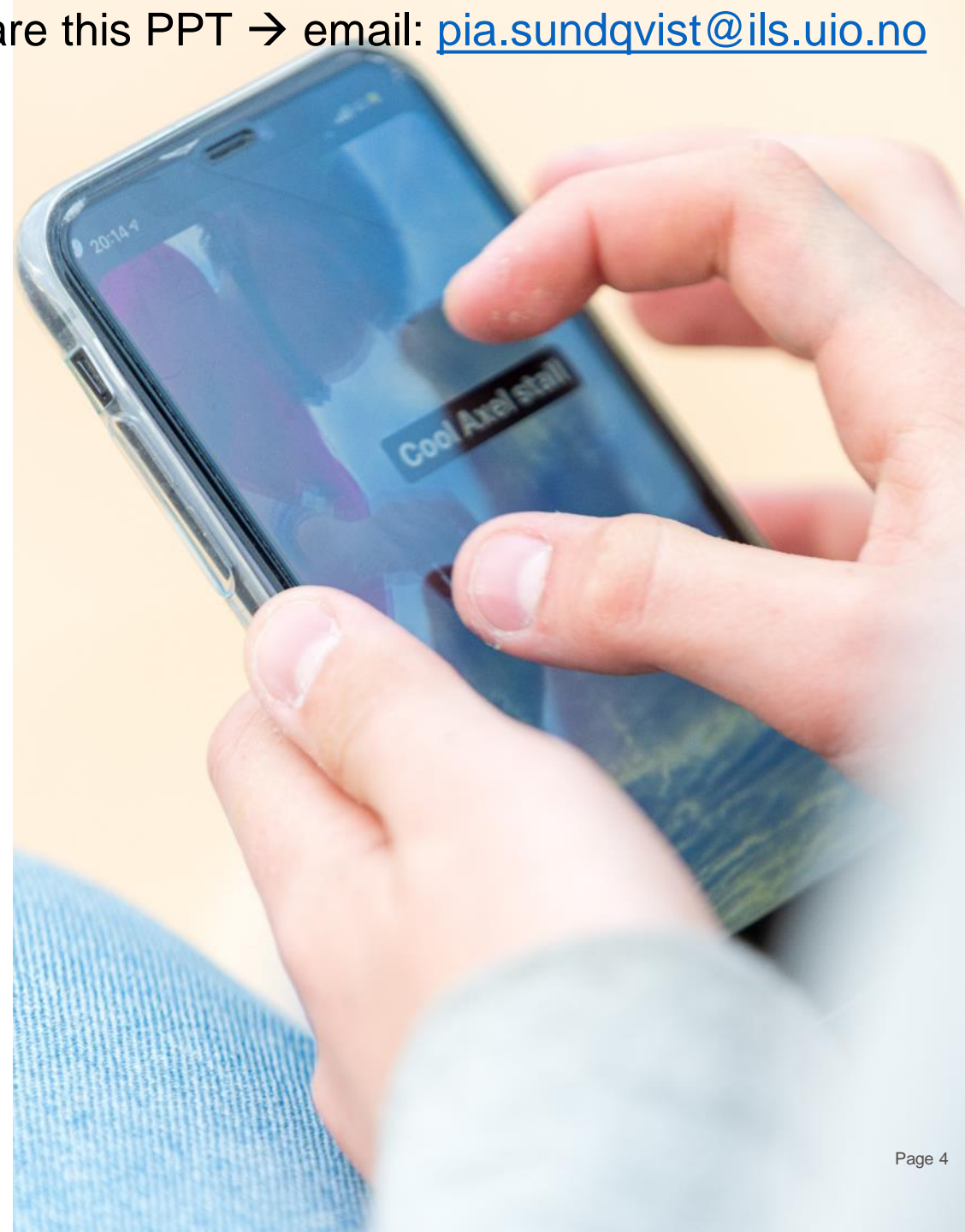- Games and language learning

2. Gaming and L2 English learning
- Empirical studies and young learner voices

3. An EE-sensitive approach to teaching
- Classroom example
- Walk the line

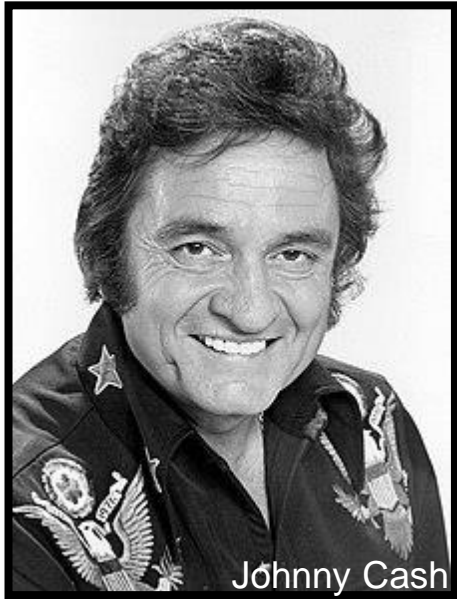## 4. Outlook

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Walk the line?

♫ I find it very, very easy to be true
I find myself alone when each day is through
Yes, I'll admit that I'm a fool for you
Because you're mine, I walk the line ♫

Source: DALL-E2 (2023)

Walk the line!

Walk the line

1. To maintain a fragile balance between one extreme and another. i.e.: good and evil, sanity and insanity, decency and **decadence**, etc.
2. To behave; to abide by the the law and/or to abide by **moral standards**; to walk a straight path of decency by following the rules; to "walk the straight and narrow."

The latter definition is that applied in the song "**Walk the Line**" by Johnny Cash.

1. *I walk the line between good and evil.*

2. *I used to be a drunken thug, but now I walk the line.*

by **Mede** July 9, 2006

(Urban Dictionary, n.d.)

Johnny Cash

A teacher's balancing act in the classroom

(Cash photo from Wikipedia)

Source: DALL-E2 (2023)

Part 1. Theory

Informal learning

Livingstone (2006, p. 206)

"Informal learning is any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge, or skill that occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria. Informal learning may occur in any context outside the established curricula of educative institutions. The basic terms of informal learning (…) are determined by the individuals or groups that choose to engage in it. Self-directed or collective informal learning is undertaken on our own."

Informal learning

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Extramural English Matters

Out-of-School English and Its Impact on Swedish
Ninth Graders' Oral Proficiency and Vocabulary

Pia Sundqvist

[Cover art: Lars Lerin]

The term *extramural* is an adjectival compound of Latin origin where the prefix, *extra*, means 'outside' and the stem, *mural*, means 'wall'.

(Sundqvist, 2009, p. 24)

Extramural English = EE

Extramural L_n engagement

Out-of-class learning (Benson, 2011)

Self-directed naturalistic learning (Benson, 2011)

Out-of-school learning (Lamb, 2004)

Extracurricular learning (Forsman, 2004)

Language learning in the (digital) wild (Hutchins, 1995; Thorne et al., 2015)

Online informal learning of English (Socket, 2014)

Informal digital learning of English (Lee & Dressman, 2018)

Typically voluntary learner-initiated activity out of interest

Not connected with school

Outside the walls of the classroom

Informal

Online *and* offline (IRL) activities
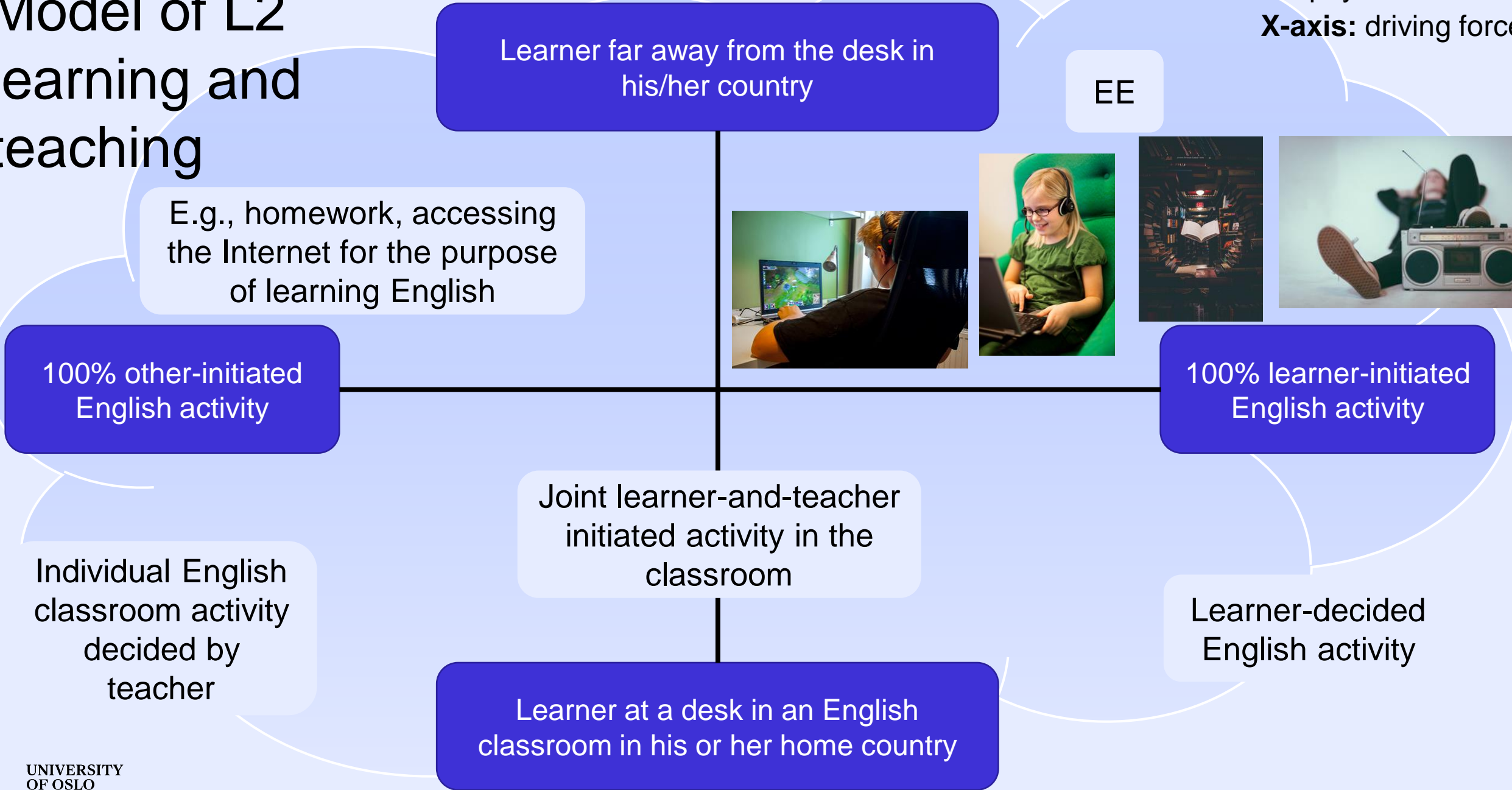
Incidental *and* intentional L2 learning

(Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016)

"In our definition, *extramural English* corresponds to 'English outside the walls' and by that we mean the English that learners come in contact with or are involved in outside the walls of the classroom. This contact or involvement is *not* initiated by teachers or other people working in educational institutions; the initiative for contact/involvement lies with the learner himself/herself or, at times, with someone else, such as a friend or a parent. Thus, in general, contact/involvement is voluntary on the part of the learner, though there is also the possibility that learners engage in specific EE activities because they feel pressured to do so, for whatever reason. Moreover, some learners will take charge of their own learning of English and in this respect, EE is linked to the theory of learner autonomy (Holec, 1981). It is also possible that learners, through engagement in EE, develop a genuine interest in learning English in out-of-school settings."

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 6)

Model of L2 learning and teaching

Learner far away from the desk in his/her country

EE

E.g., homework, accessing the Internet for the purpose of learning English

100% other-initiated English activity

100% learner-initiated English activity

Joint learner-and-teacher initiated activity in the classroom

Individual English classroom activity decided by teacher

Learner-decided English activity

Learner at a desk in an English classroom in his or her home country

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(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 10)

Play: central element in culture and in child development

Games and language learning
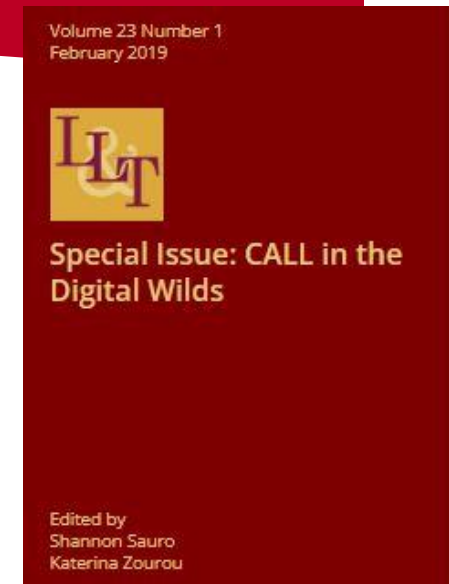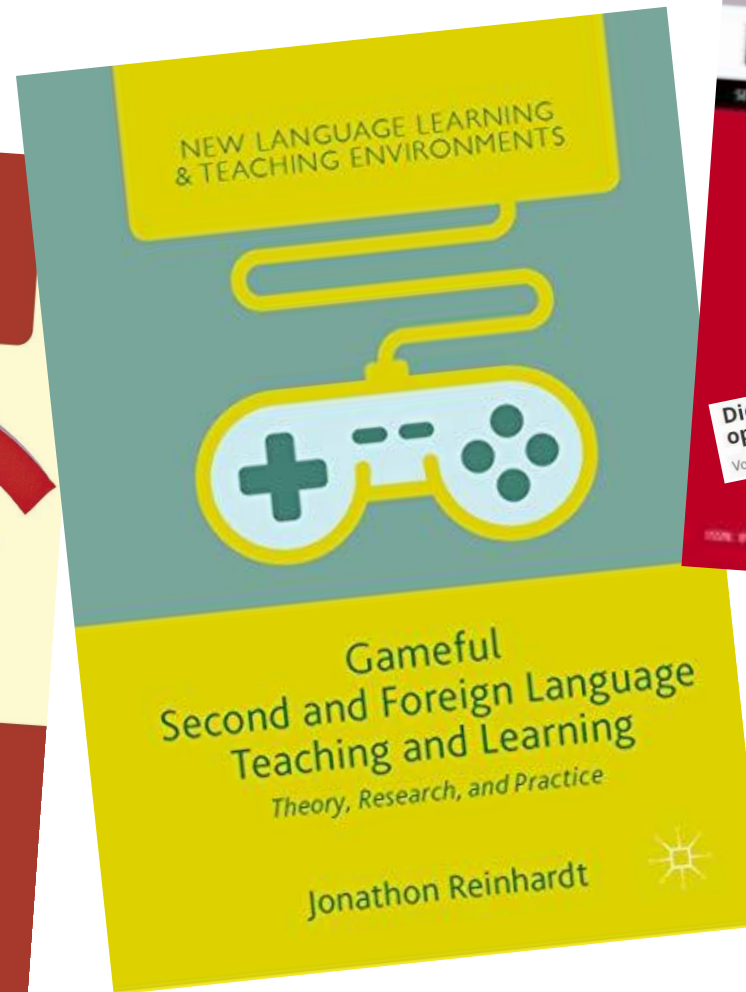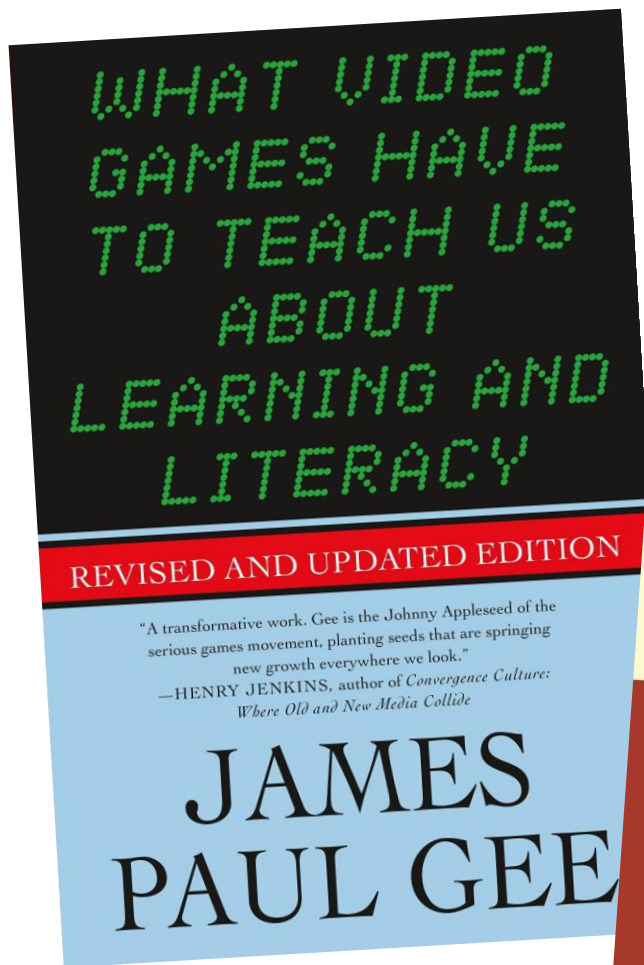
# Commercial off-the-shelf (COTS) games (Van Eck, 2009)

Framework for examining research and practice involving digital games (slightly adapted, Reinhardt & Sykes, 2014, p. 3; see also Reinhardt, 2019)

Perspective	Characteristics	L2 Learning Qs	L2 Teaching Qs
Game-enhanced	Use of vernacular COTS[#] games	How does game-mediated L2 learning occur 'in the wild'?	How can COTS games be pedagogically-mediated for L2 learning and teaching?
Game-based	Use of educational or learning-purposed games (synthetic immersive environments)	How do specific game designs afford particular L2 learner behaviors?	How can game-based environments be designed to incorporate and/or complement L2 pedagogical uses?
Game-informed ('gamification', 'gamefulness')	Game and play principles applied in digital and non-digital contexts outside the confines of what one might typically consider a game	How can insights from the study of games and play inform our understanding of L2 learning?	How can insights from the study of games and play inform our understanding of L2 teaching and the design of all L2 learning environments?

