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POSLIJEDIPLOMSKI SVEUČILIŠNI STUDIJ

(DOKTORSKI STUDIJ) HUMANISTIČKE ZNANOSTI

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Sara Brodarić Šegvić

Split, srpanj, 2021.



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1. INTRODUCTION

The present research focuses on the English-language media-related influence on the English as a foreign language (EFL) competences of Croatian secondary school students in the city of Split. It also explores students' exposure to Italian-language media and compares its influence on Italian foreign language (IFL) competences to the influence English language media has on EFL competences.

The subject matter of this study sparked interest as a consequence of an eight-year-long EFL and IFL teaching experience within the Croatian secondary-education system. A thorough insight into the modern-day EFL and IFL classrooms in Croatian high schools, firstly allowed for observations regarding the very highly developed EFL competences of students who show they make frequent use of English-language media out of the school environment, which seems to offer L2 acquisition opportunities that surpass the regular EFL learning programmes stipulated in formal education. Secondly, teaching experience also inspired interest in the differences between the current processes of informal, incidental L2 acquisition of English, as opposed to Italian - a language traditionally present in Dalmatia due to historical and geographical contexts, which has considerably influenced the local speech of the city of Split and its surroundings, but is nowadays seemingly acquired mostly, if not only, via formal tuition.

The study starts from the premise that English-language media exposure is currently a prominent feature of the social context of Croatian EFL learners and is certainly important for the understanding of their acquisition process.

Children and adolescents are nowadays exposed to the media more than ever and with the advancement of technology, English-language content has never been more within reach. Not only is it the dominant language of technology and the Internet, but it is also the primary language of music distributed globally, as well as the most common language of popular video games' content. What is more, in many European countries, most of the media supply which is directed at youth is provided in English (Drotner 2001). Croatia is among the countries where subtitles are used as a means of translation of foreign audio-visual material, as opposed to countries where the process of

dubbing is preferred. This translation system allows young generations to have an even more constant contact with the language in question via television programmes, while also providing them with the direct written translation in their own language.

The amount of engagement in the activities that relate to English-language media during students' free time, of course, brings positive effects as well as new challenges to the very process of formal EFL tuition. While some teenagers spend considerable amounts of time with media that involve the use of English, others spend their out-of-school hours engaging in activities that are not in any way related to the language in question. This lack of EFL exposure for the latter students can result in a large gap in language competence among the students of a regular, mixed-ability high school class in Croatia. On the other hand, such dissimilarities in language competence are unlikely to occur in other foreign-language classrooms, for instance, as this research aims to show, in the Italian-language classroom.

The literature review presented in the first chapters of this study, focuses on the incidental English-language acquisition of Croatian high school students and the effects it has on formal EFL learning and teaching. As not a large number of studies address this particular group of EFL students, the review will cover in detail recent research by Croatian scholars regarding the incidental English-language acquisition of primary, as well as secondary students and adults. The review also includes relevant studies conducted in other countries by mostly European authors, and reports of European projects regarding the informal acquisition of English as a foreign language in countries where English is not the students' native language. With regard to the acquisition and practice of learning the Italian language, the literature review offers an overview of the history and status of this language in the city and the region, followed by a description of the current policies that apply to the teaching of IFL in order to create context for the comparison of the processes of learning and acquisition for one language as opposed to the other.

Even though incidental EFL acquisition can be observed also with children in primary school, perhaps even earlier, high school students are of primary interest to the present research. We could argue that exposure to media increases with age, and that teenagers are a group that is most likely to follow the media considerably and on a daily basis. This qualifies them as the age group most likely to profit from the English-language media related influence on their language competences.

The *Methodology* chapters of this study describe and discuss the procedures used to collect the data required for the study ahead, as well as provide detailed insight into the research design and procedures. The chapters also offer information on the sample involved in the study as well as the instrument used for data collection, describing the questions posed in the questionnaire which primarily aimed at measuring students' FL media exposure and their FL competences as to reach conclusions regarding their incidental FL acquisition. Concerns regarding ethical regulations as well as the generalizability of results are also discussed. Finally, an account of data analysis is provided as to explain the procedures undertaken to obtain the results which will be described in the following chapters, *Results and Discussion*.

This study's *Research and Discussion* chapters are organized as to follow and answer the research questions and sub-questions. Finally, concluding and summarizing thoughts are put forward by also suggesting topics for further research in this field.

This study aims to contribute to the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by exploring the ways in which exposure to English-language media can influence the EFL proficiency of high school students, with a particular focus on Croatian high school students in the city of Split, by also contrasting it to students' IFL competences and use of Italian media. It also aims to contribute to the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) by observing and discussing the challenging ways in which the informal uptake from media could be integrated within formal EFL school lessons.

The need for further research to explore the interdependence of the availability of FL media and the FL acquisition process has been emphasized by scholars in Croatia and across Europe (see e.g., Enever 2011; Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015; Mihaljević Djigunović, Nikolov and Ottó, 2008; Nikolov and Mihaljević Djigunović 2006; Sundqvist and Olin-Scheller 2013; Kuppens 2010).

This study is an attempt to answer calls for further research in this field, and to gain insightful information on the current trends which allow young FL learners to acquire the English language, as well as Italian, in informal situations, incidentally, through acquisition processes that differ from formal language learning, but which could improve and complement the FL teaching process.

1.1. Literature review outline

The literature review starts with a presentation of the key concepts mainly discussed in the field of second and foreign language acquisition. The first sections attempt to cover the main definitions offered so far by various scholars on the differences and similarities between second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) learning and acquisition. These chapters also discuss the distinctions between formal as opposed to informal language learning and the connection these processes have with the notion of language awareness. Thirdly, the features of naturalistic settings as opposed to formal foreign language learning settings in the process of L2 acquisition are taken into consideration. Furthermore, an overview of the external factors of L2 acquisition is provided along with an introduction to the present-day out-of-class context for language learners, as well as an overview of internal factors with a specific observation of the various individual differences that might affect the process of L2 acquisition. Finally, the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory is considered with its application within L2 acquisition.

The second section addresses the status of the English language nowadays by discussing it from a worldwide perspective as well as a Croatian, national perspective, from its historical background onwards. These chapters also include an overview of the pedagogic practices relating to English language teaching (ELT). Furthermore, the English language learning policies in Croatia are explained and put into the European context. In addition, the Croatian EFL classroom context is viewed from personal experience, as well as by referring the relevant perspectives of Croatian authors on the subject matter. The next section offers information on the history and status of the Italian language in the city of Split, its use in the present day and the policies related to Italian taught as a second foreign language in Croatia.

What follows in the final section is the exploration of incidental, out-of-school English-language learning from the perspectives of both Croatian and European scholars. The media exposure, specifically in terms of the EFL exposure youth nowadays receives via the media, is thoroughly discussed throughout this section by observing the means of language acquisition offered by each media individually: the Internet in general, with an additional focus on social networks; online gaming, along with video games in general; music listened to via the Internet, radio, MP3, CD and

other formats; audio-visual content, with a specific focus on the benefits of subtitling, as well as the opportunities provided via streaming and downloading services. As to cover the most specific focus of the research, the studies that have investigated the effects of media exposure on formal EFL learning outcomes are discussed and compared, taking into consideration the studies of national as well as international authors.

2. KEY CONCEPTS OF SECOND AND FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The present chapter will attempt to offer an overview of the terminology and key concepts commonly addressed in the field of Second Language Acquisition as well as Foreign Language Acquisition by discussing both fundamental and recent literature on the subject, comparing views on SLA and FLA as branches of applied linguistics, considering where and how language acquisition usually takes place. Furthermore, the present chapter presents the contrasting views on the differences and similarities between the notions of language learning and language acquisition, the notions of explicit and implicit learning, the benefits of both naturalistic and formal foreign language learning settings, and finally the importance of external and internal factors in the process of second and/or foreign language acquisition.

2.1. L2 AND FL ACQUISITION

According to Ellis (1997), the need for a systematic study of the second language arose in the second half of the twentieth century, at a point in time when people felt a strong need to expand their communication beyond their local community. With the appearance of the "World Wide Web" and by embracing the start of a "global village" era, many have had to begin learning new languages, not only for pleasure, but to seek education or employment. Ellis (ibid.: 3) explains that *L2 acquisition* refers to the ways in which languages other than the mother tongue are learned. The term "second" may therefore be used to refer to the acquisition of a third and/or fourth language as well. The author also highlights that the term *SLA (Second Language Acquisition)* is commonly used to describe the study of acquiring both a *second language*, "naturally as a result of living in a country where it is spoken", as well as *foreign languages* – "through instruction" (ibid.). In Croatia, Jelaska (2005: 27) defines the notions of mother tongue as opposed to second languages and finally foreign languages: according to different definitions, a second language may be any language the child acquires after acquiring the mother tongue (L1), or a language acquired in a community where

it is spoken, whereas a foreign language is usually considered to be a language predominantly learned at school or in other artificial settings aimed at instruction, as it is not an official language of the learners' native country and cannot be used in everyday social contexts. As Jelaska (2007: 89) points out, the differences between second and foreign language learning are not taken into such consideration when dealing with L2 development, but rather in psycholinguistic or sociolinguistic discussions on language motivation, language teaching and learning, as well as attitudes towards languages and their status.

In present times, and for reasons that will be discussed later, the English language is the first "second" language learnt in the majority of countries across Europe. As to indicate English language learned at school, i.e., mainly via instruction and not through contacts with native speakers out of the classroom environment, the label *English as a foreign language (EFL)* is often used, as opposed to the term *English as a second language (ESL)* which would imply the teaching of English in an English context but to students whose mother tongue is another language (Sundqvist 2009: 10). The distinction between these two terms has become more complicated in recent years when English can be accessed easily in informal environments, outside the classroom, in many parts of the world where it is not the official language (Viberg 2000[1], as reported in Sundqvist 2009: 10). The easy access and the potential amount of informal, non-institutional exposure to the English language is the precise reason why this language can be viewed as "foreign" by some and as a "second language" by others in the Croatian context. However, for the purpose of clarity, throughout this study, both the English language that is learned at school and acquired via media exposure will be referred to as L2, and the term EFL will be used for the most part.

2.2. LANGUAGE LEARNING AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION: AWARENESS IN SLA

Over the course of decades, many authors have debated on the distinction between the notions of language *learning* and language *acquisition*. Krashen (1981) describes language

[1] The original source (Viberg 2000) is in Swedish.

acquisition as a subconscious process, while highlighting the conscious nature of language learning. L2 acquisition is compared to the process of a child's mother tongue acquisition where both the explicit teaching of rules and error correction are irrelevant (see e.g., Brown and Hanlon, 1970; Brown, Cazden, and Bellugi, 1973; as reported in Krashen 1981), which is therefore not characterized by a conscious awareness of the process. On the other hand, conscious language learning is described as a process which makes use of the presentation of explicit rules as well as error correction (Krashen and Seliger 1975).

Some researchers have criticized Krashen for his distinction of the two terms and choose to use them interchangeably (see e.g., R. Ellis 1995; Mitchell & Myles 2004; McLaughlin 1978). Ellis (1995) interprets L2 acquisition as a process of internalizing language rules as to use them for communication, a definition which Jelaska (2007) comments as treating acquisition and learning as synonyms[2]. However, in addition to that, when discussing second and foreign language teaching, Jelaska (ibid.) points out how it can be counterproductive to teach what can be acquired or has already been acquired, while instruction is sometimes necessary for language to be acquired correctly. In particular, she stresses how, following an initial enthusiasm with regard to the communicative approach, experience and research (e.g., Jelaska 2005; Novak-Milić 2005) have shown that some linguistic features, such as grammar, will rarely be acquired if not taught and learned properly as to be acquired eventually. Even though the two terms can generally be used interchangeably, for greater clarity, throughout this paper, *learning* will be used specifically to point to the English language learned at school or otherwise formally, and *acquisition* will be used when referring to the English language exclusively acquired out of the school environment.

To clearly understand the differences that occur between formal language learning and informal language acquisition, the role of awareness in language learning needs to be discussed. Schmidt's (1990, 1994) valuable work deconstructs the various meanings of the term *consciousness* into *intentionality* (incidental versus intentional learning), *attention* (i.e., attended versus unattended

[2] While distinguishing between the term acquisiton (Cro. *usvajanje*) and learning (Cro. *učenje*), Jelaska (2007: 99) also points out that the Croatian language allows for the use of the hypernym *ovladavanje*, an "imperfective noun derived from verb, which has the meaning features of English words conquering, mastering, ruling" in order to cover both terms.

learning), *awareness* (implicit versus explicit learning) and *control* (automatic versus controlled processing). The notions of implicit and explicit language learning, are of particular interest to the present research and will be discussed in detail in the following chapter.

2.3. EXPLICIT AND IMPLICIT LEARNING

Implicit learning is generally considered to be an incidental process that goes on without awareness, while on the other hand, the term "explicit" implies that the learning process goes on consciously and intentionally (Ellis 2009). However, the distinction between L2 implicit and explicit systems has been a controversial issue: while some scholars consider them entirely separate (see e.g., Krashen 1981), others (Ellis 2009) point out how L2 performance combines and makes use of both explicit and implicit knowledge.

Ellis (2009) compares various views on the level of awareness needed for implicit language learning to take place: Schmidt (1994) argued that complete implicit language learning is not possible, by explaining that even though it does not necessarily involve analysis, implicit learning requires awareness on the level of perception, i.e., *noticing*. Contrastingly, other linguists (Williams 2005; N. Ellis 2005) claim that implicit language learning is a cognitive process that goes on unconsciously.

On the other hand, explicit language learning is defined as a completely conscious process which is usually also intentional (Ellis 2009: 7). Explicit instruction, as described by DeKeyser (1995: 380) is the teaching of rules during the learning process, when learners develop metalinguistic awareness of the rule, either deductively or inductively. However, Ellis (2009: 18) also highlights how explicit instruction aims not only to develop explicit, but ultimately also implicit knowledge. Similarly, Hulstijn (2002: 193) points out that the value of explicit learning should not be underestimated as it can also provide great opportunities for implicit learning.

Furthermore, with regard to implicit and explicit language knowledge, scholars have contrasting views regarding the age constraints on the ability to learn an L2 implicitly or explicitly. As for explicit knowledge, Bialystok (1994) claims that it can be learned at any age. On the other hand,

Mihaljević Djigunović, Nikolov and Ottó (2008: 434) point out that while experts have not reached an agreement on the ideal length of early exposure to foreign languages, most claim that "gains in early FL programmes are as important in the affective domain as in strictly linguistic gains and they manifest themselves only in the long run if conditions are favourable and continuity is ensured". This matter can be related to notions which Herdina and Jessner (2002: 99) define as *language attrition* (gradual language loss) and *language maintenance,* the key factors of their Dynamic Model of Multilingualism, claiming that the lack of language use results in an absence of language maintenance which ultimately leads to "the deterioration of linguistic competence" (ibid.: 99).

While claiming most explicit knowledge to be learnable, Ellis (2009: 14) highlights that there are age constraints to implicit learning which allow very few L2 learners to achieve native speaker-like proficiency. When describing the various linguistic aspects of interlanguage, Ellis (ibid.: 67) concentrates on Chomsky's claim that "language is governed by a set of highly abstract principles" defined as *universal grammar* comprised in the *Language Acquisition Device* (*LAD*)[3]. Based on this theory, children are considered to possess an innate knowledge of "what is grammatically possible and impossible" which allows them to acquire their mother tongue naturally. In the light of this, the question arises as to whether L2 acquisition can occur in the same way? The notion of *critical period* for second and foreign language learning is a commonly discussed topic, and scholars supporting the critical period hypothesis[4] claim there is a certain age up to which native-like L2 competence can be achieved. Children who are extensively exposed to a foreign language generally seem more likely to understand and use it correctly than those who are not. In line with this, it is reasonable to consider the possibility that Croatian children and adolescents who are exposed to the English language through media, over a long period of time and since early childhood, are likely to acquire this language to some extent through the same mechanisms they intuitively use to acquire their mother tongue.

[3] Ellis (1994: 34) defines the Language Acquisition Device, a notion first put forward by Noam Chomsky in the 1960s, as a faculty for learning languages, which is separate from other faculties of the human mind responsible for other cognitive activities.

[4] For second or foreign language acquisition, the notion of critical period implies that acquisition can still take place to some degree after the age of 12, but not to the same extent as before that period (d'Ydewalle 2002).

2.4. NATURALISTIC SETTINGS AND FORMAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE-LEARNING SETTINGS

The distinction between two types of linguistic environments: the artificial, formal environments of language classrooms, and the natural, informal environments has often been a topic of discussion in SLA studies. In search of the "the optimal linguistic environment" for mainly adult L2 students, Krashen (1981: 40) claims some studies suggest that informal environments can benefit adults' second language proficiency to the same extent or even more than comparable amounts of time spent in formal learning situations. However, he also argues how these contrasted environments contribute to various aspects of second language competence, which will be discussed in the present chapter.

In earlier times, when exposure to foreign languages was not as present as it is today through mass media, a number of authors (*see e.g.*, Lambert, Gardner, Olton, and Tunstall 1970, Larsen and Smalley 1972) reported of children successfully acquiring languages by being exposed to the them in informal contexts. In the 1960s, Carroll (1967) found strong relationships between the successful L2 test performance of American university students and their time spent abroad, in countries where the target languages were spoken, as well as a connection between their positive test results and the amount of target language use in the students' home environment. While it is clear that, at the time, a frequent and constant exposure to foreign languages in the students' free time could be achieved mainly by travel or the opportunity to have extensive contacts with native speakers, these findings highlighted the importance of L2 acquisition in natural environments, and led to the conclusion that using L2 in the home environment might increase the motivation to study the language in question, while spending time abroad may also create more chances for self-study as well as increase motivation for formal study (ibid.: 43).

On the other hand, the claims of Krashen and Seliger (1976) support the notion of formal instruction resulting in reliably higher proficiency in ESL than exposure to the target language. However, what needs to be taken into account is that at the time, exposure was seen as the product of years spent in English-speaking countries and the amount of English the students reported having spoken every day, without taking into account how much time was spent in actual *meaningful informal linguistic environments* where students *engaged in real communicative use of the language* (Krashen 1981:

43). With that in mind, Krashen (1981: 47) concluded that as to have a meaningful effect on language acquisition, "informal environments must be intensive and involve the learner directly".

In contrast to earlier times, nowadays the opportunities for being in contact with foreign languages have grown tremendously along with the availability of different media which, as I have already stressed before, have certainly brought many benefits to the processes of language acquisition among both children and teenagers (Brodarić 2015: 33). Since the possibilities of exposure to the English language in naturalistic environments have become infinite, almost anyone has a chance of becoming an EFL learner, either voluntarily or incidentally (Ivars Olmedo 2015: 6).

In addition to the different contributions that the outlined explicit or implicit learning, in formal or naturalistic settings, can bring to the process of L2 acquisition, there are numerous other factors which can influence it, and which will be addressed in the next section.

2.5. EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL FACTORS OF L2 ACQUISITION

Dörnyei (2009: 240) points out that in discussions on SLA, adequate explanations cannot be provided without taking into consideration different learner-based as well as environmental factors, such as learner motivation, age, or the nature of language input learned via instruction. In an earlier study, the author also comments the complex nature of L2 learning, as a process where besides environmental and cognitive factors, personality traits and social components should not be ignored when attempting to master new knowledge (Dörnyei 1994).

In Croatia specifically, the results of the *ESLC - European Survey on Language Competences*[5], show that contextual factors such as the learning of different FLs, parents' knowledge of and the students' own perception of a target language, the use of a foreign language at school, as well as exposure to foreign languages via the media, significantly influence students' positive test performance (Buljan Culej 2013: 16).

[5] The First European Survey on Language Competences (European Commission 2012, as cited in Buljan Culej 2013) was conducted as to collect data regarding the foreign-language proficiency of secondary school students in European educational systems.

2.5.1. EXTERNAL FACTORS OF L2 ACQUISITION

As explained by Rod Ellis (1995), one of the aims of SLA is to identify external, as well as internal factors of L2 acquisition. The external factors that he highlights are: firstly, the social conditions that create opportunities for learners to hear and speak the L2 as well as develop an attitude towards the language in question, and secondly, language input, i.e. the samples of L2 the learners are exposed to (ibid.: 5).

Presently, Croatian EFL learners have ample opportunities of being exposed to authentic samples of the English language provided constantly by various media. The influence of each media on students' language competence will be discussed in later chapters.

2.5.1.1. OUT-OF–CLASS CONTEXT

As mentioned previously, the out-of-school context that provides L2 learning opportunities for Croatian high school students is abundant and will be presented in detail in the sections that follow. English as a second language (ESL) or what is sometimes referred to as English as a foreign language (EFL) is the L2, the FL, and the target language (TL) of interest in the present research. The out-of-class context presented here will therefore be observed and described by focusing on the opportunities for the acquisition of the English language.

Apart from the language competence influenced by the amount of available English-media exposure, which is the main focus of the present study and which will be discussed in detail later, other important external factors include different background variables. Several authors have dealt with background variables which influence students' school achievement (see e.g., Öquist & Wikström 2006[6], as reported in Sundqvist 2009: 22; Forsman 2004; Klapp Lekholm 2008), while Pierre Bourdieu (2018) discussed the notion of *cultural capital* as a concept referring to the advantages, skills, education and knowledge which might give a person higher status in society. Variables that can be considered as crucial to a learner's cultural capital may include an urban as

[6] The original source (Öquist and Wikström 2006) is in Swedish.

opposed to rural residency, the frequency of travels abroad, the parents' educational level, as well as the presence of books in the home environment. The degree of students' success in L2 acquisition can often be associated with their parents' attitudes towards the target language as well as the culture of the target language-speaking communities, the extent to which the parents use this particular L2, and, of course, their involvement in their children's education (Ivars Olmedo 2015). The results of a qualitative study (Bartram 2006) conducted with students in England, Germany and the Netherlands have shown that children's attitudes in terms of foreign language learning are to some extent influenced by parental language knowledge, as well as parental attitudes towards the importance, status and, most importantly, the utility of a language. The ELLiE study[7] (Enever 2011) includes a whole chapter by Carmen Muñoz and Eva Lindgren investigating the out-of-school factors which influence children's foreign language acquisition, including parental influences. The data which resulted from questionnaires administered to parents, and interviews with primary school children and teachers in seven European countries, shows that parents' relationship with the foreign language has a strong impact on children's development of L2 listening and reading skills. Mihaljević Djigunović (1995) also assumes that positive attitudes and motivation may be influenced by support from parents and peers. Therefore, the aforementioned external factors can activate some of the key internal factors which affect the process of L2 acquisition, which will be discussed in the next section.

2.5.2. INTERNAL FACTORS OF L2 ACQUISITION

Although the described external factors influencing SLA are the focal point of the present research, internal factors of second language acquisition also need to be considered and understood as to draw conclusions on the possible diverse learning outcomes for individual students.

Ellis (1994: 5) underlines what the L2 learners themselves bring to the L2 acquisition process. Individual learners use their own cognitive mechanisms to gain L2 information from the input. In addition, their own previously acquired knowledge might help them understand and use L2 input:

[7] The European Commission project called ELLiE: Early language learning in Europe, 2011.

an already acquired mother tongue, a general knowledge about the world, as well as their own communication strategies. Moreover, learners might possess a knowledge on how language works in general, which facilitates L2 acquisition**.** Ellis (ibid.) also focuses on a set of individual differences which can be seen as internal factors that account for why people learn an L2 at a different rate and ultimately reach various levels of success.

2.5.2.1. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES IN L2 ACQUISITION

Individual differences in SLA research are usually considered background variables that personalize a learner's whole process of language acquisition (Dörnyei 2009: 231). The individual differences that influence the level of L2 achievement can be related to a number of factors, such as motivation, language aptitude, learning styles, and learning strategies, the four factors which have been the subject of a great number of studies (see, e.g., Dörnyei & Skehan, 2003, Dörnyei, 2005, Robinson 2002).

Ellis (1995) focuses on *language aptitude* and *language motivation* as major dimensions of individual differences in L2 acquisition, while also pointing out the influence of various *language learning strategies* individual learners make use of. Language aptitude is defined as the ability to acquire a language. It is a general belief that some people have a natural ability to learn languages while this task can be harder for others, and nowadays the *Modern Language Aptitude Test – MLAT* can be used as to predict an individual's success in learning basic communication skills[8]. Carroll (1981, as cited in Ellis 1997) offers a classification of the different components of language aptitude: *phonemic coding ability* (the ability to identify and memorize sounds of the L2), *grammatical sensitivity* (the ability to identify grammatical functions), *inductive language learning ability* (the ability to identify patterns between form and meaning) and *rote learning ability* (the ability to remember associations in e.g., vocabulary learning). While insisting on a distinction between language acquisition and language learning, Krashen (1981) claims that language aptitude,

[8] https://lltf.net/aptitude-tests/language-aptitude-tests/modern-language-aptitude-test-2/

as well as what he defines as *language attitude*[9], seem to be related to second language achievement, but also states that aptitude is usually more closely related to conscious learning, while attitude is more likely to be linked to the prosess of acquisition. Similarly, Gardner Smythe, Clement, and Gliksman (1976: 200) claim that motivational variables determine whether the student is encouraged to take advantage of informal language contexts.

Another often discussed factor that influences L2 acquisition is learners' motivation. The attitudes that learners have towards the target language can be a very important matter in the process of learning. Scholars have differentiated various types of motivation in L2 acquisition (see e.g., Ellis 1995). What Rod Ellis (1995) claims is oftentimes the major force in learning contexts is *instrumental motivation*, present when the learner is motivated to learn the target language for a "functional reason", e.g., to pass exams or get a job promotion. Learners are sometimes prompted by *integrative motivation*, mostly as to assimilate to the culture of the target language. Learners being encouraged as a result of experiencing success in language learning is considered to be a case of *resultative motivation*. Finally, *intrinsic motivation* is defined as involving "the arousal and maintenance of curiosity and can ebb and flow as a result of such factors as learners' particular interests" (ibid.: 76).

Motivation is therefore certainly a factor of considerable importance in any type of language acquisition. In the case of English language in Croatia, as in other formal, instructional settings, many students are usually motivated by performing well in an exam, i.e., their learning process is often stimulated by instrumental motivation. However, in a media-saturated world, and with most children and teenagers spending great amounts of their free time surrounded by content offered by mostly English-language media, it may well be argued that intrinsic motivation is assuming an increasingly meaningful role as students willingly choose to take in English-language content as to participate in the entertaining, informative or educational content that media in this language has to offer. In line with this argument, Sockett and Toffoli (2012) investigate how French language learners make use of the Internet to communicate in English and come to the conclusion that nowadays "learning is more likely to take place in virtual communities outside the classroom where

[9] Language attitude is defined by Krashen (1981) as the personality factors of individual learners of a target language as well as their inclination towards its native speakers.

available time, existing virtual communities and intrinsic motivation are already in place" (ibid.: 215). In Croatia, the opportunities for out-of-school language acquisition are multiple, ranging from exposure to L2 content in music, on the Internet, to TV content provided in originally recorded languages. By contrast, Hungarian scholars Nikolov and Csapó (2002, as cited in Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2008: 447) reveal that all intrinsically motivating programmes are dubbed on Hungerian television, while not many students have the opportunity to benefit from international TV channels, stressing once more the often-debated language-learning power of subtitled TV content or, more precisely, the limiting lack of it in some country contexts.

On another note, integrative motivation used to be explored mostly in relation to non-native speakers' learning of a target language as to assimilate to a new community or country context. In the present day, however, the significance of integrative motivation might have expanded, at least as far as the English language is concerned, as a consequence of the learners' desire to integrate into today's global society. As far back as the 60s, Gardner (1960, cited in Krashen 1981: 26) concluded that integrative motivation was especially important in order to develop communicative skills. Nowadays, when the English language is the dominant language of media, entertainment, technology and economy on a global scale, it could be argued that actively making use of the language content the media has to offer might have become an action prompted not only by intrinsic motivation, but also by integrative motivation. In other words, it is likely that some students feel the urge not to be left out of communicative situations happening on a global level, and are aware that English-language competence is to some degree essential. Being able to communicate in English has certainly become a requirement for the "global citizen"- an individual that feels the need to integrate into the world we now live in. This view is also supported by Mirjana Vilke (2007: 22), who states that at the present time, English is certainly the language which can most easily allow Croatian citizens to communicate with any other part of the world.

Besides the factors of aptitude and motivation, language learning strategies are also pointed out by Ellis (1995) as specific behavioural or mental techniques learners use to succeed in L2 learning. Some studies (see e.g., Heyde 1977; Naiman, Fröhlich, Stern, and Todesco 1996) show that other factors such as a positive self-image, an outgoing personality as well as empathy are related to second language achievement, while others (see e.g., Chastain 1975) also identify a relationship

between feelings of anxiety and language proficiency. Furthermore, scholars have discussed the possibility of extroverts being more suited to language learning than introverts (see e.g., Cohen 1991), as well as debated on whether anxiety in the form of comparison with peers (Xiu Yan and Horowiz 2008), fear of negative evaluation as well as identity issues (Pappamihiel 2002: 348) may influence language proficiency.

In the complex process of language learning, external factors may also influence the internal factors involved in L2 acquisition. Therefore, according to Matsuda and Gobel (2004), time spent abroad improves learners' self-confidence when speaking English, their motivation for learning the language and also their grades, whereas I found that Croatian high school students' in-class motivation for EFL speaking, reading, writing, listening and grammar activities is under the influence of their out-of-class English-language media exposure (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a).

All of the abovementioned external and internal factors may be significant for a learner's L2 acquisition. With that in mind, Van Geert (2008: 197) concludes "an understanding of dynamic systems is crucial if we want to go beyond the static or structural relationships between properties or variables and wish to understand the mechanism of development and learning as it applies to individuals". What Van Geert referred to is the *Complex Dynamic Systems Theory* in the study of L2 acquisition, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

2.6. COMPLEX DYNAMIC SYSTEMS THEORY

De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2007) argue how language can be approached as a dynamic system, where a set of variables interact over time, while language development can be considered a dynamic process. This perspective and approach to L2 acquisition, which highlights the importance of taking all external and internal factors into consideration, is the Complex Dynamic Systems Theory. Van Geert (2008) explains that "a developing person, embedded in his or her environmental niche, is an example of such a complex system", or developmental system (Ford & Lerner 1992, in Van Geert 2008: 183). He (ibid.) goes on to present the characteristics of dynamic systems and the applications of dynamic systems within L2 acquisition, whose relevance is singled

out by Sockett and Toffoli (2012: 213) in relation to the present-day study of informal language learning. The authors stress the fact that initial conditions are no longer uniform for all L2 learners, a factor which I also argue should not be overlooked when considering implications for formal FL learning settings *(see Chapter 6.).* Furthermore, emphasis is also put on how some learner strategies can act as *attractor states* and others as *repellers*[10], followed by the many contexts and tools made available to learners, which can result in unexpected learning behaviours, and finally, "the non-linear nature of complex dynamic systems which leads to phase transitions, such as jumps in degrees of fluency or comprehension unrelated to changes the quantity of exposure to the language" (ibid.: 213).

In relation to the present study's topic of English-language media exposure and its influence on Croatian students' English language acquisition, Kusyk & Sockett (2012: 45) approach their research on the online informal learning of English from the theoretical framework of Complex Dynamic Systems, viewing L2 exposure and learning as consisting of many variables which interact on the psycholinguistic as well as on the sociolinguistic level. Correspondingly, when exploring the role of virtual communities in the informal English-language learning of non-native speakers in France, Sockett and Toffoli (2012) question the present-day relevance of the learner autonomy model[11], which they claim has been the basis of language learning policies in Europe over the past 30 years, in prescribing how the English language should be taught nowadays. They point out that:

"whereas the learner autonomy model seeks to encourage the learner to take charge of his or her learning in a resource centre, the current availability of online media and communication tools means that the English learner is already involved in language use, and is better described in the

[10] Attractor and repeller states in relation to L2 learning are described by Van Geert (2008: 187): the attractor can be viewed as the learner's goal, e.g. a desired exam result. However, other goals, such as one's job, family life or the need to rest, can act as an obstacle i.e. a repeller.

[11] On the other hand, Sundqvist (2009: 26) links her research on *extramural English (see Chapter 5.)* in Sweden to the theory of learner autonomy. She argues that learners come in contact with extramural English, and take charge of their own learning by becoming involved in English language-related activities in out-of-school environments.

terms of action-oriented approaches as a user of the language and a social agent" (Sockett and Toffoli 2012: 212).

Within their research, Sockett and Toffoli therefore also emphasize a model of informal language learning related to task-based learning and dynamic systems theory. As De Bot et al. (2007: 14) summarize, the learners' *cognitive ecosystem* is related to their maturity and education level, as well as the extent to which they are exposed to the L2, which are all in turn related to the environments they interact with, i.e., their *social ecosystem*.

The chapters above have provided an overview of some common concepts and current topics related to SLA in general with the scope of introducing and creating context as to address more specifically the subject matter of the influence of media exposure on English-language acquisition by Croatian high school students. While some of the considerations above can be applied to the teaching and learning of any second language, others need to be approached differently with regard to the English language nowadays.

3. THE PRESENT STATUS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

The present chapter explores the status of the English language nowadays, worldwide, and specifically in Croatia. It also discusses the different practices in English language teaching (ELT), as well as the current English language-learning policies in Croatia, and in a European context. Finally, the teaching and learning experiences in Croatian EFL classrooms are discussed.

There is no doubt that English is currently the most popular language on a global level. In 2006, in his book *English Next*, David Graddol warned about the potential decline in popularity of English in the near future, in favour of other widely spoken languages such as Mandarin, or Spanish, but such a scenario seems highly unlikely from the present perspective. English has long been the *lingua franca* often preferred for global business communication and international trade, but there is also no denying it is the language of information technology worldwide, even more so with the rise of social media and an increased availability of the Internet for young people all around the globe. Because of its role in the world of entertainment, many also consider English to be the *main medium of Western cultural transmission* (Čepon 2006), as no other language can compare in that regard.

Sundqvist (2009) highlights how the relevance of the English language grew throughout the 20th century as a result of the political influence of Britain, the role of the USA at the end of World War I, the use of this language in science (Berns, Claes, de Bot, Evers, Hasebrink, Huibregtse, Truchot and van der Wijst, 2007), as well as the expanding popularity of American and British pop music during the 1960s onward. Nowadays this language holds a unique position in digital media and online, while in some countries, where subtitles are used as a means of translation instead of dubbing, English has also spread via American and British TV series and films.

Today, more than ever, the necessity of learning the English language is rising due to global mobility in the spheres of many people's private lives, education and work (Enever 2011: 104). Croatian scholars Cindrić and Narančić Kovač (2005) also stress how the effects of globalization, the importance of technology, the Internet, new media, new opportunities for higher education as well as in the service industry, all seem to account for the increasing awareness of the need for learning the English language. Indicating a new status of the English language worldwide, Graddol

(2006: 58) discusses whether in the history of the English language, the present period should be named as the period of "Global English", taking into consideration the latest linguistic, cultural, political and economic roles of English used in our postmodern world. What cannot be overlooked is that while English is transforming the world and vice versa, "inevitably, at the same time, the business of teaching and learning English is also changing beyond recognition" (ibid.: 22).

3.1. LEARNING AND TEACHING THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE AS A SECOND OR FOREIGN LANGUAGE

In recent years, many countries have been adapting their curriculums and pedagogic practices relating to English language teaching (ELT) as a response to new social, economic and political situations. Across the European union, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR*[12] has provided the necessary guidelines for a cross-country comparable system in terms of prescribing how important the teaching of each language skill should be, which levels of proficiency should be attained at which stage of L2 learning, the assessment criteria and suitable type of exams, as well as the age at which L2 learning should begin. However, the unique position that the English language presently holds in comparison to other languages, has created a number of terminology issues and consequently, has led to debates on the type of ELT model to be used in country specific contexts. Graddol (2006) points out that, while various ELT models may vary in terms of which variety of English (e.g. British or American) they aspire to, or regarding the motivation for learning (e.g. instrumental, or perhaps integrative motivation), how and where the language is to be used, according to the learning environment, or in selecting the appropriate content and learning materials, the two most common models are: teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) and teaching English as a second language (ESL).

These two models differ significantly in the methods and approaches they adopt in teaching English. EFL implies that English is taught as other foreign languages – by teaching about the language, culture and society of the native speakers of a target community, assigning to the learner

[12] *The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)* was established by the Council of Europe in 2001, with the aim of setting internationally comparable levels of achievement for foreign language learning.

the role of an outsider (ibid.: 82). On the other hand, the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) appeared in the 19th century firstly following the need of the British Empire to teach English to local people in colonial societies in order to facilitate administration, and secondly as a need to teach ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) to generations of immigrants in the USA and in other English-speaking countries. Therefore, one of the main characteristics of ESL, unlike EFL, is that it acknowledges the role of the English language within the society where it is taught (ibid.: 84).

Furthermore, Graddol (2006) explains how in countries where English is considered a second language (e.g., India), classrooms serve to teach a standard and more formal variety (ibid.: 85) and also mentions how code-switching between English and local languages is a feature present in ESL societies. Bearing this in mind, we should consider how the prevalence of the English language in the media on a global level provides constant opportunities to encounter this language on an everyday basis in many countries worldwide, where it also contributes to the occurrence of some degree of code-switching between English and the mother tongue. In this respect, we could argue that, it might be more adequate to consider it a second language than a foreign language even in country contexts such as Croatia, where there does not exist a local variety of English.

Beside the EFL and ESL models, in recent years other approaches to ELT have emerged and evolved in different countries, such as Content and language integrated learning (CLIL)[13], as well as teaching English as a lingua franca (ELF). ELF can be considered as the most radical approach: it suggests the conventional teaching of English should be changed to reflect the needs of an increasing number of non-native speakers who primarily use it to communicate with other non-native speakers, that therefore intelligibility is more important than native-like accuracy and that the target should be becoming fluent bilingual speakers, while also retaining national identity with regard to the accent (Graddol 2006: 87). In a similar way, Jenkins (2000: 1) discusses English as an International Language (EIL), and criticizes traditional ELT, pointing out that usual programmes include unnecessary, unrealistic, at times even harmful elements when preparing teachers to give

[13] Content and language integrated learning (CLIL) is an approach to bilingual education where curriculum content (e.g., Geography) and English are taught simultaneously. CLIL is hard to implement as it requires subject teachers to be bilingual, and implies significant changes of working relationships in educational institutions (Graddol 2006).

lessons in pronunciation skills needed for the international use of the English language. Jenkins, Modiano and Seidlhofer (2001: 18) state that English has become Europe's lingua franca, while also claiming there is less awareness of how English in mainland Europe is evolving into its own variety, which has pedagogical implications for institutionalized language-learning, educational materials as well as cultural identities created in this process.

In summary, with the growing presence of English on a global level the distinctions between 'native speaker', 'second-language speaker', and 'foreign-language user' no longer apply, as what previously used to be considered EFL learners are instead becoming second-language users especially in some countries in Europe. In support of this view, Graddol (2006: 110) claims that the traditional definition of second-language as a language used for communication within the country of its users, no longer makes sense in the present-day globalised world. As will be discussed in one of the following chapters, this is also a current issue present in the Croatian English language classroom.

3.2. THE STATUS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE IN CROATIA

Today the English language is the dominant foreign language in Croatia and is usually taught as the first foreign language in primary and secondary schools across the country, but this has not always been the case. Vilke (2007) gives a thorough account of the history of teaching and learning English as a foreign language in Croatia: it is not until 1948, after the split from the Soviet Union, and when Russian lost its status of a compulsory language, that students in Croatia were given an opportunity to select English as their first foreign language. Up until then, various political and cultural circumstances placed German, Hungarian, French and Russian in the position of dominant foreign languages, widely taught in schools across the country[14]. Therefore, only in the 1950s and 1960s of the past century did the teaching of EFL become widespread and English start gaining the popularity it enjoys nowadays.

[14] Apart from the languages mentioned in Vilke (2007), predominantly focused on the policies used in Zagreb and Northern regions of Croatia, it should be noted that the Italian language has had a very significant influence in the coastal regions of Istria and Dalmatia, due to Italy's proximity and historical connections.

Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008) highlight the general opinion that the majority of Croatians know how to make use of foreign languages to communicate for both professional and personal purposes. In support of this view, a survey that questions the foreign language needs and competences of Croatian adults with diverse educational and professional backgrounds was conducted by Cindrić and Narančić Kovač (2005) and Narančić Kovač and Cindrić (2007), who conclude that the need for and use of the English language seem to be broad and constant in the professional as well as the personal lives of Croatians. Cindrić and Narančić Kovač (2005) asked a sample of randomly chosen Croatian adults (N = 388) to specify the tasks and skills they require the English language for, in both their personal and professional lives. The respondents listed many items ranging from reading and giving directions, accessing the media, carrying out informal conversations, reading and writing e-mails, to skills needed to further their education. Among many situations relating to the need for English in their professional lives, a large number of respondents stressed the importance of tasks which include IT literacy and communication via computers. On the basis of the answers provided in the latter study it is accurate to conclude that in both the private and professional lives of adult Croats there is a need for mastering various English-language skills in a variety of contexts (ibid.: 202), and as a common view is that citizens of small European language communities need to have the ability of communicating in two widely spoken languages (Vilke 2007: 23), Vilke (2007) claims that English is the easiest foreign language for our learners to master.

Considering all of the examples given by adults in the above-mentioned survey, it seems that primary and secondary school students should have plenty of reasons to be motivated into learning the English language, if, of course, they are already aware of the powerful tool it might represent in their future, adult lives. On another note, there are other factors that can contribute to positive attitudes towards the English language. As Koolstra and Beentjes (1999: 53) point out that being the language of most popular music and films, English is often considered a "cool" language by young people, who, as passionate pop-culture followers, have been listening to English-language pop songs *stretching back to the early years of radio and vinyl records or further* (Toffoli and Sockett 2014) in Croatia, as well as in other parts of the world.

Besides the English language taught throughout their formal education, English-language content is nowadays a ubiquitous phenomenon in the lives of Croatian adolescents via the media. In the span of little more than fifty years, the status of English in Croatia has moved from being a popular foreign language heard mainly on the radio, in movies at the cinema, to being omnipresent. As far back as nearly two decades ago, scholars started noticing the growing differences between other foreign languages taught at school and the English language, the average exposure to which in Croatia measured to be 3.9 hours per day through TV programmes, radio, commercials and the Internet (Mihaljević Djigunović and Geld 2003). Only three years later, in 2006, Mihaljević Djigunović, Cergol and Li, found that exposure to English in Croatia could amount to up to 15 hours per day via various media.

As will be discussed later in detail, the fact that subtitles are traditionally used, rather than dubbing, as a means of translation for imported TV content, should not be ignored with respect to the additional English-language exposure this translation practice provides to Croatian viewers. In Croatia, teenagers are constantly exposed to a high number of television programmes imported from English speaking countries which are usually accompanied by Croatian subtitles on television and at cinemas. However, in recent years, the availability of audio-visual content has grown via the Internet, and students now have the possibility of watching English and American films through streaming, online via sites such as *YouTube*, or by downloading them to their computers. Therefore, some decide to watch English-spoken content with English captions or even no captions at all (see e.g., Brodarić Šegvić 2019a).

Furthermore, Enever (2011: 104) mentions Croatia, alongside the Netherlands, as a country where the strong presence of the English language is also seen in many advertisements kept in the original language, as well as in direction signs which are at times also presented in English. This occurrence may have resulted from the fact that Croatia is an increasingly developing tourist destination, therefore the use of the English language for general information is warranted as Croatian is not a widely spoken language. The ongoing development of tourism also creates many opportunities for young people to communicate in English with foreign visitors to Croatia's travel destinations.

Graddol (2006: 11) highlights how present-day English is a new phenomenon and is by no means "English as we have known it, and have taught it in the past as a foreign language". The general

premise of the present study is that nowadays more and more opportunities are emerging for English to be acquired in non-institutional contexts, unintentionally, mainly through media. For the individuals that acquire it in such a way, it has become more likely a second language than a foreign language by definition. However, while some students reach a level of English-language proficiency as to be considered Croatian-English bilinguals, not all learners are equally exposed to English via the media, nor do they equally seize the language-learning opportunities the media has to offer.

3.3. ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING POLICIES IN CROATIA

As previously described, the formal teaching of English as a foreign language in Croatia did not start until after World War II, it developed in the 1950s and 60s, started gaining more popularity and becoming dominant in the late 20th century and beginning of the 21st century.

In this chapter, several main findings of research related to English language learning policies in Croatia will be reported in detail. The policies will be discussed in particular with regard to the status of the English language, the formal language learning duration, and intensity, the expected learning aims and expected obtained outcomes at the end of secondary level education, the policies regarding teaching methods, materials, and contents, required teacher education, while comparing Croatia to other European countries as to gain insight into how formal EFL teaching and learning is organized and what it offers to students within the classroom walls, before comparing it to the teaching and learning of the Italian language, as well as providing an overview of what exposure to English-language media offers outside the school environment.

In contrast to its status half a century ago, English is now either specified as a mandatory or recommended as the first foreign language in nearly all European education systems[15], and it is the first foreign language learnt during primary and secondary education in almost all European countries, while Croatia is among nine European countries where more than 90% of students have EFL lessons starting from the first grade of primary school to their school graduation (European commission 2017).

As described in *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe*[16], most students in Croatia start learning English as their first foreign language at the age of 7, as it is usually chosen as the

[15] There are no such central recommendations or regulations on specific languages to be learnt in Croatia (European Commission 2017: 45).

[16] *Key Data on Teaching Foreign Languages at School in Europe* (2017) is the fourth edition of a report published by the European Commission, the aim of which is to combine statistical data and qualitative information on European education systems and describe the main policies on the teaching and learning of languages, with a focus on foreign languages. The sources used include: Eurydice, Eurostat and the OECD's PISA and TALIS international surveys.

first foreign language subject in primary school[17]. Such an early start was first introduced in Croatia in 2003, in order to improve the foreign language skills of primary school students (Buljan Culej 2013). According to the coordinator of a pilot project of Early English instruction, professor Vilke (1993: 10), when introducing early foreign language learning, the ultimate goal is to raise competent bilingual speakers.

In recent years, an increasingly early start in language teaching, that is, a lowering of the age at which learning begins, has become a widely spread practice in Europe (Edelenbos et al. 2007; Nikolov and Curtain 2000). Though survey results (European commission 2017) show that students, compared to a decade ago are learning foreign languages from a younger age, this European trend is not uniform in all countries. In 2014, for instance, Croatia was among the 12 countries in Europe where nearly all primary school students learned at least one foreign language, while this was not the case with more than 50% of students from other European countries.

At the age of 15, Croatian students have the possibility of choosing different educational pathways that include general education[18], lasting 4 years, or vocational education[19], which can last 3 to 4 years. Regardless of the type of school they choose, at the end of their high school education, Croatian students will have studied their first foreign language, which is mainly English, for 11-12 years (European Commission 2017: 156).

It should be noted that not all European countries dedicate the same amount of time to the instruction of foreign languages. According to the measurements carried out in 2016, Croatia is among the countries that have a slightly higher percentage (11.1 %) than the majority of European countries (between 5 and 10%) of instruction time dedicated to foreign languages within the total instruction time in primary schools, while in most countries instruction time for FL increases with the start of secondary education (European Commission 2017). Buljan Culej (2013: 17) described

[17] In most European countries, students start learning the first foreign language in the first year of primary education, between 6 and 8 years of age. (European Commission 2017).

[18] The students of the 'gimnazija', who usually opt between literary or scientific studies, with an aim to attend higher education (Vilke 2007).

[19] Opting for vocational education mostly leads to more work-oriented studies and directly to the labour market (European Commission 2017).

the amount of prescribed EFL lessons in Croatian schools: at the beginning of primary education, students have around 70 first foreign language lessons per year, i.e., two 45-minute lessons per week, while at lower-secondary school, they have a minimum of 105 lessons per year[20], i.e., three lessons per week. Buljan Culej also mentions the opportunity students have of participating in, both remedial as well as enrichment, extra foreign language lessons (ibid.: 17). However, insight from personal teaching experience shows that the opportunities for extra lessons are rarely taken advantage of, mostly due to the overloaded schedules of both students and teachers, as well as the lack of physical space since many schools share premises by working in opposite shifts.

Met and Rhodes (1990) point out the potential importance of learning intensity as a factor for the rate of language acquisition and achievement. Learning intensity also varies across European educational systems, and countries may allocate a similar amount of instruction time over a different number of years. The difference between Croatia and Romania is given as an example in a report by the European Commission (2017: 112) as to highlight the greater learning intensity promoted in Croatia: respectively, 525 and 520 hours are recommended in Croatia and in Romania for the first foreign language, but this provision is for a duration of 8 years in Croatia, while it lasts 11 years in Romania. On a related note, Vilke and Vrhovac (1993) consider intensive teaching at the early stages of FL learning to be responsible for providing students with more opportunity for success and emphasize that the feeling of success is considered vital for future FL learning. However, the findings of Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008) show that Croatian students perform significantly better than Hungarian students on EFL proficiency tests even though Hungarians start learning English at an earlier age, in smaller groups and with more classes per week. As to interpret these results correctly, we must take into consideration what is also emphasized by Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008: 447): unlike Hungarian learners, Croatians are exposed to considerable English-language input out of the school environment, such as undubbed foreign audio-visual content on national TV and satellite channels. Since the latter research, carried out more than a decade ago, we have been witnessing the ever-growing importance of social networks, the popularity of online gaming communities, followed by the invention of smartphones, conditions

[20] The students who opt for literary studies in general education usually learn more foreign languages with a greater intensity, and the English as a first foreign language lessons may amount to four per week, i.e., 140 lessons per year.

that have all made the availability of English-language content via the Internet even more intense. In the light of this, it could be said that the possibility of constant exposure to the English language via digital media, a matter which will be discussed later in great detail, has increased the intensity of EFL acquisition for all students who choose to make use of it.

Just as the majority of European countries, Croatia uses the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - CEFR*. According to the *ZEROJ* (CEFR 2005) all language teaching should include the acquisition of four language skills (reading, writing, listening and speaking), the achievement of which should be considered equally important by the end of compulsory education. Croatia is listed as one of the countries where oral communication is in focus during early language learning, but where "equal weight (is given) to all skills at the end of the process" (European Commission 2017: 119). As in the curricula of most European countries, students in Croatia are expected to reach the level of "independent user" in EFL by the time they finish secondary school. The foreign language proficiency levels[21] tested at the Croatian State Matriculation Exam, at the end of secondary education, are B1 and B2.

When discussing learning policies and the quality of the teaching process, the role of the teacher and its importance for successful learning outcomes is often raised as a subject. In a comparative study on Croatian and Hungarian students' EFL proficiency in relation to organizational factors in the two countries, Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008: 437) examine the teacher qualifications required in each country**,** and claim that Croatia has had qualified EFL teachers since the 50s, when fast-track programmes were set up to retrain teachers as English started gaining more and more popularity, while they also stress that, in Croatia, teachers' overall proficiency levels are high as a consequence of university-level reaching degrees being a requirement for decades. According to recent data (European Commission 2017), the majority of education systems across Europe require

[21] The ZEROJ (CEFR 2005) defined Common language-competence reference levels, with the aim of ensuring the application of equal criteria for the measurement of language development across Europe. The six levels of language proficiency are described as: A1 ('breakthrough'), A2 ('waystage'), B1 ('threshold'), B2 ('vantage'), C1 ('effective operational proficiency') and C2 ('mastery') (Vijeće Europe, 2005).

foreign languages to be taught by subject specialists[22] in secondary education. However, in half of the countries, generalist teachers[23] teach foreign languages in primary education, while Croatia is among the sole nine countries where specialist teachers are also required at the primary level – which once again points out the relevance that is given to foreign languages within the Croatian education system. In addition, transnational mobility supported by the EU has been offering more frequent possibilities for FL teachers to spend time abroad in target-language countries for professional training, which can further expand their experience, improve proficiency and thus enhance the FL teaching process.

As can be perceived throughout this chapter, even though there are certain differences in the organizational aspects of language teaching across European countries, English is frequently taught as the first foreign language for a relatively similar amount of time and with a similar intensity within the vast majority of educational systems in Europe. It is therefore even more interesting to notice the general differences in the competence of this language among students from different European countries, as well as the differences in the EFL proficiency of Croatian students who are at the same stage in their formal English language learning.

3.4. ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND CROATIAN STUDENTS

The present study is primarily focused on the issues that relate to the English language taught in Croatian secondary schools, and the informal acquisition of this language by Croatian adolescents in a non-institutional environment, as well as to what extent this type of acquisition is reflected in formal secondary-level education. Croatian high school students often learn English in mixed-ability classrooms, with the same group of students with whom they attend other school subjects' lessons. With the already mentioned minimum and maximum number of weekly lessons that take place depending on the type of school, students

[22] A specialist teacher is usually qualified to teach either one or more foreign languages, or a foreign language and one other subject. (European Commission 2017)

[23] A generalist teacher is usually a teacher at primary level who is qualified to teach almost all subjects in the curriculum and may provide foreign language teaching whether or not they have received training in this field. (European Commission 2017)

learn English according to the EFL model, even though the curriculum and pedagogic practices are gradually being altered and improved to suit the changing status of this language.

The results of a national project on EFL leaning carried out in Croatia (see Geld and Stanojević 2007; Medved Krajnović 2007; Josipović-Smojver 2007; Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović 2007) show that towards the end of primary education the average Croatian EFL learner used to reach the A2 CEFR level, while most finished high school with a B1 level of competence. As mentioned in the previous chapter, nowadays the state exam taken at the end of secondary education allows students to choose between what is considered a "lower level" – B1, and a "higher level" – B2 English language test. While these language learning outcomes are prescribed by the national curriculum, EFL teaching experience shows that many students' proficiency levels reach higher levels, especially in general education high schools[24].

Through personal experience as an English-language teacher in Croatian general education secondary schools, I have noticed many different ways in which the most proficient students' EFL competences and skills stand out in comparison to those of the rest of the class. I have often observed (see e.g., Brodarić 2015) how proficient and motivated EFL students, showing interest in British and American pop culture, would relate words encountered in schoolbooks to the lyrics of a famous song, or would recall hearing the same words spoken by the teacher in a TV show they watched the evening before. Elsewhere (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 36) I have mentioned how successful EFL students seem to build up their vocabularies with items not included in regular EFL school programmes, while rarely doing so with other foreign languages they are taught at school, such as Italian or German. What is more, among excellent EFL learners, some prefer speaking in English while others perform much better by expressing themselves in the written form. I have already assumed (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 75) that such differences might be attributed to their English-media consumption choices in their free time outside the classroom walls, if, of course, other social or psychological diversities are ruled out. In summary, the language skills and knowledge of above-average EFL learners seems to be heavily influenced by the English they "pick up" outside the school environment, in their free time, mainly through various media.

While it might seem natural to conclude that the omnipresence of the English language and adolescents' exposure to it might lead all Croatian high school students to possess an excellent and rather uniform EFL

[24] The overall high levels of proficiency are also shown in a report (Nacionalni centar za vanjsko vrednovanje obrazovanja 2021) from the State Matriculation Exam, issued at the end of the school year 2019/2020, which states that out of the 28252 students who took the English language test, 16974 (60%) students opted for the "higher level" English language test, out of which 4925 earned an excellent mark, while another 6635 earned a very good mark.

competence, in reality wide gaps are detected in students' proficiency levels. The drastic differences among the learners who are often exposed to English-language media and those who, for various reasons, do not take advantage of this opportunity, lead to many issues within the EFL classroom. Throughout teaching experience one can notice how poor EFL students are usually not "bad students" in general. On the contrary, those who find it difficult to follow the B1 or B2 level EFL programmes can be students who excel at all other school subjects. At the same time, it is easy to encounter students showing C1, occasionally even C2 level EFL competence while risking grade retention and ignoring other school subjects. Proficient EFL students often confide spending their free time being online, watching TV, playing videogames, therefore their EFL school success seems to be largely connected to their frequent informal exposure to English-language content via the media (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a).

Even though English-language content outside the classroom walls is accessible to practically everyone, in teacher-student consultations, the weaker EFL pupils, who show a surprising lack of competence given the pervasiveness of the language in question, acknowledge not being in frequent contact with British or American cultures by mainly listening to Croatian music, generally not watching television and missing out on many of the opportunities that social networking and the Internet in general can offer in terms of the development of English-language competences (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b), or due to a lack of free time in favour of out-of-school sports activities and/or many other school obligations. Thus, their unsuccessful results in formal EFL learning seem to be closely related to a low exposure to English-language content in non-institutional contexts. Formal English lessons at school can therefore hardly compensate for the immense differences in proficiency levels created by the disparities in the amount of exposure to and use of English-language media in students' free time.

Graddol (2006) highlighted how English language teaching is changing rapidly as a consequence of globalization and anticipated that in the future there would be more complex and ever-changing mixing of learner ages and proficiency levels (ibid.: 18). He also claimed that during this decade and beyond, this mix of age-relationships with skill levels will render the usual teaching and assessment methods and approaches inappropriate, as "teaching general English in secondary school will fall away and become the preserve of the remedial teacher, helping students who cannot manage in the mainstream classes to catch up" (ibid.: 101). Therefore, while the traditional EFL model will not die out completely, he believes it will be required by smaller numbers of learners (ibid: 108).

Curtain (2000) brought forward the notion of engaged time, claiming that allocated time is not crucial in comparison to the importance of learner engagement, while also stressing the importance of teaching

intensity as well as the quality of teaching. While Curtain's statement refers to formal language teaching, it can also be applied to the process of informal acquisition of the English language and how living in a context that offers ample opportunities to make use of this language does not necessarily mean acquisition will take place, especially if *learner engagement is low or missing*. Of course, such assumptions are also connected to the already mentioned factors of language awareness, motivation and aptitude (*see Chapter 2.5.2.)*

Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008: 437) comment on how Croatian instruction helps students develop and have access to modern languages along similar lines in whole classes, rather than enhancing individual differences, stressing this as a positive policy of Croatian EFL education in comparison to that of Hungary where students are streamed into ability groups from an early age. It could be argued that at the present time, taking into consideration the evident language competence-gap among EFL students, it is increasingly difficult and counterproductive to insist on mixed-ability classrooms for the unique case of English language teaching.

Evidence taken within the four year longitudinal investigations for the ELLiE study (2011) regarding the role of the learner and their individual differences in the processes of early language learning, conclude that young learners start with a generally positive attitude towards foreign language learning which, over time, sometimes deteriorates along with the awareness of assessment criteria used by the teachers, as well as young learners increasingly comparing themselves to peers (Enever 2011: 59). This observation confirms that insisting on a mixed ability EFL classroom might not be stimulating or motivating at all at the present time, when both teacher experience, as well as research in the field shows that there is a huge gap in the English language competences of students fully exposed to this language out-of-school and on the other hand students who do not spend their free time engaging in activities that involve the use of the English language. The latter, clearly, find themselves increasingly left behind in comparison to the knowledge their peers show in the EFL classroom, while the very proficient English students, contrastingly, might find their compulsory EFL classes to be irrelevant if the teacher needs to keep a "middle of the road" approach at all times, complying to the prescribed teaching programme they have already mastered, most probably due to the immense extra-exposure from media.

Perhaps, the competence gap between these two types of students could be explained by discussing the contrast between the automatic processing of implicit knowledge and the controlled processing that generally allows access to explicit knowledge, as explained by Ellis (2009). We could argue that the students who are not extensively exposed to the "real-life" English language use present in the media, do not acquire the language implicitly, but mostly only through explicit formal instruction. Therefore, the explicit

knowledge they possess may not be easily accessed in spontaneous language use (ibid.: 12), whereas the implicit knowledge their peers gain in their free time via media-exposure can be easily accessed and is an essential component of their proficiency. Even though N. Ellis (1995, in Ellis 2009: 13) proposes that "sequences produced initially through the application of declarative rules can come to be performed automatically if they are sufficiently practised", such practice takes time and the students who need to practice the structures in question are likely to constantly lag behind the students who already possess implicit L2 knowledge. Mihaljević Djigunović et al (2008) suggest that aside from the quality of teaching, the most important factors for EFL success are in fact the exposure to and practice of the target language which comprise of learning both in and out of classroom. According to Nunan (1991) formal classroom instruction was already insufficient for learning English at the beginning of the nineties. In line with this, besides attending their regular English classes at school or enrolling in additional formal EFL courses, Croatian students usually report the use of this language in their free time, during which, presumably, language maintenance is likely to occur on a regular basis and subconsciously (Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015: 34).

4. THE HISTORY AND STATUS OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN THE CITY OF SPLIT

The previous chapter has described the current status of the English language in Croatia as well as in the world. On the other hand, the present section will discuss the status of the Italian language, particularly exploring its place and history in the city of Split and its surroundings[25]. It could be said that in similar ways to how we now consider English to be the language of global communication, Italian was once viewed, as Saftich (2015) suggests, as *the language of Renaissance globalization*.

In his book on Italians in Dalmatia, Monzali (2007: 4) states that the citizens of Split and other coastal Dalmatian cities in the 10th and 11th century were descendants of Latin colonists and indigenous Illyric peoples, and points out that the indigenous Neo-Latin peoples of Dalmatia later saw a slow inflow of Slavs and Italians in their cities. Pederin (1982: 65) notes that in this region, documents as well as works of literature were initially written in Latin, just as was the case in most of the territory of Europe. However, as Monzali (2007: 5) explains, from 1100 the Italian language had already spread significantly throughout coastal Dalmatia even before the start of the official Venetian rule over this region in the 15th century. The author also illustrates that the reasons behind the spread of the language at that time were the intense trade relations between Dalmatia and the Italian peninsula, the similarity in culture and lifestyles between the two territories, geographical proximity, the immigration of many Italians to Dalmatian cities as skilled labour, as well as Italian being the *lingua franca* of Mediterranean trade which defined its presence and relevance in Dalmatian society. Nigoević (2007: 502) also points out that a variant of Venetian dialect, defined as *Colonial-Venetian* or *croato-veneziano (*Muljačić 2002, as reported by Nigoević 2007*)* was used as a *lingua franca* for centuries in the region of Dalmatia, where it has heavily influenced the local dialects of the coastal areas.

[25] The status of the Italian language in Dalmatia is not to be confused with the status of this language in Istria, the sole bilingual region in Croatia. In Istria, standard Italian has the equal status of official language as Croatian, while other dialects of both languages are in use, such as Istro-Venetian as well as the autochthonous Romance language Istriot, and Istro-Romanian (Skelin Horvat 2013: 59).

While in the Middle Ages the dominion of Venice was not favoured, Venetian rule in Dalmatia acquired greater local support during the expansion of the Ottoman Empire[26] as the economically impoverished Dalmatia depended heavily on Venice which started to be considered a protective force. In that period the cities were populated by different nationalities and Italo-Slavic bilingualism was the norm (Monzali 2007: 12).

Pederin (1982: 66) highlights how during the 16th century the Latin language was gradually replaced by Italian when writing all official documents in Dalmatia, as notaries in the urban centres of this area were mostly immigrated and assimilated Italians (ibid.: 70).

Before the fall of the Republic of Venice[27], in Dalmatia, Croatian was the language spoken by the people, while Latin, followed by Italian were the languages of official documents; Latin, along with Old Church Slavonic, was also used by the church and Italian was the language of philosophy and science (ibid.). When discussing the multilingualism of Croatian 16th to 18th century literature, Bogišić (1996: 6) points out the importance of Italian culture and claims that attending cultural circles, achieving education or participating in the literary life of Dalmatia was impossible without knowledge of the Italian language. He stresses the fact that, unlike other languages such as Hungarian, French or German, which occasionally found their way into Croatian literature and culture, Latin and Italian[28] were a constant until the 19th century when they became only the remains of a long practice in the past (ibid.: 8).

In his book on Enzo Bettiza's[29] opus and the "nation of Dalmatia", Dario Saftich (2017) highlights how the specific presence of the Italian language, as well as the colonial Venetian dialect in the urban areas of Dalmatia gave rise to important works of literature which were inspired by this region but written in Italian.

[26] Between the years 1525 and 1540, the Ottoman armies conquered most of the Dalmatian hinterland, while the urban centres of Split and Zadar became Venetian enclaves (Monzali 2007: 10).

[27] The end of Venetian independence took place in 1797 at the hands of Napoleon Bonaparte, which ended the centuries-long period of Dalmatia's subjection to the Republic of Venice (Monzali 2007: 9).

[28] According to Austro-Hungarian statistics from 1910, the Croatian language in Dalmatia was spoken by 610571 inhabitants, Italian by 17989, German by 3082. (Foretić 1972, as reported by Franušić 1999).

[29] Enzo Bettiza was a bilingual novelist and journalist born in Split, Dalmatia, at the time of Yugoslavia, to a wealthy Dalmatian-Italian and Croatian family (Saftich 2017: 9).

Monzali (2007: 19) also indicates that, in the city of Split in particular, the centuries-long rule of the Republic of Venice had left a strong impact helping the Venetian dialect become the most widespread language among its citizens. The bilingual Slavic Dalmatians were known to inhabit urban centers where different languages and cultures coexisted throughout the 19th century (ibid.: 20). It is only in the second part of the 19th century, as a consequence of Italian and Austrian conflicts, that the government of Vienna decided to make Croatian the teaching language of secondary schools in Split, downgrading Italian to a secondary, foreign language (ibid.: 96).

The mid-19th century brought campaigns, supported by Austrian authorities, by the part of the population that considered itself Slavic, directed against those who identified themselves with an Italian cultural identity, forcing some to flee the region (Cipriani 2019).

The Croatian language went on to became the official language in Dalmatia only in 1912 (Pederin 1982: 65). In the aftermath of WWI, the whole of Dalmatia became part of the newly-formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, while only the city of Zadar, at that time the capital of the region, fell under the rule of the Italian government (Cipriani 2019). This was also a period of marked emigration by the population aiming to preserve its Italian cultural identity. Peričić (2003) claims that the decline in Italian speakers in Dalmatia was proportionate to the decrease in the number of Italians who had moved to Istria, Italy or the Slovenian coast, or to Zadar.

Later on, the Italian occupation of this area during WWII and the antagonism it received by the locals, was followed by yet another and what could be considered the last wave of emigration by Italian citizens most of which relocated to Italy after the war (Cipriani 2019).

While the history described above shows an undeniable link between the Italian language and the city of Split with its surroundings, the influence of this language and culture seems to have become discernibly less powerful in recent times, particularly when considering younger generations.

4.1. SECOND FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN CROATIA

I have already mentioned *(see Chapter 3.3.)* that since 2003, Croatian children have started learning their first FL as a mandatory subject, which is usually the English language, in their first year of primary school.

When discussing the most important decisions taken with regard to Croatia's language education policy, Lujić (2016: 105) highlights the regulations[30] which prescribed the obligatory start of first FL learning in first grade, as well as the possibility of selecting a facultative, second FL in fourth grade. Since that school year, the curricula have included and approved English, and Italian, as well as French and German as compulsory, first FL and as second, optional second FL (ibid.), even though English is most often chosen as the first foreign language. The Italian language, has long been the traditional option chosen as the second foreign language by students in schools of the coastal regions of the country.

Based on the figures at the end of the school-year 2017/2018 shown in the Statistical Report issued by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics in 2019[31], out of the total number of students in high schools across Croatia, who learn one, two or even three foreign languages, 91.6% learn English, 35.7% German, 13.6% Italian. These figures indeed show a higher percentage of Croatian students choosing to learn German rather than Italian, but regional results would definitely need to be observed separately as to obtain an accurate picture of whether the Italian language is still the FL language most often selected as the second language in Dalmatia.

The *Key Data on Teaching Languages at School in Europe* (European Commission 2017: 35) shows that there is no provision for a compulsory second foreign language learning period in primary and/or general secondary education in the country. In Croatia, as in some other countries, learning more than one foreign language is not an obligation but more of an entitlement (ibid.: 12),

[30] *Upute za provedbu posebnog programa ranog učenja stranog jezika u I. razredu i izborne nastave stranog jezika u IV. razredu osnovne škole u školskoj godini 2003./2004*. (Lujić 2016: 105)

[31] *Upper Secondary Schools and Students' Boarding Homes, End of 2017/2018 and Beginning of 2018/2019 School Year* available at the link https://www.dzs.hr/ Accessed May 2021.

as the national curriculum ensures ways of providing this opportunity[32]. While across Europe the most popular second foreign language learning options are French, German and Spanish, Croatia is one of the few countries[33] where Italian is also learned as a consequence of geographical proximity and history (ibid.: str 13).

A report of the public opinion surveys conducted in 2005 on behalf of the European Commission on Europeans and their Languages[34], also included the opinions of then acceding countries, among them Croatia. 1000 citizens were interviewed in Croatia and asked which languages they know well enough to have a conversation. Italian resulted as the third most widely known language (for 14% of the sample) after English (49%) and German (34%) (European **Commission** 2006: 13). Italian (12%) also followed English (77%) and German (54%) in terms of the citizens' views on which languages, besides their mother tongue they think are most useful for personal development and career (ibid.: 32). When asked which languages children should learn the majority of Croatian sample also favoured English and German over Italian (ibid.: 33).

Naturally, as explained earlier, these are also results which can be viewed as in tight relation to the sample selection process[35] and do not entail that participants are equally representative of each Croatian region.

Italian is one of the languages that can be selected at the State Matriculation Exam at the end of secondary education. As for the expected minimum attainment levels for Italian as a second foreign language in Croatia, at the end of lower secondary education it is the A1 'breakthrough' level, and B1 'threshold' level for general upper secondary education (European Commission 2017: 123),

[32] In addition to learning a compulsory first FL from the age of 7 to 19, between the ages of 10 and 15 students in Croatia can choose to start learning a second FL as all schools have the obligation to offer this option (European Commission 2017 :154).

[33] Only 2.9% of general upper secondary education students in the EU learn Italian, with Croatia, Cyprus, Malta, Austria and Slovenia being the only countries where more than 10% of secondary school students learn Italian. Besides Malta, the language is most popular in Croatia, where 11.6 % of lower secondary school students and 24.4 % general upper secondary pupils learn Italian (European Commission 2017: 75).

[34] As part of the 64.3 Eurobarometer, 28 694 citizens of 25 EU countries as well as acceding and candidate countries of Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Turkey were asked about their experiences and perceptions of multilingualism (European Commission 2006).

[35] The technical specifications of the Eurobarometer survey (European Commission 2006: 68) state that the sample design applied in all countries was random, using a sampling points drawn with probability proportional to population size and density.

while the levels covered by the State Matriculation Exam for any second foreign language the students choose to be tested for, are tested on a lower level than that of the chosen first foreign language, which is most commonly English (ibid.: 125).

More than a decade ago, data collected throughout Europe *(European Commission 2006: 32)* showed that the languages perceived by the majority of European citizens to be the most useful were already English, French and German. Nowadays, it is also true that many students in the city of Split seem to be turning towards languages other than Italian as second foreign language options regardless of the long-lived link between the language and this region.

4.2. THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL ACQUISITION OF THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN SPLIT

While teaching experience shows that there seem to be increasing differences in the English-language competences of Croatian high school students regardless of the generally early start and same years of formal EFL education, students' Italian-language skills are rather uniform and seem to develop along the lines of the prescribed IFL curriculum. Even though the possibility of learning the Italian language is already provided by some primary schools, teaching experience shows that most pupils more often than not choose to start learning Italian, or another FL, at high-school level.

Despite the many centuries of Italian-language influence over the city's local speech (Nigoević 2007), the numerous Italian loanwords that are part of the dialect used in Split, which have been borrowed from both Venetian and Triestine dialects as well as the standard Italian language (Bezić 2016), currently, the knowledge that IFL students show, and the ways in which they learn this language seem to suggest that high school students in Split learn Italian exclusively as a foreign language via formal tuition.

Besides the presence of Italian-language elements in the local dialect, and Italian cultural elements in the lifestyle of the region, students can also access content in the Italian language via the media. The body of literature dealing with the representation of the Italian language in Croatian media is limited, however, in their book on media as carriers of interculturalism in Croatian-Italian

interactions, Leburić and Nigoević (2008) analyse Croatian citizens' perceptions and receptions of the Italian language, culture and media in Croatia and detect that respondents (N = 1500) find appeal in Italian media related to beauty, fashion as well as sports.

It should also be noted that the city is nowadays considered the central hub of tourism in Dalmatia, where citizens of different generations are often expected to able to speak more than one foreign language to meet the needs of a growing tourist industry, which has become a leading factor in the economy of the region (Cedefop 2020). It can be said that a lot of value is placed on the knowledge of different foreign languages altogether. However, while an uninterrupted, intense linguistic influence of the Italian language could be observed until relatively recently, the status it enjoyed for so long in this region does not seem to have the same quality it used to. Besides being replaced by other popular European languages, such as German, as a second FL option in formal tuition, its media presence is not as strong as the representation of some other languages, such as Spanish or Turkish (Benković 2011). On top of that, English is the language which is, by far, perceived as the most useful and the one most often encountered throughout all available media.

In the light of this, the following sections will explore the body of literature related to the incidental, out-of-school acquisition of the English language by learners in both Croatia and in other countries as to provide context for the present study.

5. OUT-OF-SCHOOL ENGLISH-LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The present chapter starts out with a consideration of the various terminology used to indicate the process of incidental, informal, out-of-school language acquisition. What follows is a specific exploration of English-language media exposure, central to this research, with a focus on the language acquisition opportunities offered by each media, covered in detail throughout four chapters. Finally, the body of literature which addresses the influence of English-language media exposure and its influence on formal English-language teaching and learning is reported from the perspective of both Croatian and European authors, by identifying the benefits for each language skill and EFL proficiency in general.

In recent times, several names have been assigned to the phenomenon of incidental, spontaneous acquisition of L2 by language students in environments other than formal, institutional. Focusing mainly on vocabulary, (Laufer and Hulstijn 2001: 11) defined *incidental learning* as "without learners' deliberate decision to commit information to memory". Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević (2015) stress how the usage of L2 in non-instructional contexts brings benefits with respect to incidental learning, which is defined as "the process of learning something without the intention of doing so" (Brown, Waring and Donkaewbua, 2008: 136)

Before introducing the term *extramural English* (EE) for defining English language-related activities outside the school environment, Sundqvist (2009) lists the different terminology other scholars have used in recent years for the same phenomenon. Benson (2013: 77) describes the process of *out-of-class learning* as taking place in a non-institutional environment, either through naturalistic learning by spoken or written interaction with target-language users, or via "self-directed naturalistic learning" which can be seen as a deliberate self-instruction project by the learner seeking to acquire language skills through their own effort. Benson also states that the degree of learners' deliberate intention to acquire language skills or content is what distinguishes the processes of self-instruction and naturalistic learning. The term *out-of-school learning* of the English language is used by Lamb (2004) and Yi (2005) to describe the same phenomenon, while Hulstijn, Hollander and Greidanus (1996: 327) refer to the process of accidentally learning

information with no intention of remembering it, when using the term *incidental learning*, as does Forsman (2004: 173) when defining *unintentional learning*.

Toffoli and Sockett (2014) also describe the features of *OILE - Online Informal Learning of English* (Sockett and Toffoli 2012), and relate them to Benson's (2013) *out-of-class learning*. While comparing the two terms, they underline that OILE firstly focuses on identifying the development of language skills via online activities and secondly, is largely incidental as the activities of this process are aimed at leisure and the intention to communicate, whereas Benson's *out-of-class learning* is mainly centred on students' deliberate efforts to improve their English (Benson 2006: 26).

With these definitions and distinctions in mind, the present research focuses on the purely incidental acquisition of English language when undertaking activities that involve the use of this language for pleasure, and finally in what ways this type of L2 acquisition is reflected in formal EFL instruction. One of what I consider the most appropriate terms is suggested by Sundqvist (2009), who refers to these linguistic activities as *extramural English* (EE)[36] that the students engage in during their spare time outside the school institution. When describing students' engagement in extramural English activities, she claims their involvement is voluntary and in no way under the pressure of peers or parents. She also mentions that while learners might not always have specific reasons for coming in contact with extramural English, they might develop interest in learning the English language via EE activities (Sundqvist 2009: 25). It is precisely within this context that I place the present study, highlighting the abundance of such activities to be undertaken by Croatian high school students, providing benefits to their English-language proficiency.

In most countries around the world, exposure to the English language increased drastically in the 1990s with the advent of the Internet, and the spread of American media in global television networks and computer applications (Modiano 2005: 34). As Kuppens (2010: 65) emphasizes, in some countries, as is the case with Croatia, foreign language media use by both children and adolescents is "far from limited to the classroom". In fact, nowadays, they are the age groups most exposed to foreign languages due to the relevance of pop culture in the lives of young people via

[36] Sundqvist (2009) defines the term as an adjectival compound of Latin origin meaning "English outside the walls".

TV, music, magazines, fashion, as well as the Internet and computer games, which are all an essential part of their lifestyle (Cheung 2001: 56). Throughout the last decade there has been an increasing number of studies exploring the opportunities of incidental language learning that take place beyond the school walls. The following chapters will give an overview of the perspectives from different countries in Europe focusing more specifically on research carried out in Croatia.

Multiple studies from a variety of countries reveal that adolescents have extensive contacts with extramural English in their free time (see. e.g., Oscarson & Apelgern 2005; Skolverket 2004a[37]; in Sundqvist 2009: 2; and Forsman 2004; Berns et al. 2007), and have assumed that, in some way, their English proficiency is influenced by engaging activities that include English-language content (Crystal 2006).

The English-language media exposure of French students is explored in terms of their involvement in the aforementioned Online Informal Learning of English – OILE activities (see e.g., Toffoli and Sockett 2010; Sockett 2011; Kusyk and Sockett 2012), with specific references to the influence that virtual communities (Sockett and Toffoli 2012) and listening to English-language music (Toffoli and Sockett 2014) might have on English language acquisition. The results of these studies show that French students who are frequently exposed to English out of the institutional environment have a significantly wider EFL vocabulary, as well as better communicative skills. In a study by Ivars Olmedo (2015), on the out-of-school exposure to English of secondary school EFL learners in Spain, while the results revealed that listening to music is the most popular activity, it is watching films with subtitles, as well as engaging in reading, and speaking in English that proved to be the activities with the highest correlations to the students' grades.

For a variety of reasons that will be discussed later, students from different European countries are not equally exposed to the English language in informal contexts. The already mentioned cross-country ELLiE study (Enever 2011: 110) confirmed that, out of the seven European countries taken into consideration[38], the Swedish and Croatian primary school children are most exposed to English as a foreign language through various media outside the school environment with more than eight

[37] The original sources (Oscarson and Apelgern 2005; Skolverket 2004) are studies written in the Swedish language.

[38] The three-year longitudinal ELLiE study includes data from England, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Spain and Sweden and Croatia (Enever 2011).

hours a week, on average. In Croatia, several studies (see e.g., Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2006.; Mihaljević Djigunović and Geld 2003; Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015; Brodarić 2015; Nikolić-Hoyt 2006) have identified informal language acquisition to be considerably important for the general EFL proficiency of students and have sought to identify the media that could be considered crucial to the EFL acquisition in the students' free time (e.g., Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015; Brodarić Šegvić 2019a). The findings of these studies are presented in Chapter 6.

5.1. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE MEDIA EXPOSURE AND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The development of new technologies has seen a tremendous growth of English-language media exposure, especially for younger generations who are in now contact with the English language more than ever before. Apel and Masterson (2012, in Ćosić 2016: 9) note the exceptional media-exposure of children, who, spend most of their days, either sleeping or in the company of multiple media. As I highlighted in earlier studies (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b), today the immediate surroundings of both children and teenagers consist, for the most part, of their contacts with media so the language content they take in via the media is bound to influence their language development considerably. This process can to some extent be linked to features of L1 acquisition, as Prebeg-Vilke (1991: 27) emphasizes the importance of children's *immediate surroundings,* in addition to the role of parents, in the acquisition of a mother tongue.

For reasons discussed throughout Chapter 3, English is the language that prevails in the media around the globe, and consequently it is by far the foreign language Croatian students are most exposed to when in touch with various types of media. This is also true for students from most other European countries. For instance, Housen, Janssens and Pierrard (2001[39], in Kuppens 2010) found that Flemish Dutch-speaking high school pupils had significantly better results at English in comparison to French language tests, even though there were no curricular differences or differences in the methods between the teaching of these two languages. They therefore concluded that the reason behind a better English proficiency must be the "extracurricular supply" of English,

[39] The original source (Housen, Janssens and Pierrard 2001) is in Dutch.

unlike French, where this language is incidentally acquired form the media. It is precisely this type of extracurricular supply that the present study assumes as being a crucial factor which creates the context for a better development of English language skills, in comparison to Italian language skills by high school students in Split, Croatia.

Data provided for the ELLiE study has shown that the most common type of foreign-language exposure in the seven European countries that were studied, is listening to music and watching subtitled TV, playing video or computer games (Enever 2011: 110). The most important out-of-school factor for the acquisition of L2 listening and reading skills proved to be exposure to L2, in particularly via TV and films. Furthermore, when asked about the sources of L2 exposure children are provided with at home, computer games were also often mentioned by Croatian students in particular, while Italian children, for instance, mentioned songs as their most common source of foreign language exposure. This latter result is most probably due to Italy being a "dubbing country" *(see Chapter 5.5.).*

In a Croatian study which proposed an L2 monitoring task as aid for collecting reliable data on learners' L2 usage, students were asked to complete follow-up questionnaires on whether they thought the given task had presented their usage of English in a genuine way: while most answered positively, one participant said they had no idea they made use of the English language for leisure to this extent and that the task was literally an eye-opener (Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015: 42)**.** The following sections will present each of the media that can nowadays offer adolescents frequent exposure to the English language and the ways in which they can provide opportunities for language acquisition.

5.2. THE INTERNET

We are witnessing an undeniable increase in the power of the Internet in relation to the language development of children and adolescents. The influence of the Internet on language behaviour has come a long way since the limited possibilities it offered to its first users. With each technological advancement and the appearance of new devices and gadgets, such as smartphones,

online activities are becoming an indispensable part of everyday life, at least in developed countries.

It is also true that most online content is provided in English[40], and even though recently programs and applications such as *Google translate* make it possible to obtain rough translations of most contents in most languages, a solid competence of English makes information gathering on the Internet unquestionably a less demanding endeavour. As far as the use of students' language skills is concerned, Crystal (2006) points out that the Internet no longer serves only to provide information, but has become a media that allows students to engage in discussions and add their own comments to the content of web pages. In an empirical study conducted in Belgium by Kuppens (2010: 74), 57.6% of primary school pupils (N = 374) reported visiting English websites at least once a week, a result that the author comments to prove the Internet to be a pastime strongly connected to the use of the English language. Similarly, the interviews conducted with parents of primary school children in seven European countries for the ELLiE study (Enever 2011: 112) show that on average, 71.8% of children are exposed to foreign languages, mostly English, via the Internet, although this varies largely between country contexts.

5.2.1. SOCIAL NETWORKS

Since the years they first started gaining popularity by serving mainly as a means of virtual communication for friends and acquaintances, social networks have gone through a series of important changes. The presence of practically any brand, product, celebrity, and other content on social media, combined with developed online marketing tools and sponsored content targeted at specific audiences expected to follow new posts provided on a daily basis – these are the changes that have now made social media, most notably *Facebook, Twitter* and *Instagram*, a major source of worldwide news and information to all their users. Although a certain percentage of the content

[40] The survey reported in "Usage of content languages for websites", retrieved March 28th 2020, from https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language, states that English is used by 59.4% of all the websites whose content language we know.

is limited to the users' local community interests and therefore provided in other native-languages, it is safe to say that on a global level, a wide variety of English-language content can be accessed daily by simply logging onto any social media platform.

As mentioned in previous studies, being online nowadays gives EFL students, in Croatia and elsewhere, the possibility to opt for the English language as a means of communication with users around the globe, via social networks, posting comments or entering written discussions, or via online gaming (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 35). Even in Spain, where student exposure to the English language is less frequent than in most other European countries (Enever 2011), secondary school students claim that the use of international social networks allows them to make friends and offers opportunities for communication with English speakers (Ivars Olmedo 2015: 20).

Aside popular social media, other common sources of English-language content for Croatian students are naturally the countless websites, online video-platforms, news portals, applications, games, documents, personal blogs and forums, most of which can be accessed virtually anywhere and anytime. However, it is likely that this type of content will be chosen by a lower number of students than those using social platforms, as it requires more engagement on their part. The productive use of the English language by Croatian youngsters is not limited to international online social platforms. In 2006, Nikolić-Hoyt described the omnipresence of English on Croatian Internet forums and within the then new media of text messages. The author emphasizes that when talking about topics such as music, fashion, the Internet, and when communicating their feelings, teenagers seem to use considerable code switching from Croatian to English.

5.3. ONLINE AND OFFLINE GAMING

Regardless of whether they are accessed via the Internet or offline, the popularity of computer games nowadays cannot be ignored in the terms of this medium's influence on English-language acquisition worldwide, and consequently in Croatia. Kuppens (2010: 79) notices the varied role of language provided in computer games, with vocabulary ranging from the simple and verbally restricted use of game over, start, quit and other instructions, to the complex language content of back-stories which include narrative elements. He also points out that for adolescents in

particular, multiplayer online gaming is likely to bring about new, worldwide friendship networks, and therefore new forms of L2 learning (ibid.). It is certain that nowadays, ten years from Kuppens's statement, this "form of language learning" is even more prevalent and prominent as online gaming has earned even more popularity. In a case study conducted with a Finnish English language learner, Kuure (2011) collected data on the out-of-school, technology-mediated actions and interactions and found that activities related to online computer games may provide powerful opportunities for language learning, as they encourage collaboration and peer-networking. As English is considered a *lingua franca* in online gaming (Webber and Long 2015) as well as in other online activities such as uploading videos on *YouTube* (Purushotma 2006, as reported in Sundqvist 2009), it is a dominant language whose incidental acquisition can take place with such activities.