#Commercial-off-the-shelf

Research orientations in L2 gaming research

Reinhardt (2017)
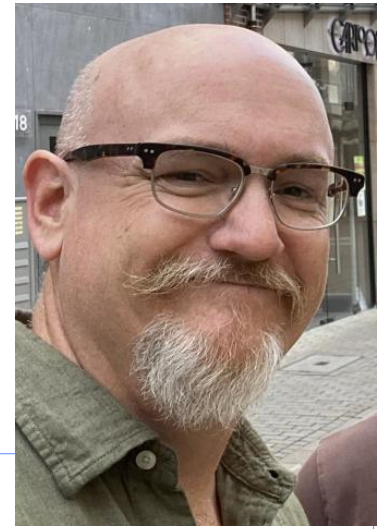
Game-oriented research (e.g., Cornillie et al., 2012; Neville, 2010; Scholz, 2017; Sykes, 2008)

➡️ Player-learner-oriented research (e.g., Pratiwi et al., 2022; Qasim, 2021; Sundqvist, 2019; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012; Thorne & Fischer, 2012)

Pedagogy-oriented research (e.g., Butler et al., 2014; DeHann, 2011; Lacasa et al, 2008; Reinders, 2009)

STRENGTH
Highly authentic and ecologically valid, in particular when using COTS games + focused on learning

WEAKNESS
Difficult to specify associations between (i) behaviors and outcomes and (ii) mechanics, titles, or genres

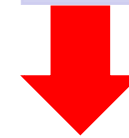# One type of categorization of COTS games (Sundqvist, 2013)

Singleplayer (SP)	Multiplayer (MP)	Massively multiplayer (MMO)
• *The Sims* • *GTA* • *LA Noire*	• *CoD* • *CS* • *LoL* • *Battlefield*-series	• *WoW* • *RuneScape* • *Warhammer online*

MMORPGs may be particularly beneficial for L2 learning
(Kuppens, 2010; Peterson, 2012; Rankin, et al., 2006; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012)
Sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) and Affinity space (Gee, 2007)

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Part 2. Gaming and L2 English learning

Positive influence from EE on…

Vocabulary (De Wilde & Eyckmans, 2017; De Wilde et al., 2020, 2021; Hannibal Jensen, 2017; Lee, 2019; Peters, 2018, 2019; Peters & Webb, 2018; Peters et al., 2016, 2019; Puimège & Peters, 2019; Schwarz, 2020; Sundqvist, 2009, 2019; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012)

Speaking (De Wilde et al., 2020, 2021; Hannibal Jensen, 2019; Lee, 2019; Lee & Dressman, 2018; Sundqvist, 2009; Sundqvist & Uztosun, under review)

Writing (Olsson, 2012; Sundqvist 2019; Sundqvist & Wikström, 2015; Verspoor et al., 2011)

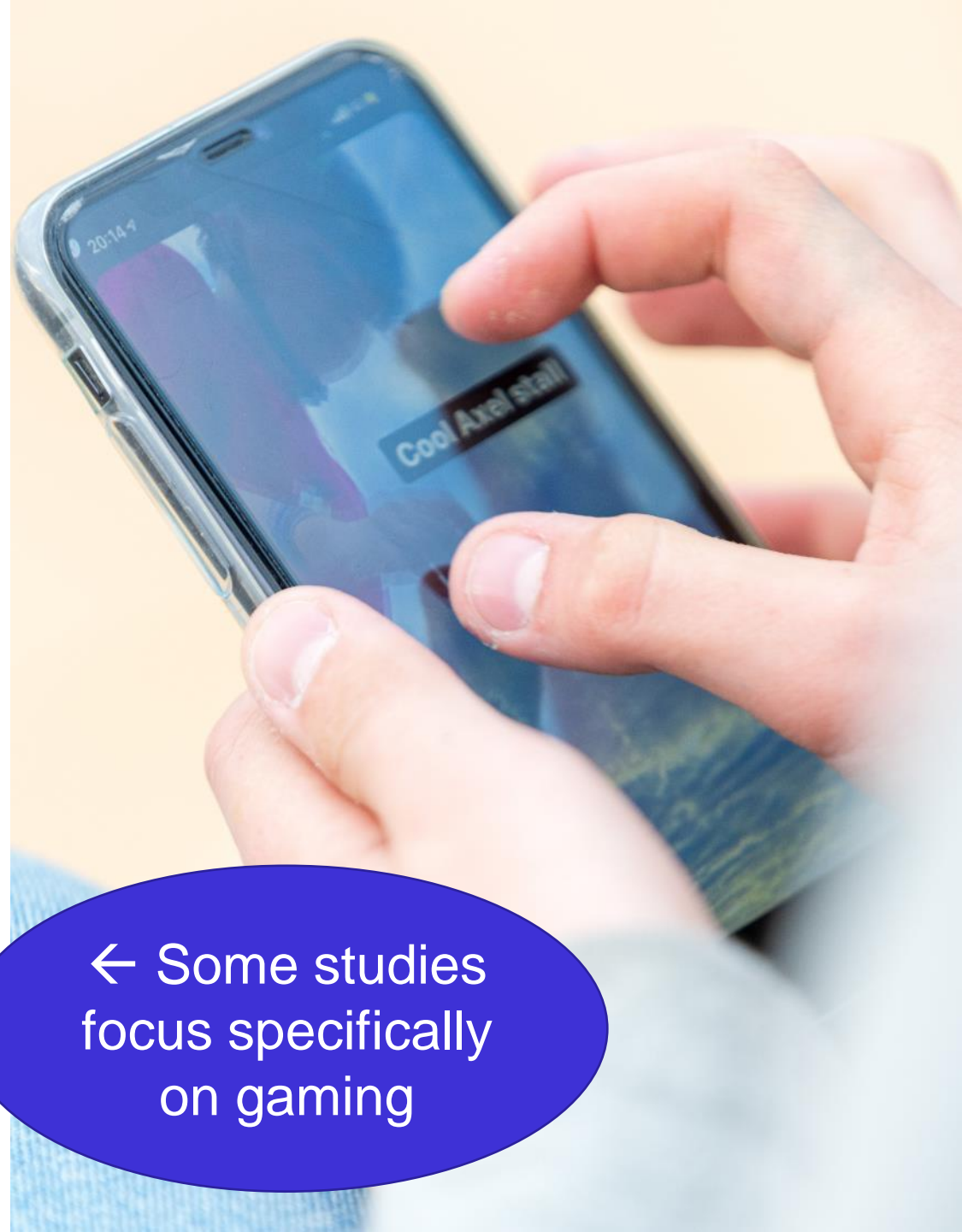**Willingness to communicate** (Lee & Drajati, 2020; Lee & Dressman, 2018; Leona et al., 2021)

Reading comprehension (Brevik & Hellekjær, 2018; De Wilde et al., 2021; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012)

Listening comprehension (De Wilde et al., 2020; Lindgren & Muñoz, 2013; Pfenninger & Singleton, 2017; Sylvén & Sundqvist, 2012)

Translation skills (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999; Kuppens, 2010)

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← Some studies focus specifically on gaming

EE: Gaming, Sweden
Grade 5
$N = 86$, ages 11–12

Data: Questionnaire, language diary, vocabulary test, reading test, listening test

Gaming as extramural English L2 learning and L2 proficiency among young learners

Liss Kerstin Sylvén and Pia Sundqvist

Mean = 9,42
Std. Dev. = 7,855
N = 86

Compare time with lessons in school…
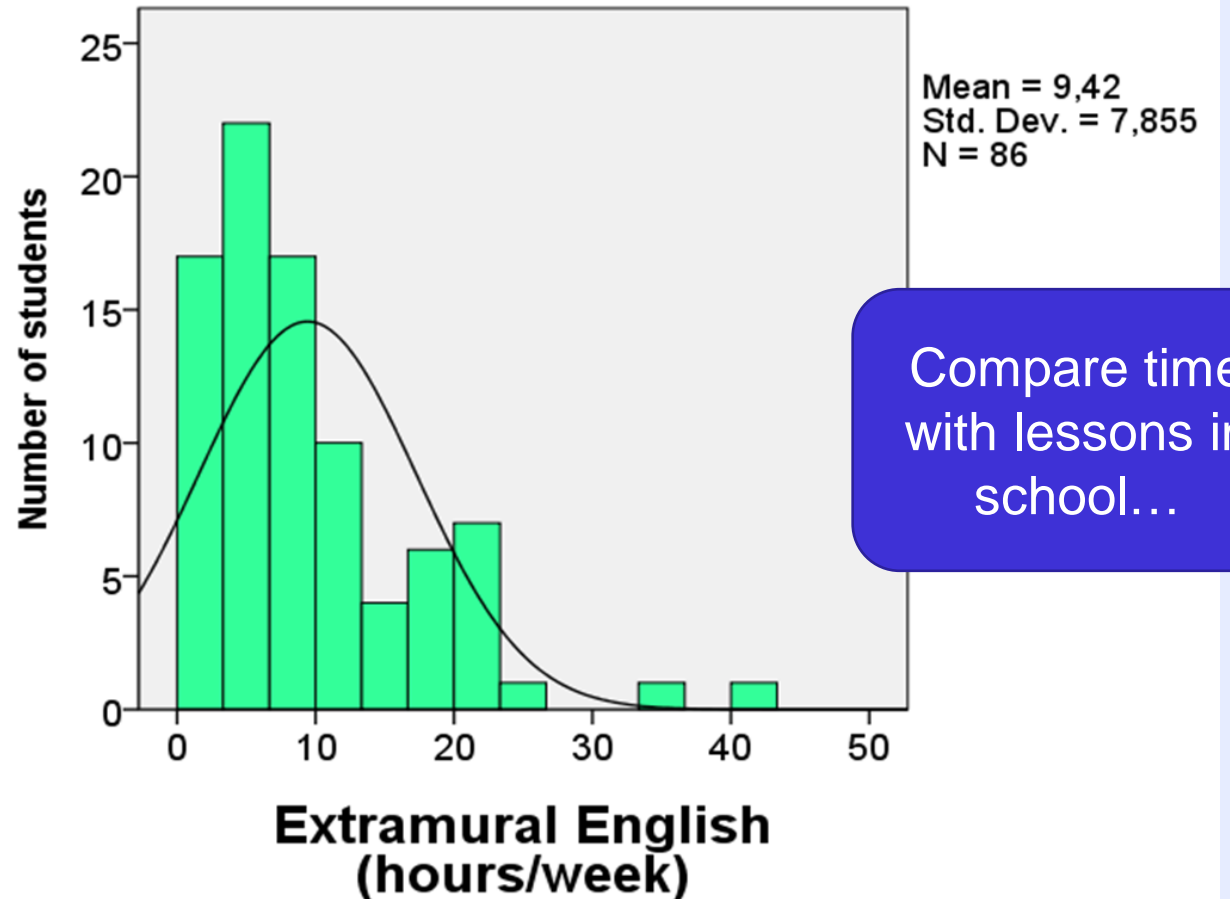
Three gaming groups