5.4. MUSIC

The popularity of music, its relevance worldwide, make it one of the primary sources for incidental language acquisition. A very high percentage of popular music nowadays is produced in the United States, but in addition to this, many artists choose to write their music with English lyrics, regardless of their own mother-tongue. English-language music receives a lot of radio airplay, can be accessed easily on YouTube, and is used in countless advertisements around the globe.

Murphey (1990b) points out the stimulating power of pop music on language acquisition, stressing how EFL students often sung lines of famous songs asking for their meaning, and hypothesizes on the connection between the commonly experienced *song-stuck-in-my-head* phenomenon to the "Din in the head", defined as an involuntary rehearsal of foreign language in one's mind as a result of the Language Acquisition Device (LAD)[41] stimulation. It is therefore probable that such a phenomenon creates the urge to ponder on the meaning of foreign words which continue to run through one's mind along with the melody of a memorized song (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 35). This occurrence could be related to the already mentioned component of language aptitude *(see Chapter*

[41] According to a 1960s and 1970s metalist theory of first language acquisition, the LAD is a separate faculty for the learning of languages characteristic of the human mind (Ellis 1994: 32).

2.5.2.), which Carroll (1981, in Ellis 1995) defines as *phonemic coding ability,* allowing the student to identify and memorize different sounds of the L2.

As far back as 1985, Murphy and Alber suggested the existence of a pop song register that could be considered the *motherese of adolescence* for providing valuable input for second or foreign language learners. Furthermore, analysed corpuses (Murphey 1989, 1990a) proved pop song register to be repetitive, conversation-like, simple and with vague references, which makes it easy for listeners to use it in personally associative ways. On the same topic, Brand (2007, as reported in Li and Brand 2009: 74) describes how pop-songs are used in ESL instruction in Asia and postulates that songs, with their lyrics, can serve as cultural ambassadors that offer English language students the lessons they need to understand the style and nature of a certain culture, while also teaching them vocabulary, grammar, specific phrases and their meanings, as well as rhythmic speech. The same notion can be applied to Croatian listeners, both inside and outside the classroom, as English-language music is listened to worldwide. Besides providing cultural insight, music is also believed to play a crucial role in EFL learning, as *additional sensory stimulation* (Wright, Sabin, Zhang, Marrone and Fitzgerald 2010). Toffoli and Sockett (2014), looking specifically into French university students' (N = 227) practices when listening to English language music, highlight how listening to this language through music is much more accessible than it was before, as nowadays it can be *actively chosen* at any time via *digital prostheses* such as smartphones and MP3 players that students carry with them wherever they go.

5.5. AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT

The rich linguistic context provided by any type of audio-visual material and its potential influence on language acquisition has been the topic of many linguistic studies, the findings of which will be discussed in this chapter. In earlier times, prior to the wide accessibility of the Internet, audio-visual English-language content could be viewed exclusively at the cinema, on television, by acquiring or renting VHS tapes or, later, DVDs. That is, of course, if the original recorded language was English to begin with, and if the translation method of the viewers' home country implied adding mother-tongue subtitles to the original "soundtrack" rather than recording a dubbed version.

5.5.1. THE BENEFITS OF SUBTITLING

Almeida and Costa (2014: 1234) identify and discuss subtitling, lip-sync dubbing and voice-over, as the most common adaptation approaches used for the language transfer of audio-visual material in Europe. Historically speaking, the translation strategy that was first adopted for big-screen movie releases would later be used on television as well, although the two later developed separately (European Commission 2011: 23). The differences in language transfer practices for imported TV programmes and movies across European countries depend on a number of factors.

As Kuppens (2010: 66) points out, in countries with smaller populations, such as the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries, the use of subtitles is common as opposed to the dubbing of television programmes and movies, providing the viewers with massive quantities of English language spoken by its native speakers. Croatia, with a population of around 4 million, most certainly belongs to the group of countries where the need for a solid English-language competence is largely related to the very limited number of speakers of the mother tongue, Croatian, on a global scale.

Furthermore, economic differences among countries might also be held responsible for the disparity in language transfer practices in Europe (Koolstra & Beentjes, 1999; Danan, 2004). As a more costly method, the dubbing technique is predominant in larger and wealthier countries such

as Spain, Italy, Germany, France (European Commission 2011), where the costs are repaid by the popularity of television programs and films (De Grazia 1989). Since the market intended for the native speakers of Croatian is rather limited, the dubbing or voice-over translation methods are most probably overly time-consuming and unprofitable. Therefore, the use of Croatian subtitles over the original soundtrack seems to be a more effective translation practice for all TV and big screen audio-visual content (with the exception of animated movies intended for child audiences, which are mostly dubbed), consequently providing Croatian viewers with infinite opportunities to take in the English language.

The generally greater fluency, comprehension and pronunciation of foreign languages (with an emphasis on English) in "subtitling countries", such as the Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium and Croatia, is a topic of interest and is commonly discussed by both linguists and non-linguists, as opposed to a lower fluency in "dubbing countries" such as Italy, Spain and France**.** In a discussion on the pros and cons of dubbing and subtitling, Koolstra et al. (2002: 342) highlight how non-native speakers' English pronunciation and comprehension in European "subtitling countries" is likely to profit from mere television-watching, as most imported TV content originates from the UK or USA.

Aside anecdotal evidence, many experiments have been carried out in a number of countries, to show that watching subtitled television represents a positive influence on the FL proficiency of children and adolescents (see e.g., d'Ydewalle and Pavakanun 1997; d'Ydewalle and Van de Poel 1999; Koolstra and Beentjes 1999; Van Lommel, Laenen, and d'Ydewalle 2006), a matter which will be discussed through reports of various studies in Chapter 6.

While, as already mentioned *(see Chapter 5)*, the ELLiE study (2011) found that, in Europe, Croatian and Swedish children are most exposed to foreign languages via the media, it is also not considered a coincidence that children proved to be most exposed to the out-of-school English language in Croatia, Sweden, as well as the Netherlands, all countries that have a long tradition with regard to subtitling (European Commission 2006). In fact, the school teachers interviewed in country contexts where there is use of subtitling stated that film and TV were commonly used by children as FL sources outside school (Enever 2011).

With that in mind, it is interesting to find that secondary school pupils in Spain (Ivars Olmedo 2015: 19) revealed that watching English-language films with or without subtitles was not an activity they undertook frequently. However, in interviews that followed a questionnaire, the students acknowledged watching films in the original version and listening to music to be the activities they considered most helpful for the improvement of their English skills. These testimonies are, once more, a reminder of the fact that students in Spain are not offered the possibility to improve their FL skills through audio-visual content as much, since in their home country dubbing is used as means of translation for imported foreign audio-visual material. Unlike Croatian students, for learners in Spain watching films with or without subtitles proved to be the least frequently practised activity commented by the author as most probably due to this activity being more cognitively demanding and requiring higher levels of literacy and English skills to understand the soundtrack while reading the subtitles (Ivars Olmedo 2015: 19). On the other hand, we will hardly hear Croatian students complaining about listening to the English language and simultaneously reading Croatian subtitles. This is very likely due to the fact that viewers are used to the adaptation method which is applied in their country (Koolstra et. al 2002: 326) and consider it natural, while there are also studies (Spinhof & Peeters, 1999[42], in Almeida and Costa 2014: 1236; Kilborn, 1993) that show how spectators in both subtitling as well as in dubbing countries believe their own traditional method is the best, regardless of economic and aesthetic factors.

5.5.2. DOWNLOADING AND STREAMING

In addition to the English language content provided on television and at cinemas, nowadays original English audio-visual content is made more available and accessible through streaming and downloading Internet services (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 35), which create more opportunities for teenagers, and EFL learners in general, to encounter and practice English, with the help of Croatian subtitles where available, but also with English captions. As Kuppens (2010: 79) suggests, the many multilingual Internet websites can further the language acquisition of learners whose linguistic skills acquired by watching subtitled TV are only minimal. This type of

[42] The original source (Spinhof & Peeters, 1999) is in Dutch.

English media-loaded environment may generate even more immersive EFL experiences for English language learners who, if eager to keep up with popular trends of their generation, are likely to find themselves taking in considerable amounts of English-spoken audio-visual materials, whether mother tongue-subtitles are available or not. On this subject, in an experimental study with Japanese undergraduate and postgraduate students, Nagira (2011) shows that same-language captions added to a foreign-language soundtrack can improve incidental language acquisition through watching audio-visual materials as they offer visual support, assist vocabulary learning and retention. Moreover, Hodžić Jejna (2016: 313) outlines the impact of verbal-visual material on English vocabulary teaching, and highlights that whether consciously or not, we acquire language via electronic media as it presents a copious amount of information as a combination of images and text (Sless 1981, in Hodžić Jejna 2016: 313).

6. MEDIA EXPOSURE EFFECTS ON FORMAL LANGUAGE LEARNING OUTCOMES

As can be observed throughout the results of research presented in the previous chapters, both intentional and incidental language acquisition benefit from the use of media (Kuppens 2010: 66). An overview of the studies seeking to discover potential improvement of English-language proficiency exclusively from English-related out-of-class activities, as well as their connection to the students' instructed, formal learning and the teaching of EFL will be presented next. This section looks into the specific language-learning benefits of each media mentioned in previous chapters, by reporting the language gains in all four language skills, vocabulary and grammar, through a review of many studies in the area conducted in Croatia as well as worldwide.

Research in terms of the acquisition of foreign languages with the help of media technologies used to be confined to analysing the value that introducing video and audio content as classroom teaching material can bring to formal teaching (e.g., Al-Seghayer 2001; Borrás and Lafayette 1994; Bueno 2009; Holobow, Lambert, and Sayegh 1984; Lambert, Boehler, and Sidoti 1981; Danan 1992; Danan 2004; Garza 1991; Markham and Peter 2003; Neri, Mich, Gerosa, and Giuliani 2008; Ranalli 2008; Tschirner 2001; Vanderplank 1988; Williams and Thorne 2000). In recent years, more specifically from the beginning of the 2010s, with the focus shifting to the ever-increasing power of the media, scholars have begun to examine the potential benefits that mere English-language media exposure in informal contexts might bring to foreign language acquisition, as well as the ways in which it can influence the formal EFL teaching process.

The studies which will be considered in detail below focus on the informal EFL acquisition via the omnipresent English-language media, and the positive effects this kind of exposure has on the English-language competence and skills of non-native speakers of this language in Croatia, as well as in other European countries and worldwide, with a special focus on secondary school students, as they represent an age group particularly likely to be devoted media-users. The present literature review, starts from the premise that, when considering the English language, it appears that nowadays the competences of younger, IT-literate generations of Croatian students are progressively becoming less related to the process of formal education, and more to the use of

media (Brodarić Šegvić, 2019b: 36). In Sweden, which is found to be similar to Croatia in the amount of students' out-of-school exposure to the English language via the media (Enever 2011), the results of a national evaluation project conducted in 2003 with ninth graders in 120 schools, showed that students with above average final EFL grades claim to have learned as much English language inside as they have outside school (Oscarson and Apelgren 2005[43], as cited in Sundqvist 2009).

As far back as the nineties, some scholars explored and wrote about the benefits that constant exposure to a foreign language can bring to the learners' language skills. To begin with, extensive reading for pleasure has for a long time been considered beneficial to FL acquisition: in a critical analysis of vocabulary learning techniques, Oxford and Crookall (1990) state their belief that reading practice helps students "absorb and retain vocabulary by osmosis, i.e., merely by reading words in context without any special training in either vocabulary learning or reading", and similarly, Krashen (1982) suggests large quantities of reading for pleasure should automatically expand students' L2 vocabulary. The results of research on extensive reading are not exclusively limited to its connection to vocabulary gains, but also L2 writing improvement (see e.g., Hafiz and Tudor, 1989, 1990; Tsang, 1996; Lai, 1993; Lee & Hsu, 2009), while Mermelstein (2015) highlights the significant benefits extensive reading can be accounted for in terms of fluency, syntax, semantics, as well as vocabulary and organization of writing. Analogously, reading English-language magazines, as well as English-language content on the Internet, were found to be frequent out-of-school activities with Croatian high school students who expressed stronger affinity for writing activities inside the EFL classroom (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a). Sylvén (2004, as reported in Sundqvist 2009) also highlights how the students who read English texts outside school, on their own initiative, usually score the best EFL results at school.

It is critical to stress the fact that at the present time the activity of extensive reading in a foreign language is certainly performed in a different way and via a different medium than it used to be, at least most of the time. While in the nineties, authors were referring to engaging students in reading target-language books, texts in textbooks, articles in available newspapers or magazines, more recent studies (see e.g., Brodarić Šegvić 2019a) show that a low percentage of students will pursue

[43] The original (Oscarson and Apelgren 2005) is in Swedish.

reading in English via what is now considered "older" media (traditional media such as radio, broadcast television, newspapers and printed magazines). Teenagers, as well as children and adults, nowadays are much more likely to engage in reading English texts on the Internet, whether it be simple social media posts, blogs, or complex texts on British or American news portals. Furthermore, following same-language captions provided online for English audio-visual content can be considered yet another form of reading for pleasure, even though less extensive than reading literary texts.

In 2003, Krashen underlined the importance of recreational reading in order to expand lexical knowledge beyond the basic, and mentioned the idea put forward by Hayes and Ahrens (1988: 408) that not much educated vocabulary is likely to come from mere conversation or television. However, by observing how the media-intake habits of language learners have altered in recent years to suit a new reality, this view can be contrasted to that of Webb and Rodgers (2009: 335) who investigated the vocabulary demands of television programs and found that significant incidental vocabulary learning can occur when learners already know the most frequent 3,000 word families and watch at least one hour of television per day. This conclusion highlights the influence television might indeed have for students' out-of-school informal EFL acquisition, but also warns us that the level of language competence is a crucial factor in order for new-vocabulary acquisition from context to take place, as not possessing already sufficient vocabulary keeps learners from creating contexts which help them infer the meaning of unknown words (Vodogaz and Jurišić 2010: abstract).

In the previous chapter the benefits of subtitles were discussed, however, subtitled television has not always been considered beneficial to language learning. Reviewing studies on the power of captions and subtitles as pedagogical tools, Danan (2004: 67) found that in contexts where students were not used to watching subtitled audio-visual content (e.g., the United States), language teachers viewed subtitled programs as a distraction taking students' attention away from the spoken target language and were not inclined to using them in the classroom. This attitude is in contrast with the opinions of teachers, children and parents surveyed across seven European countries for the ELLiE study in 2011, who all highlighted the impact of subtitled television and films when discussing the importance of media exposure for the acquisition of foreign languages (Enever 2011: 118).

Regardless of the ever-increasing popularity of audio-visual content available online, television is still considered to be an important, if not most likely, source of English-language content in "subtitling countries" such as Croatia. Almeida and Costa (2013: 1236) present a review of studies on the language transfer practices in European countries and in particular, discuss the contribution of watching subtitled programmes to the process of foreign language acquisition. The authors (ibid.) point out how the multisensory presentation of information on TV or at the cinema offers visual, auditory as well as written information from which viewers are able to derive word meanings. They also underline how the use of subtitles, as opposed to dubbing, can develop the essential cognitive competences needed in the process of language learning: metacognitive questioning, guessing, inference and verification of meaning (Almeida and Costa 2013: 1237). It has also been argued that subtitled television offers FL learners appealing samples and massive quantities of authentic foreign language, while increasing their language proficiency and consequently their confidence in the EFL classroom (Vanderplank 1988).

In many studies, watching English-language movies and series with subtitles proved to have strong effects on students' EFL competence. In a research that explores the extent to which the foreign language skills of 374 Dutch-speaking primary school pupils in Belgium benefit from their long-term consumption of English language media, Kuppens (2010) compared the pupils' self-reported use of media with their results on oral translation tests from Dutch to English and vice versa, to discover that frequently watching subtitled English television programs was reported by students who had better results on both tests. In a study I conducted with Croatian EFL high school students (Brodarić 2015), the results revealed that watching English-language movies or TV shows was among the three most frequently practiced out-of-school English-related activities (along with listening to music and surfing the Internet), and also showed that students who earned higher EFL grades used these media significantly more than students with poor EFL grades. The findings also revealed that Croatian teenagers, regardless of their EFL school success, would always choose subtitling over dubbing as translation method for English-language movies. Besides discussing the motivational, attentional and affective impact that captions and interlingual subtitles can have on viewers, therefore bringing benefits to incidental EFL learning, Baltova (1994, as reported in

Danan 2004: 68) emphasizes that audio-visual material enhanced with subtitles provides a rich context and can be considered a powerful instructional tool which facilitates auditory processing.

The notion of having the opportunity to listen to the English language outside the EFL classroom is certainly also connected to viewing of television programmes, shows, series and films of Anglo-American origin, listening to the audio content while simultaneously reading the visually presented mother-tongue subtitles, or same-language captions. With respect to this, secondary school students in Spain, who usually watch Spanish-dubbed movies, reported using the strategy of reading the subtitles after listening to the audio information when watching films in the original, English version (Ivars Olmedo 2015: 29). Another medium, which is even more globally widespread than non-dubbed original English-language films, is English-language music, or ELM, as named by Murphey (1984: 18). Even before music became globally accessible via the Internet, in the 1980s, Murphey (1984) found out that adolescents in Switzerland had two or three times more contact time with English-language music in their natural environment[44] than they had English classes at school. He therefore suggested the possibility of music facilitating their formal EFL education, *if prior exposure to language does affect subsequent learning* (Murphey 1990). More recently, by studying French university students' practices when listening to music in English, Toffoli and Sockett (2014: 199) learned that the students listen to several hundred hours of English-language songs every year, while over that same period of time they spend approximately less than 50 hours formally exposed to English at school.

The findings of authors who advocate that music helps quick memorization and facilitates easy imitation of a foreign language show it helps learners recall and reproduce English phrases when communicating in real life situations (Garza 1994), and argue that listening to English-language music improves the listening comprehension skills of EFL learners by exposing them to various expressions, new vocabulary and idioms, as well as accents (Lynch 2006). In a recent study, Croatian university students (N = 127) claim the use of technological devices for listening to music played a significant role in the development of their listening and speaking skills during childhood and adolescence (Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015).

[44] More than 70 minutes a day according to a survey carried out in 1983 (Murphey 1984).

In a study I carried out (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a) in order to explore whether there exists a relation between Croatian high school students' (N = 78) frequency of English-language informal exposure and their attitudes towards reading, listening, speaking, writing or grammar practice in the EFL class, the results showed that students who listen to music with English lyrics more often and prefer American/British songs, artists or bands over Croatian ones, are also more inclined to enjoy listening comprehension activities and even writing tasks in the EFL classroom. Among other findings, the latter research showed students are generally most comfortable with EFL listening comprehension activities at school. I have already stressed the possibility of such a result being associated with the fact that the three English-related activities of listening to music, watching films and browsing the Internet, which the students claimed they were most exposed to outside the school environment, all possess a dominant audio-component (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 86). Furthermore, students who reported listening to English language music and communicating in English in their free time proved to achieve significantly higher EFL grades (Brodarić 2015) and show a significantly higher interest in listening comprehension activities in the EFL classroom (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a). Apart from reconfirming the significance music can have for informal language acquisition, these results also suggest that the many newly available opportunities students might have of speaking in English via new media (e.g., video calls) can provide them with spoken replies by their interlocutors in real-life situations, which could facilitate listening comprehension in the EFL classroom. However, it is probable that the EFL proficient students will be the ones to have the confidence to willingly engage in FL communication in their free time**.**

The Internet nowadays offers adolescents a virtually infinite source of English-language reading material *(see Chapter 5.2.),* audio, as well as audio-visual material: digital audio files on podcasting services, online radio, audio streaming platforms such as *Spotify*, audio distribution platforms (e.g., *SoundCloud*); it allows them to purchase, download and stream audio or video files of various formats (e.g., *YouTube, iTunes, Netflix, etc.*). When asked to estimate the influence of different media on their EFL language skills during primary and secondary education, Croatian university students (N=127) rated the Internet, and the devices that allowed its use, to have been the most responsible for the development of all their English language skills (Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015). This view is also supported by primary school teachers interviewed for the ELLiE

study (2011) across seven European countries (including Croatia), who consider the children who use digital media to be more confident in the FL classroom, showing a better FL pronunciation and developed listening skills. (Enever 2011: 117).

In addition to the availability of reading, audio and audio-visual material, the Internet allows students to actively participate in conversations and discussions on forums or other sites, by commenting, expressing views using their English-language productive skills of speaking and writing. Sundqvist (2009), whose main objective was to explore the impact of extramural-English activities on students' oral proficiency and vocabulary, found they were influenced greatly by activities involving the use of the Internet, video games and reading, which required the students to be more productive in the use of their language skills out of the school environment, as opposed to music and TV where they absorbed the language passively. Sundqvist (2009) upholds this view by also pointing out that engaging in playing video games and using the Internet for chatting and publishing, appears to provide students with suitable opportunities for language learning, especially since those media present linguistic features in various ways and repeatedly.

Even though this might be true nowadays, as the Internet allows a more active approach to FL media, it is important to mention that researchers have not always agreed on the value that repeated exposure to certain words in various contexts can have on language learning and knowledge. Especially when it comes to the influence on productive language skills. Oxford and Crookall (1990: 23) believe that while students might be able to recognize a frequently encountered word more easily the next time they come across it, the recognition level is definitely not considered equivalent to productive knowledge. Sharing the same concern in their comparative study of Croatian and Hungarian EFL students, Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2008) point out that media exposure alone seems to boost language reception while not necessarily ensuring a development of the productive skills. In the case of the latter study, Croatian students, who proved to be more frequently exposed to English-language media than Hungarians, showed better listening and reading comprehension, but their achievements in EFL speaking and writing were not significantly superior to those of Hungarian students. In a different study carried out with Croatian university students by Cergol Kovačević and Matijević (2015), writing was also found to be the only language skill not influenced by the students' long-term watching of English-language movies. This result,

once more, creates doubt whether media exposure has a lasting effect on the use of productive language skills. However, in a recent study (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a), Croatian high school students who revealed watching English-spoken TV programmes often, and without the help of Croatian subtitles, also showed more interest in EFL classroom activities which involve the use of productive language skills, as well as grammar. While this result can simply signify that learners who deem themselves skilled enough to view English-language movies with no subtitles, might also be confident enough with regard to their EFL skills as to engage in writing in the English language (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 85), but it might also be interpreted as showing that a constant and frequent exposure to audio-visual material in the target language might result in productive knowledge, or at least a more favourable attitude towards the practice of productive skills.

Online and offline gaming have become increasingly discussed activities in terms of the unique language-learning experiences they may provide language students and avid video-game players with. Gee (2003) brings attention to the possibility that playing video games is developing a new kind of literacy alongside the more traditional literacy, defined as reading books and writing with pen and paper. Newman, Groom, Handelman, and Pennebaker (2008) highlight how commonly gender differences may occur in language studies. In relation to this, Sundqvist (2009: 21) reports the study results of Nycander (2006[45]) stating that the gap between the final grades of male and female students decreased during the time of the study carried out from 1998 to 2005. English as a foreign language was the only school subject where this change occurred. Perhaps this is due to an increase in the availability of computer and/or online video games with English language content that might have occurred in that given period, as in a number of studies, the male population of high school students has reported a higher interest for video games. Significant gender differences with regard to playing video games were also found in studies on the out-of-school English-language exposure of high school pupils in Spain (Ivars Olmedo 2015), in Sweden (Sundqvist 2009; Sylvén 2004: 226 in Sundqvist 2009), as well as in Croatia (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b) the boys' habits in terms of playing video games tend to be much more frequent and an important factor which contributes to their vocabulary development (Sylvén 2004, in Sundqvist 2009: 37) and generally formal EFL grades (Brodarić 2015).

[45] The original source (Nycander 2006) is in Swedish.

Many studies have considered the influence of EFL media by exploring the possibility it offers for vocabulary expansion and development of lexical competences. Mihaljević Djigunović et al. (2006) claim that the abundance of English-language content encourages the unintentional acquisition of English vocabulary for younger, technology-literate generations. In a study on the informal acquisition of English vocabulary through media and how it is reflected on the EFL school success of Croatian high school students (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b), I have argued that the language context of the media offers the students more natural, exhaustive and authentic communicative situations than those presented in the EFL classroom, while also pointing out that the vocabulary acquisition and learning strategies students use when exposed to English-language media might be considered *fully contextualizing techniques*[46] according to Rebecca Oxford and David Crookall's (1990) classification. The results of this same study showed that the students who reported using the strategy of inferring meaning to words from context, as well as frequently and voluntarily checking the meaning of new words encountered in various media, proved to be students with significantly better EFL grades (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b).

Sekelj (2011) also highlights the significant contribution that spontaneous acquisition strategies make to the vocabulary range of EFL students when they are highly motivated by simply enjoying their free time in the presence of the English language provided by the media. Koolstra, Peeters, and Spinhof (2002: 343) claim that the phenomenon of Dutch and Flemish children pronouncing English and American "slang" words perfectly is most probably a consequence of children listening to English-language music, playing computer games, and watching subtitled television. In much the same way, Croatian high school students often claim to have picked up the lexicon of weapons by playing online games, while they also show being familiar with vocabulary specific to certain popular TV series, or idiom and slang expressions specific to song lyrics linked to rap and hip-hop subcultures (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 36).

Vocabulary range and accuracy are often considered to make a difference in language competence. Allen (1983) finds that limited vocabulary is a greater obstacle to communication than limited

[46] In Oxford and Crookall (1990: 10): Fully contextualizing techniques (embedding new words in a more or less normal communicative context), differ from Semi-contextualizing (word grouping, associations etc.) and Decontextualizing techniques (which include learning with the help of word lists or flashcards).

grammar knowledge, while Wilkins (1972, in Andraka and Jurković, 2016: 30) points out that "without grammar little can be conveyed, but without words nothing can be conveyed". Sekelj (2011) highlights the power of vocabulary in early EFL learning, as the quality of FL learning at the start of formal education shapes the course of the learning process that follows, while Udier (2009: 78) observes how the students' individual differences in terms of their vocabulary acquisition grow as they become more advanced learners. As the previously reported studies seem to prove, a constant and rich exposure to English-language media seems to bring many benefits to the improvement of EFL learners' vocabulary, and consequently to their language proficiency in general.

Unlike the spontaneous acquisition of L2 vocabulary, acquiring grammar is considered by many scholars to require more attention than mere exposure to English-language media can provide. This view is held by Harding and Riley (1986) who maintain that sufficient attention and motivation are essential for FL grammar learning to occur, both in formal instruction and real-life situations. In an experimental study with primary and secondary school students, Van Lommel et al. (2006) investigated the possibility of L2 grammar-rules acquisition by watching subtitled foreign movies and concluded grammar to be too complex for acquisition to occur during a short movie presentation. The incidental acquisition of certain rules is considered by Berry (1991) to require more exercise besides mere observation. This belief agrees with the conclusions brought by Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević (2015) when observing the results of a longitudinal study carried out as to monitor the L2 language development of university students: the results showed the participants felt they had learned more during the activities performed at the faculty or at home, but with the specific target of learning English, than while being engaged in English-related leisure activities in their free time, especially in view of the learning of vocabulary and grammar. However, while the L2 learning process is more direct when the target language is the focal point of an exercise, using the foreign language in order to achieve non-linguistic aims provides students with authentic materials for practice and helps them maintain their L2 (Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015). In this regard, the amount of time, as well as the frequency of exposure to English-language media are important factors when drawing conclusions on the effects it might have on L2 acquisition. Mihaljević Djigunović et al (2008: 448) state their belief that the duration, intensity and quality of

exposure, as well as FL practice, all need to be taken into account. Kuppens (2010: 68) also supports this view by stating that a longer period of exposure and to a greater quantity of input is likely to result in more incidental language acquisition.

6.1. THE FUTURE OF ELT IN CROATIA

The changing status of the English language will continue to present a challenge for both language learners and teachers. Therefore, the process of formal education is not to be neglected, but redirected and redesigned to made more functional for the present and in the future (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 37). As Sockett (2011) suggests, additional research needs to be done in order to gain better insight into the motivations of English-language learners, and organize formal teaching by making the best of them. Krashen (1981: 36) defined the *good language learner* pointing out that a combination of formal and informal L2 experience seemed to have the most successful outcomes. Other scholars, similarly suggest that nowadays the process of learning ought to be viewed as the sum of implicit, for the most part unconscious acquisition via language exposure, and explicit learning in a systematic way in formal settings (Sekelj 2011: 205), and emphasize that both explicit and implicit acquisition methods should be incorporated in vocabulary teaching and learning (Lee et al. 2012).

Highlighting the benefits of exposure in increasing L2 competence, Sundqvist (2009: 26) cites Bialystok's (1981) claim that "the most functional situations are likely to occur outside the classroom" and that it is therefore important to teach students out-of-class learning strategies. Buljan Culej (2013: 19) discusses the results of the ESLC Report and concludes that, among other language teaching policies to be introduced, promoting bilingual communication at home should be useful in motivating young L2 learners to use the language in their spare time, in order to develop a positive attitude towards it.

On a different note, some scholars find that, in view of entertainment culture becoming increasingly important and present in the lives of today's youth, it is necessary to "design affordable foreign language learning materials that hope to bridge the chasm between education and foreign popular

culture" (Purushotma 2006: 5). Kuppens (2010) also proposes a number of potential changes to be made in EFL teaching. He suggests teachers should focus on providing skills, strategies and behaviour which could help learners optimize incidental L2 acquisiton via media exposure out of the school environment (ibid.: 80). Raising students' awareness of, for instance, subtitling practices by administering classroom or homework exercises related to producing new subtitles, or noting translation mistakes by using movie clips or excerpts from media as resource material. In such ways teachers could create a link between students' contacts with the English language in and out of the classroom, hence between intentional, formal, and incidental L2 acquisition (ibid.).

On the other hand, Kuppens (2010) also voices his concerns over transferring the results of studies on incidental language acquisition to intentional language learning settings (ibid.: 79), taking into account the considerable differences in the processes of incidental and intentional language acquisition. He therefore also warns that children incidentally learning English from subtitled television does not necessarily mean that subtitled television is an efficient medium for intentional learning (ibid.). The author goes on to highlight the possible counterproductivity of pushing students to engage in intentional learning during their leisure time (ibid.) as their positive attitudes towards the English language might be exclusively related to leisure activities. In this respect "when educators attempt to formalize incidental learning, they might well inhibit it" (ibid.: 80), as students can view this as an invasion of their privacy, while teachers might, to some extent, lose control over the learning process (Kukulska-Hulme, Traxler, and Pettit 2007: 58).

It is nevertheless undeniable that the status of the English language has changed drastically if we compare it to other langauges taught through formal education (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 87), and attempts should certainly be made as to retain the motivation of those students whose L2 competences are already more developed than what the curriculum requires throughout their high school education, as well as motivate the less successful language learners to keep up.

In summary, this literature review has given a background to the central topic by exploring some of the commonly discussed concepts when addressing informal L2 or FL acquisition, in particular relating to the out-of-school incidental acquisition of the English language through media exposure. The notions of second and foreign language were contrasted with regard to the English

language in the past and at the present time, to conclude that the great differences among the ways Croatian students learn or acquire this language could be defined in terms of considering some students ESL (English as a second language) learners as they tend to acquire this language in their natural environment, and others EFL (English as a foreign language) learners, as they mainly acquire it via formal education. Furthermore, explicit and implicit learning, as well as language learning in naturalistic, as opposed to formal settings were compared as to identify the benefits of and disadvantages of all options. Additionally, a thorough exploration of both external and internal factors of L2 acquisition was provided in order to gain insight into all the mechanisms that might be boosting, or otherwise inhibiting, the English-language acquisition of Croatian high school students. Special attention was given to the status of the English language throughout history, up until the present day, considering the various changes in ELT practices, English-language learning policies and the current challenges present in EFL classrooms, particularly in Croatia. The history of the Italian language in the city of Split and the surrounding region was also discussed by exploring its past and present status, as well as the language learning policies that regard it.

The out-of-school English-language exposure opportunities were discussed thoroughly, by observing the means provided by each media separately. Finally, a detailed review of studies in the field of media exposure effects on formal language-learning outcomes was provided focusing on different, possible language gains. The body of literature so far has shown that English-language media exposure is an important factor for the acquisition of the English language by Croatian students (e.g. Mihaljević Djigunović and Geld 2003; Čepon 2006; Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2006; Nikolić-Hoyt 2006) and that it can be held responsible for high school students' progress in terms of the expansion of their English vocabulary range (e.g. Brodarić Šegvić 2019b) the development of oral proficiency and lexical competences (Sundqvist 2009), improvement with regard to all L2 skills (Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015), an external factor that provides motivation and better attitudes towards in-class language activities (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a) and results in better EFL grades (Brodarić 2015), as well as a useful source of L2 language input to be added to formal language learning (Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015).

The availability of English-language media in Croatia, allows for a constant and intense practice of all language skills. However, not all high school language learners make use of the benefits

provided by the omnipresence of the English language in the media. In his research notes on ESLC, Jones (2013: 4) claims that there are clear differences between European educational systems in terms of the informal language learning opportunities that are available to students, including their parents' FL knowledge, the amount of travelling abroad, the usage of dubbing or subtitles as translation practices for audio-visual material, as well as the amount of exposure to the L2 via new and traditional media. Just as there are considerable differences across European countries in students' out-of-school foreign language contexts as some children are "exposed to the FL on a daily basis, while others hardy ever meet the foreign language outside school" (Enever 2011: 118), there seem to be unsurmountable differences among Croatian high school students in the amount of informal EFL intake via the media, which has its effect on the English-language competence and performance shown within the walls of the EFL classroom. This is somewhat due to the different ways in which teenagers spend their out-of-school time: while many are in constant contact with the media, others might be less inclined to spend hours playing video-games with English-language content, watching TV series of American origin, or prefer listening to Croatian bands rather than British ones. Other internal and external factors responsible for discrepancies in the amount of time spent with English-language media and reaping the benefits for L2 acquisition, are most probably individual differences among students, such as one's language aptitude, motivation and confidence, as well as differences in socioeconomic backgrounds, and/or parental influence on their perception of the English language. However, Sundqvist's (2009: 203) research concludes that extramural English "is an independent variable and a possible path to progress in English for any learner, regardless of his or her socioeconomic background", once again highlighting the importance of out-of-school media exposure for L2 learners.

On the other hand, in a recent study (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a) I have found that students who report an above average engagement in out of school English-related activities express more interest for EFL activities in the classroom. This result might indicate that it is either their out-of-school engagement that is to be held at least somewhat responsible for their confidence and motivation in the EFL classroom, or otherwise, their interest towards the learning of the English language in formal circumstances gives them the tools to make good use of the exposure opportunities at hand in their free time. Kuppens (2010) also states that the relationship "between media use on the one

hand and English proficiency as the dependent variable on the other hand is not a straightforward matter", pointing out that when there is a relationship, we might argue that it does not immediately signify that a specific media influences proficiency, it might simply indicate cases where students with better EFL proficiency have a stronger inclination towards the use of English-language media (ibid.: 72).

It is however crucial to identify the motivations behind such engagement in extramural English activities, or otherwise, no engagement at all. As there are more and more opportunities to acquire the English language naturally with the use of media, success in the EFL classroom is no longer achieved only through hard work, learning new vocabulary or grammar structures, but also through long-term and constant engagement with English-language content media, at times proving detrimental to other school commitments (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 36). Accordingly, questioning the present nature of formal EFL teaching, as well as what is currently being assessed in EFL classrooms, seems to be a reasonable way forward (Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 75).

It is clear that EFL educational programs are being revised and remodelled to match the needs of new generations of English-language learners, with the use of media in the classroom, providing more natural communication situations and by turning to contextual vocabulary learning strategies. However, more effort should be made as to identify methods aimed at supporting the linguistic improvement of what could be considered regular EFL students, who learn this language as any other foreign language, as well as attending to the needs of proficient ESL students, who mostly acquire English in contact with the media and use it as a means of global communication. As the first group of students inevitably lag behind linguistically as well as culturally (Brodarić Šegvić 2019b: 45) by not taking part in extramural English activities, the process of teaching as well as assessment of knowledge for what are apparently two or more categories of English-language learners should not be uniform (ibid.). Ellis (2009: 6) puts forward the following questions:

"What aspects of an L2 can be learned implicitly? What are the mechanisms of explicit learning available to the learner? How necessary is explicit knowledge for the acquisition of an L2? What is the relationship between explicit and implicit L2 knowledge? How best can instruction aid L2 acquisition?"

which are still to some extent unanswered, and the answers to which will be susceptible to change over time, along with the ever-changing status of the English language. Furthermore, Mihaljević

Djigunović et al. (2008: 448) point out that “the methodology for a systematic study of out-of-class exposure and how learners benefit from it is yet to be developed”, also drawing attention to the challenge laid before EFL teachers in finding ways to integrate the extensive out-of-school exposure to the English language into their lessons (ibid.).

In the light of these considerations, the premise of further research might be that the availability of English provided by the media nowadays creates a powerful out-of-school context for Croatian children and adolescents, which can significantly improve L2 skills and competences if made use of appropriately, and also have a positive reflection on formal EFL school results. It is of great importance to the language teaching profession to identify: firstly, the effective strategies used by successful EFL students when informal, non-institutional L2 acquisition takes place; secondly, the external instances that usually prevent less successful EFL students from acquiring the omnipresent English language from mere media exposure; thirdly, the individual differences that help or hinder spontaneous L2 acquisition via media exposure; fourthly, propose new methods that could adapt to a new reality in EFL learning and teaching when issues arise in mixed-ability classrooms as the proficiency gap between students who make use of the media and those who do not is so wide that is hardly reconcilable.

Van Geert (2008) points out that studying L2 acquisition as a Complex Dynamics System, entails simplifying a complex system into one dimension, in this case the distance between the "starting point" and "end point" of L2 proficiency. And Croatian high school students in mixed ability classes may be viewed as samples “of participants at different levels of performance and at different levels of effort required to achieve that performance" (ibid.: 191). A Dynamic Systems Approach seems to support the value of longitudinal qualitative research in the field of SLA, which may identify the complex dynamic changes that govern the process of L2 acquisition. In addition, Dörnyei (2007) explains the value of *mixed methods research*, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches, as it offers a possibility of a multilevel analysis of complex matters which allows the researcher to observe data on the individual as well as on a broad societal context (Dörnyei 2009: 242).

Bearing in mind the presented benefits of extramural exposure to a second language learnt in schools, it is beneficial to investigate more closely to what extent the use of media creates

opportunities for the incidental acquisition of the English, as well as Italian language, by Croatian teenagers in the city of Split, while also shedding a light on the need for changes to the EFL teaching curriculum, as well as teaching materials as to adapt to the new status of the English language. The results of the present study should be of interest to foreign-language teachers, textbook authors, as well as everyone involved in defining future policies with regard to English-language learning and teaching.

7. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

In the light of the considerations stated above, the main aim of the present study is to determine the frequency and the different ways in which high school students are exposed to the English language through the media, as well as to explore if there is a relationship between their media exposure and their EFL competences. Furthermore, the aim of the study is also to compare the connection of students' media exposure and EFL competences, to the relationship between media exposure and Italian foreign language (IFL) competences.

7.1. Research questions

In accordance with the aim, the present study addresses four main research questions, which are each divided into their respective sub-questions.

The research questions of this study are as follows:

1. Which types of media exposure to the English language offer opportunities for secondary school students' EFL acquisition outside the formal education system?
    a. What are the frequencies with which students engage in different types of media (TV and/or radio channels, audio formats, Internet platforms, online games, etc.) with English-language content?
    b. Which media content (sports, music, fashion, etc.) high school students most frequently search for on the Internet in the English language?
    c. What are the students' preferences towards subtitles or captions when exposed to English-language audio-visual content, as well as their attitudes towards the practice of Croatian dubbing?
    d. What are the students' attitudes on the importance of media for their out-of-school EFL acquisition, in comparison to their formal EFL school education?

2. What are the ways and the frequency of students' exposure to English-language media as opposed to Italian-language media?

    a. In which ways are female as opposed to male students exposed to media in both the English and the Italian language?

    b. In which ways are general-education students as opposed to vocational students exposed to media in both the English and the Italian language?

3. Are the students' EFL skills and competences related to the ways in which they engage in English-language media out of the school environment?

    a. Are specific media significantly related to students' particular EFL competences (speaking, listening, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary)?

    b. Are specific media-contents the students look for on the Internet significantly related to particular EFL competences?

    c. Is there a relationship between EFL competences and students' preferences in terms of their use of subtitles and/or captions when exposed to English-language audio-visual content, as well as their attitudes towards Croatian dubbing?

    d. Is there a connection between students' level of EFL competences and their attitudes towards the importance of specific media vs. the importance of formal EFL tuition for their English-language acquisition?

    e. Do other external factors, besides the media, contribute to English-language acquisition outside the classroom, i.e., is there a relationship between students' EFL competences and the frequency with which they use the English language with friends and family?

    f. Is there a relationship between the duration and types of formal EFL learning and the students' EFL competences, and how does it differ from the relationship of English-language media exposure and students' EFL competences?

4. Is the relationship of EFL competences and English-language media exposure out of the school environment different from the relationship between IFL competences and Italian-language media exposure?
    a. Is the relationship between the frequency with which students use English with friends and/or family and the self-reported level of EFL competences different from the relationship between the frequency of using the Italian language with friends and/or family and the students' self-reported levels of IFL competences?
    b. Is the relationship between the duration and types of formal EFL learning and students' EFL competences different from the relationship between the duration and types of formal IFL learning and students' IFL competences?

8. METHODOLOGY

8.1. Research design

Firstly, I wish to note that the data used in this doctoral thesis was collected as part of a larger institutional research project of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Split, Croatia, led by professors Magdalena Nigoević and Darko Hren. As a PhD candidate, under the supervision of the professors leading the project, I designed the instrument, an extensive questionnaire, by means of which the quantitative data for this thesis was collected.

The present research evolved from my previous studies and is in tune with earlier research in this particular field, which made it easier to determine the validity of the questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was, however, as per usual practice, preliminarily tested on a small number of participants to evaluate the reliability and validity of the questions and to check whether specific items needed to be added or dismissed.

8.1.1. Pilot study

Time working as a teacher has allowed for plenty classroom observation, as well as opportunities to explore and inquire on students' L2 learning and incidental acquisition behaviours which have undoubtedly served as a guide in the construction of the instrument for this research.

A small-scale pilot study was conducted with participants belonging to the same age group of teenagers as to test try-out versions of the questionnaire. Some questions were indeed modified, following the first attempts to fill in the questionnaire: In Questions 13 and 14 (see Appendix) an instruction was added, guiding the participants to select only one of the given options as the pilot informants claimed the initial version of the question did not clearly state whether they were supposed to choose only one answer or more. Following other feedback from the initial informants, some clarifications and adjustments were also added to the various items in Question 11 (ibid.) and some of the final open-end questions were added to the originally formulated items.

8.1.2. Study outline and procedures

The data collection for the study was carried out during the school year 2018/2019. Following the design of the instrument and the pilot study, the procedure started with the process of contacting the schools selected for matching the established criteria, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.3.

After finding the contact information on the various schools' web pages, I sent preliminary emails to all the headmasters/headmistresses in order to receive a written approval, i.e., their gatekeeper's consent to enter the schools as to conduct research. The emails included two attachments: an informative letter to the school principal and the consent form prepared and aimed at the students as potential informants of the study. Both of the documents were created with the aim of introducing myself as the researcher, providing general information about the research, and in order to allow for potential questions regarding the nature of the research, the ethical concerns, its anonymity, etc.

While communication with some of the schools in question was prompt and straightforward, others took a longer time to reply or failed to reply altogether due to outdated email addresses or emails being marked as unsolicited. In the latter cases, I set appointments with the principals and visited the respective schools for a preliminary informative consultation and in order to receive permission to carry out the research. After each of the contacted headmasters confirmed their approval, the procedure was slightly different for each of the schools involved.

I had previously communicated with a few of the teachers employed in some of the schools selected for the research in order to ensure I would have their cooperation and the approval to enter their classes as to collect data from their students, as well as to find out if they would be willing to sacrifice part of their lesson for the purpose of my research. My aim was to connect with teachers that taught English or Italian to second or/and third-graders, in order to have direct communication and a clear insight into their schedules, so as to plan my school visits accordingly.

High schools in Croatia usually operate in two shifts, most frequently with two schools sharing one facility and rotating morning and afternoon shifts each week. Alternatively, one school works in two shifts as to provide more daily student capacity. Such organization is the reason why it was, at

times, challenging to coordinate my personal visits to the classes that were selected as appropriate for the research.

In order to obtain an approximately equal number of respondents for the English-language and the Italian-language questionnaire, I specifically requested, from each school, to be given admission into at least one second-grade and one third-grade class attending English-language lessons, and the same selection of classes attending Italian-language lessons. The English language is attended as a first-foreign language subject by all students in the selected schools, while only some of the students attend Italian lessons[47], which made it easier to organise my visits to collect data on the English language.

Most of my visits to each school were coordinated with the aim to cover more than one class per visit. This was, however, hard to accomplish due to time, schedule and shift constraints. In three out of eight schools I was given the freedom to plan my classroom visits with the teachers I had contacted for collaboration, as these were colleagues I had previously worked with, or schools where I had formerly worked at as a language teacher myself. In another three schools, my classroom visits were planned by a school counsellor, to whom I was redirected after my first meeting with the headmasters, and to whom I thoroughly explained the criteria students had to meet, in order to facilitate their coordination process. In one school, most of my classroom visits ended up not being during English or Italian-language periods, but made possible by equally cooperative teachers of other school subjects, as this had been easier to organize and the students met the criteria I had requested. All of the staff I collaborated with in each school were cooperative and kindly met my needs when introducing me as a researcher and conceding me part of their lesson time for the purpose of research. In the last two schools covered by the research, I was kindly asked to give thorough instructions and hand the right number of questionnaires and student consent forms to two designated teachers, who then had their students fill in the questionnaires during their lessons and contacted me after the testing to forward the completed documents.

[47] In most schools the students can select a second foreign language subject, the choice being between Italian and German, as well as Spanish or French in rare cases.

8.2. Ethical considerations

The present research was planned and carried out in line with specified ethical regulations required in Croatia (Cergol 2021). The questionnaires were administered to the study participants by myself as the researcher in all schools save two, where such a procedure was not possible due to schedule and time constraints (*see Chapter 8.1.2.).* Prior to the administration of the very instrument of research, ethical measures were respected, in first place, by informing each school principal of the general aims of the research, as already described in Chapter 8.1.2, and by obtaining their approval to conduct the research with the students of their school and within the school premises, in agreements with EFL or IFL teachers or school counsellors. Ethical considerations were also discussed with the teachers who were involved and interested in the research either by being present when I administered the questionnaire to their students during their lessons, or by administering the questionnaire themselves, following my guidelines.

As for the very participants of the study, a written consent form was presented to the students on the occasion of visiting their school as to carry out the research. The form included brief and general information on the aims of the research, information on the researcher, as well as a guarantee that the results of the questionnaire would be anonymous. If approved and signed, the students could proceed by completing the questionnaire which was then handed to them on a different piece of paper, separate from the consent form they had signed with their name and surname. As all the informants of this study were minors, collecting written consent forms was a requirement, but being second and third-grade students above the age of 14, they were authorized to sign the consent form themselves, without their parents' or guardians' consent (Cergol 2021). The principle of voluntary participation in this research was emphasized both in writing, in the aforementioned consent form, as well as orally, before the testing took place.

8.3. Sample

8.3.1. Participants selection criteria

Decisions on how large the sample for the present study would be and the kind of students it would consist of, were made well ahead, during the overall research planning process, and discussed with my mentors along with the notions of reliability, measurement validity and research validity in quantitative research.

The decision to conduct this study exclusively in secondary schools rather than including primary school students was based on the process of focusing on the main target population which the results of the research might apply to. Teenagers are the age group most often linked with media-consumption and are therefore considered of primary interest to the research as they are most likely to incidentally acquire FL via their everyday use of media.

From previous research in this field (see Brodarić 2015, Brodarić Šegvić 2019a and Brodarić Šegvić 2019b), which I had carried out in the years between 2012 and 2017, I concluded the sample for the present study needed to include students from both general education schools, as well as vocational schools. My previous research was conducted solely with students of general education high schools. Such students usually have a higher competence of the English language[48] and they are also taught a higher level of English once enrolled in high school (Vijeće Europe 2005). Therefore, the samples used in these studies had a very low number of poor EFL students. In light of this, including vocational high school students guaranteed a more varied sample in terms of EFL competence and knowledge level.

Furthermore, my previous studies used convenience samples of my own students, entailing that all informants had the same language teacher at the moment the research took place. This ensured that variations in the assessment criteria of various teachers did not affect the results of the research, as students' EFL school grades were taken as variables. In the present research however, there would

[48] The students usually need a high GPA to qualify for enrollment in general-education secondary schools. Once erolled into general-education secondary schools, lessons start at the B1 level and the expected minimum level of attainment based on CEFR for the first foreign language by the end of secondary education is B2, while the minimum attainment level to be reached by the end of vocational secondary education is A2 (European Commission 2007: 123).

be limitations in observing students taught by one single teacher. The study attempted to include as many students taught by different FL teachers, as to ensure a greater variety in the ways students perceive the English and the Italian languages, and the way they relate to FL, both within the classroom walls as well as informally, in their free time.

In addition to including both general education as well as vocational students in this study, through experience as a high-school teacher, I found second and third graders to be more suitable to answer questions relating to the two languages, their attitudes and habits of FL use outside and within the classroom. Namely, first-graders are usually too preoccupied with adapting to a new school, while fourth-graders' motivation and habits tend to change as the State-Graduation Exam and the end of their high-school days approach. Therefore, it was decided that being in second or third grade at the time of the research was among the criteria students had to meet as study participants.

8.3.2. General characteristics

As explained by Dörnyei (2007: 96), the chosen research sample should be a subset of the population and be representative of the whole target population. Indeed, some of the general characteristics of a sample, which include gender, age, socioeconomic status, social class, educational background, ethnicity (ibid.), were considered when selecting the present sample.

While the process of selecting a sample via randomization was unattainable due to practical reasons and schedules, the sample was a convenience sample as the schools which the students attended were selected because of their geographical proximity, easy accessibility and availability (Dörnyei 2007: 99). There is no reason to doubt the representativeness of this convenience sample.

The students who enrol into high schools in the city of Split consist of teenagers who live within the urban area, but also of commuters travelling to or moving to Split for high school education from the nearby islands as well as rural areas. Students are predominantly of Croatian nationality, with Croatian being their mother tongue. Immigrants and minorities, non-native speakers of Croatian are a rarity in this area. The students' educational background can therefore be considered

as uniform, as most students attend Croatian primary schools conforming to the same educational policies[49].

As for the socioeconomic status of the population in Split and the surrounding areas, it tends to be higher for the families of students enrolled into private high schools than those enrolled into regular state schools, just as is the case in other educational systems across Europe (Senko 2020). Croatian education is still, for the most part, based on national institutions and free, therefore, private or alternative schools are not a frequent choice[50] (see e.g., Rajić 2008), and are, more often than not, opted for when pupils are not able to secure a place in state general-education schools, and when parents can afford tuition costs which can exceed the average Croatian monthly salary (Senko 2020: 61).

8.3.3. Sample description

As initially planned (*see Chapter 8.1.2.),* an approximately similar number of students out of the total of participants in the present study (N = 679) completed the questionnaire regarding the English language (N = 363) and the questionnaire regarding the Italian language (N = 316).

The sample comprised students enrolled in the second (N = 349) or third grade (N = 330) of eight secondary schools in the urban area of Split, Croatia. As explained in the previous chapter, the pupils of the schools in question are usually based within the urban area or commute from the nearby rural areas and islands, as they gravitate towards the city of Split for secondary education.

The informants of this study are male (N = 231) and female (N = 448) students of both general-education (N = 460) as well as vocational secondary schools (N = 219). In fact, the sample covers students from a wide variety of educational tracks: the participants attending general-education high schools can be subdivided into the students of *opće gimnazije* (N = 180), i.e., schools covering

[49] Question 5 of the questionnaire (see Appendix) addresses whether students have attended an education abroad. Only 13 students out of the whole sample (N = 679) attended primary or secondary schools abroad.

[50] In the school year 2019/2020, 7904 students enrolled into private (primary and secondary) schools in Croatia, only 1,72% of the total number of students of that generation (Croatian bureau of statistics: https://www.dzs.hr/ (Accessed: 20.11.2020.)

a general, wide range of subjects and focusing on further education; *jezične* or *klasične gimnazije* (N = 167), i.e. schools with a focus on foreign languages (or classical languages) and social sciences in general; *prirodoslovno-matematičke gimnazije* (N = 81), i.e. schools predominantly specializing in Mathematics, natural sciences and Information Technology. The participants attending vocational schools were students attending an education in the area of Tourism Management, Hospitality and Catering (N = 146) as well as Economy and Administration (N = 73). A small portion of the sample also included students from a private high school (N = 32). The decision to include high schools with various educational tracks also increased the possibility of achieving results which could be generalized.

8.3.4. Generalizability of results

As for the generalizability of the results, they can be considered as applicable to teenagers in the city of Split and the Split-Dalmatia County. However, it could be argued that the results pertaining specifically to the English language are also representative of the whole of Croatia[51], as English is mostly learned as a first foreign language from the first grade of elementary school (European commission 2017), i.e., for the same number of years and with a similar intensity by all children throughout the country[52]. While the prescribed attainment levels (Vijeće Europe 2005) may depend on the students' chosen educational track in secondary education, English is also present in much of the media consumed presumably in equal or very similar quantities regardless of the region adolescents inhabit. Ideally, the sample would have also included schools from other Croatian regions as to ensure it would geographically cover the whole country and its target population, however, this was not possible due to practical reasons and time constraints, since the data was collected by myself as the researcher. What is more, the focus of the research is the town of Split due to the comparisons made between the informal usage and incidental acquisition of

[51] The present sample consists of students who attend high schools in the city of Split, which include both pupils from the urban area as well as pupils who commute from rural areas and nearby islands.

[52] Unlike English, which is mostly learned as a first FL throughout the whole country, the Italian language is traditionally sought as a second FL option in the costal areas of Croatia, whereas German is more likely to be chosen in other regions (see e.g. Vilke 2007).

English as opposed to Italian, the latter language having been used formally and informally in this city and its surrounding areas for centuries.

8.4. Instrument

The instruments used in the present study were two identical questionnaires administered to the participants in the Croatian language (*see Appendix*), one of which questions high school students' competences, opinions and attitudes, formal as well as informal exposure to the English language, while the second questioned all of the aforementioned, but in relation to the Italian language.

The questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first designed to gain background information about the students; the second focusing on their EFL or IFL language competences; and the third, aimed at collecting data on students' habits, opinions and attitudes towards the English or the Italian language they encounter outside the school environment, mainly via various kinds of media.

The first part of the questionnaire (*see Appendix, Questions 1-7*) aimed at gathering general information regarding the participants, information regarding their formal foreign language education, as well as the various external factors of language acquisition which could have influenced their informal L2 acquisition, aside from the media. The questionnaire opens with items inquiring the informants' gender, the name of the school they are enrolled into, the year as well as educational track they are attending. The duration of their formal FL school tuition for either of the two languages was to be expressed in the number of years, while the possible attendance of various types of additional, extracurricular FL lessons was to be specified by ticking the boxes appropriately. Furthermore, the students were asked to rate the frequency with which they use either the English or the Italian language in interactions with family, as well as with friends. The frequency of FL interactions with friends and family were to be selected on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale (where 1 = *never* and 5 = *every day, very often*).

The second part of the questionnaire aimed at collecting data regarding the level of students' EFL and IFL competences and skills. The questions demanded the pupils' self-report on their foreign-

language listening, speaking, writing and reading comprehension skills, as well as their knowledge and use of foreign-language vocabulary and grammar. Specifically, participants were asked to rate their skills and competences on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. As the possible options were formulated with affirmative statements such as "I understand foreign language texts when reading" *(see Appendix 3., Question 8.3.)* the answers on the scale ranged from 1 = *I strongly disagree*, to 5 = *I strongly agree*. This section of the questionnaire also investigated the students' opinions on the amount of foreign-language competences they acquired via formal FL tuition, as opposed to the amount of that same language acquired incidentally, via informal exposure to media, in their free time.

The third and most extensive part of the questionnaire consisted of questions aimed at collecting data regarding the students' habits and experiences when engaging in activities related to a variety of English or Italian-language media outside the school environment.

This section comprised, firstly, of questions on the students' frequency of engagement with media in either the English or the Italian language, such as: watching foreign-language movies with or without Croatian subtitles on Croatian television channels, satellite channels or via streaming and downloading Internet platforms; listening to English or Italian-language music on the radio, via different audio formats, or on the Internet; playing video games with FL content; reading English or Italian Internet portals, blogs and similar content; writing comments or engaging in written discussions in English / Italian on social media, forums or other Internet platforms. Among them, one question (*see Appendix, Question 11.7.)* also addressed the frequency of students' engagement in English or Italian oral communication with members of the family, friends or tourists. Older media such as books, newspapers, magazines were not taken into consideration for this study, as previous studies (see e.g., Enever 2011; Brodarić Šegvić 2019a) have shown a decline of interest towards those media with most teenagers throughout the last decade.

The students were asked to provide the answers to these questions by rating their engagement on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *never* and 5 = *frequently, every day*. Some questions (*Appendix 1, Questions 11.2, 11.5, 11.6, 11.8, 11.9, 11.10*) required the participants to support their answers by listing respective examples of the media they most frequently engage with in the form of open-end answers.

Secondly, this part of the questionnaire investigated how frequently, once more on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 5, students search the Internet for different English or Italian content (*see Appendix 1, Question 12),* ranging from the fields of sports, fashion, music, cuisine, politics, arts and culture to daily, crime or gossip news.

Thirdly, the informants were also asked to share their attitudes and habits regarding how they watch audio-visual content in the English or Italian language (*see Appendix, Questions 13 and 14*). Specifically, the students were asked to select if they preferred watching English/Italian language movies with the help of Croatian subtitles, captions provided in the same language as the original audio, or rather without subtitles and/or captions. As to allow for other possibilities not covered by these three options, a fourth answer, stating "none of the above", was also provided.

Furthermore, the students were invited to express whether or not they would prefer imported foreign-language movies to be dubbed into the Croatian language, and why (*see Appendix 1, Question 14*). The students were given five possible answers to choose from: to opt for dubbing as it would make it easier to follow movie plots; to opt for dubbing without a particular reason; to express their neutral position on the matter; to reject dubbing without a particular reason; to reject dubbing as they consider subtitling to be a means of foreign language acquisition.

Finally, the last question in the questionnaire investigated the pupils' opinions in terms of the quantity of English or Italian words and expressions they had acquired, outside of the school environment, with the help of media such as music, film and TV in general, online and offline videogames, social media, other websites or web portals, as well as through travel abroad to English-speaking countries or to Italy, and by communicating in, respectively, one or the other language with family and/or friends. As in many of the previous questions, the students were asked to rate their opinions on a scale from 1 to 5; where, in this case 1 = *I have by no means acquired this language this way*; and 5 = *I have acquired a numerous amount of new FL words and expressions this way*.

8.5. Procedure

It seemed fundamental to begin the procedure by visiting the participating classes in person, so as to clarify how research works, to ensure the students took the testing seriously and to reassure them that they could trust their data would remain anonymous even though I needed to have them sign consent forms. As mentioned earlier (*see Chapter 8.1.2.)*, in most schools, the questionnaires were distributed and completed during the students' regular EFL or IFL school lessons. I was accompanied to each class and briefly introduced by the teachers in charge and would enter the classes at the beginning of their lessons.

In order to participate, each student was asked to read a form of consent handed to them on printed paper, which explained the purpose and nature of the study, without disclosing specific details regarding the main research questions. It also introduced me as the researcher and guaranteed the anonymity of the results of the questionnaire. In most of the classes, where time and circumstances allowed for it, I read the consent forms out loud to fully capture the participants' attention, accelerate and facilitate the introduction to the testing. The students were then asked to select whether they accepted or declined participating in the study by ticking the respective option, finally they were required to write their full name and sing the consent form. The papers were then collected by myself as the researcher (or in a small number of occasions by their teachers, as explained in Chapter 8.1.2.) and the questionnaires were handed out separately as to secure anonymity.

Out of the total of 681 students present at their classes when the research took place, only two opted out by not signing their consent form affirmatively. The participants were warned about the importance of responding honestly and were assured once again of the anonymity of the results, stressing how their responses would not be judged in any way. Instructions were given when needed for each individual question, however, in all the classes where students were asked to complete the questionnaire regarding the Italian language, the FL in question needed to be additionally emphasized as students would often ask whether they needed to respond to their use of the English language as soon as they reached the questions regarding media exposure. Students were, therefore, always warned and reminded of the foreign language they needed to keep in mind

while giving their answers. Depending on the class, it usually took about 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

The participants were generally very collaborative, seemed interested in the research and were focused when answering the questions. They were happy to give information regarding their engagement in FL media in their free time. In addition, their teachers' collaborative disposition and positive attitudes towards my research, also helped create a constructive atmosphere and enjoyable context.

8.6. Data analysis

Firstly, following all school visits and once all data was collected, the student responses were inputted into the statistical software SPSS[53] for data analysis. The main group design was based on the two languages in question. Namely, the results were separately observed for the students who completed the English-language questionnaire (N = 363), and compared to the same answers given by the group of students who answered the Italian-language questionnaire (N = 316). In addition, the data was also clustered as to answer the research questions which aimed to compare the responses of male and female students, as well as vocational as opposed to general-education students, for both languages.

The analysis of collected data for the purpose of this research consists of two parts. The first part is a descriptive analysis of all data regarding the English-language media exposure of Croatian high school students. It consists of the analysis of closed type responses, attitude scales and open-end responses, through the observation of relative and absolute frequencies. The same data regarding Italian-language exposure are described in the second place, and later used as to compare the presence of the English language in the media and its availability to high school students, with the media-presence of another foreign language also formally taught in secondary schools in Croatia.

[53] *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences v.19.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA)*

The second part of data analysis consists of statistical tests in order to investigate the connection between English-language media-exposure and students' EFL language competences. The potential influence of English via the media was analysed through correlations, both for each separate EFL competence, as well as for EFL total competence. Once again, the data regarding the Italian language were subsequently used to test the assumption that the omnipresence of the English language in the media, in the present Croatian setting, affects students' EFL language competences, while this does not apply to other foreign languages, or at least not to the same extent.

In order to answer *Research Questions 3* and *4* (*see Chapter 7.1.)* and investigate the potential relationships, the results pertaining to the student's frequency of involvement with FL media were correlated to the results of their self-reported language competences.

The participants' FL competences were measured with their own opinions, i.e., their self-rated competence levels on a scale from 1 to 5 (*see Appendix, Question 8*). In the case of the present research, students' self-report was favoured, instead of opting for a variable such as the report of their school grade in the two foreign languages, as grades can often be based on various additional factors, for instance, the FL teacher, students' concentration in class, their study habits. Each competence, for each language, was analysed separately as well as considered within total EFL or IFL competence in the correlations between language competences and media-exposure.

The background variables i.e., other external factors of L2 acquisition which were considered most relevant, and were therefore additionally explored to some extent, are FLs used in communication with family or with friends in informal settings[54]. Besides the informal usage of the two languages within a family circle, the amount and range of extracurricular FL-activities might also be seen as parents' efforts to lend attention and importance to their children's FL acquisition. These were therefore also variables analysed and compared by observing their correlations with students' respective EFL or IFL competence.

[54] Communicating with the use of English and/or Italian in informal or home environments is an entirely plausible situation in Dalmatia, as Italian expressions and words of Italian origin are still a common part of some families' lexicons (Nigoević 2007), while the English language has entered the everyday Croatian language, and has become a dominant presence through borrowed lexical items or mere code-switching (see e.g., Nikolić-Hoyt 2006; Brodarić Šegvić 2020).

Mann-Whitney U tests were used to check for statistically significant differences in responses to questions regarding the out-of-school engagement in FL media (*Questions 11.1.-15.7. in Appendix*) among different sample groups: 1) to compare the answers given with regard to the English language to those regarding the Italian language; 2) to compare the male as opposed female answers given regarding the English language; 3) to compare the male as opposed to female answers on the Italian language; 4) to compare the answers by general-education students as opposed to vocational students regarding English; 4) to compare the answers of general-education students as opposed to vocational students regarding Italian.

Furthermore, the association between variables was analysed with Spearman's correlation coefficient analysis. Firstly, each of the students' specific EFL or IFL competences (*Questions 8.1.-8.6. in Appendix*) were correlated to their self-reported media-exposure to the respective foreign languages (*Questions 11.1.-12.9. and 15.1.-15.7. in Appendix*). Other variables, such as students' FL usage with friends or family (*Questions 6. and 7. in Appendix*) and finally, the nature and duration of their formal EFL or IFL education at school (*Questions 4. and 5. in Appendix*) were also analysed in correlation to their total EFL or IFL competences (*Question 8 in Appendix*).

As previously explained by Kuppens (2010) the relationship between media use and FL proficiency cannot be seen as straightforward, as we do not know the direction of the influence between the analysed variables (as previously discussed in Chapter 6). It would therefore be hard to claim one variable is the cause of another, while it is correct to draw conclusions on the presence or absence of a relationship between them with the methods used in the present research.

The level of statistical significance was set at $P<0.05$, and significant results are indicated in *Tables 1 – 25* with asterisks or by being emboldened for transparency.

9. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with an account of the results of the questionnaire items regarding English-language media exposure. The first section (Chapter 9.1.) covers all the questions raised by *Research question 1* (*see Chapter 7.1.*), with an attempt to identify the English-language media which students engage in outside the school walls, the English-language content students search for on the Internet, their preferences in terms of watching English-language TV content with Croatian subtitles or English captions, as well as their opinions on Croatian dubbing, and, finally, it explores their attitudes towards the significance of out-of-school EFL acquisition in comparison to their formal EFL education.

The second section (Chapter 9.2.) focuses on relating and discussing the results which compare the students' English-language media exposure with their media exposure to the Italian language. The section covers the results sought by *Research question 2* (*see Chapter 7.1.*), specifically dealing with the students' dissimilar habits with regard to the media consumption of English versus Italian-language content, in terms of the frequency of their engagement in each specific media, their habits regarding browsing the Internet, watching TV, as well as their attitudes regarding the importance of the out-of-school acquisition of each of the two languages in comparison to the respective formal EFL or IFL school tuition. In addition, this chapter also covers a discussion of the results concerning female, as opposed to male habits regarding both English-language and Italian-language media exposure, and finally, the section discusses the results of general-education students, as opposed to those of vocational students with respect to their use of both English and Italian-language media outside the school walls.

The third section (Chapter 9.3.) contains the results that concern the relationship between students' English-language media exposure and their EFL competences. As to provide answers to *Research question 3* (*see Chapter 7.1.*), the results are presented and discussed across a number of subchapters, organized according to different media or media-involved activities. Following the discussions on the interdependence of individual language competences and students' engagement in particular forms of informal EFL acquisition via media exposure, the total of students' EFL competence is observed in relation to their media exposure as opposed to the relationship of EFL

competence with the duration and types of formal EFL tuition, as well as other background factors that might influence students' EFL competence, such as their use of English with friends and/or family.

Finally, Chapter 9.4. provides the results concerning *Research question 4* (*see Chapter 7.1.*), i.e., the influence of English-language media on EFL competences is discussed and compared to the influence of Italian-language media on IFL competences. In addition, the interdependence of EFL competences and the informal use of the English language among friends and family is compared to the interdependence of IFL competence and the informal use of the Italian language with friends and family. Ultimately, this chapter ends with a discussion and comparison of EFL competence in relation to the duration and types of formal EFL learning, as opposed to IFL competence in relations to the duration and types of formal IFL learning.

9.1. Media exposure to the English language

The results presented below provide the answers to the first research question of this study and are based on the responses students provided to all the questionnaire items which explore their relationship with English-language media. The discussion of the following results aims to determine all the types of English-language media exposure which can offer opportunities for high school students' EFL acquisition outside the formal education system.

9.1.1. English-language media students engage in out of the school environment

The results presented and discussed in this section are focused on determining the frequencies with which students engage in different types of media, such as TV and/or radio channels, audio formats, Internet platforms, online games, etc., with English-language content. As described in Chapter 8.3.3., one part of the sample (N = 363) considered for the present study consists of students who were asked to rate the frequency of their engagement with particular English-language (EL) media on 1-5 Likert-type scales.

Table 1. Students' self-rating of their engagement in English (N=363) and Italian (N=316) language-related activities in non-institutional contexts.

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content		**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Movies – Croatian TV with subtitles	English	17 (5)	33 (9)	60 (17)	70 (19)	183 (50)	**<0.001**
	Italian	132 (42)	87 (28)	33 (10)	34 (11)	30 (10)	
Movies – satellite channels	English	101 (28)	35 (10)	56 (15)	56 (15)	115 (32)	**<0.001**
	Italian	249 (79)	41 (13)	12 (4)	8 (3)	6 (2)	
Movies – downloading /streaming via Internet	English	9 (3)	18 (5)	27 (7)	45 (12)	264 (73)	**<0.001**
	Italian	170 (54)	59 (19)	36 (11)	20 (6)	31 (10)	
Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.	English	30 (8)	25 (7)	40 (11)	41 (11)	227 (63)	**<0.001**
	Italian	167 (53)	70 (22)	32 (10)	20 (6)	27 (9)	
Music via radio, TV	English	100 (28)	56 (15)	52 (14)	67 (19)	88 (24)	**<0.001**
	Italian	233 (74)	49 (16)	16 (5)	9 (3)	9 (3)	
Music via Internet	English	21 (6)	12 (3)	28 (8)	38 (11)	264 (73)	**<0.001**
	Italian	150 (48)	71 (23)	46 (15)	17 (5)	32 (10)	
Communication with friends and family	English	36 (10)	75 (21)	101 (28)	77 (21)	74 (20)	**<0.001**
	Italian	164 (52)	84 (27)	51 (16)	11 (4)	6 (2)	
Video games	English	162 (45)	49 (14)	26 (7)	30 (8)	96 (26)	**<0.001**
	Italian	292 (92)	15 (5)	4 (1)	3 (1)	2 (1)	
Reading news portals/ Internet blogs etc.	English	94 (26)	77 (21)	71 (20)	62 (17)	59 (16)	**<0.001**
	Italian	282 (89)	17 (5)	9 (3)	4 (1)	4 (1)	
Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs / portals	English	168 (46)	54 (15)	49 (14)	38 (11)	54 (15)	**<0.001**
	Italian	273 (86)	24 (8)	12 (4)	2 (1)	5 (2)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

The results presented in Table 1 show that the most frequently undertaken activities, in order of popularity, proved to be: watching EL movies or shows by downloading or streaming them via the Internet as well as listening to EL music on the Internet, followed by listening to EL music via various audio formats, and finally, watching movies or shows with EL content on Croatian TV

channels. The media that proved to be altogether less popular are: watching English-language TV content via satellite channels, playing video games with EL content, listening to EL music via the radio or TV channels. Finally, the least popular activities resulted as being reading Internet blogs or news portals written in the English language, followed by writing comments or engaging in written discussions on social media, portals or blogs.

The results which instantly draw attention are the ones reporting students' higher frequency in both watching movies and listening to music with English-language content via the Internet then via "older" media such as television or radio broadcast, audio formats such as MP3 players or, perhaps, the currently rather outdated, CDs, and recently re-trending vinyl records. The activities of streaming and downloading Anglophone movies, series and shows seem to be equally popular as listening to music with English lyrics via the many platforms and music-streaming services provided on the Internet such as *YouTube, Spotify, Deezer*, or *SoundCloud*, and many available podcasts[55]. Such results clearly indicate a shift in the habits of younger generations which favour the use of the newest technologies, and promote the acceptance of the newest trends in the field of media consumption.

Early studies in this particular field show that both audio-visual and audio material (see e.g., Murphey 1984; Murphey 1990b; Koolstra and Beentjes 1999, in Kuppens 2010) have always been strong interests which provided opportunities for the incidental language acquisition of young foreign-language learners long before their access to the Internet. More recent research, conducted across different European countries (see e.g., Enever 2011; Ivars Olmedo 2015), and in Croatia (Mihaljević Djigunović and Geld 2003), all showed that subtitled TV content, is usually considered to be one of the most common types of youngsters' foreign-language exposure. However, as already described in *Chapter 6*, in a study conducted recently by Cergol Kovačević and Matijević (2015), Croatian university students had already rated the various devices which allowed them to use the Internet as more important than other media for the improvement of their EFL skills in a similar way as in the present research, and in a smaller-scale study I conducted in the urban area of the city of Split (Brodarić 2015), the use of Internet resulted as equally significant as watching

[55] 85% of the sample reported watching English-language movies or series online very frequently by rating this activity with a 4 or 5 on the Likert-type scale, while 84% reported the same frequency for listening to English-language music on Internet platforms.

movies and listening to music in English, in terms of its relationship to high school students' EFL grades.

While the current results do not necessarily indicate that teenagers have turned to the Internet for most audio or audio-visual content, they do show that Croatian youngsters are more and more likely to encounter such English-language content via the Internet then via other media. The reason behind these findings can be interpreted as students having more opportunities to listen to the English language online then otherwise, or as students actively and consciously seeking popular or specific English-language content provided on their favourite websites, as such content is perhaps unavailable in their mother tongue[56].

The students were also additionally given the opportunity to point out the platforms or websites they most frequently use to listen to English-language music online. The most popular proved to be *YouTube*, mentioned by 63% of the sample (N = 229). Other, much less frequently, mentioned services include *SoundCloud* (N = 21), *Spotify* (N = 15) and *Deezer* (N = 10). The latter options are music and audio streaming services which largely require a paid membership or subscription and are thus, less available than the popular video-sharing platform YouTube – which has for years been considered the leading Internet video service (Liikkanen and Salovaara 2015) and is still the second most visited website in the world (Alexa 2021). Specifically, various measurements show that, as of 2014, it is precisely music videos that hold top positions in charts as the most dominant and popular content genre on YouTube (Liikkanen and Salovaara 2015). It is therefore clear that the results of the present study completely confirm predictions made by Cayari's (2011: 4) claims that in a similar way to gramophones, record players, and formats such as cassette tapes, CDs and audio digital files, YouTube has also influenced the musical art form and become a significant

[56] In 2008, Chung claimed that while the worldwide use of the Internet had grown tremendously and rapidly in the previous decade and in non-English-speaking regions (mostly referring to Chinese, Spanish, and Arabic-speaking regions), the existing Web portals and search engines were unable to meet demands as they were primarily developed to serve English-speaking users (Chung 2008). Nowadays, while many non-English-speaking Internet-users set out to rely on their native languages to browse the Web, the English language is still the dominant when seeking for information online. Therefore, non-native English speakers often search the Internet in English as the availability of information in their mother tongues online is limited (Chu et al. 2015).

platform which allows new possibilities in terms of consuming, creating, sharing and accessing music content.

As mentioned earlier, the result regarding students' engagement in watching English-language movies on Croatian television with the aid of subtitles is surprising, as only 50% (N = 183) confirmed undertaking this activity often or on a daily basis. The results for watching Anglophone content on satellite channels was also lower than what was expected. Namely, many studies conducted in the early 2010s (see e.g., Enever 2011, Kuppens 2010) concluded that one of the most prominent English-language media students encounter outside the classroom and use to acquire the language informally, if, of course, based in a country context where subtitles are the norm for audio-visual translation, is in fact television and the numerous TV shows imported from the USA or UK.

The lower engagement towards the medium of television which is shown by the present study can be interpreted as being due to this generations' obvious shift towards audio-visual content provided online via streaming or downloading services. What these findings also imply is that, on a daily basis, approximately two thirds (73%) of students regularly look for English-language audio-visual content which is often not provided with their mother tongue subtitles, as many of the movies and series available on streaming services such as *Netflix* or *HBO* do not offer Croatian subtitles but, most often, English captions[57].

On the same subject, when pointing to the foreign satellite programmes they often watch other than Croatian TV, students mostly mentioned: a number of different television channels by the *Fox Networks Group* (N = 67); the cable channels *MTV* (N = 27) and *CineStar TV* (N = 22); pay television networks *Viasat History* (N = 17), *Discovery Channel* (N = 18) and *TV1000* (N = 10); *National Geographic* (N = 13). While the satellite or cable TV channels mentioned above often do provide Croatian subtitles, students also highlighted the online streaming services *HBO* (N = 33) and *Netflix* (N = 22) in the same category, showing that they are also accustomed to watching Anglophone audio-visual content with English captions instead of subtitles, or with no form of translation at all.

[57] As of the end of 2020, Netflix has added the option of Croatian subtitles to most of its contents, however, this option was not available at the time the present study was conducted.

Furthermore, the present results show that students are more likely to listen to English-language music by using Internet platforms, or, secondly, via different audio formats, then they are by listening to the radio, or music played on TV channels. A closer look at Table 1 shows that this is due to the distribution of the results, with approximately the same percentage of students claiming they *never* listen to EL music on the radio or TV (28%), and another 24% claiming they listen to songs in this language on the radio or TV *every day*. While Chapter 9.2.5. will explore how these results are related to gender, we might also conclude they depend on students' preferences in terms of listening to music from their country, sung in Croatian, or, on the other hand their preference for music produced abroad, mostly in English-speaking countries. Such preferences also dictate the students' choices in terms of the radio stations they are likely to play. In fact, apart from music TV channels such as *MTV*, which proved to be most popular with this activity (N = 98), and *VH1* (N = 33), students who claimed they frequently listen to English-language music on the radio mostly mentioned one national and another local radio station that are usually known for broadcasting international music hits, generally sung in English: *Otvoreni radio* (N = 60)[58]; *Ultra FM Split (*N = 34). Hence, while students might listen to approximately equal amounts of radio in their spare time, this does not necessarily mean they will be listening to English-language music.

When considering another type of media-exposure, the low score reached by video games as media which is usually considered to be played frequently among teenagers (Lenhart, Kahne, Middaugh, Macgill, Evans and Vitak 2008) and mostly with English-language content (Miettinen 2019) may come as a surprise, however, Table 1 shows a specific distribution among student answers for this particular question, with almost half of the respondents (45%) admitting to having no contact with the English language via video games. Considerable gender differences are to be taken into account for the activity of playing video games, a matter which will be considered later, in Chapter 9.2.5. A low result of students' overall engagement in playing video games is linked to

[58] A recent study which aimed to identify whether there are stereotypes in terms of personality traits, values and specific characteristics of listeners of different Croatian radio stations, found that the listeners of Otvoreni radio are considered to be the most open-minded and some of the most liberal (Novosel 2019). Furthermore, the radio station's programme highlights mostly playing popular foreign as well as national contemporary hits (Otvoreni radio 2019; in Novosel 2019).

the dominance of female students in the sample[59], girls being regularly less interested in this activity[60] also in accordance with previous studies conducted both in Croatia and in other European countries (see e.g., Sundqvist 2009; Sylvén 2004 as reported in Sundqvist 2009; Ivars Olmedo 2015; Brodarić Šegvić 2019b).

The specific video games students most frequently highlighted as being those they commonly play and where they come across the English language are: different games in the *FIFA* series of football sports video games (N = 26); the survival, battle royale, or sandbox game modes of *Fortnite* (N = 23); versions of the first-person shooter video game franchise *Call of Duty* (N = 20); different releases of the of action-adventure games *Grand Theft Auto* (N = 16); the multiplayer online battle arena video game *League of Legends* (N = 11); the action-adventure stealth video game *Assassins' Creed* (N = 9). The video-game genres which were most frequently mentioned indicate considerable inclination towards contents which are likely to contribute to students' vocabularies relating to groups of words that describe battle or groups of words relating to sports, a matter which will be discussed in close detail in Chapter 9.3.4.

Finally, these findings show that learners are less inclined to using the English language by reading, and even less by writing comments and discussions on online news portals, blogs, or social media. Almost half of the students claimed never to have used the English language to comment or discuss online (46%), while 47% never or almost never read portals or blogs with content provided in English. As for the activity of reading, these results clearly show that while it is safe to say that youngsters nowadays do much of their reading online (*see Chapter 6*), it does not necessarily include reading in the English language, or leaving the realm of social media where communication can often be limited to a student's mother tongue language. In fact, among the websites and applications most often mentioned by students to specify where their EFL reading goes on online was *Instagram* (N = 11).

[59] The sample of high school students who completed the questionnaire regarding the English language consisted of N = 228 female repondents and N = 135 male respondents.

[60] While Lenhart et al. (2008) dismiss the common stereotype that only boys play video games, their research also shows that boys usually play games with both greater frequency and duration.

Instagram (N = 98) also proved to be, by far, the most popular social networking service where students write comments or engage in discussions in English online, followed by *YouTube* (N = 31) and *Facebook* (N = 27), with *Twitter* (N = 12) and the social news website *Reddit* (N = 9) also being mentioned more than a few times. Interestingly, some students also reported communicating in written English on the messaging platform *WhatsApp* (N = 8) which, in recent years, has virtually become a substitute for the standard SMS phone messaging[61]. It remains unclear whether students use English via the latter application in order to communicate to their English-speaking friends, as WhatsApp is a free medium for online international communication, or whether they use English also when communicating with their Croatian friends, in much the same way it was commonplace for teenagers to use English to express themselves on, nowadays outdated, online locations, such as forums or chat rooms, as Nikolić-Hoyt (2006) pointed out a little over a decade ago. While online blogs and other texts are available to whoever wants to access them (Cayari 2011: 6), they do not seem to be of primary interest to Croatian teenagers who are apparently much more likely to engage with English online by seeking audio or audio-visual content.

As for the productive skill of writing, which requires more effort as well as language competence, as explained in previous studies covered in the literature review (Chapter 5.2.), it is most probably only undertaken by students who have a high level of EFL competence and feel confident enough to engage in a written debate in that language. On this topic, a research Khan (2017) conducted by surveying a sample of 1143 registered YouTube users as to explore user engagement and motives for active participation and/or passive content consumption, showed that both commenting and uploading, as active engagements, are "strongly predicted by social interaction motive"[62]. With that in mind, engaging in written debate in the English language online could be considered an activity dictated for the most part by other internal factors *(see Chapter 2.5.2.)* such as students'

[61] In a study which explored the differences in the uses of WhatsApp and traditional SMS, as early as 2013, the results of interviews and a large-scale study show that social influence as well as costs were found to have impacted smartphone users' communication practices by shifting them towards a more frequent use of WhatsApp messages in comparison to SMS (Church and de Oliveira 2013).

[62] On the other hand, "passive content consumption" such as video viewing, liking and disliking as well as reading the comments section were found to be predicted by "relaxing entertainment" and "information seeking" motives (Khan 2017: 236).

self-confidence or level of extroversion, and which is undertaken only by students who care to state their opinion publicly and enter debate, anonymously or not.

9.1.2. English-language media content students search for on the Internet

Questionnaire item 12 (*see Appendix*) required that the students rate the frequency of their engagement in searching the Internet for different media content (sports, music, fashion, etc.) in the English language. The aim of this question was to explore which fields of interest are most popular with this age group in Croatia, and find out which data, information, news they are most likely to look for in English, perhaps rather than in Croatian, due to greater availability of this language online (Chu, Komlodi and Rózsa 2015).

Table 2. Students' self-rating of their engagement in browsing diverse content on the Internet involving the use of English (N=363) or Italian (N=316).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Internet FL-content	**Language**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Sports	English	106 (29)	61 (17)	61 (17)	52 (14)	83 (23)	**<0.001**
	Italian	202 (64)	34 (11)	31 (10)	23 (7)	26 (8)	
Fashion	English	101 (28)	42 (12)	55 (15)	62 (17)	103 (28)	**<0.001**
	Italian	160 (51)	45 (14)	43 (14)	47 (15)	21 (7)	
Music	English	16 (4)	14 (4)	31 (9)	63 (17)	239 (66)	**<0.001**
	Italian	139 (44)	76 (24)	54 (17)	23 (7)	24 (8)	
Daily News	English	67 (19)	83 (23)	100 (28)	74 (20)	39 (11)	**<0.001**
	Italian	248 (79)	42 (13)	15 (5)	8 (3)	3 (1)	
Politics	English	223 (61)	76 (21)	46 (13)	12 (3)	6 (2)	**<0.001**
	Italian	289 (92)	12 (4)	10 (3)	1 (0)	4 (1)	
Cuisine	English	155 (43)	78 (22)	66 (18)	42 (12)	22 (6)	**<0.001**
	Italian	189 (60)	52 (17)	44 (14)	12 (4)	19 (6)	
Culture / Arts	English	137 (38)	90 (25)	70 (19)	37 (10)	29 (8)	**<0.001**
	Italian	206 (65)	47 (15)	39 (12)	17 (5)	7 (2)	
Gossip News	English	175 (48)	45 (12)	53 (15)	36 (10)	54 (15)	**<0.001**
	Italian	291 (92)	18 (6)	5 (2)	1 (0)	1 (0)	
Crime News	English	235 (65)	55 (15)	36 (10)	23 (6)	14 (4)	**<0.001**
	Italian	296 (94)	10 (3)	4 (1)	3 (1)	3 (1)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

As shown by the results presented in Table 2, music content is, by far, the field students highlighted as the one they most often browse for in English, with 66% of students claiming to do so every day. Music is followed, in order of popularity, by fashion, sports, gossip news, daily news, and with culture and arts, cuisine, with crime news and politics being the least popular content as over 80% of the sample claimed they never or nearly never browse the Internet for the latter topics in the English language. Showing compatibility with the results discussed in Chapter 9.1.1., the frequency of searching for music is the English-language content which the largest portion of the sample (83%) rated as 4 or 5 on the Likert-type scale, showing, once more, an extremely frequent and constant engagement in listening to EL music via the Internet. The results pertaining to

students' interest towards sports and fashion content, which showed a unique type of distribution, will best be discussed by also taking into account students' gender *(see Chapter 9.2.5*).