Gender distribution

≥ 5 hrs/w
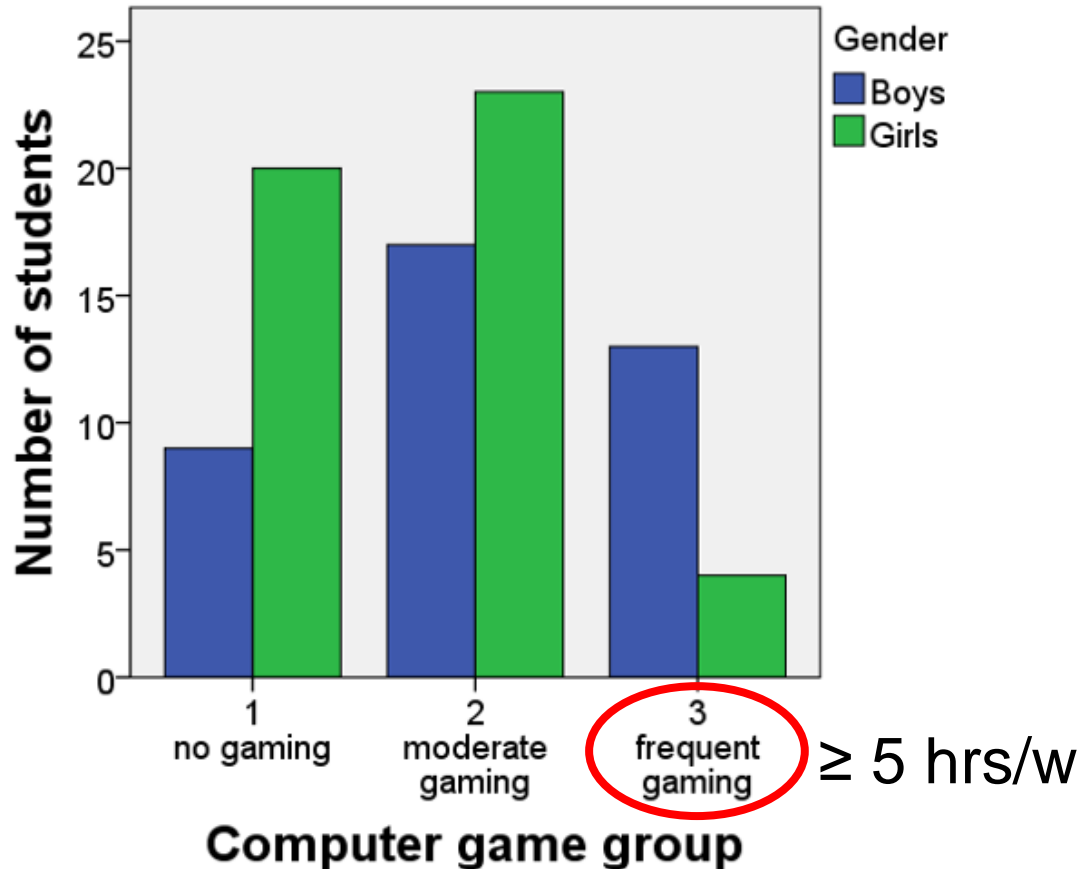
Findings

- **Frequent gamers** outperformed **moderate gamers** who, in turn, outperformed **non-gamers**
  - L2 vocabulary
  - Listening comprehension
  - Reading comprehension

- **Background variables** could **not** explain the between-group differences

- **Vocabulary**: boys > girls (sig.)

- **Gaming:** boys > girls (sig.)

EE: Computer use, Sweden
Grade 4
$N = 76$, ages 10–11

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

Pia Sundqvist and Liss Kerstin Sylvén

ReCALL / Volume 26 / Issue 01 / January 2014, pp 3 - 20
DOI: 10.1017/S0958344013000232, Published online: 15 January 2014

Link to this article: http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0958344013000232

How to cite this article:
Pia Sundqvist and Liss Kerstin Sylvén (2014). Language-related computer use: Focus on young L2 English learners in Sweden . ReCALL, 26, pp 3-20 doi:10.1017/S0958344013000232

Boys > Girls English use on computers (11.5 hrs/w vs. 5.1 hrs/w) (sig.) → gaming and films

Girls mainly used **computer time** for facebooking in Swedish

Extramural L_n: Japanese (manga) and German (digital game)

Gender and gaming groups:
Frequent gamers (≥ 4 hrs/w): predominantly male
Moderate gamers: a mix
Non-gamers: predominantly female

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014)

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Anxiety – speaking in English (4th grade)
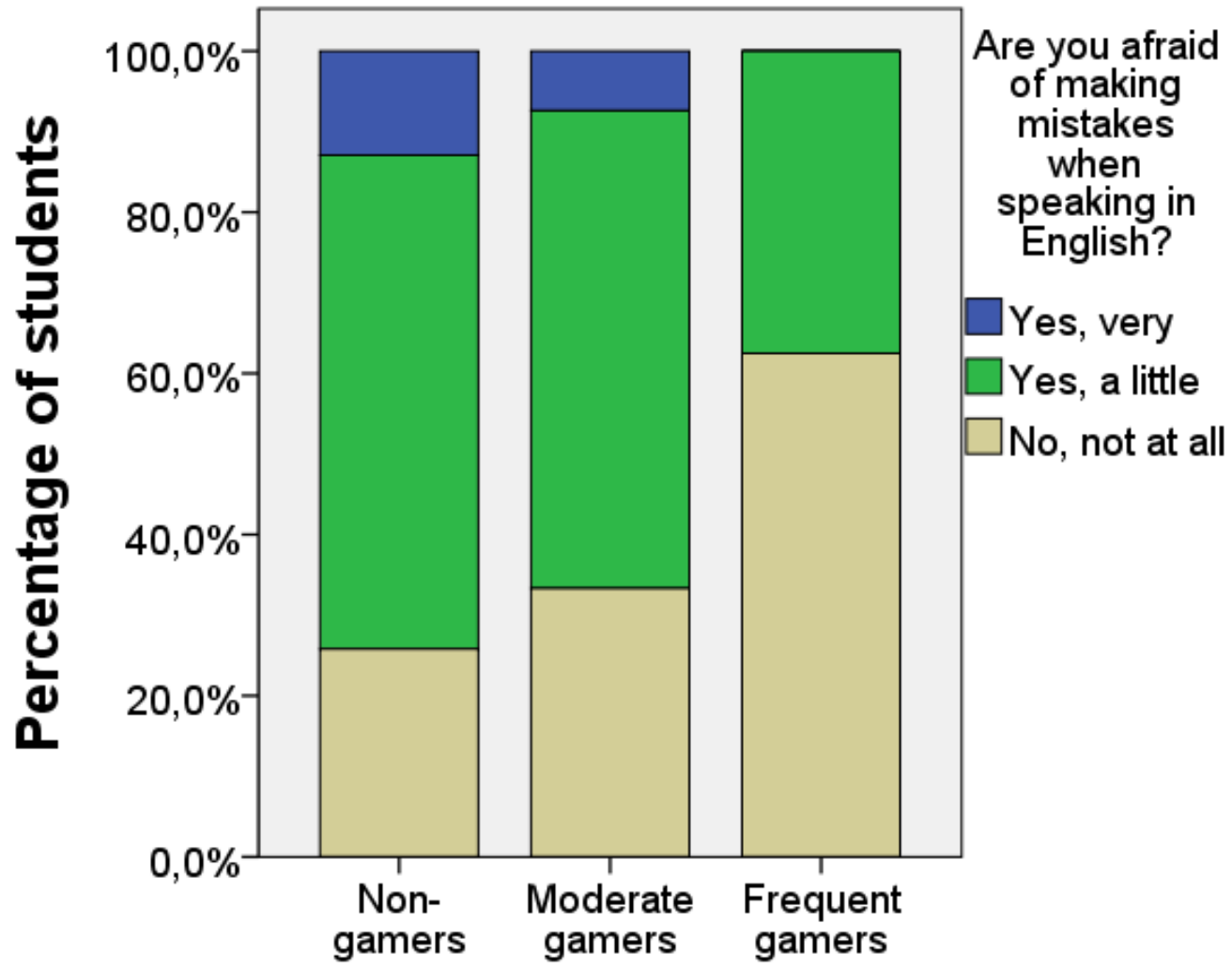
(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014)