9.1.3. English-language TV content: Students' preferences towards subtitles, captions and dubbing

The data presented in this chapter explores high school students' habits when exposed to English-language audio-visual content, in terms of their preferences for the original English audio being accompanied by Croatian subtitles providing an immediate translation in their mother-tongue; by same-language captions supplying additional written information in English; or enjoying the English "soundtrack" without the help of subtitles or captions. Furthermore, the results regarding respondents' attitudes towards the practice of Croatian dubbing will also be presented and discussed.

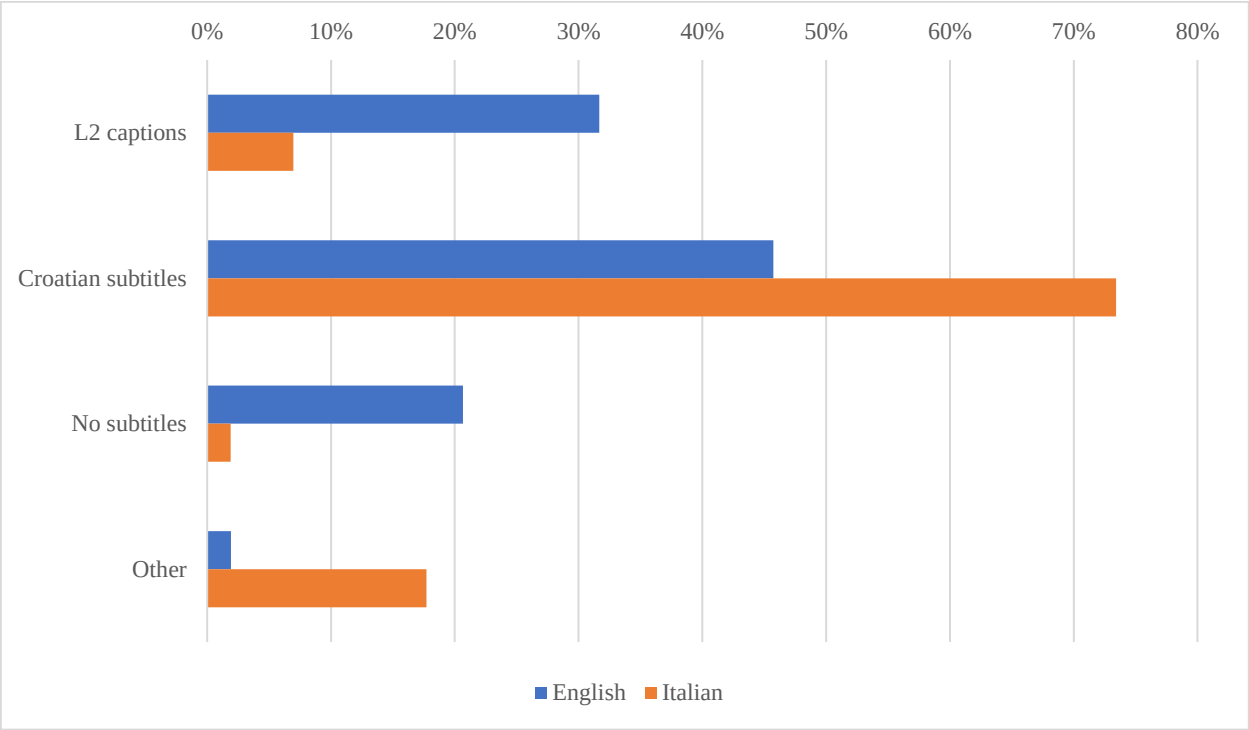


Figure 1. Student preferences in watching English (N=363) or Italian-language (N=316) movies with respect to L2 captions, Croatian subtitles and no subtitles. The bars show the precentage of responses within the separate English and Italian samples.

Figure 1 shows students' answers with respect to the modes in which they prefer watching English-spoken movies. The majority (N = 166, 46%) of the sample opted for the aid of Croatian subtitles. As described in the Chapter 3.2. of *Literature review*, watching TV content with mother tongue subtitles is the country's chosen translation practice for audio-visual material, and is what the students are used to from a very young age, as any foreign, imported content on both television and in the cinema is mostly provided with Croatian subtitles**.** Remarkably however, 32% (N = 115) of the respondents chose English-language captions over Croatian subtitles, and, what is more, 21% (N = 75) claimed that they prefer watching English-spoken movies in the original language and with no additional aid in the form of mother tongue subtitles or even L2 captions. The latter results are in line with the findings presented in Chapter 9.1.1., as many respondents (N = 309, 85%) confirmed one of the most frequent media they are exposed to in the English language out of the

school environment is precisely watching American or British movies and TV series on the Internet, where many of the streaming and downloading platforms offer content in the original language with no subtitles. The fact that more than a half of students reported watching English-language audio-visual material without the help of any kind of translation is not something to be overlooked, especially if we attempt to compare this kind of confidence Croatian teenagers have in their ability to understand English-language content with how their peers in many other European countries, who are used to watching dubbed movies (see e.g., Ellie 2011; European Commission 2011; Koolstra et al. 2002), might reply to this question.

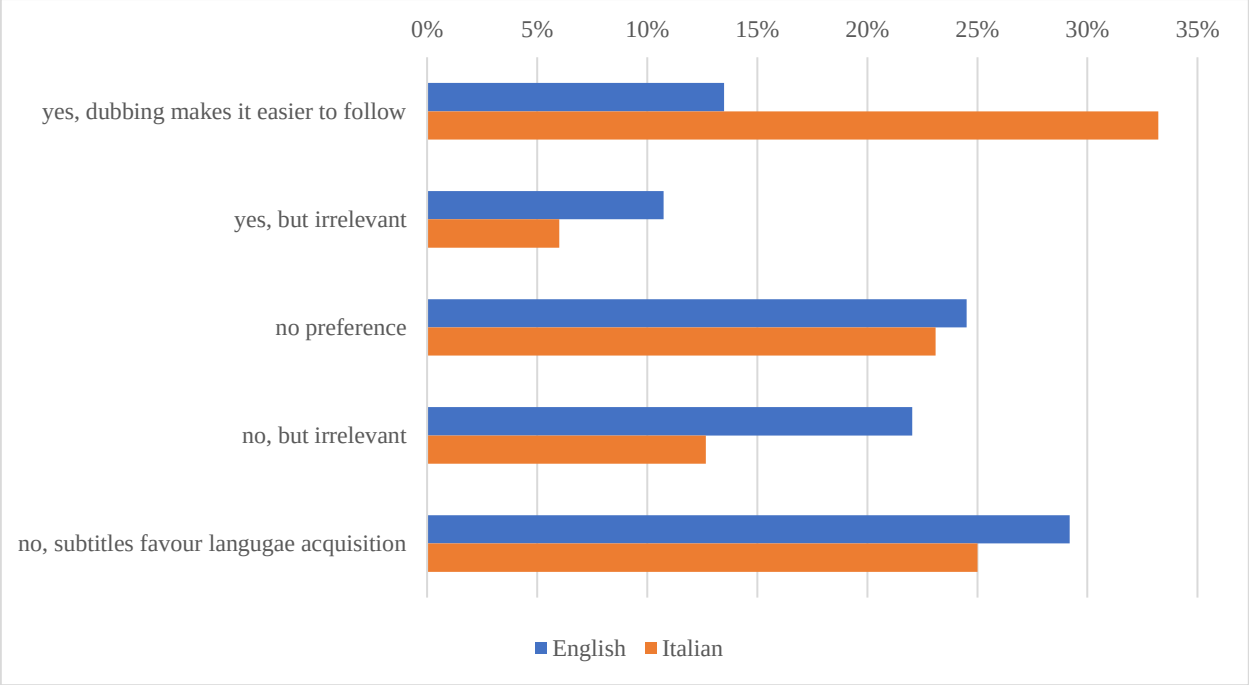


Figure 2. *Students' attitudes towards dubbing for English (N=363) or Italian-language (N=316) movies. The bars show the precentage of responses within the separate English and Italian samples.*

Figure 2 presents the students' responses to whether they would prefer English-spoken movies to be dubbed into Croatian. The results are not in complete agreement with my previous research (Brodarić 2015: 45) where a vast majority had rejected dubbing as an option. In the present study only half of the respondents (N = 186, 51%) clearly stated they would not prefer English audio-

visual material to be dubbed into their mother tongue. The dissimilarity of these findings may lie in the fact that the present sample is much more likely to be diverse in terms of encompassing students coming from different schools, backgrounds and with greater differences in their EFL competences which therefore included a higher percentage of students who do not have high EFL competences. In fact, the only students who did express a preference towards Croatian dubbing in the earlier research (ibid.) were students whose EFL school grades were poor. Nevertheless, the most common answer (N = 106, 29%) the students of the present sample opted for was still to reject mother tongue dubbing, as they reckon subtitles favour L2 language acquisition. This result shows a certain level of awareness towards the benefits that the subtitling translation practice chosen in Croatia seems to bring, specifically discussed throughout Chapter 5.5. On the other hand, 25% of the sample (N = 89) expressed their indifference on the matter, while another 24% (N = 88) felt they would indeed find it easier to follow movie plots if they were dubbed, or simply expressed their preference for dubbing without a particular reason. The results presented here were also tested for correlations with the students' reported competences as to explore whether their attitudes towards subtitling and dubbing have any connection to their EFL acquisition process. The results of correlations are presented in Chapter 9.3.2.**)**

9.1.4. Out-of-school EFL acquisition vs. formal EFL school education: students' attitudes

In one of the items in the questionnaire (*Question 9, see Appendix*), the students were required to rate to what extent out-of-school English-language media exposure on the one hand, and their formal EFL school education on the other hand, have contributed to their EFL acquisition process. The results show that 53% (N = 194) consider their EFL school lessons to have had an extremely important role in their L2 acquisition process. However, even more students (N = 245, 67%) deemed the out-of-school media-exposure crucial to their English-language acquisition. This result offers powerful evidence which, among other results yet to be presented and discussed, prove that the abundant "extracurricular supply" of English, as defined by Housen, Janssens and Pierrard

(2001[63], in Kuppens 2010), provides tremendous opportunities for incidental acquisition of this language, which might be even more valuable to students' proficiency than their curriculums.

In addition, students were given the possibility to add their own written answer to this question and specify a means which they regard as being, or having been remarkably important for the development of their EFL skills. Most of the additional answers, provided by a small number of students, fall under the category of media-exposure, with respondents emphasizing having learnt the language via TV (N = 4) and music (N = 3), by using the Internet (N = 3); communicating with other gamers using computer games (N = 2); by reading books (N = 1). Others felt the need to state that different forms of institutionalized EFL learning, other than regular school lessons, helped them in their EFL acquisition process, such as: EFL classes at foreign language schools (N = 7); private individual lessons (N = 3); additional lessons at school (1); EFL classes at kindergarten (N = 1). Finally, a small portion of the sample stressed other situations which they value as having had an important influence on their EFL competence: seasonal jobs (N = 2); interacting with tourists (N = 2); communicating with friends (N = 2); communicating with family (N =2); travelling abroad (N = 1). Such influence of external factors, as well as additional formal language-learning situations, on students' EFL competences will be discussed in detail later, throughout Chapters 9.3.8. and 9.3.9.

[63] The original source (Housen, Janssens and Pierrard 2001) is in Dutch.

Table 3. Students' rating of English (N=363) or Italian-language (N=316) activities' impact on their FL incidental vocabulary acquisition (1 = I have never acquired FL words this way; 5 = I have acquired a great number of FL words this way).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL- content	**Language**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Music	English	17 (5)	29 (8)	60 (17)	87 (24)	170 (47)	**<0.001**
	Italian	123 (39)	86 (27)	56 (18)	27 (9)	24 (8)	
Movies / TV	English	8 (2)	16 (4)	35 (10)	77 (21)	227 (63)	**<0.001**
	Italian	120 (38)	100 (32)	50 (16)	28 (10)	18 (6)	
Video games	English	122 (34)	59 (16)	49 (14)	45 (12)	88 (24)	**<0.001**
	Italian	278 (88)	23 (7)	9 (3)	4 (1)	2 (1)	
Social Media	English	37 (10)	15 (4)	59 (16)	102 (28)	150 (41)	**<0.001**
	Italian	176 (56)	70 (22)	42 (13)	18 (6)	10 (3)	
Websites / Portals	English	138 (38)	67 (19)	79 (22)	45 (12)	33 (9)	**<0.001**
	Italian	263 (83)	32 (10)	15 (5)	4 (1)	2 (1)	
Travel Abroad	English	123 (34)	68 (19)	64 (18)	51 (14)	57 (16)	**<0.001**
	Italian	167 (53)	53 (17)	37 (12)	41 (13)	18 (6)	
With family / friends	English	66 (18)	97 (27)	100 (28)	55 (15)	45 (12)	**<0.001**
	Italian	165 (52)	79 (25)	39 (12)	21 (7)	12 (4)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

The results displayed in Table 3, more specifically, show how students rated the impact of different media and activities involving the use of the English language, outside the school environment, on their EFL incidental vocabulary acquisition, i.e., which media or activities they deem the most important in the development of their English vocabulary. A majority of students (84%) consider movies, and television in general, to be the most prominent means of EFL vocabulary acquisition, and rated them very highly (4 and 5 on the Likert-type scale) in terms of how many words they acquired by watching them. At the same time, music as well as social media were also pointed out as important sources for incidental English-language vocabulary acquisition, with respectively 71% and 69% of respondents rating them with a 4 or 5 on the Likert-type scale.

These results are consistent with the conclusions brought by previous studies. Namely, when exploring the effects listening to songs may have on the English vocabulary learning of non-native

language learners, Alipour, Gorjian and Zafari (2012) found that music has a positive effect on vocabulary recall and retention. Other research, already mentioned in Chapter 6, also highlights the benefits listening to songs with English-language lyrics for the acquisition of English words and phrases (see e.g., Lynch 2006; Garza 1994), and emphasizes the incidental vocabulary learning which can occur while watching television (Webb and Rodgers 2009).

Similarly, students in other countries have also expressed their opinion as to social media being beneficial for their EFL competence: for example, Sharma (2019), investigated EFL students' opinions on the influence of social media on their EFL learning, to find that they consider their positive attitudes towards social media to have advanced their English language learning process in and out of the classroom**.** In the present study, when additionally asked to specify the social media they have learned most English vocabulary from, the largest number of students pointed to Instagram (N = 182), followed by Facebook (N = 83), YouTube (N = 51), Snapchat (N = 34) and Twitter (N = 28). YouTube (N = 14) was also most frequently mentioned as a website seen as a source of EFL vocabulary.

In order to gain additional information, later to be compared to the extent of influence students' media-exposure to the English language can have on their EFL competences *(see Chapter 9.3.9.),* students were also asked to assess the influence that other factors, such as travel abroad or communication in English with friends and/or family have had on their EFL vocabulary acquisition process. The results, also presented in Table 3, show that, in comparison to the effects of various media, these contexts, which can also offer opportunities for incidental FL vocabulary acquisition in naturalistic settings, were not rated as very influential by many students. This suggests that, with regard to the English language, mere media exposure is more likely to have a positive effect on Croatian teenagers' EFL vocabulary expansion than exposure to this language in other situations with native English-speakers. This is a result which will also be commented in comparison to the results regarding the same matter, but in relation to Italian-language exposure in Chapter 9.2.4.

The present chapter only presents the students' attitudes regarding what has influenced their acquisition process, however, the true impact of English-language media exposure on EFL competence, or, more precisely, the interdependence of the two, is a matter which will be thoroughly explored throughout Chapter 9.3.

9.2. English-language vs. Italian-language media exposure

While the results dealt with in the previous chapter presented the types of English-language media which high school students are exposed to outside the school walls and how often, the findings described in the following sections will provide the answers to the second research question of this study by comparing the students' responses regarding their English-language informal exposure as opposed to their Italian-language exposure, i.e., the frequency and ways in which students are exposed to English-language media with the frequency and ways of exposure to Italian-language media. As already explained in *Chapter 8.3.3.*, the sample of high school students who completed the questionnaire about the English-language (N = 363) was not the same sample of respondents who participated in the study by completing the same questionnaire about the Italian language (N = 316). They were however all students of the same high schools, of the same ages, both male and female.

As is presented throughout Tables 1, 2, 3, and Figures 1 and 2, the Mann-Whitney tests performed as to compare students' answers to questionnaire items 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 (*see Appendix*) all showed statistically significant differences in the values given for the use of the English language in comparison to the Italian language ($P<0.001$, Mann-Whitney test). The sections that follow will provide a detailed insight into the results revealed by the participants' responses to each of the aforementioned questions.

9.2.1. English-language vs. Italian-language media students engage in out of school

Presented in Table 1, along with the already discussed responses of high school students regarding their exposure to English-language media, are also the answers rating the frequency of students' out-of-school exposure to various media provided in the Italian language.

As can be clearly observed, the results regarding the Italian-language cannot compare to the frequency with which students engage in English-language media. The highest percentage of students who highly rated their involvement with Italian via any of the media in question amounts

to 10%, respectively for watching Italian movies on Croatian TV, by downloading them or streaming them via the Internet, as well as for listening to Italian music online on a frequent or daily basis. Such a result is still lower than the one which proved the least popular English-language activity was written communication in the English language online *(see Chapter 9.1.1.)*, where only 15% of the English-language sample stated this to be an activity they frequently undertake. This first comparison of English versus Italian language-media engagement alone, already provides valuable insight into the unsurmountable differences in the mere exposure available in the two languages for Croatian L2 learners.

The media students most frequently pointed out as sources of the Italian language are: the Italian national television channel *Rai 1* (N = 16), watched via satellite or cable TV; the radio station *Radio Dalmacija* (N = 9), a regional station known to regularly include Italian music in its broadcast**;** *YouTube* (N = 84) as an online source of Italian music; and *Instagram* (N = 14) as a possible means of engaging in Italian written communication online. Importantly, watching Italian movies on TV and listening to Italian music online are the only activities where less than 50% of the students claimed having absolutely never engaged in them. The case with all the other media is that more than half of the students stated never having any contact with the Italian language via those means.

As already announced in Chapter 9.2., Mann-Whitney tests confirmed statistically significant differences in the values regarding the students' engagement in all English-language media in comparison to their engagement in all Italian-language media ($P<0.001$, Mann-Whitney test). The highly significant difference of engagement between media consumption involving one as opposed to the other language was anticipated, as it could equally be expected for any language in comparison to the dominance of the English language in the media. It is however also astounding to find that, despite the centuries of history and tradition binding the Italian language to the city of Split *(see Chapter 4)*, most of the younger generation of its inhabitants virtually reports having no contact with it beyond the classroom walls.

9.2.2. English-language vs. Italian-language media content students search for on the Internet

The results presented in Table 2 show both students' rating of their engagement in looking for English-language as well as Italian-language online content for diverse fields of interest.

The Mann-Whitney tests performed as to explore whether there are statistically significant differences among students' frequency of online browsing for content in one language as opposed to the other, as expected, all confirmed that students seek for online information in the English language significantly more frequently than in the Italian language ($P<0.001$, Mann-Whitney test). Much of the content teenagers encounter online nowadays is indeed provided in the English language (see e.g., Chu et al. 2015; Flammia, and Saunders 2007) and no other language, including Italian, can compare with it in that respect[64]. In fact, future research could also explore how often younger generations search the Internet by using the English language as opposed to their own mother tongue and specifically, in the present context - the Croatian language[65].

As for the Italian language, the students altogether rated their Italian online activity as very low, however, some interest was expressed for the categories of *fashion, sports, music and cuisine*. To some extent, these results concur with previous findings by Leburić and Nigoević (2008), who explored the Italian media consumption habits of Croatian citizens and found that they will mostly seek content in the Italian language regarding topics such as beauty, fashion, culture, and also sports, rather than in the categories of politics and informative daily news.

It should, however, be noted that regardless of the area of interest, the percentage of students claiming they have never looked for Italian language content online is over 50% (apart from music content where the result is such for 44% of students). There are also some interesting results which regard differences in interests according to gender and will be discussed in Chapter 9.2.5.

[64] As of March 2021, English content makes up 61.4% of all content on the Web, followed by Russian (7.9%) (World Wide Web Technology Surveys [W3Techs], 2021).

[65] A recent study (Fu 2019), conducted as to examine how and why multilingual Internet users, focusing on Chinese-English bilinguals, search for information in different languages, found that both linguistic and cultural/social factors are reasons behind code-switching behaviours in seeking information online.

9.2.3. English-language vs. Italian-language TV content: Students' preferences towards subtitles, captions and dubbing

The results presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 have already been discussed throughout Chapter 9.1.3. for the students' preferences regarding watching English-language audio-visual content with the aid of subtitles, captions, no subtitles or with mother-tongue dubbing. The charts also present the same results with respect to the Italian language.

While less than half of the students opted for reading Croatian subtitles while watching English-language movies, 73% of students (N = 232) stated they prefer having their mother-tongue subtitles available when watching Italian movies. It remains unclear why 17% of students (N = 56) chose none of the provided options and can perhaps be interpreted as their indifference on the matter. What is clear is that, in comparison to the findings relating to the English language, a very low number of students are willing to watch Italian audio-visual material with no subtitles or Italian captions.

In much the same way, quite differently to what was concluded with students' attitudes towards dubbing in the case of English-language movies, one third of the sample (N = 105, 33%) was in favour of Italian-spoken movies being dubbed into Croatian as to enhance comprehension, and another 23% (N = 73) remained indifferent on the matter. The latter are somewhat unexpected results, as it is a common belief that Croatian viewers frown upon dubbing and that, just as in other countries (see Koolstra et al. 2002; Kilborn, 1993), children and adolescents are accustomed to the translation practice used in their country.

What can be concluded from such results is that dubbing is still regarded as an unnecessary means of translation for TV or cinema content coming from English-speaking countries, but such opinions are not necessarily valid when the original language is a language other than English. These findings can also be seen, once more, as highlighting and proving the special status that the English language enjoys in a Croatian setting.

9.2.4. Out-of-school EFL or IFL acquisition vs. formal EFL or IFL school education: students' attitudes

In order to be able to compare their views and perceptions on the influences of incidental EFL and IFL exposure, as well as the effects of their formal EFL and IFL school tuition, students completing the questionnaire about the Italian language were also asked to rate whether informal exposure via the media or formal lessons have had more influence on their present IFL skills.

The results show the drastically different perspective students have regarding the sources of their IFL as opposed to their EFL knowledge. As already described in Chapter 9.1.4., 67% (N = 245) of the English-language sample of students claimed to have acquired the English language mainly in contact with the media, while only 5% (N = 17) stated having done so with the Italian language. In fact, most students (N = 269, 85%) confirmed having learned Italian solely through formal tuition. A small number of students additionally highlighted other sources which notably contributed to their Italian-language competence: the home environment, their nuclear or extended family (N = 5); time spent in Italy (N = 3); communicating with friends who are native speakers (N = 2); with the help of "similar Croatian words" (N = 1); through the language-learning application *Duolingo* (N = 1); via Italian TV series or movies (N = 2); at foreign language schools (N = 1). However, most of the additional sources do not concern Italian-language media exposure.

In addition to the latter findings, throughout Table 3 we are able to observe students' opinions on whether some of the given media-related activities, or social situations, have had an impact on the widening of their EFL or IFL vocabulary. The media which students rated as having an impact on their IFL vocabulary are found to be music and movies, which were rated as having a high (4 on a Likert-type scale) and very high (5) impact by, respectively, 17% and 16% of the sample. Regardless of how poorly they rated social media's influence altogether, some students pointed out *Instagram* (N = 60), *Facebook* (N = 22) and *YouTube* (N = 9) as providing input with regard to the Italian language. *Google Translate* was also mentioned (N = 3) as a useful Italian-language learning tool. However, traveling abroad, to visit Italy, was given a high rating by even more students (19%) than any of the media in question. Once again, this shows that students in Croatia perceive Italian

as a language more likely to be picked up on vacation than via the media, which is in total contrast to how they view the English language.

As is the case with many of the Italian-language media-related activities explored throughout Chapters 9.2.1. and 9.2.2., here also, more than half of the students rated each of the media and out-of-school contexts, save music and movies, as having no impact on their IFL vocabulary. Moreover, regardless of how highly they rated the impact of media towards their Italian vocabulary knowledge, Mann-Whitney tests confirmed that a significantly stronger effect on their EFL vocabulary is, in the students' opinion, exercised by the influence of English-language media.

The latter results are valuable as they show students' awareness of the influence their frequent use of the English language outside formal education might have on their general EFL acquisition process and, ultimately their EFL competence levels. Furthermore, in comparison, the results also show students' awareness of the lack of such an "external" influence for the Italian language.

In conclusion, a very low number of students pointed to external factors, be it the media or background factors such as the home environment or travel abroad, as having contributed to their Italian-language competence. Such findings can be taken as evidence that at present, in the context of the city of Split and its surroundings, the Italian language can be defined as a *foreign language* - learnt exclusively or mostly in artificial environments by non-native speakers for the purpose of reaching a level of competence in the given language, as described in Chapter 2.1. This largely differentiates it from the status of both partially official and locally used language that it used to enjoy in this region for centuries, and seemingly up to some decades ago (*see Chapter 4*). What is more, this certainly sets it apart from how the English language is nowadays used and perceived. While it is a non-native and non-official language in this location, English is available to be acquired on a daily basis, in what we could now define as naturalistic settings, as media helps it to become omnipresent and helps it to affirm its status of "second language"- acquired naturally *(see Chapter 3),* in a community where its presence has become commonplace.

9.2.5. English-language and Italian-language media exposure for female vs. male students

The results discussed up to the present point have not taken into account the gender of the students. However, for some of the questions raised by this study, gender does bear some consequence for the results which regard the total sample, or more precisely samples of students who responded to questionnaires about either of the two languages, as the number of female respondents outweighs the number of male participants.

9.2.5.1. Female vs. male English-language media exposure

In the English-language sample the girls (N = 228) make up the majority of the sample, as the boys (N = 135) form just over one third of the total sample (N = 363). In the total Italian-language sample (N = 316), the number of female participants (N = 220) is more than double the number of the male participants (N = 96). Since one gender outnumbers the other, it is easy to conclude the girls' responses had more impact on the overall results. It was therefore necessary to further analyse the responses of both female and male respondents and compare them in order to check whether gender is responsible for the results regarding some media-involved activity preferences.

This chapter will relate and discuss the results concerning the ways male and female students are exposed to media in both the English and the Italian language.

Table 4. Students' self-rating of their engagement in English language-related activities in non-institutional contexts, for both male (N = 135) and female (N = 228) respondents. (Total N=363).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Movies – Croatian TV with subtitles	M	9 (7)	13 (10)	25 (19)	26 (19)	62 (46)	0.121
	F	8 (4)	20 (9)	35 (15)	44 (19)	121 (53)	
Movies – satellite channels	M	41 (30)	14 (10)	23 (17)	21 (16)	36 (27)	0.140
	F	60 (26)	21 (9)	33 (15)	35 (15)	79 (35)	
Movies – downloading / streaming via Internet	M	5 (4)	5 (4)	12 (9)	25 (19)	88 (65)	**0.028**
	F	4 (2)	13 (6)	15 (7)	20 (9)	176 (77)	
Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.	M	13 (10)	14 (10)	19 (14)	17 (13)	72 (53)	**0.005**
	F	17 (8)	11 (5)	21 (9)	24 (11)	155 (68)	
Music via radio, TV	M	51 (38)	24 (18)	16 (12)	22 (16)	22 (16)	**<0.001**
	F	49 (22)	32 (14)	36 (16)	45 (20)	66 (29)	
Music via Internet	M	12 (9)	10 (7)	13 (10)	18 (13)	82 (61)	**<0.001**
	F	9 (4)	2 (1)	15 (7)	20 (9)	182 (80)	
Communication with friends and family	M	20 (15)	36 (27)	37 (27)	24 (18)	18 (13)	**<0.001**
	F	16 (7)	39 (17)	64 (28)	53 (23)	56 (25)	
Video games	M	28 (21)	16 (12)	9 (7)	13 (10)	69 (51)	**<0.001**
	F	134 (59)	33 (15)	17 (8)	17 (8)	27 (12)	
Reading news portals / Internet blogs, etc.	M	43 (32)	31 (23)	25 (19)	20 (15)	16 (12)	**0.011**
	F	51 (22)	46 (20)	46 (20)	42 (18)	43 (19)	
Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs /	M	63 (47)	22 (16)	20 (15)	12 (9)	18 (13)	0.612
	F	105 (46)	32 (14)	29 (13)	26 (11)	36 (16)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

Table 4 shows both male and female students' self-rated engagement in English language-related activities in non-institutional contexts. Mann Whitney tests were conducted to show a statistically significant difference in the results regarding students' engagement in most media, where female students revealed being more interested and active in watching EL audio-visual content via the

Internet; listening to EL music altogether, be it online, on the radio or on audio formats; as well as reading online news or blogs written in the English language. Girls also gave a higher rating of the frequency with which they use this language in their communication with friends, family or tourists - other sources of potential incidental EFL acquisition which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.3.9. by discussing their relation to students' EFL competences.

On the other hand, as was expected from previous studies (see e.g., Sundqvist 2009; Sylvén 2004 as reported in Sundqvist 2009; Ivars Olmedo 2015; Brodarić Šegvić 2019b) and experience, the male part of the sample showed a significantly higher interest in playing video games with English-language content, with more than half of them (61%) confirming they do so very regularly or on a daily basis, while 59% of female participants claimed never to have played a video game with English-language content.

To conclude, the engagement in English-language media out of the classroom walls is higher for female students for all the aforementioned activities, except one: playing video games. As in many other previous studies, the present research also proves male students are significantly more inclined towards playing video games. Consequently, this activity will be separately taken into consideration for the male sample when addressing the possible incidental English-learning effects it may have (*see Chapter 9.3.4.*).

Table 5. Students' self-rating of their engagement in browsing diverse content on the Internet involving the use of the English language, for both female (N = 228) and male (N = 135) participants.

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Sports	M	19 (14)	13 (10)	17 (13)	22 (16)	64 (48)	**<0.001**
	F	87 (38)	48 (21)	44 (19)	30 (13)	19 (8)	
Fashion	M	78 (58)	29 (22)	15 (11)	4 (3)	9 (7)	**<0.001**
	F	23 (10)	13 (6)	40 (18)	58 (25)	94 (41)	
Music	M	12 (9)	7 (5)	15 (11)	40 (30)	61 (45)	**<0.001**
	F	4 (2)	7 (3)	16 (7)	23 (10)	178 (78)	
Daily News	M	32 (24)	26 (19)	40 (30)	25 (19)	12 (9)	0.164
	F	35 (15)	57 (25)	60 (26)	49 (22)	27 (12)	
Politics	M	68 (50)	29 (22)	26 (19)	7 (5)	5 (4)	**<0.001**
	F	155 (68)	47 (21)	20 (9)	5 (2)	1 (0)	
Cuisine	M	74 (55)	28 (21)	12 (9)	12 (9)	9 (7)	**0.001**
	F	81 (36)	50 (22)	54 (24)	30 (13)	13 (6)	
Culture / Arts	M	58 (43)	42 (31)	22 (16)	7 (5)	6 (4)	**0.002**
	F	79 (35)	48 (21)	48 (21)	30 (13)	23 (10)	
Gossip News	M	89 (66)	18 (13)	17 (13)	5 (4)	6 (4)	**<0.001**
	F	86 (38)	27 (12)	36 (16)	31 (14)	48 (21)	
Crime News	M	88 (65)	19 (14)	14 (10)	7 (5)	7 (5)	0.992
	F	147 (65)	36 (16)	22 (10)	16 (7)	7 (3)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

Along the same lines as above, Table 5 allows us to observe the differences in the results of girls and boys in terms of the content they seek for on the Internet in the English language. It shows that gender creates a significant difference in the results relating to all fields except for daily news and crime news (Mann Whitney test, $P < 0.01$). The fields which are found to be more popular with the female population of students are *fashion*, *music*, *cuisine*, *arts* and *culture* as well as *gossip news*. With fashion in particular the difference in engagement is considerable, with 41% of girls stating they google fashion news in English or on English-language websites *every day*, and another 25% of them stating they do so nearly as often, while 58% of boys claimed they have *never* done so.

Such a striking difference between gender interests is also present for the category of *sports*, where 48% of boys follow English-language sports news on a daily basis, while 59% of female students never or nearly *never* do so. Political news, provided in the English language, a topic which did not result popular altogether, also proved to be significantly more interesting to the male sample.

Table 6. Ratings of English-language activities' impact on students' FL incidental vocabulary acquisition, for both male (N = 135) and female (N = 228) participants (1 = I have never acquired FL words this way; 5 = I have acquired a great number of FL words this way).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					**P****
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Music	M	12 (9)	14 (10)	28 (21)	26 (19)	55 (41)	**0.003**
	F	5 (2)	15 (7)	32 (14)	61 (27)	115 (50)	
Movies / TV	M	4 (3)	7 (5)	20 (15)	28 (21)	76 (56)	**0.026**
	F	4 (2)	9 (4)	15 (7)	49 (22)	151 (66)	
Video games	M	16 (12)	11 (8)	18 (13)	20 (15)	70 (52)	**<0.001**
	F	106 (47)	48 (21)	31 (14)	25 (11)	18 (8)	
Social Media	M	21 (16)	11 (8)	23 (17)	37 (27)	43 (32)	**<0.001**
	F	16 (7)	4 (2)	36 (16)	65 (29)	107 (47)	
Websites / Portals	M	56 (42)	25 (19)	23 (17)	18 (13)	13 (10)	0.482
	F	82 (36)	42 (19)	56 (25)	27 (12)	20 (9)	
Travel Abroad	M	58 (43)	21 (16)	27 (20)	13 (10)	16 (12)	**0.005**
	F	65 (29)	47 (21)	37 (16)	38 (17)	41 (18)	
With family / friends	M	34 (25)	44 (33)	29 (22)	16 (12)	12 (9)	**<0.001**
	F	32 (14)	53 (23)	71 (31)	39 (17)	33 (15)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

Finally, Table 6 shows how highly female and male students rated the impact that different out-of-school English-language activities have on their EFL vocabulary acquisition. All media, apart from *websites and Internet portals*, had significantly different ratings from male as compared to female students, as well as contexts such as travelling abroad and communicating with friends and family (Mann-Whitney test, $P<0.01$). Specifically, girls assigned a higher value to the impact of *music*,

movies and *social media*[66]. In fact, close to or more than 50% of the female sample gave the highest possible rating (5 on a Likert-type scale) to music, movies and social media, claiming such media exposure had an extremely valuable influence on their EFL vocabulary knowledge. Conversely, more than 50% of the male sample deemed *video games* to have had a powerful impact on their EFL vocabulary, a rating that proved to be significantly higher than that of the female sample who did not find video games to have had any impact on their English word stock, for most of them, as previously discussed in this chapter, stated mostly never spending time playing video games.

9.2.5.2. Female vs. male Italian-language media exposure

The results pertaining to each gender's preferences in using Italian-language media also showed some significant differences which will be discussed in brief. Even though, as analysed throughout Chapters 9.2.1. – 9.2.4., the engagement in Italian-language media is altogether extremely low when compared to that of English-language media, the comparison of responses according to gender shows that girls are significantly (Mann Whitney, $P<0.01$) more prone to watching Italian movies on Croatian television and with subtitles, listening to Italian music on their CDs or MP3 players, as well as downloading Italian music and movies from the Internet (*see Table 7*). For all the other activities, the results are approximately equally low for both genders.

[66] Aside from media-related activities, female respondents also assigned higher values than male students to the impact of non-institutional contexts such as travelling abroad and communication with friends and family.

Table 7. Students' self-rating of their engagement in Italian language-related activities in non-institutional contexts, for both male (N = 96) and female (N = 220) respondents. (Total N=316).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Movies – Croatian TV with subtitles	M	48 (50)	27 (28)	7 (7)	6 (6)	8 (8)	**0.025**
	F	84 (38)	60 (27)	26 (12)	28 (13)	22 (10)	
Movies – satellite channels	M	80 (83)	12 (13)	1 (1)	2 (2)	1 (1)	0.157
	F	169 (77)	29 (13)	11 (5)	6 (3)	5 (2)	
Movies – downloading / streaming via Internet	M	61 (64)	17 (18)	10 (10)	3 (3)	5 (5)	**0.009**
	F	109 (50)	42 (19)	26 (12)	17 (8)	26 (12)	
Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.	M	64 (67)	21 (22)	6 (6)	2 (2)	3 (3)	**<0.001**
	F	103 (47)	49 (22)	26 (12)	18 (8)	24 (11)	
Music via radio, TV	M	73 (76)	12 (13)	6 (6)	1 (1)	4 (4)	0.621
	F	160 (73)	37 (17)	10 (5)	8 (4)	5 (2)	
Music via Internet	M	60 (63)	20 (21)	6 (6)	3 (3)	7 (7)	**<0.001**
	F	90 (41)	51 (23)	40 (18)	14 (6)	25 (11)	
Communication with friends and family	M	54 (56)	26 (27)	10 (10)	3 (3)	3 (3)	0.244
	F	110 (50)	58 (26)	41 (19)	8 (4)	3 (1)	
Video games	M	85 (89)	5 (5)	2 (2)	2 (2)	2 (2)	0.074
	F	207 (94)	10 (5)	2 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)	
Reading news portals / Internet blogs, etc.	M	84 (88)	5 (5)	4 (4)	0 (0)	3 (3)	0.479
	F	198 (90)	12 (6)	5 (2)	4 (2)	1 (1)	
Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs /	M	81 (84)	6 (6)	7 (7)	0 (0)	2 (2)	0.436
	F	192 (87)	18 (8)	5 (2)	2 (1)	3 (1)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

As for the Italian-language content, students generally very rarely browse for on the Internet (*see Table 2)*, the female part of the sample showed a significantly higher interest in *fashion* and *music* (*see Table 8*); whereas 17% of the male sample claimed they very frequently look for *sports* news online in the Italian language, significantly more frequently than girls (Mann-Whitney test,

P<0.001). The latter is also the highest interest that is shown towards Italian-language content altogether.

Table 8. Students' self-rating of their engagement in browsing diverse content on the Internet involving the use of the Italian language, for both female (N = 220) and male (N = 96) participants (Total N=316).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Sports	M	39 (41)	14 (15)	13 (14)	14 (15)	16 (17)	**<0.001**
	F	163 (74)	20 (9)	18 (8)	9 (4)	10 (5)	
Fashion	M	81 (84)	6 (6)	4 (4)	4 (4)	1 (1)	**<0.001**
	F	79 (36)	39 (18)	39 (18)	43 (20)	20 (9)	
Music	M	59 (62)	21 (22)	11 (12)	3 (3)	2 (2)	**<0.001**
	F	80 (36)	55 (25)	43 (20)	20 (9)	22 (10)	
Daily News	M	73 (76)	15 (16)	4 (4)	3 (3)	1 (1)	0.513
	F	175 (80)	27 (12)	11 (5)	5 (2)	2 (1)	
Politics	M	84 (88)	4 (4)	5 (5)	0 (0)	3 (3)	0.086
	F	205 (93)	8 (4)	5 (2)	1 (1)	1 (1)	
Cuisine	M	66 (69)	10 (10)	11 (12)	4 (4)	5 (5)	0.071
	F	123 (56)	42 (19)	33 (15)	8 (4)	14 (6)	
Culture / Arts	M	70 (73)	9 (9)	12 (13)	3 (3)	2 (2)	0.083
	F	136 (62)	38 (17)	27 (12)	14 (6)	5 (2)	
Gossip News	M	89 (93)	5 (5)	1 (1)	0 (0)	1 (1)	0.793
	F	202 (92)	13 (6)	4 (2)	1 (1)	0 (0)	
Crime News	M	91 (95)	2 (2)	0 (0)	3 (3)	0 (0)	0.604
	F	205 (93)	8 (4)	4 (2)	0 (0)	3 (1)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

As for the students' ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on their Italian vocabulary acquisition, male and female responses did vary and show statistically significant differences according to the performed Mann-Whitney tests (*see Table 9*). However, as the overall ratings were altogether low, the only results which may be noteworthy are the fact that approximately 20% of

girls found Italian music (N = 44); Italian movies (N = 41) and visiting Italy (N = 47) to have had a powerful impact on their Italian vocabulary, by rating the media and activities with a 4 or 5 on the Likert-type scale.

Table 9. Ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on students' FL incidental vocabulary acquisition, for both male (N = 96) and female (N = 220) participants (1= I have never acquired FL words this way; 5=I have acquired a great number of FL words this way).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					**P****
Activities with FL-content	**Gender**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Music	M	49 (51)	29 (30)	11 (12)	2 (2)	5 (5)	**<0.001**
	F	74 (34)	57 (26)	45 (21)	25 (11)	19 (9)	
Movies / TV	M	47 (49)	27 (28)	17 (18)	3 (3)	2 (2)	**0.003**
	F	73 (33)	73 (33)	33 (15)	25 (11)	16 (7)	
Video games	M	79 (82)	9 (9)	5 (5)	2 (2)	1 (1)	**0.036**
	F	199 (91)	14 (6)	4 (2)	2 (1)	1 (1)	
Social Media	M	63 (66)	21 (22)	6 (6)	5 (5)	1 (1)	**0.008**
	F	113 (51)	49 (22)	36 (16)	13 (6)	9 (4)	
Websites / Portals	M	81 (84)	8 (8)	4 (4)	3 (3)	0 (0)	0.775
	F	182 (83)	24 (11)	11 (5)	1 (1)	2 (1)	
Travel Abroad	M	58 (60)	17 (18)	9 (9)	10 (10)	2 (2)	**0.029**
	F	109 (50)	36 (16)	28 (13)	31 (14)	16 (7)	
With family / friends	M	51 (53)	23 (24)	12 (13)	8 (8)	2 (2)	0.853
	F	114 (52)	56 (26)	27 (12)	13 (6)	10 (5)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

The findings show that the differences across gender with regard to students' interests in certain topics, as well as the frequency with which they engage in various media, are similar with regard to media content in both languages, but are significantly higher in relation to English-language media, regardless of gender. Furthermore, in comparison with how the students rated the impact of out-of-school activities on their English vocabulary, what needs to be stressed is that the strongest

influence towards their Italian vocabulary was attributed to travel to Italy, by the female part of the sample, and not towards any of the media. The comparisons of these results for one and the other language, once again highlight the students' awareness of the presence and influence of the English language in the media, as well as the absence of such presence by the Italian language, and therefore the lack of such influence and benefits in terms of language acquisition.

9.2.6. English-language and Italian-language media exposure for general-education vs. vocational students

9.2.6.1. English-language media exposure for general-education vs. vocational students

As explained in Chapter 3.3., students who enrol into general-education high schools often have better developed EFL skills than pupils who enrol in vocational-high schools. The former are usually students who end primary education with higher altogether grades, and as already mentioned earlier, once enrolled into general-education secondary schools, attend EFL lessons at a higher level than vocational students. In fact, the respondents from general-education schools report altogether better total EFL competence [C = 4.5 (Q = 3.8 – 4.8)] than the students of vocational schools [C = 3.5 (Q = 2.8 – 4.5)].