Self-assessed English ability (4th grade)
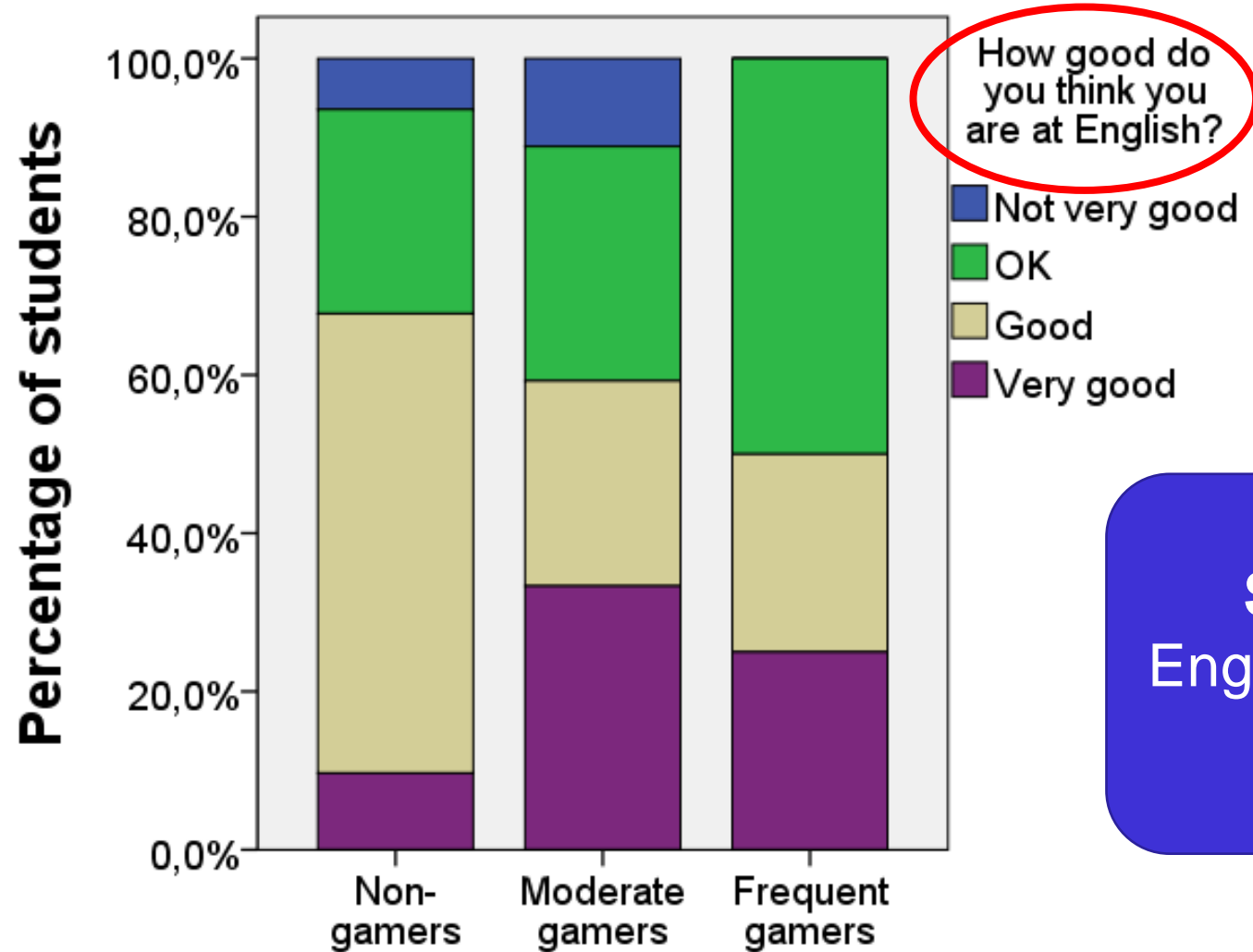
Self-assessed ability in English affected by experiences of online gaming

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014)

L1 Swedish vs. L1 Other

Non-gamers

- L1 Swedish
- L1 other

Moderate gamers

- L1 Swedish
- L1 other
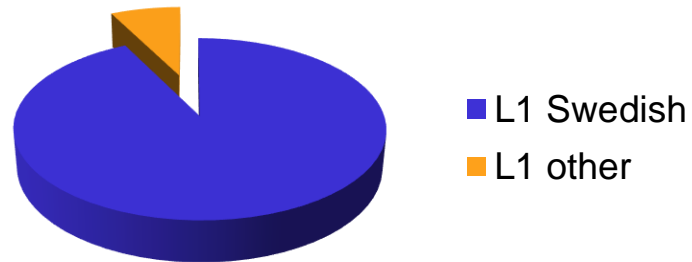
Cf. Dutch study on screen media use among preteens ($N = 1,464$)

(Duursma et al., 2017)

Frequent gamers

- L1 Swedish
- L1 other

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2014)

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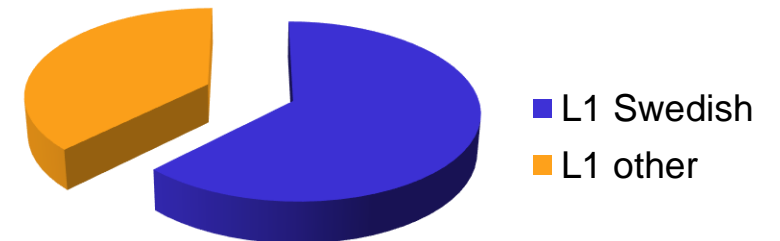
Gaming, Sweden
Grade 5
N = 52, ages 11–12

Vocabolario e digitalizzazione
Scazi da plaids e digitalisaziun
Vocabulary and Digitalization

BABYLONIA 1|2022

Rivista per l'insegnamento e l'apprendimento delle lingue
Zeitschrift für Sprachunterricht und Sprachenlernen
Revue pour l'enseignement et l'apprentissage des langues
Rivista per instruir ed emprender linguatgs
A Journal of Language Teaching and Learning

Young gamers in the digital wilds: Implications of gaming preferences on L2 English vocabulary learning and teaching
Pia Sundqvist & Rickard Nilsson

Data: Questionnaire, Picture Vocabulary Size Test (max: 96) (Anthony & Nation, 2017), listening test
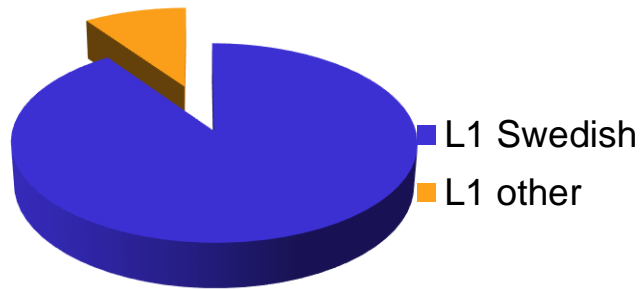
2 gaming groups: *always* (n = 26) and *rarely, often* (n = 26)

PVST: *always* (66.19) > *rarely, often* (54.88) (sig. diff., large effect size)

Listening: *always* = *rarely, often*

Gaming preferences: *always* ≠ *rarely, often* → more common with MP games in the *always* group

(Sundqvist & Nilsson, 2022)

Game preferences

SP

Games supporting MP in any form

The higher PVST score for *always* might depend on a need for successful L2 communication to win games
(cf. Hannibal Jensen, 2017)

Group 1 (*rarely, often*)	Group 2 (*always*)
Roblox* (9)	Minecraft* (9)
Minecraft* (6)	Fortnite*# (3)
Fortnite*# (3)	Roblox* (3)
Grand Theft Auto (GTA)*# (3)	Terraria (2)
Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CSGO)*# (1)	Valorant # (2)
Danganronpa (1)	At Home Alone (1)
FIFA (1)	Big Fighting (1)
Hayday*# (1)	Call of Duty: Black Ops Cold War # (1)
NHL 21 (1)	Counter Strike: Global Offensive (CSGO)*# (1)
Pro Evolution Soccer (PES) (1)	Doom # (1)
Plants vs. Zombies: Garden Warfare 2 (1)	Genshin Impact (1)
Red Dead Redemption 2 (1)	Grand Theft Auto (GTA)*# (1)
Rocket League*# (1)	Hayday*# (1)
The floor is lava (1)	Mario (1)
Supercross 3 (1)	NBA 2K (1)
Sims 4 (1)	Need for Speed (1)
	Overwatch # (1)
	PewDiePie: Legend of Brofist (1)
	Pokémon (1)
	Rainbow Six: Siege # (1)
	Rec Room (1)
	Rescue Team: Planet saver (1)
	Rocket League*# (1)
	The Crew 2 (1)
	War Thunder # (1)
	Among Us # (1)