Table 10. Students' self-rating of their engagement in English language-related activities in non-institutional contexts, for both general-education (N = 254) and vocational-school (N = 109) respondents. (Total N=363).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Movies – Croatian TV with subtitles	General-education	10 (4)	29 (11)	39 (15)	53 (21)	123 (48)	0.320
	Vocational	7 (6)	4 (4)	21 (19)	17 (16)	60 (55)	
Movies – satellite channels	General-education	64 (25)	25 (10)	43 (17)	40 (16)	82 (32)	0.262
	Vocational	37 (34)	10 (9)	13 (12)	16 (15)	33 (30)	
Movies – downloading / streaming via Internet	General-education	4 (2)	11 (4)	17 (7)	31 (12)	191 (75)	0.071
	Vocational	5 (5)	7 (6)	10 (9)	14 (13)	73 (67)	
Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.	General-education	22 (9)	14 (6)	24 (9)	28 (11)	166 (65)	0.109
	Vocational	8 (7)	11 (10)	16 (15)	13 (12)	61 (56)	
Music via radio, TV	General-education	64 (25)	44 (17)	37 (15)	46 (18)	63 (25)	0.453
	Vocational	36 (33)	12 (11)	15 (14)	21 (19)	25 (23)	
Music via Internet	General-education	9 (4)	7 (3)	21 (8)	21 (8)	196 (77)	**0.003**
	Vocational	12 (11)	5 (5)	7 (6)	17 (16)	68 (62)	
Communication with friends and family	General-education	16 (6)	51 (20)	64 (25)	61 (24)	62 (24)	**<0.001**
	Vocational	20 (18)	24 (22)	37 (34)	16 (15)	12 (11)	
Video games	General-education	106 (42)	39 (15)	12 (5)	25 (10)	72 (28)	0.099
	Vocational	56 (51)	10 (9)	14 (13)	5 (5)	24 (22)	
Reading news portals / Internet blogs, etc.	General-education	47 (19)	51 (20)	53 (21)	56 (22)	47 (19)	**<0.001**
	Vocational	47 (43)	26 (24)	18 (17)	6 (6)	12 (11)	
Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs	General-education	105 (41)	37 (15)	42 (17)	28 (11)	42 (17)	**0.004**
	Vocational	63 (58)	17 (16)	7 (6)	10 (9)	12 (11)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

The figures presented in Table 10 show that general-education students are statistically significantly more inclined to listening to English-language music via Internet platforms (Mann-Whitney, $P<0.001$), as well as reading English-language articles or blogs online ($P<0.001$), and writing in English to comment or discuss content online ($P<0.01$). Vocational students also showed statistically less engagement in verbal communication in English with friends, family or tourists outside the school environment ($P<0.001$).

The findings described in Chapter 9.1.1. concluded that reading English texts on portal and blogs, as well as commenting and discussing online by typing in English, are media-involved activities that proved to be the least popular among high school students altogether. The results presented here show that, in fact, such use of English-language media is statistically more likely to be undertaken by general-education students. Whether this is due to a lower EFL competence that refrains vocational students to equally engage in English-language out-of-school activities that require more linguistic knowledge and effort on their part, or whether frequent reading and writing online are partially responsible for general-education students' higher EFL competences, remains open to speculation. Vocational students' lower engagement in verbal English-language communication beyond the classroom walls could also be attributed to the aforementioned reasons, and raises the same doubts with regard to interpretation.

Table 11. Students' self-rating of their engagement in browsing diverse content on the Internet involving the use of the English language, for both general-education (N = 254) and vocational-school (N = 109) respondents. (Total N=363).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Sports	General-education	69 (27)	45 (18)	45 (18)	33 (13)	62 (24)	0.313
	Vocational	37 (34)	16 (15)	16 (15)	19 (17)	21 (19)	
Fashion	General-education	68 (27)	29 (11)	39 (15)	46 (18)	72 (28)	0.588
	Vocational	33 (30)	13 (12)	16 (15)	16 (15)	31 (28)	
Music	General-education	11 (4)	9 (4)	20 (8)	40 (16)	174 (69)	0.128
	Vocational	5 (5)	5 (5)	11 (10)	23 (21)	65 (60)	
Daily News	General-education	35 (14)	55 (22)	81 (32)	56 (22)	27 (11)	**0.004**
	Vocational	32 (29)	28 (26)	19 (17)	18 (17)	12 (11)	
Politics	General-education	141 (56)	62 (24)	38 (15)	8 (3)	5 (2)	**0.001**
	Vocational	82 (75)	14 (13)	8 (7)	4 (4)	1 (1)	
Cuisine	General-education	109 (43)	57 (22)	47 (19)	29 (11)	12 (5)	0.499
	Vocational	46 (42)	21 (19)	19 (17)	13 (12)	10 (9)	
Culture / Arts	General-education	82 (32)	63 (25)	57 (22)	28 (11)	24 (9)	**<0.001**
	Vocational	50 (51)	27 (25)	13 (12)	9 (8)	5 (5)	
Gossip News	General-education	105 (41)	38 (15)	44 (17)	28 (11)	39 (15)	**0.002**
	Vocational	70 (44)	7 (6)	9 (8)	8 (7)	15 (14)	
Crime News	General-education	156 (61)	42 (17)	31 (12)	18 (7)	7 (3)	0.079
	Vocational	79 (73)	13 (12)	5 (5)	5 (5)	7 (6)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

Students' interests across school-types *(see Table 11)* also vary significantly for the topics of culture and arts (P<0.001), politics, daily news as well as gossip news (P<0.01), all of which general-education students showed more interest for (Mann-Whitney tests). Such results can easily

be connected to the findings just stated above: the students who attend general-education schools are more prone to reading longer and more complicated texts in English online, and are therefore most likely to engage in finding online information regarding politics or culture and arts. The same is also true for daily and gossip news which can be provided online in both textual or audio-visual forms. The results might also imply that general-education students are more likely to profit from their extramural media-exposure in terms of a wider range of vocabulary and expressions common in the fields of politics, culture and other vocabulary often found in daily or gossip news articles. However, these matters are yet to be discussed in Chapter 9.3.6.

Finally, the results presented in Table 12 show that, aside from music and video games, the ratings of all the other media and English-language out-of-school activities have a statistically higher impact on the EFL vocabulary knowledge of general-educations students than that of vocational students, which, in line with the other results presented in this chapter, can be interpreted as a consequence of vocational students' lower engagement with most English-language media and frequency of English-language use outside the classroom.

Table 12. Ratings of English-language activities' impact on students' FL incidental vocabulary acquisition, for both general-education (N = 254) and vocational-school (N = 109) respondents (1= I have never acquired FL words this way; 5=I have acquired a great number of FL words this way).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Music	General-education	12 (5)	18 (7)	42 (17)	63 (25)	119 (47)	0.762
	Vocational	5 (5)	11 (10)	18 (17)	24 (22)	51 (47)	
Movies / TV	General-education	2 (1)	9 (4)	18 (7)	56 (22)	169 (67)	**0.002**
	Vocational	6 (6)	7 (6)	17 (16)	21 (19)	58 (53)	
Video games	General-education	80 (32)	48 (19)	34 (13)	30 (12)	62 (24)	0.660
	Vocational	42 (39)	11 (10)	15 (14)	15 (14)	26 (24)	
Social Media	General-education	18 (7)	11 (4)	42 (17)	69 (27)	114 (45)	**0.013**
	Vocational	19 (17)	4 (4)	17 (16)	33 (30)	36 (33)	
Websites / Portals	General-education	80 (32)	53 (21)	61 (24)	33 (13)	26 (10)	**0.001**
	Vocational	58 (53)	14 (13)	18 (17)	12 (11)	7 (6)	
Travel Abroad	General-education	77 (30)	47 (19)	45 (18)	39 (15)	46 (18)	**0.008**
	Vocational	46 (42)	21 (19)	19 (17)	12 (11)	11 (10)	
With family / friends	General-education	38 (15)	67 (27)	74 (29)	41 (16)	34 (13)	**0.020**
	Vocational	28 (26)	30 (28)	26 (24)	14 (13)	11 (10)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

9.2.6.2. Italian-language media exposure for general-education vs. vocational students

As for the students' extramural use of the Italian language, Table 13 and 14 show that regardless of whether students were enrolled in general-education or vocational schools, a very low percentage claimed undertaking any of the Italian-involved activities in their free time. The only statistically significant correlations which show that general-education students are more likely to engage in spoken communication in Italian or in writing in this language online *(see Table 13)* are also hard to interpret as only 2% (writing online) an 6% (spoken communication) of general-education students claimed they do so very often (by rating these activities with 4 or 5 on Likert-type scales).

Table 13. Students' self-rating of their engagement in Italian language-related activities in non-institutional contexts, for both general-education (N = 206) and vocational-school (N = 110) respondents. (Total N=316).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Movies – Croatian TV with subtitles	General-education	75 (36)	64 (31)	27 (13)	20 (10)	20 (10)	0.058
	Vocational	57 (52)	23 (21)	6 (6)	14 (13)	10 (9)	
Movies – satellite channels	General-education	160 (78)	29 (14)	9 (4)	3 (2)	5 (2)	0.544
	Vocational	89 (81)	12 (11)	3 (3)	5 (5)	1 (1)	
Movies – downloading / streaming via Internet	General-education	106 (52)	41 (20)	26 (13)	13 (6)	20 (10)	0.359
	Vocational	64 (58)	18 (16)	10 (9)	7 (6)	11 (10)	
Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.	General-education	101 (49)	53 (26)	22 (11)	12 (6)	18 (9)	0.180
	Vocational	66 (60)	17 (16)	10 (9)	8 (7)	9 (8)	
Music via radio, TV	General-education	151 (73)	35 (17)	9 (4)	6 (3)	5 (2)	0.949
	Vocational	82 (75)	14 (13)	7 (6)	3 (3)	4 (4)	
Music via Internet	General-education	86 (42)	55 (27)	34 (17)	13 (6)	18 (9)	0.057
	Vocational	64 (58)	16 (15)	12 (11)	4 (4)	14 (13)	
Communication with friends and family	General-education	96 (47)	65 (32)	33 (16)	9 (4)	3 (2)	**0.045**
	Vocational	68 (62)	19 (17)	18 (16)	2 (2)	3 (3)	
Video games	General-education	193 (94)	11 (5)	2 (1)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.198
	Vocational	99 (90)	4 (4)	2 (2)	3 (3)	2 (2)	
Reading news portals / Internet blogs, etc.	General-education	182 (88)	13 (6)	6 (3)	4 (2)	1 (1)	0.523
	Vocational	100 (91)	4 (4)	3 (3)	0 (0)	3 (3)	
Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs /	General-education	186 (90)	12 (6)	6 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	**0.005**
	Vocational	87 (79)	12 (11)	6 (6)	1 (1)	4 (4)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

At the same time, the only result that indicates a statistically significant difference among the two groups regarding their interest in Italian topics online is in the field of sports *(see Table 14)*. Interestingly, this is the only result related to comparisons between school types where vocational school students showed a higher interest than general-education students (Mann-Whitney, $P<0.01$). However, as sports are a topic which resulted altogether more interesting to the male part of the sample, this result could be due to the higher percentage of male students in the part of the sample covering vocational schools, in comparison to that of male students from general-education schools[67].

[67] Out of the total sample of students who completed the Italian language questionnaire (N = 316), 53 are male and 143 female students enroled in different general-education schools, while another 43 male and 77 female students were from vocational high schools. While the number of boys is lower in the part of the sample from vocational schools, its percentage is higher than in general-education schools when compared to the number of girls.

Table 14. Students' self-rating of their engagement in browsing diverse content on the Internet involving the use of the Italian language, for both general-education (N = 206) and vocational-school (N = 110) respondents. (Total N=316).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					P**
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**never**	**rarely**	**sometimes**	**often**	**regularly**	
Sports	General-education	139 (68)	24 (12)	19 (9)	15 (7)	9 (4)	**0.018**
	Vocational	63 (57)	10 (9)	12 (11)	8 (7)	17 (16)	
Fashion	General-education	96 (47)	37 (18)	31 (15)	29 (14)	13 (6)	0.296
	Vocational	64 (58)	8 (7)	12 (11)	18 (16)	8 (7)	
Music	General-education	84 (41)	54 (26)	40 (19)	14 (7)	14 (7)	0.331
	Vocational	55 (50)	22 (20)	14 (13)	9 (8)	10 (9)	
Daily News	General-education	159 (77)	29 (14)	11 (5)	5 (2)	2 (1)	0.454
	Vocational	89 (81)	13 (12)	4 (4)	3 (3)	1 (1)	
Politics	General-education	186 (90)	9 (4)	7 (3)	1 (1)	3 (2)	0.312
	Vocational	103 (94)	3 (3)	3 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)	
Cuisine	General-education	130 (63)	34 (17)	26 (13)	7 (3)	9 (4)	0.053
	Vocational	59 (54)	18 (16)	18 (16)	5 (5)	10 (9)	
Culture / Arts	General-education	129 (63)	33 (16)	24 (12)	14 (7)	6 (3)	0.154
	Vocational	77 (70)	14 (13)	15 (14)	3 (3)	1 (1)	
Gossip News	General-education	187 (91)	15 (7)	4 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	0.261
	Vocational	104 (95)	3 (3)	1 (1)	1 (1)	1 (1)	
Crime News	General-education	196 (95)	6 (3)	3 (2)	1 (1)	0 (0)	0.127
	Vocational	100 (91)	4 (4)	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

Table 15 shows that there are mostly no differences in general-education and vocational students' ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on their IFL vocabularies, which are significant only

in terms of the influence of Italian music and travelling to Italy, as an example of a context unrelated to media-exposure. As for the differences shown for playing video games, such a low number of students altogether rated this activity highly (N = 6), that it does not seem relevant to comment on whether it is a media that is more likely to bring learning benefits to general-education or vocational students.

Table 15. Ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on students' FL incidental vocabulary acquisition, for both general-education (N = 206) and vocational-school (N = 110) respondents (1= I have never acquired FL words this way; 5=I have acquired a great number of FL words this way).

		Frequencies* [N (%)]					**P****
Activities with FL-content	**School type**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Music	General-education	64 (31)	64 (31)	39 (19)	22 (11)	17 (8)	**0.001**
	Vocational	59 (54)	22 (20)	17 (16)	5 (5)	7 (6)	
Movies / TV	General-education	73 (35)	65 (32)	36 (18)	20 (10)	12 (6)	0.148
	Vocational	47 (43)	35 (32)	14 (13)	8 (7)	6 (6)	
Video games	General-education	188 (91)	11 (5)	6 (3)	0 (0)	1 (1)	**0.013**
	Vocational	90 (82)	12 (11)	3 (3)	4 (4)	1 (1)	
Social Media	General-education	112 (54)	51 (25)	26 (13)	14 (7)	3 (2)	0.884
	Vocational	64 (58)	19 (17)	16 (15)	4 (4)	7 (6)	
Websites / Portals	General-education	171 (83)	24 (12)	7 (3)	3 (2)	1 (1)	0.995
	Vocational	92 (84)	8 (7)	8 (7)	1 (1)	1 (1)	
Travel Abroad	General-education	86 (42)	44 (21)	29 (14)	33 (16)	14 (7)	**<0.001**
	Vocational	81 (74)	9 (8)	8 (7)	8 (7)	4 (4)	
With family / friends	General-education	98 (48)	59 (29)	27 (13)	13 (6)	9 (4)	0.062
	Vocational	67 (61)	20 (18)	12 (11)	8 (7)	3 (3)	

** Mann- Whitney test

NOTE: Due to rounding, the sum of the separate percentage figures may not correspond with the total 100%.

All the results presented and discussed so far are related exclusively to students out-of-school media exposure for English, as well as for the Italian language. What follows in the upcoming chapters are the descriptions and discussions on findings which connect students' media exposure to their EFL and IFL competences, as to reach conclusions on the impact specific media might have on different language competences, as well as come to conclusions about the significance informal media exposure in its total may have on English and Italian language acquisition, in comparison to what formal EFL and IFL tuition provide.

9.3. English-language media and students' EFL competences

The present chapter will attempt to answer all the questions of *Research question 3* (*see Chapter 7.1.*), and will therefore thoroughly discuss the interdependence of English-language media exposure the students reported and their EFL competence, by focusing on specific media separately, and presenting the results that showed a significant relationship between specific media and various language skills – speaking, listening, reading, writing, as well as students' vocabulary and grammar competences.

Firstly, an insight into the levels of each EFL skill and competence reported by the present sample will be presented in Chapter 9.3.1. Secondly, throughout Chapters 9.3.2. – 9.3.6. English-language media-exposure will be explored by observing and discussing the connections between the particular media whose exposure to resulted significantly related to specific EFL competences. Secondly, the first six sections of this chapter will also cover which specific English-language media-contents the students search for on the Internet are related to which particular EFL competence, and finally, the relationship between each EFL competence and students' preferences in terms of their preferred modes of watching English-language audio-visual content, as well as their attitudes towards Croatian dubbing will also be interpreted.

Following the discussions on the correlations of media exposure and specific EFL competences, Chapters 9.3.7. - 9.3.9. will approach the results regarding students' total EFL competences and the comparison of its relationship to media exposure as opposed to the duration and types of their

formal EFL school education, as well as other background factors, such as students' informal use of this language among friends and/or family.

9.3.1. An overview of the sample's EFL competence levels

Before viewing how the results described in the previous chapters relate to students' EFL competences, I wish to provide a summary of specific characteristics of the English-language sample, in terms of how they rated each of their EFL competences.

Firstly, over half of the students (N = 195, 54%) rated their EFL speaking skills with the highest possible grade provided on the Likert-type scale, with another 71 students (20%) rating it with a 4 out of 5. It is important to stress that, regardless of the type of school they were attending, their gender, their years of formal EFL tuition as well as their English-language media exposure, 266 students (74%) of the sample of high-school students from Split, Croatia, regarded their English-speaking skills as excellent or very good. As to gain more insight into this matter, it would be interesting to see whether such confidence related to one's own proficiency with regard to this productive language skill would be equal, similar, or completely distinct for EFL high school students in other European countries.

The same is true for the students' listening and reading skills, both rated as excellent or very good by as many as 317 (87%) and, respectively 296 (82%) students of the sample. These results seem to show Croatian teenagers' positive attitudes towards the English language and their positive perspective on the ways they are able to use this language receptively, by reading various texts and listening to both teachers and native speakers inside or outside the school environment.

With regard to students' writing skills, the percentage of students who assessed their English-language writing abilities as very high was, however, lower (N = 249, 68%) then for the other skills. As mentioned previously (*see Chapter 6.)* and discussed by many scholars (see e.g., Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2008; Oxford and Crookall 1990), mere exposure to a language does not necessarily provide enough input needed for the improvement of productive skills, especially writing. If we are to link, as the present study attempts to, an above-average EFL proficiency of many Croatian teenagers to their consumption of English-language media, I must once again

mention the dominant audio-component (see Brodarić Šegvić 2019a: 86) of most media the students regularly engage in, in order to attempt interpreting why their writing skills seem to be less affected. A lower number of respondents also rated their grammar and vocabulary knowledge and competence highly, with 219 (60%) of them claiming to have a very good or excellent knowledge or use of English grammar, and 234 students (64%) rating their vocabulary range, knowledge and use as highly developed.

The described percentages regard students' reports of each specific component of language competence, whereas in total, the EFL competence of this sample of students is C = 4.3 (Q = 3.5 – 4.7), which proves most of the students rated their competences as above average and highly developed. The chapters that follow will present and discuss in detail the results of correlations between the levels of EFL competence of high school students and the various media-related activities they engage in out of the school environment.

9.3.2. Watching English-language movies and students' EFL competences

By observing the results, presented in Table 16, of correlations between students' level of EFL competences and the types of media they are exposed to, it is easy to notice that exposure to one type of the media in question turned out not to be significantly related to *any* EFL competences of high school students. Namely, the activity of watching English-language movies or shows on Croatian television, with the aid of mother-tongue subtitles did not prove to be significant in terms of its correlation to the levels of students' EFL speaking, listening, reading, or writing skills, nor did it prove significant in relation to their EFL vocabulary or grammar levels (*see Table 16*). What is more, watching English-language audio-visual content with Croatian subtitles even correlated negatively with all the given language competences. What such results suggest is that the more students watch TV with Croatian subtitles, the lower their EFL competences are. Or, conversely, the higher their EFL competences, the less likely students are to watch English-language movies with Croatian subtitles.

Table 16. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific EFL competences and the English-language media or activities they engage in out of school (N=363).

	Movies– Croatian TV with subtitles	**Movies – satellite channels**	**Movies – download /stream via Internet**	**Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.**	**Music via radio, TV**	**Music via Internet**	**Communication with friend and family**	**Video games**	**Reading news portals/ Internet blogs, etc.**	**Writing comments / discussions on social media / blogs, etc.**
EFL speaking	-0.041 (0.435)	0.241** **(<0.001)**	0.348** **(<0.001)**	0.274** **(<0.001)**	0.231** **(<0.001)**	0.380** **(<0.001)**	0.339** **(<0.001)**	0.133* **(0.011)**	0.340** **(<0.001)**	0.257** **(<0.001)**
EFL listening	-0.059 (0.265)	0.204** **(<0.001)**	0.343** **(<0.001)**	0.304** **(<0.001)**	0.144** **(0.006)**	0.422** **(<0.001)**	0.394** **(<0.001)**	0.150** **(0.004)**	0.302** **(<0.001)**	0.237** **(<0.001)**
EFL reading	-0.083 (0.116)	0.179** **(0.001)**	0.361** **(<0.001)**	0.278** **(<0.001)**	0.123* **(0.019)**	0.369** **(<0.001)**	0.371** **(<0.001)**	0.255** **(<0.001)**	0.314** **(<0.001)**	0.303** **(<0.001)**
EFL writing	-0.021 (0.695)	0.158** **(0.003)**	0.352** **(<0.001)**	0.287** **(<0.001)**	0.165** **(0.002)**	0.411** **(<0.001)**	0.429** **(<0.001)**	0.233** **(<0.001)**	0.392** **(<0.001)**	0.299** **(<0.001)**
EFL grammar	-0.083 (0.116)	0.099 (0.061)	0.319** **(<0.001)**	0.257** **(<0.001)**	0.138** **(0.009)**	0.321** **(<0.001)**	0.349** **(<0.001)**	0.219** **(<0.001)**	0.338** **(<0.001)**	0.296** **(<0.001)**
EFL vocabulary	-0.105* (0.047)	0.189** **(<0.001)**	0.314** **(<0.001)**	0.324** **(<0.001)**	0.214** **(<0.001)**	0.385** **(<0.001)**	0.392** **(<0.001)**	0.241** **(<0.001)**	0.393** **(<0.001)**	0.013** **(<0.001)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

A detailed analysis of students' responses reveals that, with regard to their speaking skills, 50% out of the 97 students who reported having very poor skills when speaking in English, also claimed they watch English-spoken movies with subtitles on Croatian TV every day. Similarly, approximately half (50%) of each group of respondents who gave any rating on the Likert-type scale (ranging from 1 to 5) regarding their EFL listening skills, reading skills, writing skills, as well as their grammar and vocabulary competence, confirmed they enjoy subtitled English movies on Croatian TV each day[68]. This thorough insight into the responses given by the sample in question, provides answers regarding the results of Spearman ρ correlation tests, inasmuch as it demonstrates how the activity of watching original movies with mother-tongue subtitles is in no way connected to the way students rated their own particular EFL competences.

To some extent surprisingly, and unlike many of previously conducted studies (see e.g., Enever 2011; Ivars Olmedo 2015), these findings show that having the opportunity to simply expose oneself, for long amounts of time, to a foreign language via audio-visual content provided along with mother-tongue subtitles, does not in any way entail an improvement of FL skills. Nevertheless, besides the fact that self-report is known to be biased to some extent (Cergol 2011: 64), this conclusion does not imply that subtitles are not beneficial to the language acquisition process altogether, when compared to dubbing practices, but it does highlight that, for many language learners, watching original movies with subtitles cannot be considered the most influential form of informal FL exposure. This conclusion also provides some answers to one of the questions raised regarding students varied levels of EFL competence. Namely, as described throughout Chapter 3.2., Croatian students have the possibility of hearing English on TV, unlike their peers in some other European countries (see Enever 2011; Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2008), however, their competences are usually far from uniform and, as the present results suggest, it is their individual engagement in other types of media that is seemingly more likely to bring about an above average improvement of their language competences. This idea can be seen as being in line with Kuppens's

[68] The only exception being students who reported not having any EFL grammar competence (and rated it with a 1 on a Likert-type scale), out of which only 4 respondents (36%) also reported watching EL movies every day (5 on a Likert-type scale).

(2010: 79) suggestion that linguistic competence gained by watching subtitled television can "lead to further language acquisition" through the use of other FL media, mainly referring to the Internet.

As already indicated and discussed in Chapter 9.1.1. and 9.1.3., nowadays media-consumers have an extended choice in terms of available audio-visual material which, in addition to the regular national TV channels, is also provided via satellite or cable TV, as well as on digital streaming and downloading platforms. The present sample of students reported watching English-language movies, series or shows via satellite or cable less frequently than on Croatian television channels (*see Chapter 9.1.1.),* but the results of Spearman ρ correlation tests show a significant positive correlation between this activity and all students' EFL competence levels except their grammar knowledge (*see Table 16*).

The latter can be interpreted by considering, firstly, the fact that grammar structures are perhaps the hardest language aspect to grasp unintentionally, by watching TV content. In fact, this result concurs with many previous studies. As described in more detail in Chapter 6, early research by Harding and Riley (1986), as well as more recent studies in Croatia and other European countries (see Cergol Kovačević and Kovačević 2015; Van Lommel et al. 2006) all agree that additional motivation, formal instruction, exercise and attention directed to the structures that need to be learned might be necessary, besides mere exposure, for the acquisition of complex, FL grammar rules. Secondly, these correlations can be interpreted by considering the fact that nowadays many cable and satellite channels also provide Croatian subtitles and are therefore not substantially that different from Croatian TV channels when considering the modes with which students are able to watch content in the original language. In fact, as stated earlier, EFL grammar competence levels did not correlate with the frequency of watching English audio-visual material with Croatian subtitles either. However, the fact that frequent engagement in this activity correlates with higher levels of other EFL skills, unlike watching Croatian TV with subtitles, might also imply that watching TV channels via satellite or cable includes content which possibly brings more benefits to EFL competence, or requires a different type of activity such as viewing some channels without the help of written mother-tongue translation.

An analysis of student responses has already confirmed that watching original movies in English is more popular via online streaming and downloading than on available television programmes

(*see Chapter 9.1.1.*). The performed Spearman ρ correlation tests show significant correlations ($P<0.001$) between the frequency of undertaking this online activity and the levels of all students' EFL skills and competences (*see Table 16*). The results pertaining to the present sample of students show that, respectively, over 84% of students who excel at speaking (N = 164), listening (N = 175), reading (N = 168) and writing (N = 116) in English, as well as those who have excellent EFL grammar and vocabulary knowledge, report watching English-language movies on the Internet all the time.

Such a difference in comparison to the same results with regard to watching English movies on Croatian and satellite or cable TV, can only be explained by the fact that, for a lot of their content, digital platforms still only provide same-language captions, in this case English-language captions. The significant correlations of the frequencies with which students engage in watching online English-language movies or series with the reports of their EFL competence levels could be seen as suggesting that this is a mode in which such students acquire most of their language skills. However, what should also be taken into consideration in this interpretation is the fact that, for watching audio-visual content in an original language with the help of same-language captions, or perhaps no captions at all, one must already have a certain level of language competence as to deduct meaning from context, as previous knowledge can help understand new language input (Ellis 1995).

In Chapter 9.1.4. we observed the ratings students gave to particular out-of-school activities in terms of how much they helped them acquire English vocabulary items. The results of Spearman ρ correlation tests show that the students who claim movies have had an important role in their English vocabulary acquisition, also report significantly higher EFL competence levels (*see Table 17).*

Table 17. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific EFL competences and their ratings of English-language activities' impact on their incidental vocabulary acquisition. (N=363).

	Music	**Movies/ TV**	**Video Games**	**Social Media**	**Websites/ portals**	**Travel abroad**	**With family/ Friends**
EFL speaking	0.262** **(<0.001)**	0.389** **(<0.001)**	0.113* **(0.031)**	0.246** **(<0.001)**	0.243** **(<0.001)**	0.080 (0.129)	0.162** **(0.002)**
EFL listening	0.301** **(<0.001)**	0.398** **(<0.001)**	0.148** **(0.005)**	0.254** **(<0.001)**	0.229** **(<0.001)**	0.068 (0.193)	0.136** **(0.009)**
EFL reading	0.231** **(<0.001)**	0.354** **(<0.001)**	0.179** **(0.001)**	0.237** **(<0.001)**	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.058 (0.267)	0.127* **(0.016)**
EFL writing	0.238** **(<0.001)**	0.374** **(<0.001)**	0.198** **(<0.001)**	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.251** **(<0.001)**	0.086 (0.102)	0.185** **(<0.001)**
EFL grammar	0.196** **(<0.001)**	0.337** **(<0.001)**	0.206** **(<0.001)**	0.187** **(<0.001)**	0.227** **(<0.001)**	0.058 (0.271)	0.171** **(0.001)**
EFL vocabulary	0.256** **(<0.001)**	0.412** **(<0.001)**	0.214** **(<0.001)**	0.281** **(<0.001)**	0.295** **(<0.001)**	0.047 (0.373)	0.186** **(<0.001)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

Specifically, the responses of the present sample of students show that, respectively, 194 (85%) and 182 (80%) of the 227 students who rated the influence of movies and TV very highly (5 on a Likert-type scale), are also students who reported excellent or very good EFL speaking skills and writing skills. As for the two receptive language skills, the same is true for 212 (93%) students who

claimed to have excellent EFL listening skills, and 204 (90%) of students who consider their EFL reading skills to be outstanding. Excellent EFL grammar competence and, respectively vocabulary knowledge were reported by 164 (72%) and 180 (79%) of the total of students who reckon TV and movies in the English language have had an extremely powerful influence on their EFL vocabulary range.

The present results undoubtedly show that a majority of teenagers who do consider themselves proficient English users attribute much of their knowledge and competence to audio-visual content. This is in complete agreement with my previous studies (Brodarić 2015; Brodarić Šegvić 2019a; Brodarić Šegvić 2019b) which state that frequently watching English-language movies improves student EFL grades, their interest for EFL classroom activities, and also confirms the general opinions of Croatian citizens with regard to their foreign language knowledge being a consequence of exposure to the L2, via television among other media, during childhood and adolescence (Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015).

Two more questions comprised in the questionnaire inquired on students' exposure to English-language audio-visual media, by examining their preferences in terms of the use of subtitles and/or captions when watching movies or series produced in English-speaking countries, as well as their attitudes towards Croatian dubbing. The results of students' answers show that the reported levels of EFL speaking, listening and reading skills are excellent for more than 68% of the 115 students who claim their preferred mode of watching English-language movies is with English captions, and 72% to 82% (depending on the skill in question) of the 75 respondents who prefer no subtitles at all. On the other hand, for the 166 students who prefer Croatian subtitles the aforementioned skills reach such a high level for only 33% to 36% of pupils. As for the students' EFL writing skills, as well as EFL grammar and vocabulary competence, excellent levels of competence were reported by 33% (ELF grammar) to 43% (writing skills and vocabulary knowledge) of the 115 students who prefer English captions; from 33% (grammar) up to 61% (EFL writing skills) for the 75 who opted for no subtitles at all. For the 166 pupils who confirmed their preference for Croatian subtitles, the same high levels regarding the latter competences were reported by only 10% (grammar competences) and up to 20% (EFL writing skills). As with the findings discussed above, these results also show a stronger link between overall students' EFL competences and viewing original

English-language audio-visual material with no translation, as opposed to with the help of Croatian subtitles.

As for students' attitudes on potential Croatian dubbing of English audio-visual content, a majority (62%) of the 186 students who expressed being against the practice of dubbing, either for no apparent reason or by specifically stating that subtitling helps them learn the language, also reported excellent EFL speaking, listening and reading skills, while such level, for the same skills, is reported by less than 24% of the 49 students who support dubbing, by stating that it would make understanding movie plots easier. Similarly, a higher percentage of students (from 26% to 43% depending on the competence in question) who reported excellent EFL writing skills, grammar and vocabulary competence expressed being against dubbing as a means of translation, while such high competence levels are only reported by no more than 10% of the 49 students who support dubbing.

In conclusion, all of the results offered by students' answers with regard to their attitudes towards subtitling and dubbing as well as their preferences in terms of the modes of watching original English-language audio-visual content, show that better competence levels were reported by the students who consider the subtitling translation system an advantage over dubbing. Some will rather opt for same-language captions or watch a movie in the original language without the help of any subtitles, but it can also be assumed that their highly developed EFL competences had already reached a certain level before they were able to start enjoying these possibilities.

How often students are exposed to the English language via audio-visual contents is in a significant relationship with their EFL competences: the more frequent their engagement in watching English-spoken movies or series, the higher are their EFL competences. However, this does not apply to the students who solely watch original anglophone TV content on Croatian television, with the aid of their mother-tongue subtitles. Seemingly, the latter is an activity undertaken by a vast majority[69] of teenagers who do not necessarily profit from it in terms of incidentally improving their language skills. As pointed out earlier, watching subtitled TV content, as opposed to dubbed audio-visual materials, can perhaps only be considered the first step of incidental FL acquisition, which, in the

[69] As already mentioned in Chapter 9.1.1., 50% of the present sample of students rated the activity of watching Angophone TV content with Croatian subtitles with the highest value on the Likert-type scale (5), while another 19% reported doing so also very often (and rated the activity with the second highest value on the Likert-type scale).

case of the English language, then leads to subsequent media-exposure opportunities which bring about further benefits to the acquisition process.

9.3.3. Listening to English-language music and students' EFL competences

The frequency with which students enjoy listening to English-language music, be it online, on the radio, or on various audio formats, proved to be significantly related to their levels of EFL competences (see Table 16).

As described and discussed in Chapter 9.1.1. the media that is most frequently used by students for listening to English-language music is the Internet, followed by audio formats, and finally the radio. Indeed, the results show that 264 students (73% of the total sample) stated they listen to EL music online very frequently, i.e., every day, while 227 (63%) do so with the use of MP3 players or other audio formats, and only 88 (24%) listen to EL music everyday via radio stations. For this reason, here I will primarily report the results related to the connections between students' EFL competences and their online engagement with music sung in English.

A thorough analysis of all student answers reveals that, when observing the reported levels of each language competence, over 85% of students who rated their competences as excellent (with a 5 on the Likert-type scale), also listen to English-language (EL) music on the Internet every day. This shows it is a popular activity among students who have highly developed EFL skills. However, when the results are observed from a different point of view, they show that out of the students who revealed listening to EL music online every day, approximately 65% reported having excellent EFL listening (N = 179), speaking (N = 168) and reading skills (N = 167), while less than half stated having developed excellent EFL writing skills (N = 116, 44%), and even less confirm having very high EFL vocabulary (N = 102, 39%) and grammar (N = 71, 27%) competence. It can therefore be concluded that, while engaging in this type of activity positively correlates with all EFL competences, observing the specific results of the sample helps in realizing which EFL skills can receive most benefit and develop or improve via incidental exposure to EL music on the Internet.

As explained above, this popular activity seems to have a stronger connection to both receptive skills and the productive skill of speaking. It is easy to comprehend how listening to music in a foreign language could be linked to learners' improved listening skills, which can also be used to reproduce language with speaking skills. In line with these results, a recent study by Cergol Kovačević and Matijević (2015) also confirmed that learners consider the use of technological devices for listening to music to have had an important role in the development of precisely listening and speaking skills. Other earlier studies, the results of which are also mentioned in Chapter 6, argued that listening to lyrics sung in an L2 helps and improves the memorization and therefore also the imitation and reproduction of the language in question (Garza 1994), while Lynch (2006) highlighted that various expressions, words and accents used in songs improve learners' listening comprehension**.** On a different note, the fact that, besides listening and speaking, the present results also show a similar connection to students' EFL reading skills can only be interpreted by assuming that the same respondents also have other media interests besides this one, which help them develop their reading skills, or that their listening to music online, mostly via the YouTube platform, also includes other attached activities such as reading comments in English, as well as reading the lyrics of songs the meaning of which they are interested in.

A similar trend as the one described above is observed for the connection between students' EFL skills and the frequency with which they engage in listening to English-language media from media such as MP3 players, CDs or other audio formats[70]. As for students' activity of listening to EL music on the radio, which resulted as the least popular means of exposure to music with English lyrics, the percentage of students who express having excellent skills and who also report listening to music in this language on the radio is approximately 32% for each EFL competence. However, the trend described for students' EFL skills and both their engagement in listening to EL music

[70] Out of each total of students who rated their EFL skills as excellent, approximately 75% also reported listening to English-language music via various audio formats on a daily basis (5 on the Likert-type scale), but out of all the students who very frequently listen to EL music this way, 63% to 68% reported excellent EFL speaking (N = 143), reading (N = 147) and listening (N = 155) skills, while less than half reported such developed EFL writing skills (N = 100, 44%), vocabulary competence (N = 92, 40%) or grammar competence (N = 61, 27%).

online or via audio formats, stays the same for their engagement in listening to music sung in English via radio stations[71].

We can conclude that regardless of the means by which students choose to listen to English-language music, the relationship to their individual EFL competences is similar: their receptive EFL skills are most likely to profit, while their grammar competences seem to be the least likely to benefit from this activity. This too can be seen as having to do with the overall complexity of grammar rules and the difficulties of acquiring them by mere exposure to an FL as they need to be addressed via direct instruction, as explained in the previous chapter.

As many past studies (see e.g., Toffoli and Sockett 2014; Murphey 1989; 1990a) have also researched and discussed the effects that listening to foreign language music can have on the learners' vocabulary knowledge and range, more correlation tests have been performed as to explore whether there are relationships between how students rated the importance of listening to EL music for their vocabulary acquisition and their reports on the levels of each EFL competence. The results displayed in Table 17 also show that the respondents who feel their English language vocabulary was considerably influenced by music, do in fact have significantly higher EFL competences than the students who do not attribute their vocabulary knowledge to English lyrics (Spearman ρ correlation coefficient analysis, $P<0.001$).

A further look into the answers provided by the sample of students used in this study, shows that listening to EL music can be considered an important factor in the development of EFL vocabulary as well as other skills. Out of the total of students who reported excellent EFL vocabulary knowledge, understanding and range (N = 116), 67 (58%) attributed their vocabulary knowledge to music to the highest extent (by rating it with a 5 on a Likert-type scale). By exclusively observing the competence levels of students who claimed to have predominantly acquired English words by listening to music, we find that 129 (76%) of them reported possessing excellent or very good EFL vocabulary knowledge (4 or 5 on Likert-type scale). In the same manner, 115 (67%) reported a very high level of EFL grammar competence, while very high percentages of these students

[71] Out of the students who reported listening to EL music on the radio on a daily basis (N = 88), a higher percentage reported having excellent EFL listening (N = 65, 74%), speaking (N = 65, 74%) as well as reading skills (N = 58, 65%), then writing skills (N = 40, 45%), or vocabulary (N = 41, 47%) and grammar (N = 23, 26%) competence.

claimed having very highly developed EFL listening (N = 159, 94%), reading (N = 148, 87%) speaking (N = 139, 81%) and writing (N = 131, 77%) skills. Collectively, these results show that most students who deem music a very important factor in their EFL vocabulary acquisition, also claimed to have reached very high levels in regard to all EFL competences.

Finally, as presented in Chapter 9.1.2. the participants were asked to rate the frequency with which they search for different content online, in the English language, and as reported, music turned out to be the most popular field of interest.

Table 18. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific EFL competences and the English-language content they search for on the Internet. (N=363).

	Sports	**Fashion**	**Music**	**Daily News**	**Politics**	**Cuisine**	**Culture / Arts**	**Gossip News**	**Crime News**
EFL speaking	0.069 (0.192)	0.057 (0.282)	0.291** **(<0.001)**	0.199** **(<0.001)**	0.189** **(<0.001)**	0.048 (0.361)	0.268** **(<0.001)**	0.196** **(<0.001)**	0.132* **(0.012)**
EFL listening	-0.001 (0.980)	0.065 (0.217)	0.288** **(<0.001)**	0.160** **(0.002)**	0.119* **(0.024)**	0.104* **(0.049)**	0.290** **(<0.001)**	0.258** **(<0.001)**	0.106* **(0.043)**
EFL reading	0.027 (0.608)	-0.003 (0.959)	0.261** **(<0.001)**	0.148** **(0.005)**	0.141** **(0.007)**	-0.017 (0.750)	0.248** **(<0.001)**	0.198** **(<0.001)**	0.088 (0.092)
EFL writing	0.081 (0.125)	0.053 (0.314)	0.243** **(<0.001)**	0.219** **(<0.001)**	0.243** **(<0.001)**	0.048 (0.361)	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.258** **(<0.001)**	0.163** **(0.002)**
EFL grammar	0.026 (0.622)	0.038 (0.469)	0.240** **(<0.001)**	0.192** **(<0.001)**	0.251** **(<0.001)**	0.058 (0.268)	0.289** **(<0.001)**	0.220** **(<0.001)**	0.096 (0.067)
EFL vocabulary	-0.007 (0.901)	0.041 (0.435)	0.275** **(<0.001)**	0.219** **(<0.001)**	0.197** **(<0.001)**	0.069 (0.190)	0.300** **(<0.001)**	0.197** **(<0.001)**	0.110* **(0.036)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

Table 18 presents the results of Spearman ρ correlation tests between the respondents' EFL competences and the frequency of their online browsing for information or news in particular fields

of interest. The findings show that students who are interested in music content have statistically significantly better developed EFL skills and competences ($P<0.001$). This results can be interpreted in two ways: firstly, it might imply that via their strong interest in music content, such as actual music, or news and information regarding the music they listen to, teenagers are more likely to acquire different EFL skills – listening, of course, for the same reasons mentioned earlier in this chapter; speaking, by attempting to sing the lyrics to their favourite songs; reading – by studying the lyrics to a favourite song, reading online reviews, articles and other information about music; as well as writing – by, perhaps, commenting and discussing music, or music videos, as YouTube proved to be the most common website students visit and the second most popular online platform, after Instagram, where they are likely to use their EFL writing skills (*see Chapter 9.1.2.)*. Vocabulary and grammar also seem to be elements that are incidentally acquired due to a passion and interest for music, perhaps for the same reasons explained earlier in this chapter. On the other hand, as correlations are not able to provide information on the direction of this relationship, the present results could also mean that the students who are already skilled in the English language are precisely those most likely to use their skills by reading online reviews, exploring song lyrics, discussing videos. However, both of these interpretations are likely accurate.

An analysis of students' responses to this question shows that approximately 75% of students who reported very high levels of any EFL competence (by rating it with a 5 on a Likert-type scale) also confirmed having a very high interest in music content and searching for it online on a daily basis. The results also allow to observe that, out of all the students who claimed they look for music content on the Internet every day (N = 239), over 75% claimed having highly developed EFL speaking (N = 192, 80%), reading (N = 208, 87%), listening (N = 223, 93%) and writing (N = 182, 76%) skills, while many also rated their grammar (N = 162, 68%) and vocabulary competence (N = 174, 73%) as very high (4 or 5 on a Likert-type scale). This analysis shows that music content provided online is usually an interest of proficient EFL students, and could signify that motivation to gain information concerning this field of interest generates language learning opportunities and encourages the process of informal EFL acquisition.