21 PVST words with significant group differences
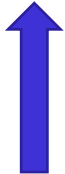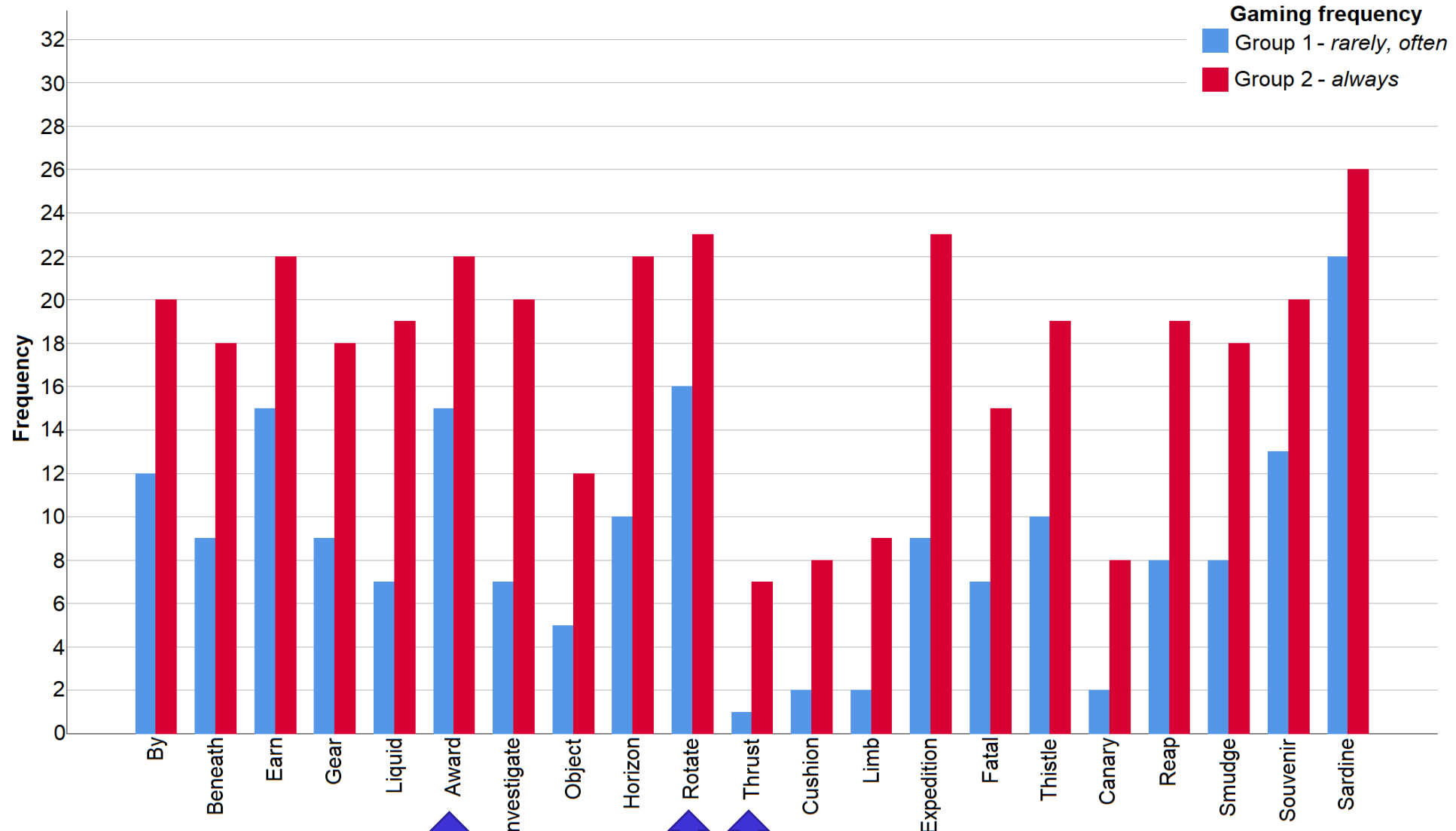
Likely to have appeared in games

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Gains from EE prior to formal instruction: Two Flemish studies

Puimège & Peters (2019): Learners' English vocabulary knowledge

Cross-sectional study; *N* = 616; grade 4-5-6, ages 10, 11, and 12; EE questionnaire; English and Dutch voc tests
- Types of EE: gaming, social media, TV, listening, speaking → frequent involvement in EE and EE increased with age
- Vocabulary: meaning recognition, 51/96; **3,157 words** in grade 6
  - *cognateness > frequency > concreteness*
  - EE (gaming, TV)

De Wilde et al. (2020): Learning English through out-of-school exposure

N = 780, grade 6, ages 10–13 (majority 11 years old), questionnaire and language tests
- Types of EE: gaming, social media, TV, listening to music, speaking English
- Receptive vocabulary knowledge
- Listening (15/25): 25% → A2-level
- Reading & writing (21/50): 14% → A2-level
- Speaking (7/20): 14% → A2 level
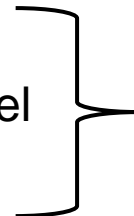
EE (gaming, social media, speaking)

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STarting AGe and Extramural English

Learning English in and outside of school in Norway and Flanders

Aim

Grade 1   **Grade 6**   **Grade 10**

to investigate the impact of an early start of formal English instruction in **input-rich contexts** by comparing **early** (in Norway) and **late** (in Flanders) starters' English proficiency in grades 1 (age 5–7), 6 (age 10–12), and 10 (age 15–16)

[cross-sectional study design]

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A video of (very young) learner voices

YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3mAz0hH1Qtk (4 min 37 sec),
also available here: uv.uio.no/stage

Video about learning English in the first grade

What do some students in the first grade have to say about English? Watch this video from STAGE: "First grade English" (youtu.be).

Interviewed in pairs
Video created for the public
14 children: 11 girls, 3 boys
Age: 5 or 6 years old

While viewing, please pay attention to
▪ what extramural English activities they mention, and
▪ what they say about gaming

EE and Gaming

- English is learned both **in school** (even **in preschool**) and **outside school**

- **Extramural English** activities
  - Gaming (Paw Patrol, Minecraft)
  - Viewing YouTube
  - Viewing television
    - Chef programs
    - Subtitles matter
  - Using English at a local restaurant
  - Learning English from older siblings

I've got Paw Patrol on my TV where we can choose language. Sometimes I forget to take it in Norwegian, so it is in English instead.

Boy 2

Boy 3

On screens and mostly at home.

I've got an English Super Mario.

Boy 2: ...and on screen.

Boy 3: On screens and mostly at home.

Researcher: What do you watch on these screens?

Boy 2: It's only YouTube.

Boy 3: Yes. We watch things...

Boy 2: There are some guys on YouTube playing Minecraft.

Boy 3: Yep!

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Early findings from GR1 in
N

-
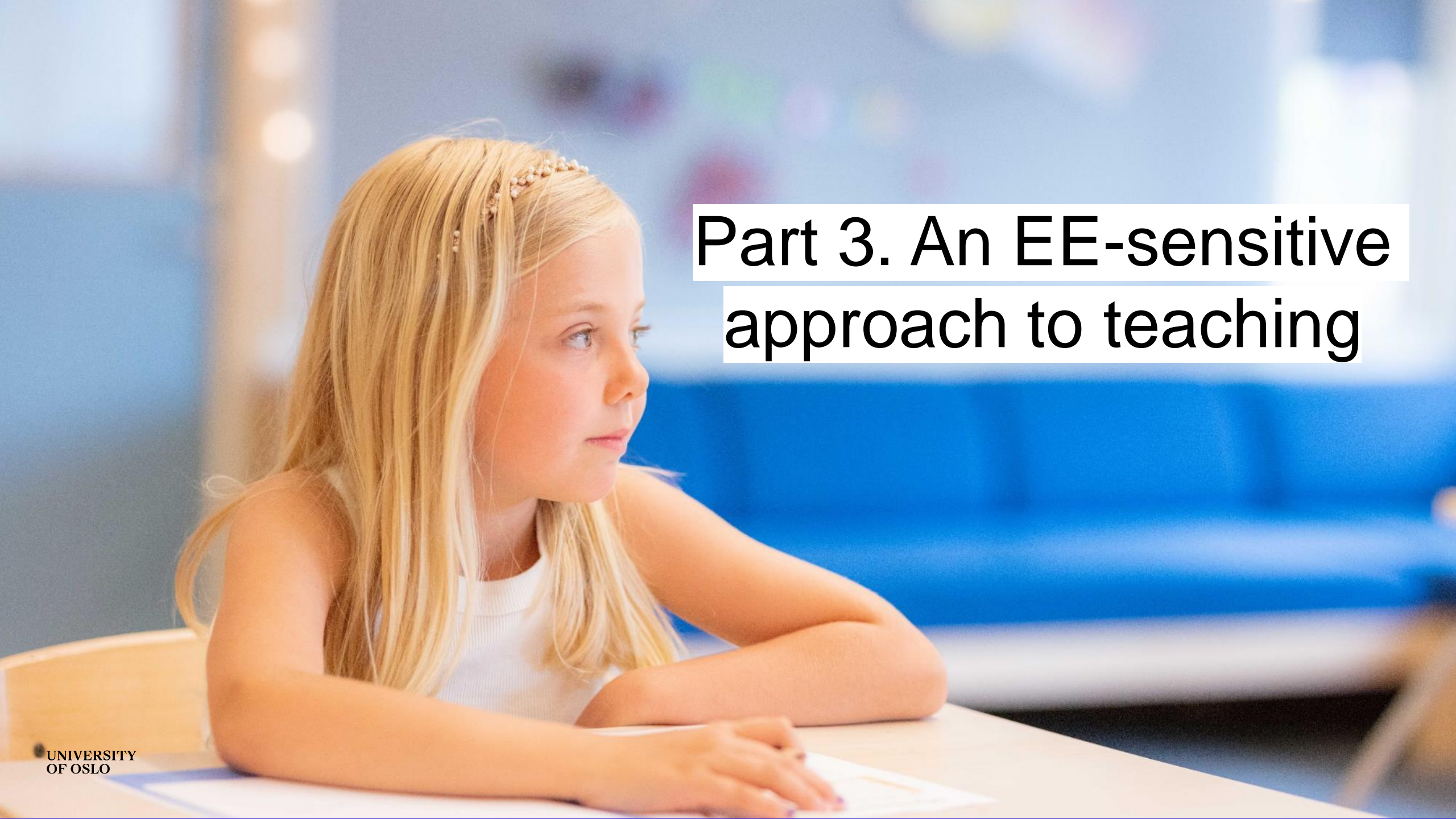
Hidden – preliminary findings, not yet published

Part 3. An EE-sensitive approach to teaching

Classroom example – grade 7 – aged 13–14

(Sundqvist & Nilsson, forthcoming)

Aim: To implement COTS games and students' own experiences of gaming in ELT for the purpose of intentional vocabulary learning for all – gamers and non-gamers

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lessons 3–6	Lesson 7

Classroom example – grade 7 – aged 13–14

(Sundqvist & Nilsson, forthcoming)

Aim: To implement COTS games and students' own experiences of gaming in ELT for the purpose of intentional vocabulary learning for all – gamers and non-gamers

Lesson 1	Lesson 2	Lessons 3–6	Lesson 7
Discussion voc learning	Consolidation of lesson 1	Ss' preparations	Oral presentations
What is the most unusual word you know? (Where did you learn it?)	Instructions: Oral game presentation (live or recorded version), incl. assessment criteria	Decisions about target vocabulary to be included. Creating quizzes etc. for peers.	Live or recorded
Group discussion about vocabulary learning	Ss' chosen games → avoiding overlap → T's approval	Write-up of oral presentation, incl. target vocabulary	Q&A session after each presentation, with exit tickets for feedback
T's own voc learning and gaming, incl. target voc	Goal: Ss know which 'their own game' is	Rehearsals in group rooms	**LATER:** T's oral + written formative feedback, incl. assessment (1-on-1)
Time frame and goals			ALL PRESENTED☺
Consider: what game? card/board/video		*Extra handouts on grammar and vocabulary*	**Highly motivating + voc learning → successful**

An EE-sensitive approach

Austria (N = 201, aged 15–16)

EE: 4 hours 7 min/day (>28 hrs/w)

Order of popularity

1. Music
2. Online video clips
3. Reading in social media

Positive correlation: EE – Vocabulary knowledge

I would argue that classroom practice should not be modelled on students' language use and learning outside school, but endeavour, on the one hand, to facilitate and enhance such learning and, on the other hand, to usefully complement it by focusing on those skills and types of knowledge that students are unlikely to acquire in extramural contexts. Hence, rather than being *EE-inclusive*, English teaching in the 21st century should ideally be *EE-sensitive*.

(Schwarz, 2020, p. 353)

Walk the line

- In **adopting an EE-sensitive approach** to English language teaching...

- teachers will need to **walk the line** between **using** (drawing on) and, simultaneously, **respecting**, students' **personal sphere** (i.e., their self-chosen EE engagement, e.g., gaming)

> A teacher's balancing act in the classroom

- Acknowledge students' EE, but do not intrude

Source: DALL-E2 (2023)

Part 4. Outlook

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The L2 English learning pyramid

NEW LANGUAGE LEARNING
& TEACHING ENVIRONMENTS

Extramural English in
Teaching and Learning

From Theory and Research to Practice

Pia Sundqvist and Liss Kerstin Sylvén

Classroom activities

Evening school, English club,
extracurricular tutoring

Homework

EE
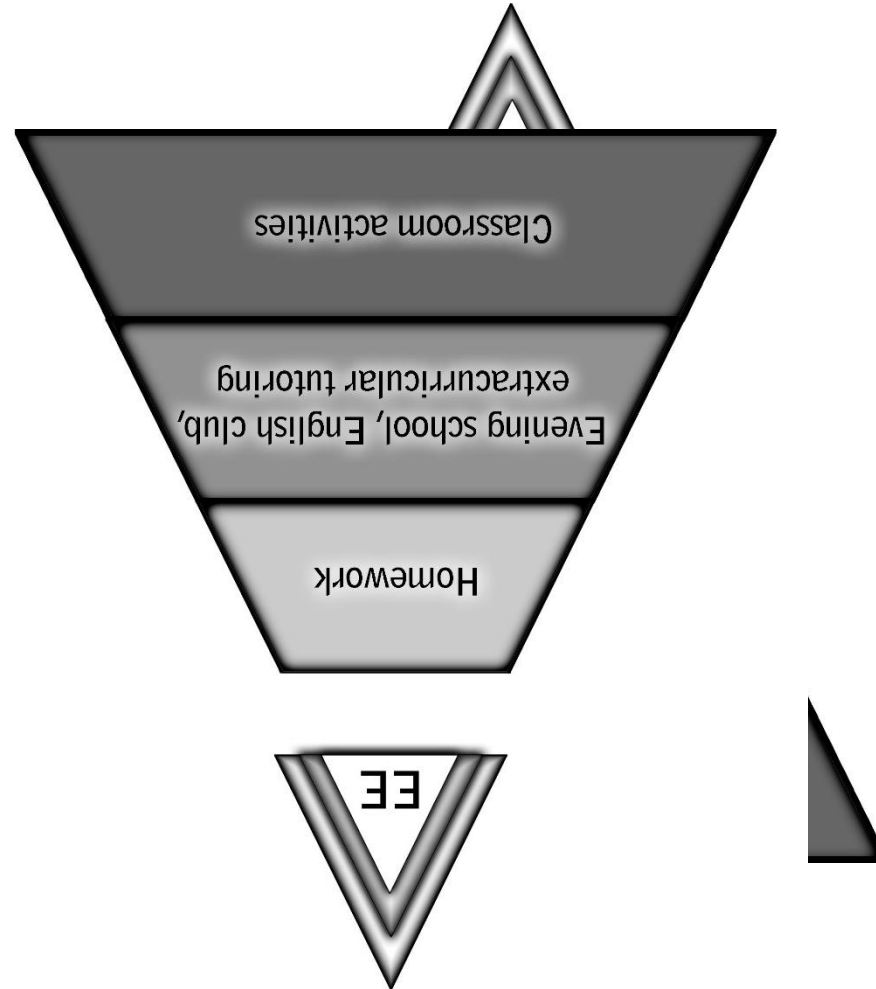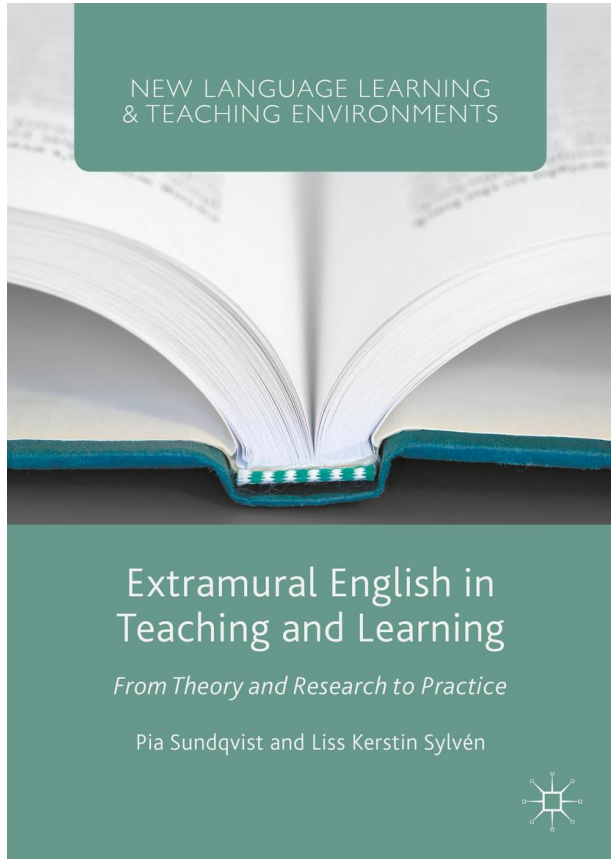
seems to
have turned
around…

(Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 222)

so it has a new base…

…thick or thin…
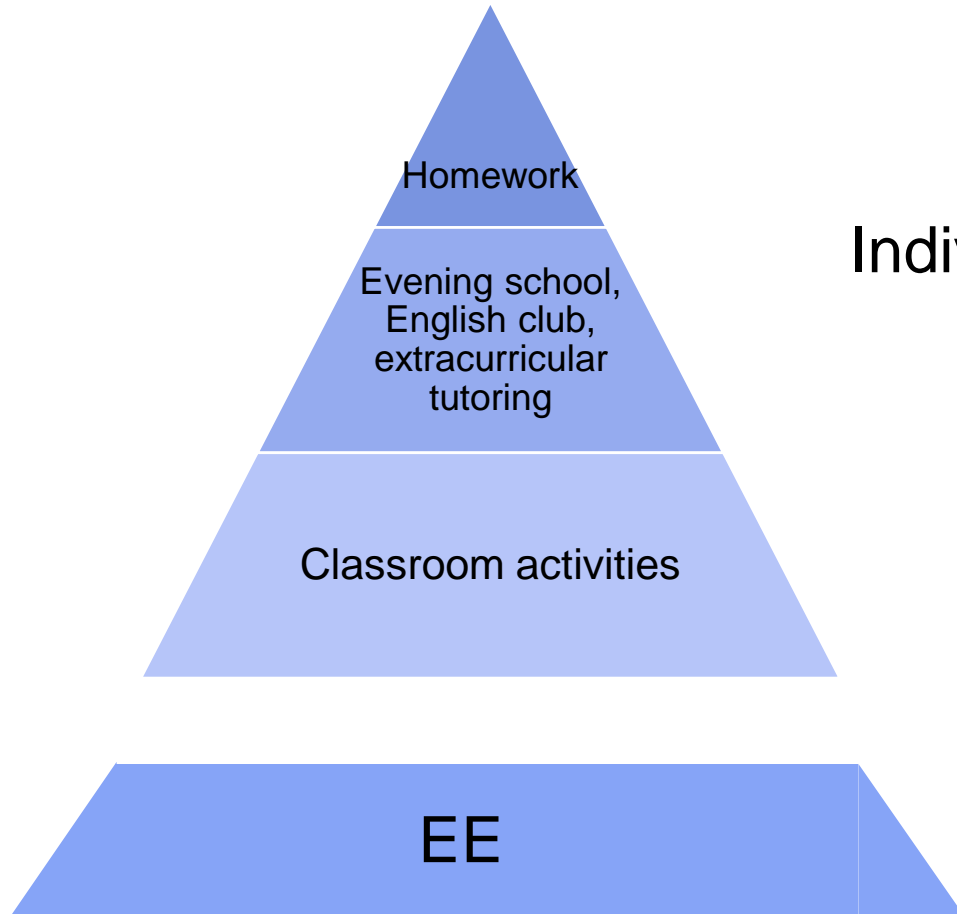
Individual difference variables