What I also find a need to stress is the fact that nowadays, music is being consumed very often via audio-visual formats such as music videos that accompany songs and which are provided on

YouTube - the channel that proved to be the most popular gateway to English-language music. This format can certainly be seen as adding more meaning and information to the English-sung soundtrack, and besides providing listeners with multiple expressions, idioms, repetitive and simple vocabulary which they can personally associate to (see e.g., Lynch 2006; Murphey 1992), it also might add context to what is being sung, similar to the context that visual information adds to the conversations we hear in audio-visual materials such as movies, as previously suggested by Baltova (1994, as reported in Danan 2004). Back in 1994, Garza already underlined the "wealth of memorable, functional language units contextualized by relevant, culturally-saturated visual images" (Garza 1994: 108), which foreign language music clips on MTV provided to language learners, and also claimed that such a combination promotes FL proficiency. Nowadays, with music videos being much more accessible than they used to be in the nineties, it is safe to conclude that their impact might be even stronger.

9.3.4. Playing English-language video games and students' EFL competences

Exposure to video games was also found to be significantly related to the English-language competences of high school students in Split, Croatia (see Table 16). The findings discussed in Chapter 9.1.1. showed video games are not popular with the majority of students, however, as suspected, such a result stems from the unequal number of female and male participants in the present research. In fact, Chapter 9.2.5. revealed major differences in girls' and boys' engagement for the activity of playing video games.

The results of Spearman ρ correlations in Table 16 and 18 show both that playing video games with English language content is a significantly more frequent activity for students with highly developed EFL skills, and also, that students who claimed a considerable portion of their English word stock can be attributed to playing video games are significantly more proficient than others.

However, detailed analyses of all respondents' answers show that, unlike for the previously discussed exposure to English-language movies and music (Chapters 9.3.2. and 9.3.3.), the results which regard the relationship between playing video games and students' EFL competences are distributed differently, inasmuch as around 35% of students who claim possessing high EFL skill

levels also report playing video games with English language content every day, while the same percentage of students with the same level of language skills claim never to have played video games in their free time. Similar trends can also be observed for the connection between students EFL competence levels and how highly they rated the influence video games have on their EFL vocabulary knowledge: around one third of the students who reported highly developed skills have either rated videogames as crucial to their personal vocabulary development or, otherwise, deem them completely unimportant - a result which is due to the explained differences in interest of male and female students.

As previously explained, results showing a connection between gaming and EFL competences can only be interpreted as truly relevant for the male students. In fact, more Spearman ρ correlation tests were performed for boys and girls separately, as to examine whether the correlations are stronger for the male sample. As expected, the results showed that the frequency with which boys engage in gaming, and also how highly they rated the effect video games have on their English vocabulary, significantly correlates with all their EFL competences on a $P<0.001$ level, except for their EFL speaking which still correlates positively on a $P<0.05$ level. As for the results provided by the female students, the only correlations found to be significant are in connection to their EFL writing skills, grammar and vocabulary, and mostly at a weaker, $P<0.05$ level.

Regardless of the students' gender, all of the performed test and analyses seem to relate their passion for video-game playing with improved vocabulary, grammar as well as writing skills. As previously put forward by Lenhart et al. (2008), the present findings also suggest that contrary to some beliefs and stereotypes, avid gamers do not spend their time alone, in isolation, but frequently engage in communicative situations. With that in mind, Granic Lobel and Engels (2014) also highlight the social nature of video games today as 70% of gamers engage in playing video games with friends "either cooperatively or competitively" (Entertainment Software Association 2012 in Granic et al. 2014: 73)[72]. Consequently, when discussing the social benefits of gaming, the authors also stress that by playing video games online with friends, but also with complete strangers, gamers are increasingly "crossing vast geographical distances and blurring not only cultural

[72] Data provided by the same source in 2020, reports 65% of gamers play with others online or in person (Entertainment Software Association 2020).

boundaries but also age and generation gaps, socioeconomic differences, and language barriers" (ibid.: 76). The language which is most commonly used by these virtual communities is, certainly English, which can nowadays be seen as the lingua franca of online societies (Miettinen 2019). As indicated by Miettinen (2019: 1), "coherent verbal communication between teammates" is of utmost importance for a successful outcome of some popular online games, which can lead us to assume that most players will attempt to communicate to the best of their abilities in order to win the game.

This is consistent with the present study's results and the fact that EFL writing skills are found to be connected to the intensity with which Croatian students play video games with English-language content. Their motivation to communicate in English may, in fact, be triggered by a desire to win the game in question. Indeed, when examining the underlying motivational dimensions of sport video gaming, Yongjae and Stephen (2006) found that social interaction and competition were among the most prominent motivational dimensions, and that sport video game playing requires a pattern of use which creates the need to achieve a purpose and requires more activity than traditional media (ibid.: 28).

As for the present relationship between frequent gaming and students' highly developed EFL vocabulary, the result concurs with other studies which pinpoint and discuss the types of new vocabulary that players may acquire while playing video games. Musa (2015: 448) divides them in two groups: one type are the words of general meaning, needed to manage a game, and the other type is *vocabulary with situated meaning* which is related to the topic of the videogame (ibid: 448). Similarly, Gee (2003: 135) highlights that the various tools gamers use to navigate the game include vocabulary to be used for the actions performed while playing, and also emphasizes that video games provide a lot of written text in the form of instructions, descriptions and dialogues which are also likely to be acquired in order to reach autonomy during gameplay.

Overall, the findings of the present study lead to the conclusion that playing video games with English language content seems to be an excellent tool for EFL language acquisition, especially in terms of improving students' vocabulary, grammar and writing skills, but also one which is most likely to be taken advantage of by the male teenage population. It is, therefore presumable that male students who are avid gamers will come to EFL class having already picked up much of the EFL vocabulary that is comprised in the instructions to gameplay, as well as any lexical items that

are related to the topics of their favourite video games, which are most often related to sports or battle.

9.3.5. Reading and writing in English online and students' EFL competences

Both reading and writing in English online have resulted as correlated to all of the students' English-language competences (see Table 16). More precisely, the correlations show that students who are inclined to reading English texts on web portals or blogs, as well as students who are prone to using English to comment and discuss a topic in written form online, are students who reported better developed EFL competences than others. This was expected, as the activities of writing, as wells as reading, perhaps longer and complex articles, are likely to require some degree of effort and a higher level of language competence and vocabulary knowledge in the first place, in order to have the ability to infer meaning from context (Vodogaz and Jurišić 2010). However, the results can also be seen as showing that these students have the intrinsic motivation *(see Chapter 2.5.2.1.)* to engage in such language use, outside the classroom walls, and this might also be what encourages them to learn more, in order to be able to read and understand the texts they are interested in, as well as express themselves in written form.

An analysis of the relationship between the levels of students' EFL competences and their answers regarding the frequency with which they engage in reading news and articles in English on online portals, blogs etc., shows that only around 30% of students who reported having excellent EFL writing skills (N = 37), grammar (N = 24) and vocabulary competences (N = 36) also reported reading English texts online every day. However, the responses also show that almost all (93% up to 97%) students who claimed they engage in reading online on a daily basis (N = 59), also claimed having very highly developed (4 to 5 on a Likert-type scale) EFL speaking (N = 55), listening (N = 57) and reading skills (N = 56), as well as a very rich EFL vocabulary (N = 55). This suggests that, while reading online is not necessarily an activity that all proficient EFL learners engage in frequently, it seems that those who do, reap the benefits with regard to most EFL skills.

Here, once again, it must be stressed that this relationship could also mean that the students who are proficient are simply more confident in terms of using their skills online for the activity of

reading more complex texts in the English language. Nevertheless, the results lend support to early studies which highlighted the L2 vocabulary gains available via substantial reading for pleasure Krashen (1982), and more recent findings in the field of extramural English, which point to the fact that, for instance, Swedish learners who independently choose to read English texts in their free time, also have the best EFL school results (Sylvén 2004, as reported in Sundqvist 2009).

Similar trends to the ones described above, can be observed in the relationships between the levels of students' EFL competences and their answers regarding the frequency with which they use the English language to write comments or engage in written discussions on social media, blog posts, news portals etc. Out of the students who expressed having highly developed EFL competences, less than 30% write in English online on a daily basis, while over 30% claimed never doing so.

Much like the activity of reading online, this type of media-exposure does not seem crucial to students' attainment of high EFL competence levels. Moreover, unlike listening to music or taking in audio-visual materials, which demand learners' passive engagement, writing comments or engaging in discussions in written form requires the use of a productive language skill and more effort from the language user. Ultimately, the presence or absence of this type of engagement might also depend on students' extroverted or introverted personalities and other internal factors *(see Chapter 2.5.)*. Indeed, regardless of their language knowledge, some students might be reluctant to start, or join a conversation in a foreign language, or even their mother tongue. That being said, nearly all of the respondents of the present sample who did confirm writing in English online very often (N = 54), also reported possessing excellent or very good EFL reading (N = 52, 96%), writing (N = 50, 93%) and listening skills (N = 52, 96%), as well as a highly developed vocabulary (N = 47, 87%).

In correspondence with the latter findings, the Spearman ρ correlation test results in Table 17 also shows that learners with more developed EFL competences attribute significantly more importance to both social media and visiting various other websites in terms of the influence on their English vocabulary knowledge and range.

When inquired as to how they would rate the importance of social media in providing input for their EFL vocabulary acquisition, half of the students who reported excellent EFL competences

also rated social media as an extremely important factor, and many (over 79%) of the very students who assessed social media as crucial to their EFL vocabulary improvement, also reported an excellent or very good level of all four language skills, as well as highly developed EFL vocabulary.

With regard to searching the web for content other that social media, it should be noted that more than one third (N = 138, 38%) of students in the sample stated that visiting other websites, news portals, blog and more, has not had any influence on their vocabulary knowledge. In fact, out of the students who claimed possessing excellent EFL skills, less than 17% rated websites as a very important factor of their EFL vocabulary competence. On the other hand, over 90% of the students who did attribute most of their EFL vocabulary range to various websites (by rating their influence with 5 on the Likert-type scale), also reported excellent or very good levels for all four EFL skills, as well as very highly developed EFL vocabulary, while their grammar knowledge does not seem to reach such levels. This analysis of students' answers could be seen as an indication that even though exploring online sites which offer English-language content, besides social media, is not an activity which seems essential to the development of EFL proficiency, engaging in it seems to bring significant benefits to the EFL acquisition process.

These findings add to the body of recent literature, in Croatia and abroad, exploring the effects the Internet has been having on English language acquisition. Correspondingly, across different European counties, children who use digital media have shown better FL pronunciation and listening skills (Enever 2011: 117); while reading blogs has been found to promote EFL writing skills of EFL learners from Germany, the Netherlands and other backgrounds (Arndt and Woore 2018); similarly, constant use of the Internet is related to better EFL school grades of Croatian teenagers (Brodarić 2015), while university students in Croatia consider the Internet as the media to have had the most influence on their EFL skills (Cergol Kovačević and Matijević 2015).

In recent years, the Internet seems to have become an even more significant source of English-language content, and as the current study shows (*see Chapter 9.1.)*, even movies and music, which used to be accessed independently via television or reproduced from audio or video recordings, are now more frequently accessed on Internet platforms. In addition, even though social media can often be used to communicate exclusively in one's mother tongue, it also appears to have become a more common source of English-language input than other websites. Namely, as students have

mainly highlighted Instagram as the social media where they most often encounter the English language, and the one that has had the most positive effects on their EFL vocabulary acquisition, it could be argued that, in comparison to Facebook networking, which is more close-community oriented, profiles on Instagram are often set up in order to communicate with the world as a whole, and this is why the verbal communication is often provided in English, regardless of where the user is located. The English language is therefore unavoidable for the average Instagram user nowadays, and will inevitably provide some opportunities for incidental EFL acquisition.

As put forward by Henry and Lamb (2019: 600), leisurable activities such as interpersonal communication taking place in networked environments are likely to foster sustained engagement as these activities address the basic human need of experiencing autonomy, competence, and social connectedness. In order to experience all of the latter, language learners are more likely than ever to engage in English-language communication online.

9.3.6. Different interests and students' EFL competence

By now, it is clear to see that when addressing the incidental EFL acquisition process of Croatian students as a consequence of frequent media exposure, the highest levels of EFL competence seem to be achieved by those students who, in one way or the other, make most frequent use of Internet content in the English language.

This chapter investigates whether, and in what ways, students' particular interests, pursued by following or searching for specific content in the English language online, are in any way connected to their reported levels of EFL competences. This question is explored as to gain insight into what might be the most popular fields of interest among the students who feel most motivated to gain information about these topics in the English language, and who might, hence profit most in terms of incidental EFL acquisition.

Throughout Table 18 we can observe the results of Spearman ρ correlations between the frequencies with which students search the Internet for English-language content regarding the aforementioned topics, and their reported EFL competences. The performed correlation tests show that there are no statistically significant differences in terms of their interest towards *sports, fashion* and *cuisine*[73], among students with different levels of EFL competences. Correspondingly, an in-depth analysis of students' responses shows that, out of the respondents who claimed to have excellent EFL competences, for both sports and fashion, approximately 30% have expressed browsing for such contents on a daily basis, while another 30% stated never doing so. With regard to these two topics such results might be due to the already mentioned (*see Chapter 9.2.5.*) substantial differences in interest among the male and female population of students. However, the results of correlations showing no statistical significance can also indicate the fact that both sports and fashion, while being interesting topics to search for online in the English language, do not necessarily offer many opportunities for language acquisition. This could be attributed to the mostly visual nature of both fashion blogs, editorials, shows and campaigns, as well as sport events

[73] An exception to this is a weaker, but still significant correlation of students' interest in topics related to cuisine, and their EFL listening skills ($P<0.049$). This result is difficult to interpret, but could be connected to the fact that, much of the content related to cuisine, such as step by step recipes, can nowadays be accessed in audio-visual form, on YouTube or other platforms, where language learners are able to practice their EFL listening skills.

and lists of match results, which are often not accompanied by verbal information and therefore do not provide incidental EFL acquisition. In much the same way, as for the topic of cuisine, around 40% of students who reported excellent EFL competences have no interest in this topic. Unlike sports, fashion and cuisine, all other fields of interest and the frequency with which students look for such content online show statistically significant correlations to practically each EFL skill and competence (*see Table 18*).

In Chapter 9.3.3. I have already discussed the significant correlations of students' interest in music content and the levels of their language competences. Similarly, *daily news*, as well as news related to *politics, gossip, culture, arts, crime* seem to be browsed for significantly more frequently by students who also claimed having more developed EFL skills. This result does not come as a surprise, namely, as mentioned earlier (*see Chapter 9.3.5.)* the present research has confirmed that most of the English-language media exposure of Croatian high school students happens online. However, while most teenagers spend their free time on the Internet, not everyone is making use of incidental English-language learning opportunities. While some students prefer to use the Internet exclusively for communication, and most probably in their mother tongue, others use it to seek for various information in the English language. The aforementioned topics related to politics, or perhaps culture and arts, are usually provided by specialized news portals, blogs, podcasts, which require more effort from their users in terms of English language comprehension and use. Correspondingly, such content is also more likely to bring benefits to students' overall EFL competence, as students who are motivated to understand this type of content provided in the English language will also need to acquire, incidentally or formally, new vocabulary and often complicated language structures.

An analysis of the ways in which students' responses relate to their reports regarding EFL competences, shows that highly EFL developed skills are reported by a similar percentage (15%) of students who claimed to follow English-language daily news every day and those who claimed they never do so. As for the other topics, over half of the students who reported excellent EFL skills claimed they never, or nearly never (1 or 2 frequency on a Likert-type scale) search for politics (80%), culture (55%), gossip (55%), or crime (77%) news in the English language online. Even so,

a high interest in any of these topics, also coincides with highly developed skills for over 64% (and ranging to 94% depending on the topic and skill in question) of respondents.

Hence, while students' interest in any of the discussed fields of interest cannot be seen as an essential part of their informal EFL acquisition process, having a motivation to access English-language information on such topics is related to their levels in all EFL competences.

All of the sections above have discussed the relationships between particular EFL competences and students' varied engagements in and attitudes towards specific English-language media. The sections that follow will attempt to give answers to other aspects of *Research question 3*, by exploring, firstly, in which ways students total EFL competence correlates to their total media exposure to English-language content, as opposed to how it correlates to the duration of their formal EFL school tuition; secondly, Chapter 9.3.8. will cover the differences between the correlations of EFL media exposure to total EFL competence, as opposed to the correlations of EFL competence to additional forms of formal EFL learning; and finally, Chapter 9.3.9. will discuss the relationships of total EFL competence to EFL media exposure, as opposed to other external factors which might influence its development.

9.3.7. EFL competences acquired via media exposure vs. formal EFL tuition

In an attempt to discover students' opinions on whether they consider formal EFL tuition or the media to have had more influence on their current EFL competences and knowledge, the respondents of the current study were asked to rate the influence of both. Even though, as explained in *Appendix* the respondents did not complete *Question 9* of the questionnaire in a uniform way, some conclusions can be drawn from their answers. Namely, 24% (N = 85) of the total students (N = 351) who gave an answer as to whether they learnt most of their English through formal education, claimed to have learnt mostly everything they know at school (with a 5 rating on the Likert-type scale). On the other hand, out of the 347 students who rated whether they acquired the English they know via the media, nearly half (N = 154, 44%) claimed to have learnt everything

they know through English-language media. This distribution clearly shows that many students prioritize the influence of media exposure over their school EFL lessons, and consider the importance of the language learning effects it brings to their EFL competence.

When observing the latter findings and associating them to the pupils' ratings of each specific EFL competence, we find a similar patter related to all the specific competences under consideration. Here I will only present the results which are relevant for conclusions regarding students who deemed each separate EFL skill level as excellent.

As for EFL speaking skills, 39% (N = 33) out of the 85 students who prioritize formal tuition rated their speaking skills as very highly developed, while such speaking skills were reported by 70% (N = 108) of the 154 students who consider the media to be responsible for their EFL competence altogether. When considering high school students' EFL listening skills, approximately half (N = 40, 47%) of the students who highly rated the effects of formal EFL lessons at school have also highly rated their listening skills. On the other hand, a vast majority (N = 126, 81%) of respondents who gave a high rating to the influence of the media also stated their EFL listening skills are excellent. Correspondingly, out of the pupils who claimed to have acquired their English skills from school lessons, 36 students (42%) also rated their ELF reading skills as excellent, while, reading skills were reported as excellent by 78% (N = 120) of the students who ascribe their EFL knowledge almost exclusively to media exposure. With respect to EFL writing skills, not many of the learners who mostly attribute their EFL knowledge to formal education reported highly developed writing skills (N = 22, 25%), while half (N = 82, 53%) of those who fully acknowledge the importance of media in their EFL acquisition process also rated their writing skills as excellent.

When considering students EFL grammar and vocabulary competences, we can find that, in a similar fashion, the respondents who attribute their EFL knowledge to formal education are less likely to report highly developed competences (N = 17, 20% for grammar and N = 20, 23% for vocabulary), than the pupils who find most of their EFL knowledge is due to their exposure to media in the English language (N = 51, 33% for grammar and N = 78, 51% for vocabulary).

To summarize the results presented above, the students who deem English-language media as a crucial input to their EFL competence reported an altogether higher level of development for all

the skills and competences in question when compared to the respondents who attribute their EFL knowledge, for the most part, to formal EFL education. These findings can be interpreted as signalling that media exposure brings more benefits to the EFL acquisition process than formal tuition. However, we must take into consideration that this study questioned solely students' self-report on their language skills, and therefore we might also conclude that students who are more inclined towards English-language media have a better opinion of their EFL competence and/or are more confident FL users.

To have a clearer understanding of the connection between the levels of EFL competence and media exposure to this language, as opposed to formal tuition, Spearman ρ correlation tests were preformed between students' total EFL competence as one variable, and both total media exposure to the English language and the duration of their formal EFL education as another variable.

Table 19. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' total EFL competence and the duration of their formal tuition, their English-language use with family and friends, the total of their media exposure to the English language out of the school environment. (N=363).

	Total EFL competence
Years of formal EFL tuition	0.032 (0.539)
English-language use with family	0.298** **(<0.001)**
English-language use with friends	0.513** **(<0.001)**
Total media exposure to the English language	0.489** **(<0.001)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

The results (*see Table 19*) confirm a statistical significance of the correlations between the respondents' total EFL competence and their media exposure to this language, but also show no statistically significant relationship between EFL competence and the years pupils' spent leaning the English language formally, at school.

In essence, the results of these correlations imply that if Croatian high school students spend more hours of their free time informally engaging in English-language media, by watching English-spoken movies, listening to music sung in English, browsing the Internet for English-language texts, audio or audio-visual content, play video games with English-language content, they are also more likely to develop EFL competences to a higher level of proficiency. In contrast to that, and remarkably, these results also show that, contrary to what one might believe, differences in the duration of formal EFL tuition are in no way connected to students' EFL competence levels.

The following chapter will further explore this matter with a presentation and discussion on the results of correlations between students' total EFL competence and the types of formal EFL education students attented. In addition, to further prove this point, the same comparison will be observed for Italian-language competences in Chapter 9.4.2.

9.3.8. EFL competence and its relationship to types of additional formal EFL learning vs. English-language media exposure

Besides stating the duration of their formal EFL school education in Croatian primary and secondary schools, the participants were also asked to provide details regarding other potential forms of EFL classes they additionally attended. Namely, students were asked to specify if they attended formal education abroad where they were also taught EFL; if they took private English language lessons; had English classes at foreign-language schools; or frequented extra EFL lessons at a foreign-language school abroad. The following discussion concerns the results of correlations between students' total EFL competence and the various types of formal EFL education students attended.

Even though the duration of their EFL education did not show a significant correlation with students' EFL competences, the results in Table 20 show there is a significant correlation at the P<0.05 level between students' formal EFL tuition in Croatian schools and their EFL competence levels, however, the amount of time spent acquiring English informally via the media *(see Table 19)* correlates significantly with students' EFL proficiency on a much stronger level (P<0.001).

Table 20. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' total EFL competence and the types of their formal EFL tuition. (N=363).

	Total EFL competence
Formal EFL tuition in Croatian schools	0.116* **(0.028)**
Formal EFL tuition in schools abroad	-0.108* (0.039)
Extra EFL tuition in foreign language-schools	0.233** **(<0.001)**
Extra EFL tuition via private instructions	-0.112* (0.032)
Extra EFL tuition in foreign language-schools abroad	0.076 (0.147)

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

On the other hand, a few participants (N = 8) reported having attended primary or secondary schools abroad, but this option resulted in a negative correlation to their EFL competence – meaning that the competences of those students are lower than of those who did not report attending a formal education abroad. This result could point to their EFL tuition in other countries being less effective than the one provided to the pupils who attended compulsory education in Croatia. Even though no certain conclusions can be drawn with regard to this result, as the aforementioned number of respondents is so low, it can be interpreted as evidence that supports the notion of the Croatian educational system as one that has given relevance to the quality of the FL teaching process, a greater instruction time and intensity dedicated to foreign languages in general than is

some European countries, as described in Chapters 3.3. and 3.4. We do not have insight into the specific countries where the students in question attended formal education, but other studies have already stressed FL education yields better results in some European countries in comparison to others (see e.g., Enever 2011; Mihaljević Djigunović et al. 2008).

We generally consider successful learning outcomes of formal FL education to be dependent on a number of factors, such as the amount of FL lessons per year, the quality of teaching; teachers' methods; the students', teachers' and parents' attitude towards the foreign language in question; a number of background factors; as well as students' language aptitude, motivation for language learning etc. *(see Chapter 2.5).* Altogether the current results seem to suggest that the Croatian educational system seems to provide a context which has a more positive impact on the development of learners' high levels of EFL competence than perhaps in some other contexts, however, before such conclusions are made, larger samples of students who attend EFL formal education in different countries would need to be taken into consideration. What is more, the present results also suggest that it is the extent of media-exposure that brings more benefits to the EFL proficiency of Croatian teenagers than formal EFL tuition. We would therefore also need to consider whether media exposure to the English language is available to the same extent and brings the same benefits in the other country contexts which are taken under consideration.

As previously described in Chapter 3.4., students in Croatia usually start their EFL education at the same time, in the first year of primary school, following the same prescribed programme, and the teachers' all need to be equally qualified (European commission 2017). In the light of this, it seems reasonable to ascribe the immense range of differences in EFL competence levels to the students' additional, individual English-language media exposure outside the school environment. However, it is also true that many children and adolescents in Croatia choose to attend other forms of formal language-learning activities which might add to their FL acquisition process. In order to explore whether media exposure is solely responsible for the scale of differences in terms of students' EFL skills, the present study also explores if other types of formal EFL tuition correlate with students' total competences.

Another negative correlation resulted to be the one between the pupils' EFL competences and their extra EFL tuition via private instructions *(see Table 20*). This outcome highlights the fact that

Croatian students who do opt for individual instructions are most probably weaker EFL students who choose, or whose parents choose, this form of FL lessons as to make up for their lack of knowledge or skill prior to a school exam.

On the other hand, a strong statistically significant correlation is shown between the pupils' language competences and extra EFL lessons attended at foreign-language schools ($P<0.001$). Foreign-language schools are rather popular as extracurricular activities in Croatia, and as also visible from the answers students provided (see Chapter 9.1.4.) to *Question 5* and *9* of the Questionnaire *(see Appendix*), parents are known to enrol their children into foreign language schools as early as kindergarten age. The extra intensity and time dedicated to formal EFL learning in smaller groups and, perhaps, from an even earlier age then the start of primary education, may therefore explain this latter result.

To summarize, with regard to formal EFL teaching and learning, only attending EFL lessons at foreign language schools as an extracurricular activity showed a significant relationship with the students' total EFL competence which is as strong as the correlation level between media exposure and EFL competence. This seems to suggest that, only attending additional EFL classes in specialized schools is able to promote the level of EFL proficiency that students' frequent engagement with English-language media out of the school environment seems to. Whether this is due to an even earlier start in terms of FL learning for the students in question, or whether it depends solely on the extra time spent learning the language in a formal environment, is an issue that should be additionally explored in future research.

9.3.9. EFL competence and its relationship to English-language media exposure vs. other external factors

The results of the previous chapter seem to show that only long-term, additional, extracurricular EFL lessons can compete with the incidental English that can be acquired through extensive media exposure. However, other external factors of language acquisition should not be overlooked when drawing conclusions on the influence of media on students' FL acquisition process inside and outside the formal education process.

Throughout the administered questionnaire, mostly focused on their media-exposure, students were also asked to provide information on their use of the English language in their free time, in communication with friends and family, tourists visiting their own country, or by travelling abroad. This study does not focus on parental influences or the parents' educational level, social status etc., but the collected data does give insight into the students' backgrounds by inquiring on the respondents' opportunities to speak this language at home, or opportunities to travel abroad and speak foreign languages.

Besides the results of Spearman ρ correlation tests between total EFL competence and students' years of formal EFL tuition as opposed to their total English-language media exposure, Table 19 also shows that the more frequently students use the English language with their friends, or at home, the more developed their EFL competence is. This statistically significant correlation shows a mutual relationship between language competences and the use of this language in informal communication. Similarly, in Table 16 we can also observe the statistically significant correlations of each EFL competence with the students' reported frequency of engagement in oral English-language communication with family, friends or with tourists visiting their home town. However, presently there is no way of concluding whether the conditions in which students use this language encourage the development of their EFL skills, or whether their EFL skills first need to reach a certain level as to allow them to use English freely in informal situations, in a Croatian context.

Additionally, Table 17 also shows that Spearman ρ correlation tests yield statistically significant results for the relationship between each EFL competence and how highly students rated the impact that family and friends had on their EFL vocabulary range. Again, this result confirms that students

who deem the informal influence of family and friends as being important factors in their language learning process are also students who reported a higher level of EFL proficiency. This should indicate that any interest in the English language and its use and competence by parents, siblings or other family members, as well as by groups of friends is likely to have a positive effect on high school students' EFL competences. What further research could explore is the relationship of parents' attitudes towards English as well as their EFL competence levels, with the students' engagement in media with English-language context. This kind of investigation would provide answers to whether the home environment and parents' use of this foreign language are in fact crucial in providing the initial input and motivation needed to turn a child's attention towards media which could, ultimately, provide benefits to their EFL competences and offer countless opportunities for early-on encounters with the language in question which allow for a continuous acquisition process in, what can now be considered, natural settings.

In relation to this, we might also argue that this type of influence is later exercised by, and dependent on friends, or groups of friends, who might define an adolescent's intrinsic motivation towards the English-language acquisition process, in order for them to fit in a group. Younger generations in Croatia are known to have been using English words and expressions since forums and chat rooms were the popular platforms for online communication (Nikolić-Hoyt 2006). Similarly, the results of the present research show that Instagram, YouTube and Facebook are the social media where students engage in most English-language communication, while they also report using English when messaging via WhatsApp (see Chapter 9.1.1.). On this account, the current results regarding English-language communication with friends also add to the findings of a recent study by Ćurković, Grbaš Jakšić and Garić (2017) which explored the use of English words and acronyms by Croatian primary school students (N = 157) in Zagreb, Croatia. The results of their research showed that most young students used both English words and acronyms on a daily basis[74], emphasizing they mostly use acronyms in communication via mobile phone or social media (ibid.). In that same study, the students were also asked to report the reasons behind such frequent use of the English language, and the most common answers stated it was a faster and easier way to

[74] Depending on the word, from 50% to 100% of the primary school students in the sample reported using the words *thanks, sorry, yes, no, bye, selfie, cool, hi, friend, nice* on a daily basis (Ćurković et al. 2017: 6), while the most popular acronyms were found to be, in order of popularity *OK, OMG, THX/ /THNX, LOL, BTW, BFF* (ibid.: 7).

communicate than by typing full Croatian words, as well as that “everybody uses English expressions” (ibid: 7). With that in mind, we could conclude that whether students are motivated or not to learn how to use the English language in informal communication with friends, does to some extent depend on their group, or groups, of friends who might support it, or might, conversely inhibit it.

On a different note, as for the impact of travelling to English-speaking countries on students' EFL vocabulary knowledge, travel abroad did not correlate with any of the students EFL competences (Table 17). It is important to stress that, nowadays, very high levels of EFL proficiency are attainable by Croatian high school students regardless of their linguistic contacts with native speakers, in countries where English is the official language. Only decades ago, travel or longer stays in countries where the FL in question was a native language, were considered the best opportunities for informal L2 acquisition in naturalistic settings, along with having a native speaker of the language as a family member (Carroll 1967). While this might still be the case for other foreign languages, as will later be discussed in Chapter 9.4.1., the results of this study show that incidental English language acquisition for Croatian learners is both much more frequently accessed via the media, as well as it is statistically more likely to benefit from media exposure than by visiting English-speaking countries.

The sections that follow make up the final chapter of *Results and Discussion* and will attempt to answer *Research question 4* by discussing the results of the already presented relationships of EFL competence and English-language media exposure, and comparing them to the results of correlations between IFL competence and Italian-language media exposure.

9.4. English-language media and students' EFL competences vs. Italian-language media and students' IFL competences

Firstly, when comparing the results for the two samples in question, we must take into consideration the total language competence levels given for the English language as opposed to the total levels reported for the Italian language. For the English language the total competence level amounts to C = 4.3 (Q = 3.5 – 4.7), whereas for the Italian language it resulted much lower, C = 2.9 (Q = 2.2 – 3.7), ($P<0.001$, Mann Whitney test).

In the following discussion on the correlations between language competence and media exposure I will focus on the differences which can be observed when comparing the results regarding the English language as opposed to the ones related to Italian.

Table 21. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific IFL competences and the Italian-language media or activities they engage in out of school. (N=316).

	Movies– Croatian TV with subtitles	**Movies – satellite channels**	**Movies – download /stream via**	**Music – CDs, MP3 players, etc.**	**Music via radio, TV**	**Music via Internet**	**Communication with friend and family**	**Video games**	**Reading news portals/ Internet**	**Writing comments / discussions on**
IFL speaking	0.226** **(<0.001)**	0.154** **(0.006)**	0.277** **(<0.001)**	0.291** **(<0.001)**	0.141* (0.012)	0.316** **(<0.001)**	0.330** **(<0.001)**	-0.032 (0.573)	0.148** **(0.008)**	0.205** **(<0.001)**
IFL listening	0.202** **(<0.001)**	0.208** **(<0.001)**	0.325** **(<0.001)**	0.337** **(<0.001)**	0.165** **(0.003)**	0.370** **(<0.001)**	0.362** **(<0.001)**	-0.046 (0.416)	0.190** **(0.001)**	0.106 (0.061)
IFL reading	0.254** **(<0.001)**	0.205** **(<0.001)**	0.343** **(<0.001)**	0.359** **(<0.001)**	0.070 (0.213)	0.344** **(<0.001)**	0.403** **(<0.001)**	-0.058 (0.301)	0.185** **(0.001)**	0.177** **(0.002)**
IFL writing	0.292** **(<0.001)**	0.216** **(<0.001)**	0.308** **(<0.001)**	0.325** **(<0.001)**	0.146** **(0.009)**	0.294** **(<0.001)**	0.385** **(<0.001)**	-0.025 (0.664)	0.184** **(0.001)**	0.184** **(0.001)**
IFL grammar	0.244** **(<0.001)**	0.140* **(0.013)**	0.269** **(<0.001)**	0.283** **(<0.001)**	0.098 (0.083)	0.234** **(<0.001)**	0.356** **(<0.001)**	0.006 (0.919)	0.165** **(0.003)**	0.144* **(0.010)**
IFL vocabulary	0.265** **(<0.001)**	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.338** **(<0.001)**	0.337** **(<0.001)**	0.160** **(0.004)**	0.305** **(<0.001)**	0.422** **(<0.001)**	-0.033 (0.565)	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.140* **(0.013)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

The Spearman *ρ* correlations between students' specific IFL competences and the Italian-language media they engage in out of the school environment are all statistically significant, with the exception of the relationship between video games and music listened to on the radio (*see Table*

21.). Even though most students[75] claimed never engaging in any form of media-involved activity with Italian language content, around 50% of the very students who did report a higher frequency of using Italian-language media[76] also reported highly developed IFL speaking, reading, writing skills, as well as IFL grammar and vocabulary competence (4 or 5 on Likert-type scales).

Table 22. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific IFL competences and their ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on their incidental vocabulary acquisition. (N=316).

	Music	**Movies/ TV**	**Video Games**	**Social Media**	**Websites/ portals**	**Travel abroad**	**With family/ Friends**
IFL speaking	0.287** **(<0.001)**	0.298** **(<0.001)**	-0.002 (0.975)	0.259** **(<0.001)**	0.106 (0.061)	0.301** **(<0.001)**	0.246** **(<0.001)**
IFL listening	0.361** **(<0.001)**	0.365** **(<0.001)**	0.007 (0.906)	0.282** **(<0.001)**	0.201** **(<0.001)**	0.402** **(<0.001)**	0.338** **(<0.001)**
IFL reading	0.343** **(<0.001)**	0.373** **(<0.001)**	-0.072 (0.205)	0.262** **(<0.001)**	0.104 (0.065)	0.283** **(<0.001)**	0.306** **(<0.001)**
IFL writing	0.320** **(<0.001)**	0.323** **(<0.001)**	-0.007 (0.896)	0.257** **(<0.001)**	0.159** **(0.005)**	0.300** **(<0.001)**	0.277** **(<0.001)**
IFL grammar	0.254** **(<0.001)**	0.264** **(<0.001)**	-0.001 (0.990)	0.200** **(<0.001)**	0.136* **(0.016)**	0.265** **(<0.001)**	0.302** **(<0.001)**
IFL vocabulary	0.345** **(<0.001)**	0.351** **(<0.001)**	0.026 (0.643)	0.303** **(<0.001)**	0.189** **(0.001)**	0.340** **(<0.001)**	0.354** **(<0.001)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

[75] Over 70% of the sample rated their enagement with a value of 1 or 2 on Likert-type scales with regard to watching Italian content on TV (N = 219), or on the Internet (N = 229), as well as listening to Italian music on different audio formats (N = 237). For the other activities, the percentage of students who negated their media exposure to the Italian language was over 90% and reaching 97% (N = 307) with regard to playing video games.

[76] With the exception of watching Italian audio-visual content on TV with Croatian subtitles, as less than 46% of students who state engaging in this particular activity very often aslo report better IFL competences.

Analogously, the results of correlations between students' IFL competences and their ratings of Italian-language activities' impact on their incidental IFL vocabulary acquisition also show significant relationships between most of the students' reported levels of IFL competences and the impact they attribute to the Italian language they encountered via music, TV, social media and other websites (see Table 22). Finally, analyses made in order to connect students' IFL competences to the modes in which they prefer to watch Italian movies or series, shows that the majority of the respondents in the sample watch audio-visual content in this language with the aid of Croatian subtitles and most of which reported an average level of IFL competence by rating their skills with a value of 3 on the Likert-type scale.

In comparison to the same correlation tests performed with regard to EFL competences and English-language media exposure, one important difference needs to be pointed out. While the results showed no statistically significant correlation between students' EFL competence levels and the frequency with which they engage in watching English-language content on TV with Croatian subtitles (*see Chapter 9.3.2.)*, watching Italian movies or series with the help of mother tongue subtitles does correlate with students' levels of IFL competence.

To some extent, the comparison between the media exposure to both English and Italian and their respective significant correlations to EFL and IFL competences gives potential answers as to the reasons behind the differences in EFL competence in "subtitling" and "dubbing countries". Namely, it could be argued that nowadays the disparity between the EFL fluency and comprehension of learners from subtitling countries in comparison to those in dubbing countries, highlighted in previous years (Koolstra et al. 2002), is outdated as the English language is now available to children and teenagers all around the globe, provided they have access to the Internet. However, research in recent years shows that EFL competences still seem to be more developed in countries where subtitles are the chosen form of audio-visual translation practice (see e.g., Enever 2011; Almeida and Costa 2013; Ivars Olmedo 2015).

In relation to this, the current results show that watching subtitled English-language content does not seem to have a significant relationship to Croatian teenagers' EFL competences anymore, as their engagement with online activities seems to have taken over, on the other hand their IFL competence levels are significantly correlated to watching Italian movies or shows with Croatian

subtitles. The findings can be interpreted as showing that the practice of subtitling can still be considered an important factor in providing FL input outside the school environment (e.g. for the Italian language), and perhaps the first source children are likely to use, before gaining the confidence or motivation, in the case of the English language, to reap the benefits of the current availability of the Internet and all the audio, audio-visual, textual content it provides in the English language, along with the possibilities it offers in terms of engaging in two-way communication in English.

The results emphasize that other mentioned types of extracurricular supply of English-language content significantly add to the benefits of subtitling, which can be considered the first step, or a sort of prerequisite to developing the mechanisms and interests required for the incidental acquisition of any foreign language via a regular and frequent media exposure to it. In summary, these results once again confirm the power of subtitling over dubbing in terms of the benefits it provides to any foreign-language acquisition process, and also shows that the non-institutional use of the English language has moved beyond that point for Croatian youngsters.

Table 23. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' specific IFL competences and the Italian-language content they seach for on the Internet. (N=316).

	Sports	**Fashion**	**Music**	**Daily News**	**Politics**	**Cuisine**	**Culture / Arts**	**Gossip News**	**Crime News**
IFL speaking	0.130* **(0.021)**	0.329** **(<0.001)**	0.293** **(<0.001)**	0.249** **(<0.001)**	0.118* **(0.036)**	0.123* **(0.028)**	0.169** **(0.003)**	0.109 (0.053)	0.156** **(0.005)**
IFL listening	0.009 (0.878)	0.348** **(<0.001)**	0.339** **(<0.001)**	0.175** **(0.002)**	0.050 (0.373)	0.172** **(0.002)**	0.241** **(<0.001)**	0.133* **(0.018)**	0.155** **(0.006)**
IFL reading	0.117* **(0.038)**	0.346** **(<0.001)**	0.330** **(<0.001)**	0.223** **(<0.001)**	0.095 (0.092)	0.146** **(0.009)**	0.161** **(0.004)**	0.101 (0.072)	0.113* **(0.046)**
IFL writing	0.109 (0.053)	0.334** **(<0.001)**	0.305** **(<0.001)**	0.187** **(0.001)**	0.089 (0.115)	0.151** **(0.007)**	0.206** **(<0.001)**	0.076 (0.178)	0.112* **(0.047)**
IFL grammar	0.083 (0.140)	0.203** **(<0.001)**	0.206** **(<0.001)**	0.200** **(<0.001)**	0.128* **(0.023)**	0.108 (0.054)	0.153** **(0.007)**	0.043 (0.448)	0.064 (0.258)
IFL vocabulary	0.120* (0.033)	0.367** **(<0.001)**	0.336** **(<0.001)**	0.292** **(<0.001)**	0.091 (0.105)	0.210** **(<0.001)**	0.236** **(<0.001)**	0.162** **(0.004)**	0.117* **(0.037)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

With regard to the correlations between respondents' specific IFL competences and the Italian-language content they search for on the Internet, the results (*see Table 23)* are similar to those linking their IFL competences to the frequency of engagement in media-involved activities (*see Table 21*). Most of the students' interests correlate with their levels of IFL competence, and an in-

depth analysis of respondents' answers show that, while most students[77] reported no interest in browsing for any content regarding these topics in the Italian language, over one half of the few students who did report a high interest, namely in the fields of *music, fashion* and *culture*, also reported above average levels in almost all IFL competences. While the field of *sports news* resulted as one of the most rated interests browsed for as Italian-language content *(see Chapter 9.2.5.),* this engagement does not correlate to any of their IFL competences, most probably confirming that the sports news content students report browsing does not provide a lot of verbal input, as already suggested when discussing the same results in relation to the English language in Chapter 9.3.6.

All of the results above show that any exposure to the language is likely to have an effect on learners' language skills, even if only improving them slightly. Once again, what needs to be stressed is the fact that a minority (not over 10%) of the sampled students reported a frequent out-of-school involvement with the Italian language via various media or other activities. Furthermore, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the results regarding the students' total EFL and IFL competences show a much higher overall proficiency of the English language. Accordingly, the results of correlations signalling a significant relationship of Italian media consumption with the levels of students IFL skills entail that any use of Italian media can improve learners' IFL levels, even if the results are not drastically better, when compared to the effects of English-language media exposure on EFL competences of Croatian high school students.

[77] Over 65% (N = 205) of the sample regarding *fashion*, and up to 98% (N =309) for *gossip news.*

9.4.1. EFL competence and English-language vs. IFL competence and Italian-language informal use with friends, family, and native speakers

Along with the correlations between IFL competence and formal tuition of and media exposure to the Italian language, which will be discussed in the following chapter, Table 24 also shows that the frequency of students' use of the Italian language with both family members and among friends, significantly correlates with the results of their total IFL competence. Furthermore, just as shown for the results regarding most Italian-language media-involved activities, the few students who do orally interact using the Italian language with their family members, friends or Italian tourists visiting their surroundings, reported significantly better developed IFL competences *(see Table 21).* Finally, the results also show that the higher the value with which students assessed their IFL competences, the higher they also rated the influence their home environment and friends had on their Italian vocabulary knowledge *(see Table 22).*

Table 24. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' total IFL competence and the duration of their formal IFL tuition, their Italian-language use with family and friends, the total of their media exposure to the Italian language out of the school environment. (N=316).