EE

Homework

Evening school, English club, extracurricular tutoring

Classroom activities

EE

Homework

Evening school, English club, extracurricular tutoring

Classroom activities

EE

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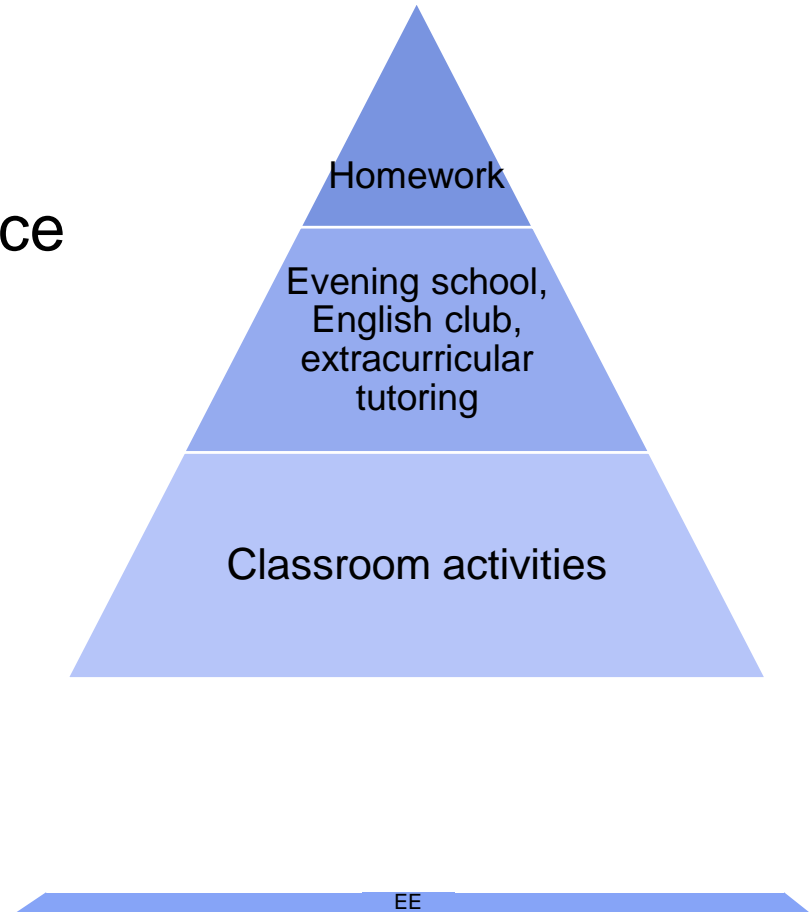
In teaching and in research: Pay attention to the EE variable!
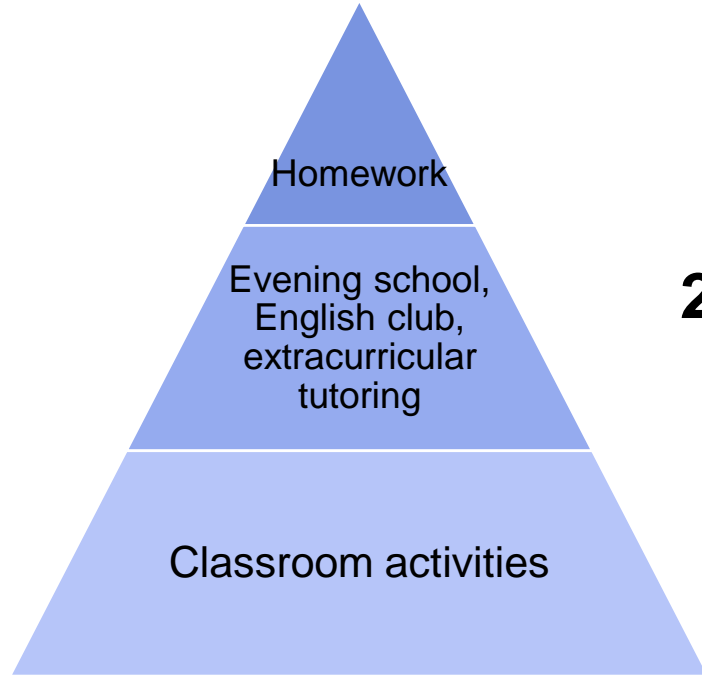
Time spent on EE
15-16-year-olds
Input-rich settings

2009: 18.4 hours/week
(Sundqvist, 2009)
2020: 28 hours/week
(Schwarz, 2020)

Left pyramid (top to bottom): Homework / Evening school, English club, extracurricular tutoring / Classroom activities / EE (circled in red)

Right pyramid (top to bottom): Homework / Evening school, English club, extracurricular tutoring / Classroom activities / EE (thin layer, circled in red)

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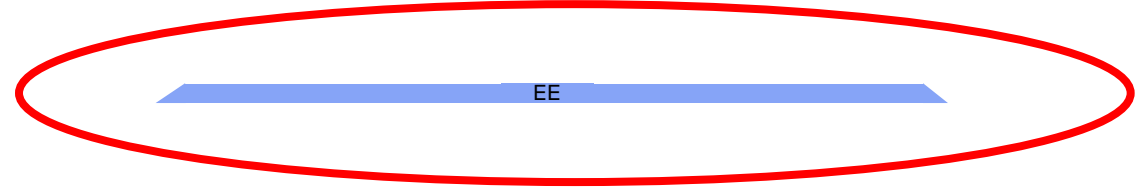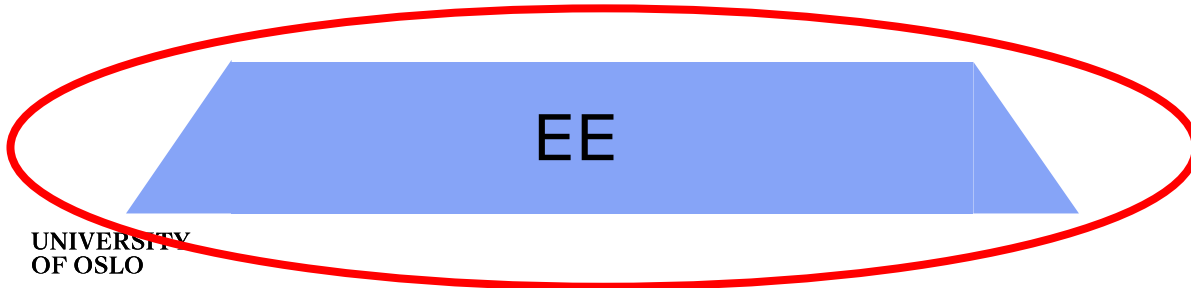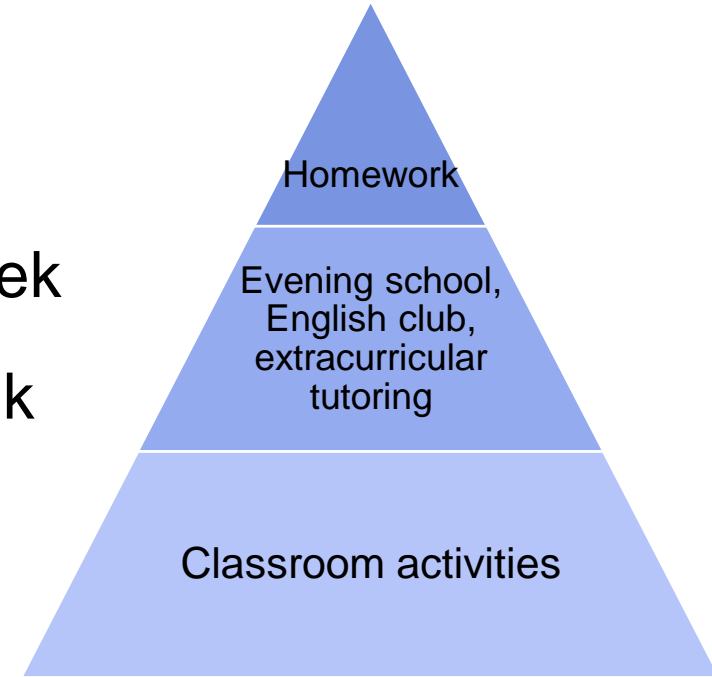
Gaming and L2 research

- How does the social dimension of gaming impact L2 learning?
- What are some characteristics of game interaction in the L2 (oral and written)?
- How are COTS games integrated in L2 teaching in primary and secondary-school classrooms? What are the learning outcomes?
- Conducting more cross-national studies targeting EE-gaming (and L2 English proficiency) among young learners
- Creating corpora and examining lexical coverage of popular COTS games (cf. Rodgers & Heidt, 2021)
- Taking participants' language repertoires into consideration

Photo: Andy Lind

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