	Total IFL competence
Years of formal IFL tuition	0.421** **(<0.001)**
Italian-language use with family	0.327** **(<0.001)**
Italian-language use with friends	0.405** **(<0.001)**
Total media exposure to the Italian language	0.497** **(<0.001)**

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

As determined earlier for the English language *(see Chapter 9.3.9.),* it is probable that the informal acquisition of any other foreign language, Italian for instance, is likely to be influenced and motivated by a possibility to communicate in this language in children's or adolescents' immediate environments, i.e., with the family and/or with friends. In the present study specifically, the differences between the two languages in question lie also in the percentage of Croatian students who reported a frequent use of the English language with family and friends, as opposed to the percentage of students who reported often communicating in the Italian language at home or among friends. Correlation tests do prove a significant relation to the competences of both languages, however, while 16% (N = 59) and 24% (N = 86) of students reported using English in their free time every day (5 on a Likert-type scale) respectively with family and friends, for the Italian language this is the case for only 1% (N = 4) of respondents.

The extremely low percentage of students exposed to the Italian language in their home environments is to some extent a surprise, as the city of Split could be considered a location where the influence of the extended use of this particular language over centuries is still felt considerably, and it is debatable whether just a few decades ago the responses to these questions might have been different. Contrary to expectations, it seems as though the Italian language is no longer a language likely to be spoken or passed onto younger generations in the home environment, and is nowadays perhaps only present to a certain degree in the homes of families who make use of the local speech, abounding with elements of the Venetian and Triestine dialects, as well as borrowed from the standard Italian language (Bezić 2016).

In addition to this, while travelling to English speaking countries, as discussed in Chapter 9.3.9., does not correlate to students' EFL competences, on the other hand, visiting Italy indicated a statistically significant correlation to students' IFL competence *(see Table 22).* This result seems to confirm that, as discussed in the aforementioned chapter, the Italian language belongs to the group of foreign languages the competence of which is likely to depend on and improve in a native-speaking context, nowadays even for younger generations of the citizens of Split and its surroundings, which are seemingly no longer frequently exposed to this language in their own home or cultural environments as they used to be.

9.4.2. EFL and IFL competence in relation to the duration and types of formal learning vs. media exposure

Chapters 9.3.7. and 9.3.8. discussed the relationships between formal EFL learning, its duration and its various forms on the one hand, and students' total EFL competence as well as specific EFL competences on the other hand. Most notably, the results showed that the duration of regular, compulsory EFL school education does not correlate significantly to students' EFL competences, while one type of formal tuition which can compete with English-language media-exposure, in terms of showing significant correlations to students EFL competences, is represented by the extracurricular, additional EFL courses some students attend at foreign-language schools.

With regard to the Italian language, Table 24 shows that, just as is the case for the English language, the frequency of media exposure to the Italian language correlates with the level of students' total IFL competences. Here again, it is important to stress the overall levels of students' competences in terms of the Italian language which are nowhere near as high as those reported for the English language *(see Chapter 9.4.).* What this result emphasizes is the fact that, if Italian, or any other language for that matter, were represented in various media to the same extent as English, students would have equal opportunities of incidentally acquiring other FLs, via the same process of mere everyday exposure. In the Croatian context, this often is the case, to some extent, with Spanish and more recently Turkish– two languages often heard on TV due to numerous television series imported from Latin America and Turkey (Benković 2011).

With regard to formal tuition, the results differ considerably in connection to the Italian language. While the duration of formal EFL tuition did not correlate with the total EFL competence of high school students, the years of formal IFL school lessons significantly correlate with the students' reported IFL competence (*see Table 24.).* This points to the fact that, in the case of the Italian language and in contrast to the results observed in relation to English, the duration, frequency and intensity of formal school tuition do represent an important factor for the IFL acquisition process of Croatian high school learners.

What is more, no other forms of formal IFL tuition, such as attending Italian lessons privately or at foreign-language schools and courses in Croatia or abroad, correlate with students' total IFL competence *(see Table 25).*

Table 25. Spearman ρ correlation coefficients (and associated p-values) between students' total IFL competence and the duration and types of their formal IFL tuition. (N=316).

	Total IFL competence
Formal IFL tuition in Croatian schools	0.083 (0.140)
Formal IFL tuition in schools abroad	0.028 (0.615)
Extra IFL tuition in foreign language-schools	0.077 (0.174)
Extra IFL tuition via private instructions	-0.004 (0.950)
Extra IFL tuition in foreign language-schools abroad	0.035 (0.533)

**P<0.01
* P<0.05

This result can also be seen as indicating that, unlike what can be observed in relation to EFL competence, any higher levels of IFL competence from Croatian high school students in Split, are likely to be achieved exclusively through a formal learning process, according to longer or more intense hours in regular IFL classrooms.

The latter results add to all that is put forward in the discussions of this study's main findings by, once more, confirming the predominantly formal, and institutionalized, learning processes related to the Italian language of high school students in Split, as opposed to their distinct high levels of EFL competence which seem to be achieved predominantly via intense English-language media-exposure in the Croatian context.

10. CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I provide a brief description of the present study, followed by an account on main findings. The chapter also describes the possible implications of the study as well as offers suggestions for further research on the studied topics.

The present research was designed in order to determine the effects that the English language available via various media has on Croatian high school students in terms of bringing benefits to their EFL competence via exposure to such content in non-institutional settings. The second aim of this study was also to investigate the relationship between out-of-school exposure to the Italian language with the IFL competences of high-school learners in the city of Split, in order to compare it with the extent of the incidental acquisition process occurring for the English language. The Italian language was chosen both as an example of any other foreign language, besides English, which is being taught through formal education in Croatia, as well as due to the status it used to enjoy in this region and its influence on the local dialect.

In order to answer the study's research questions, data was collected by the means of two identical questionnaires which were completed by two respective samples of students, regarding the English (N = 363) and the Italian language (N = 316), from 8 different high schools in the city of Split, Croatia. The results can therefore be considered as representative of the population of teenagers in the corresponding urban area and its surroundings.

To the best of my knowledge, this is the first study to compare the L2 acquisition processes of two languages in terms of the influence via media exposure as opposed to formal tuition, in a location where neither is considered a native or official language. The study adds to existing research on incidental language acquisition in general, and more specifically on the non-institutional acquisition of the English language, made available on a global level via the advancements of media and technology. It also contributes to the limited body of literature exploring the use of Italian media, as well as incidental IFL acquisition in Croatia.

Once again, it is important to highlight that this study does not explore the language gains of different media use within the classroom walls, but the potential benefits that mere exposure to

various media provides to Croatian adolescents who choose to engage in them independently, in their free time, mostly for pleasure.

Research question 1 sought to determine the types of English-language media exposure which offer Croatian high school students EFL acquisition opportunities. In terms of determining the frequency with which students engage in various types of media with English-language content, the study has identified watching audio-visual materials as well as listening to music both via Internet platforms as the most frequently undertaken activities. This result confirmed that teenagers are, now more than ever, turning to the newest technologies and are more likely to encounter the English language online than via any other channels, such as TV channels with Croatian subtitles, or radio. Such habits promote the use of English even more since an extremely high percentage of content online is provided in this particular language.

As for the content that students most frequently seek for online in the English language, music was found to be the most popular topic by far – once again highlighting its importance as a potential source of English language input.

Interestingly, as for the respondents' preferred modes of viewing English-language audio-visual content, the collected data showed that more than 50% express a preference towards no mother-tongue translation, choosing to watch movies with English captions or no subtitles at all. This is a finding which additionally shows the level of proficiency that many Croatian youngsters feel they possess, allowing them to abandon subtitles altogether.

The study has also explored respondents' own opinions on the importance media has had on their out-of-school EFL vocabulary acquisition. Generally, television, music and social media, Instagram in particular, were pointed out as the sources that provided most EFL vocabulary input.

Very significantly, in comparison to the importance that around half of the learners' attribute to their formal EFL school education, more students (68%) expressed that they consider extramural media-exposure an indispensable factor of their English-language acquisition process. These findings stress the extent to which the omnipresence of English in the media has been overpowering the formal teaching and learning environment, as well as confirms students' awareness of the language-acquisition benefits exposure to media provides them with on a daily basis.

The objective of *Research question 2* was to compare students' exposure to English-language media to that of their Italian-language media exposure. The most significant findings show that, in first place, as expected, no type of media exposure to the Italian language can compare to the extent with which students are exposed to English. Most of the respondents, in fact, never engage in any Italian-related media. Italian movies on television and music online are confirmed as being encountered slightly more often than other content, and the low number of respondents who do make use of Italian media also find music and movies to have had an important impact on their IFL vocabulary skills.

Furthermore, the collected data showed that, as opposed to how they feel about English-spoken movies, a great number of students choose to watch Italian movies provided with mother-tongue subtitles. However, unexpectedly, the data revealed another interesting result, showing that a third of the students would not mind watching Croatian-dubbed Italian movies. Even though it should be further explored, this result challenges the common belief that Croatians are, on the whole, unfavourably disposed towards the dubbing practice, and suggests that a preference towards subtitles as opposed to dubbing is perhaps valid only in the case of English-language audio-visual material, to which the viewers are most commonly exposed. This is also a finding which can be seen as shedding light on the unique status of the English language in the Croatian context.

In addition to this, the present study also uncovered the drastic difference in students' perspectives on the major sources of their English versus Italian language competence, showing that most students (85%) state that, as opposed to what the results showed about their opinions on the influence media exerts on their EFL skills, the means through which they acquire the Italian language is entirely formal tuition. This is valuable information as it additionally points to the awareness that Croatian learners have about the impact of extramural English on their EFL acquisition process, as well as the lack of such out-of-school circumstances which could influence their Italian competences.

In order to reach in-depth conclusions on students' media consumption habits, the study also investigated the differences between the types of media exposure for female, as opposed to male students, with regard to both languages. In relation to the English language, major differences were noticed for the activity of gaming, where, in line with many other previous studies, male students showed a significantly higher engagement. Accordingly, 50% of boys also credit video games as

the media which has had most impact on their EFL vocabulary competence. On the other hand, the exposure of female students resulted higher with regard to all other English language-related media, with girls also assigning higher values to music, movies and social media in terms of the influence exercised on their EFL vocabulary knowledge. As for gender contrasts with regard to the English-language topics that interest them and which they browse for online, the greatest differences consist of boys' strong inclination towards sports content, as opposed to girls' interest in fashion.

Both male and female high school students' fields of interest showed being similar for both languages, while being significantly less pursued in Italian. However, the one difference which is worth highlighting is that, in comparison to how they rated the influence of out-of-school activities on their English vocabulary, female students consider travel to Italy a stronger influence on their IFL vocabulary than any of the media in question. Once again, this points to learners' awareness of the benefits media exposure can bring to their English language skills, as opposed to the absence of a comparable presence by the Italian language, such exposure to which can only be attained by visiting the very country where this is a native language.

The research also found significant differences between the English-language media exposure of general-education, as opposed to vocational high school students. As expected, general-education students who are commonly known to possess a higher level of EFL knowledge, are more apt to listening to EL music online, and showing their productive skills by using English to write comments or discussions online. The same students are also more keen on reading articles, blog posts or news portals in the English language, and in particular, show a higher interest towards culture and arts, politics, daily news, as well as gossip news, most of which probably require a higher level of receptive EFL skills. Accordingly, all media, apart from music and video games, are considered as having higher informal impact on EFL vocabulary competence by general-education students. This evidence is relevant in terms of gaining insight into what type of out-of-school English input can be expected from pupils in general-education schools and students being taught EFL in vocational schools' classrooms, as well as it provides insight into the likely EFL content and vocabulary that is most usually picked up by male, as opposed to female students. As for the Italian language, such differences across genders and school types are not considered substantial as very low numbers of students confirmed having any contact with Italian media altogether, regardless of their gender and the school they attend.

The main goal of the present research was to explore the relationship between students' EFL competence levels and their engagement in English-language media outside the formal learning environment.

Online streaming and downloading audio-visual content, as well as listening to music via Internet platforms, the two English-language media-related activities confirmed by this study as being undertaken most frequently by students in their free time, both showed statistically significant correlations with learners' EFL competence levels. While all language skills, as well as grammar and vocabulary seem to profit from watching English-spoken movies and series online, most probably without Croatian subtitles, the activity of listening to EL music, online, via the radio or other audio formats, seems to have a stronger connection to receptive skills, and one productive skill – speaking in English. The fact that writing skills as well as grammar competences are more likely to benefit from viewing movies online than by listening to music, is a plausible result, if we consider that some audio-visual material online is likely to be accompanied by same-language captions, additionally providing learners with written form of the language that is being spoken.

One of the notable findings to emerge from this study is that, unlike the results of correlations between exposure to audio-visual content online and pupils' EFL competences, the activity of watching English-language movies or series with Croatian subtitles on TV did not prove to be significantly correlated to their language proficiency, and what is more, showed a negative correlation to each of the students' EFL competences. This result reveals that mere exposure to imported TV content with the aid of mother-tongue subtitles does not entail the development of EFL proficiency. It also suggests that it is students' choice to engage in other types of media exposure to this language that is more likely to result in above-average levels of competence shown by teenagers in Croatia.

One type of such media exposure seems to be the aforementioned use of digital platforms to access EL audio-visual material provided with no translation or only English captions. For male students in particular, what proved being a very useful and significant tool for incidental EFL acquisition is playing video games with English language content. Specifically, this activity considerably affects the development of pupils' English word stock, very likely in the fields of battle and/or sports, as well as grammar competence and writing skills. Lastly, reading English texts and writing in English

online have also both resulted as correlated to all of the students' English-language competences. Both reading complex texts as well as writing comments in English require more effort as well as a higher level of language competence in order to engage in deducting meaning from context and using productive language skills. These activities, which, as the present findings show, are not undertaken by students as frequently as other media-related activities involving movies, music and video games, are most likely to bring benefits to general-education high school students, who state a significantly more frequent engagement.

The specific English-language media-content the students look for on the Internet, which this study identified as being significantly related to their EFL competences, is music. As music-content resulted by far the most frequently browsed for topic, it could be predicted that interest in music, and motivation to access information regarding this field often generate EFL language learning opportunities and encourage informal EFL acquisition for a majority of high school students. As predicted, some of the other, less commonly browsed for topics, such as politics or culture, which can be viewed as more complex content, the understanding of which requires more effort as well as a solid level of language knowledge to begin with, also show statistically significant correlations to students' EFL skills.

With reference to students' preferences in terms of the modes in which they enjoy watching English-spoken audio-visual content, as expected, higher competence levels are reported by students who opt for English-language captions or no subtitles as opposed to Croatian subtitles, as well as those who reckon that subtitling is an advantage over the dubbing system. It is indeed reasonable to expect any wish for the uncommon practice of dubbing in the Croatian context to come only from learners with less developed language skills.

Among other questions, this study aimed to determine the relationship between students' levels of EFL competence and the attitudes they have towards the relevance that specific media, as opposed to formal EFL tuition, have for their EFL acquisition process. Firstly, the findings show that most students who consider themselves proficient users of the English language ascribe much of their current knowledge to audio or audio-visual content, primarily movies and music. Secondly, with regard to video games, EFL competence levels are found to be strongly statistically correlated to, specifically, male students who highly rated the effect gaming has had on their English word

stock. Finally, correlation tests also showed higher levels of EFL competence with students who value both social media and other websites significantly more highly in terms of the influence on their EFL vocabulary range.

Besides discovering that many students prioritize the influence and importance of media exposure over their EFL school lessons when considering their EFL acquisition process, the present study results are also valuable as they reveal that the students who find that their EFL competence is primarily a result of English-language media exposure also report statistically higher levels of development for all EFL competences in question, when compared to the learners who ascribe most of their EFL knowledge to formal EFL education. This finding can be viewed as one showing that currently, everyday media exposure to the English language is likely to bring more benefits to the EFL acquisition of young Croatians then the formal process of language leaning.

To achieve a better understanding regarding this matter, several external factors of L2 acquisition were additionally explored as to compare their influence to that of media, in terms of students' English-language acquisition outside the formal classroom environment. The results of correlations showed that, the more frequently students confirm using the English language with their friends, in their home environment with family, or by interacting with tourists visiting their country**,** the more developed their EFL competences are. Similarly, statistically significant results were found for the connection between each EFL competence and how highly students rated the impact that family and friends have had on their EFL vocabulary knowledge so far. As many of the students participating in this study have pointed to Instagram, YouTube, Facebook and even WhatsApp as platforms where they engage in most English-language communication, it could be said that whether or not Croatian learners are motivated to use the English language in informal communication is also likely to depend on their groups of friends who might support it or not. Furthermore, these results could indicate that EFL competence as well as the use of, and attitudes towards the English language of learners' parents, or other family members are likely to stimulate children's interest and could further be explored as a potential prerequisite for some learners' early-on encounters with the English language via media which then allow for a continuous acquisition process, in what can nowadays be considered natural settings.

Conversely, travel to English-speaking countries showed no correlation to any of the students EFL competences - a finding which also points into the direction of very high levels of EFL proficiency by Croatian high school students, which are nowadays attained regardless of any linguistic contacts with native speakers in countries where English is the official language, but most likely via continuous media exposure.

In order to gain more insight into the influence of media exposure on Croatian students' EFL skills, this study also set out to compare the interdependence of EFL competences and English-language media exposure, as opposed to its dependence on the duration and types of formal EFL learning. One of this studies' key findings confirms a statistically significant correlation between the use of media and students' total EFL competence, while it also shows no statistically significant relationship between their EFL competence and the duration of their formal EFL education. Remarkably, this implies that time spent engaging in media with English-language content is more likely to bring benefits to EFL proficiency than time spent in the language classroom. Such a result does not negate the benefits of formal EFL tuition, but it does, however, highlight that, at this time, exposure to the omnipresent English-language media might result in an even more effective L2 acquisition process with Croatian students, precisely as this study aimed to bring to light.

On the other hand, unlike the students who confirm attending an EFL education in Croatia, the EFL competences of students who attended primary or secondary schools abroad, resulted in a negative correlation to their EFL competence**.** This is a finding which seems to suggest that the Croatian educational system provides a more positive impact on the development of learners' high levels of EFL competence than perhaps some other country contexts. However, this result, could again be due not only to the context of Croatian policies in terms of L2 education, but also to this country context with regard to policies and attitudes towards English-language media in general, for instance, the use of a subtitling translation practice for imported audio-visual material.

Considering all of what is stated above, the high proficiency levels as well as the great differences in Croatian high school students' EFL competence seem to be due to the frequency, duration or intensity of their individual English-language media exposure out of the school environment. One final test was performed as to check whether other, additional formal language-learning activities are also responsible for EFL proficiency. The results show that only attending extracurricular EFL

lessons at foreign-language schools has a strong statistically significant correlation to students' competence, and therefore suggest that only this type of additional formal instruction can compare to and promote the levels of proficiency that students reach by everyday media exposure to content in the English language.

Finally, *Research question 4* sought to explore the relationship between EFL competences and English-language media exposure by comparing it to the relationship of IFL competences and Italian media exposure. Firstly, as highlighted throughout the discussion on study results, when comparing the two, one must keep in mind that for the English language the total competence level of the participants in the current study amounted to C = 4.3 (Q = 3.5 – 4.7), unlike the much lower total Italian language competence C = 2.9 (Q = 2.2 – 3.7).

Even though most students reported virtually never being exposed to Italian-language media, the results show statistically significant relationships between IFL competences and engagement in the Italian media a minority of students (approx. 10%) claimed having some contact with. One important difference needs to be emphasized in comparison to the equivalent correlation tests performed concerning EFL competences and English-language media exposure: while tests showed a negative correlation between pupils' EFL proficiency levels and the frequency of viewing subtitled English-spoken content on Croatian TV, this correlation proved to be significant in the case of the relationship between Italian audio-visual content and IFL competence.

This is a key result which goes back to draw attention to the beneficial effects that mother-tongue subtitles can have on the L2 learning process, when opposed to the practices of voice-over or dubbing of imported foreign language TV content or cinema programme. While subtitling should certainly still be considered as a powerful tool for the acquisition of any foreign language, the presently conducted comparison of the potential influence of subtitling on the language acquisition effects for these two languages clearly indicates that, in the case of the English language, many other available sources are now likely to increase the levels of Croatian teenagers' EFL proficiency, beyond what mere exposure to subtitled TV can achieve.

However, this insightful result can be taken as an indication suggesting that the considerable differences in EFL competence which are usually noticed in "subtitling" as opposed to "dubbing countries", are likely to remain similar even with the advent of the Internet and more English-

language availability, as subtitling can still be considered one of the first steps towards developing the mechanisms and interests required for incidental L2 acquisition via a regular and frequent media exposure to it.

The relationships between students' use of the English or Italian language with friends and/or family and their self-reported levels of respective EFL and IFL competences were also compared in order to observe the differences in the benefits that other external factors, besides media exposure, can bring to the acquisition processes of the two languages. As with the English language, correlation tests show significantly better IFL competences for the low percentages of students who claimed they make use of the Italian language in informal, out-of-school communication with either family members, friends or tourists, as well as for those who highly rated the influence their home and friends have on their Italian vocabulary acquisition. However, these results, showing that young people in the city of Split are so rarely exposed to the Italian language in their homes, were also a surprise as this language's use and status over the centuries has left considerable impact on the local speech, and was expected to still have a stronger presence in a larger number of students' family environments. In support of this finding, results also showed that visiting Italy indicated a statistically significant correlation to learners' IFL competences, while this did not result so for the correlation tests regarding travel to English-speaking countries. This difference, once again, confirms that, at the present time the Italian language in this region can be viewed exclusively as a foreign language likely to be acquired informally by younger generations only by interaction in a native-speaking context, in contrast to the English language, whose informal acquisition has become a constant via its representation in the media. Finally, the total Italian-language media exposure correlated with the level of students' total IFL competences, as is also the case for the relationship of media exposure and competence levels regarding the English language. Even though, as the results of the study also show, the overall levels of students' IFL competences are not nearly as developed as those they reported in relation to English, these findings indicate that a greater representation of Italian in the media would perhaps foster its incidental acquisition via everyday exposure, just as it does for the English language.

On the other hand, the years of formal IFL school education significantly correlate with the students' reported IFL competence, pointing to the fact that, in contrast to the results observed in

relation to English, any higher levels of IFL competence from Croatian high school students in Split, are likely to be achieved solely via the formal learning process. In fact, all of the results of the present study point to a predominantly institutionalized learning processes in relation to the Italian language, as opposed to students' distinct high levels of EFL competence which they seem to achieve predominantly via intense English-language media-exposure the Croatian context provides.

This study draws attention to the status of the English language in Croatia, and sets it apart from the Italian language - taken as both an example of another foreign language taught within the programmes of formal school education in this country context, as well as the representative of a language which, in the geographical area of Split and its surroundings, was formerly used throughout centuries in much the same ways we now view and use the English language on a daily basis. As previously explained, many historical circumstances have led to not that distant points in time when the Italian language was considered indispensable as both a *lingua franca* and a language used for official, formal communication, as well as a prestigious language used by educated members of society. Moreover, the local speech, mostly an informal, conversational dialect, used in this location regardless of status or education, was also heavily influenced by both the Italian language as well as the Venetian and Triestine dialect. As expected, and as the results of the present study have also fully confirmed, the Italian language seems to have lost its former status in many ways. Firstly, the perception of it as a *lingua franca* in any subject area, or the notion of it being a prestigious language one needs to be acquainted with to some extent as to communicate outside their immediate environment, seems to have dissolved entirely, as most young people never make use of it via the media. Secondly, its status of a second language in this geographical area has seemingly disappeared as most students have confirmed they never speak or encounter the language in any form within their family and home environment. Thirdly, the fact that many of the expressions and words still in use via the modern-day local speech in Split are in fact of Italian or Venetian origin, does not seem to be perceived as much help in the acquisition process, although this is a matter which was not covered by the study and should be further explored.

When discussing the process of "Americanization" of the Croatian language, Ćurković et al. (2017: 11) invite us to reflect on what might have happened to the Croatian language when faced with the

use of German or Hungarian, had the Austro-Hungarian Empire been able to access the media we use nowadays. Namely, just as historical events can be taken as underlying causes for centuries of Italian-language use in both private and public spheres of life on the Croatian coastline, today, events such as globalization, technological advancements and media dominance determine the status of "second language" that English has started to enjoy in the Croatian context.

The reason I highlight the importance of acknowledging this relatively recent shift from English being perceived as a foreign language to the idea of it being second language, stems from the fact that, even though Croatia is not a native English-speaking country, the expansion of this language in terms of its ever-growing availability via various media is creating more and more opportunities for incidental English-language acquisition by young generations in what we can now certainly consider natural, while also virtual, environments. The present study shows that students indeed report very high levels of English-language proficiency, which they considerably ascribe to media exposure. The research also confirms their opinions by showing that learners who have more interest in and use English-language media more often, also report better developed competences. Furthermore, it finds that a considerable portion of students show interest in and consume each of the media addressed by the present research with English language content. The respondents even confirm a frequent engagement in searching for content on the Internet specifically in the English language, in many of the considered fields of interest. What is more, students also reveal using English to perform media-related activities which require a lot of knowledge and effort on their part, such as watching original movies with no translation or writing in English online to discuss varied topics. Finally, Croatian teenagers also report using this language in everyday oral and written communication with friends as well as family members. All of the evidence above points to new generations headed in the direction of becoming Croatian-English bilinguals in the near future.

On top of this, the study raises important questions by showing that the level of Croatian students' English-language competences is not correlated to their formal EFL tuition, as opposed to being in a significant correlation to the frequency of English-language media exposure. The relevance of this result is clearly supported by the fact that students' levels of Italian language competence are, in contrast, expectedly related to the duration of their formal Italian foreign language tuition. This

is yet another finding which points to the need for a substantially different approach to the two languages, or more specifically a different teaching and learning approach to the English language in Croatian schools, as opposed to all other foreign languages.

All the results presented by this study indicate that English-language media is an extremely important factor of L2 acquisition in the Croatian contexts. Such findings, naturally, have implications for the process of formal English-language teaching and learning within the classroom walls.

The programmes of English-language teaching in both primary and secondary schools in Croatia could benefit from restructuring their approaches to embrace this paradigm shift. While spending large amounts of time with the media used to be considered a waste of precious time and a characteristic of idle students, conversely, nowadays, not having an affinity towards playing videogames, watching season after season of popular TV shows, or listening to predominantly Croatian music, seems to have powerful negative consequences when assessing the EFL competences of such teenagers, in comparison to those who seem to be doing nothing else but making use of the language-learning opportunities offered by the media.

We should not forget that, although a majority of respondents state engaging in English-language media-related activities frequently in their free time, not all students confirm this, or at least not to the same extent. While intense media consumption might not seem an asset during their scholastic years, not having a strong background and knowledge of the English language might indeed prove to be detrimental when faced with a global English-speaking society. Judging by the present results, it is reasonable to deduce that current EFL tuition methods are not likely to have the means of compensating for the latter students' lack of media exposure to the English language. This is why more attention should also be given to finding ways of achieving a degree of balance in the English-language acquisition process of youngsters who devour the contents of new media, with the children or adolescent who are less prone to such activities, in order to reconcile and stimulate the linguistic and cultural needs of, as well as assessment methods for these two, or more, very different groups of English-language students.

The first step towards innovative change is to acknowledge the overwhelming presence of English content in the lives of most Croatian teenagers and accept to what extent the English language of the media can influence learners' competences today. Given the ever-growing challenges of a digital age where the uses of technology, virtual environments and various social media for communication on a global level are only likely to increase, the new opportunities which allow a steady, natural and pleasurable acquisition of the English language beyond the classroom, should not be dismissed, feared, overlooked or underestimated by educators, but instead made the most of, both within the formal learning environment, as well as encouraged and promoted in students' free time.

The findings of the present research should be considered as relevant to the teaching profession, to textbook authors, and all in charge of determining teaching policies. Teachers will certainly profit from looking into the current habits, interests, needs of young language learners, which might be beneficial out of the classroom, but might also heavily influence their interest during time allocated to formal learning. Thought should be given to the fact students are free to choose the English-language topics they engage in independently in their free time and to consider the presence of high levels of motivation which increase the chances for incidental language acquisition. A better understanding of the individual vocabularies learners are likely to develop during their online activities might help guide the students by teaching useful learning strategies with the aim of attaining specific learning goals. For instance, the investigated gender differences and differences shown between the habits and interests of general-education as opposed to vocational students could offer inspiration with regard to the topics that might be expanded in class and which might motivate different groups of learners to achieve more language skills inside and outside the school walls. Teachers should strive to motivate students to use and profit from the availability of this language outside the classroom, but also need to be up to date with the input the students are provided with regardless of their lessons, in order to optimize learning conditions as well as use their expertise and retain their authority.

This research highlights the need to be in touch with the many sources of incidental English-language acquisition that are provided by the media, in Croatia or elsewhere, as well as be acquainted with the popular means and content the students might seek for and gain in the English

language outside the school environment. Such awareness can and should be used as to approach the teaching and learning processes in new, appropriate ways, perhaps even elevate the tuition process to encompass or complement the incidental acquisition processes that go on without particular effort from the students, mostly unconsciously. Being aware of how, where, when and why students use the English language in their spare time undoubtedly gives clues as to how such knowledge could be integrated into students' school lessons and therefore increase the chances for successful formal teaching and learning. On the other hand, such possibilities seem to be unavailable with regard to the formal teaching process of Italian which, as probably other foreign languages as well, is likely to continue being restricted to the FL classroom. As formal English-language learning and informal English-language acquisition via media exposure seem to have become intertwined, they need to be considered as the complementary processes they are, and the infinite possibilities of informal English acquisition should be embraced as both an extension of the educational programme for some learners, as well as the starting point and foundations to build upon in the classroom for other, more numerous students.

10.1. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The questions that remain unanswered by the findings of the present research might serve as a guideline and inspiration for future studies. To conclude, here I will provide a list of possible future directions which can be taken to further the exploration of matters discussed in the present study.

What needs to be pointed out is that the findings of the current study are based on pupils' self-report which is known to be biased to some extent. This is why care should be taken to further explore all of the discussed topics and complement the here obtained results by:

1) collecting also qualitative data via e.g., individual interviews with students, teachers and/or students' parents. Interviews may be conducted with learners, as well as their parents as to gain more information on the habits by which, and circumstances which favour children's and adolescents' acquisition of the English language via each of the media explored throughout the

current study. Interviews, open end questionnaire items, or diaries could, for instance, attempt to explore the reasons behind what this study has found to be Croatian teenagers' frequent Internet use to access English-language content. It would be helpful to gain insight into whether such behaviour is due to the general omnipresence of this language online, or an elevated need for a language other than the mother tongue to cover a wider array of topics of their interest, the need for which should also be compared to similar behaviours in other country contexts. Among other matters, students' involvement with EL music should also be further explored and seriously approached in terms of its affordances for language learning, which as the present results revealed, are most likely to be lessons in vocabulary and grammar as music resulted as the most popular EL online content, and one of the two most popular English-language media students are exposed to. Furthermore, by interviewing secondary, as well as primary school teachers more data could be collected and analysed with the aim of precisely identifying the current challenges which formal English-language teaching is facing, as well as suggesting, determining specific solutions with a focus on redesigning and updating the current approach to teaching EFL.

2) conducting longitudinal research over a longer period of time as to gain full insight into the specific duration, intensity of and ways in which Croatian students make use of English-language media, and the circumstances which allow them to achieve English-language proficiency spontaneously. An intriguing result of the present study, which should definitely be further explored, shows that watching subtitled TV does not necessarily improve and is even negatively correlated to some Croatian students' EFL skills. This highlights that while virtually all adolescents watch supposedly similar amounts of TV content in the original English language, they do not end up with a uniform knowledge of this language. It is my assumption that while subtitles offer many opportunities for language learning, not all learners are able or interested in grasping these opportunities equally as a result of both external, background factors, such as family influence, of internal, such as motivation or cognitive capabilities. Further research could perhaps explore which specific motivational factors are most likely to generate an interest in out-of-school activities involving the use of the English language, as well as explore the cognitive processes which assist or inhibit the incidental acquisition of this omnipresent language as to reach conclusions on why

some Croatian learners are still not making use of such accessibility to the English-language, at least not to the same level as the majority.

3) conducting similar cross-countries investigations as to draw conclusions on the influence media exposure is bringing to other English-language learning environments, and to shed light onto the conditions in which extensive media exposure is allowed to take place and bring benefits to the incidental English-language acquisition process. For instance, the current results seem to suggest that the Croatian educational system provides a context with a more positive impact on EFL competence than perhaps some other country contexts, however, before such conclusions are made, larger samples of students who attend formal EFL education in different countries would need to be taken into consideration. What is more, the present results also suggest that it is the extent of media-exposure that brings more benefits to the EFL proficiency of Croatian teenagers than formal EFL tuition. We therefore also need to consider whether media exposure to the English language is available to the same extent and brings the same benefits in the other country contexts which are taken under consideration. A similar comparison to the media-exposure and its influence on EFL competence could be conducted in other European countries where the standard practice for the translation of audio-visual material is dubbing, as to conclude whether total EFL levels are altogether improved in "subtitling countries" due to this type of media exposure, regardless of the availability of English-language music, the Internet etc.

4) expanding this investigation by encompassing primary school pupils, or even younger children, as to better understand the conditions and points in time when different media exposure to the English language might start taking place in the lives of younger generations, in order to consider the implications of these processes. This is how the effects of an early start via English lessons in kindergarten or additional time spent learning English in foreign language schools can also be explored in comparison to the influence of media exposure.

4) conducting similar research by including other country regions as to strengthen the claims of the present study by targeting all of Croatia's population. In addition, the ways in which the English language is being incidentally acquired nowadays could also be observed in comparison to foreign languages other than Italian in both this region, country, as well as in other locations.

The evidence presented here confirms that it is by no means correct to consider English as a “foreign language” any longer in the Croatian context and that it is also high time to approach future education programmes in the field with the present findings in mind. For better or for worse, young generations are immersed into a wide range of content provided in the English language, and it is fair to assume that the range of activities involving this particular language is going to multiply in the foreseeable future. The inevitable use of the English language on a global level, and the rapid spread of English-language content facilitated by new media, has created a world where developing a solid, or even excellent command of this language has become and is increasingly proving to be a necessity, a prerequisite for globally successful communication in both professional and private life areas. It is therefore of utmost importance to raise awareness regarding the informal L2 acquisition processes made available by the means of different media, and to finally integrate them as to assist, complement, stimulate and interact with the formal teaching and learning processes.

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SUMMARY

This thesis explores the frequency of English-language (EL) media-usage by Croatian high school students in the city of Split, and its influence on English foreign language (EFL) competences. In addition, this relationship is also explored in comparison to students' exposure to Italian-language (IL) media and its influence on Italian foreign language (IFL), where the Italian language is taken as both an example of another FL taught within the Croatian educational system, as well as a language which has had considerable influence in the region of Dalmatia due to historical reasons and geographical proximity. The study includes an overview of relevant literature on SLA, explicit and implicit leaning, the past and present statuses of the EL and IL, external and internal factors of L2 acquisition, out-of-school EL exposure via different media and its effects on formal language learning outcomes. The research was carried out by means of questionnaires administered to over 650 students of 8 general-education and vocational schools in the urban area of the city of Split, Croatia. Along with a descriptive analysis of the results, inferential tests of statistical significance were carried out to reach conclusions on the relationship between the EFL competences of students and the out-of-school exposure to EL media. Finally, the EL media-related influence on EFL competences was also compared to the influence Italian media has on IFL competences, to gain insight into the dissimilar media presence of these languages and stress the need for different approaches in the process of formal language learning. The results highlight watching EL audio-visual material and listening to EL music both via Internet platforms, rather than by way of older media, as the most frequently undertaken activities, with music being the content most frequently browsed for online. Both activities show statistically significant correlations to learners' EFL competence levels, with all language skills, grammar and vocabulary profiting from English-spoken movies online, and with EL music bringing benefits to speaking and receptive skills. For male students specifically, playing video games with EL content seems to considerably affect word stock, grammar competence and writing skills. Reading EL texts and writing in English online were found to be likely to benefit general-education students, who confirm significantly more frequent engagement. Respondents pointed out TV, music and social media, Instagram in particular, as sources providing most EFL vocabulary input, while 50% stated they prefer watching EL movies with EL captions or no subtitles, rather than with Croatian

subtitles, suggesting they possess high levels of proficiency. On the other hand, and notably, watching EL content with Croatian subtitles on TV showed a negative correlation to each of students' EFL competences, suggesting that it is their choice to engage in other types of media which results in above-average levels of competence shown by teenagers in Croatia. Significantly, many (68%) found extramural media-exposure to be an indispensable factor of their EL acquisition process, in comparison to formal EFL school education. A valuable result reveals that students who find that their EFL competence is primarily a result of EL media exposure also reported statistically higher levels for all EFL competences in question. The findings confirm significant correlations between the use of media and students' total EFL competence, while showing no significant relationship between their competence and the duration of their formal EFL education. In addition, the results suggest that attending extracurricular EFL lessons at foreign-language schools is the only type of formal instruction which can compare and promote the levels of proficiency that students reach via EL media exposure. The performed Mann Whitney tests show that no type of media exposure to the Italian language can compare to the extent with which students are exposed to English. Exploring the relationship between EFL competences and EL media exposure by comparing it to the relationship of IFL competences and IL media exposure showed that, while most students confirmed never engaging in any Italian-related media, significantly better IFL competences were reported by the minority (10%) of students who claimed to have some contact with IL media. In addition, the total IFL competences of students were significantly lower than the total EFL competences. Importantly, unlike EFL competence, IFL competence levels showed a positive correlation to viewing subtitled L2 content on Croatian TV, once again highlighting the beneficial effects of the L1 subtitling practice on L2 acquisition in "subtitling countries" as opposed to "dubbing countries", while also drawing attention to the fact that, in the case of the English language in the Croatian context, many other available sources are likely to increase EFL proficiency, beyond what exposure to subtitled TV can achieve. Drastic differences were shown in students' perspectives on major sources of their English versus Italian language competence, where most students (85%) claimed they acquire the IL entirely via formal tuition. Moreover, regardless of the centuries-long local use of this language and its impact on local speech, the results show that young generations in Split and its surroundings are also rarely exposed to the Italian language in their home environments, and that at the present time, Italian is viewed exclusively as a foreign

language, in contrast to English whose informal acquisition has become a constant via its representation in the media. The study contributes to existing research on incidental language acquisition in general, and more specifically to the non-institutional acquisition of the English language, made available globally via media and technology advancements. The research also gains insight into the use of Italian media, as well as incidental IFL acquisition in Croatia.

KEY WORDS: incidental language acquisition; SLA; media exposure; ESL; EFL; Italian language; Croatian high school students

SAŽETAK

Utjecaj izloženosti medijima na engleske jezične kompetencije u usporedbi s talijanskima kod učenika srednjih škola u Splitu

Ovaj doktorski rad temelji se na izvornom istraživanju o učestalosti korištenja medija na engleskom jeziku (EJ) kod srednjoškolaca u Hrvatskoj te utjecaju koji takav kontekst ima na jezične kompetencije. Izloženost medijima i utjecaj koji ima na jezične kompetencije dodatno se istražuje i za talijanski jezik (TJ), uzimajući ga kao primjer medijski manje prisutnog jezika, a koji se podučava u srednjim školama u Hrvatskoj, te ima povijesni značaj u gradu Splitu i okolici. Autorica iznosi detaljan prikaz relevantne literature te rezultate istraživanja provedenog upitnikom na uzorku od preko 650 učenika osam gimnazija i strukovnih škola u gradu Splitu. Uz deskriptivnu analizu, inferencijalni statistički testovi provedeni su kako bi se donijeli zaključci o povezanosti EJ kompetencija učenika s izlaganjem medijima na tom jeziku izvan učionice, a utjecaj medija na EJ kompetencije usporedio se i s utjecajem talijanskih medija na TJ kompetencije, radi stjecanja uvida u različitu medijsku prisutnosti dvaju jezika i naglašavanja potrebe za različitim pristupom kod formalnog procesa učenja.

Sveprisutnost u medijima uslijed globalizacije i razvoja tehnologije pridonosi stalnom mijenjanju statusa engleskog kao stranog jezika u cijelom svijetu, pa tako i u Hrvatskoj. Još prije dva desetljeća EJ smatrao se isključivo stranim jezikom, koji su hrvatski učenici pretežito usvajali formalnim putem, u školskoj nastavi. Rastućom popularnošću interneta, *download i streaming* platformi, društvenih mreža i videoigara engleskog jezičnog sadržaja, uz sveprisutnost glazbe i televizijskih kanala na EJ, kao i prisutnosti titlova kao sredstva prijevoda audio-vizualnih materijala, EJ se u Hrvatskoj više ne uči isključivo formalnim putem, već se uvelike usvaja i implicitno od najranije dobi. Predmet istraživanja odabran je slijedom dugogodišnjeg autoričinog iskustva u nastavi EJ i TJ u srednjim školama, gdje se sve češće mogu primijetiti visoko razvijene EJ kompetencije onih učenika koji često koriste medije EJ sadržaja izvan učionice, a koje izlaze iz okvira programa propisanog za nastavu u srednjim školama, a što nije slučaj na nastavi talijanskog koji je tradicionalno prisutan u Dalmaciji zbog povijesnog i geografskog konteksta.

Rad polazi upravo od pretpostavke da je danas izlaganje medijima na engleskom jeziku bitan dio društvenog konteksta hrvatskih učenika engleskog jezika i jedan od ključnih faktora za razumijevanje njihovog procesa usvajanja tog jezika. Srednjoškolci su od najvećeg interesa za ovo istraživanje s obzirom na to da je riječ o dobnoj skupini koja učestalo koristi medije i čije jezične kompetencije najizglednije mogu profitirati od izlaganja medijima na engleskom jeziku.

Pregled literature pruža uvid u ključne koncepte usvajanja drugog i stranog jezika, kao što su razlike u pojmovima eksplicitnog i implicitnog učenja te značenja i uloge svjesnosti pri učenju i usvajanju jezika (Ellis 2009), učenje i usvajanje jezika u formalnim i neformalnim uvjetima, odnosno u prirodnim kontekstima te u formalnim kontekstima učionice, vanjski i unutarnji faktori koji mogu utjecati na proces usvajanja drugog jezika, Teorija dinamičkih sustava (Van Geert 2008), koja drži bitnim uzeti u obzir sve faktore kako bi se pristupilo razumijevanju individualnog procesa usvajanja jezika, te njezin značaj i utjecaj na današnje studije o neformalnom usvajanju drugog jezika. Opisana su i istraživanja o povijesnom statusu engleskog jezika diljem svijeta i promjenama koje je doživio do danas, uz opis različitih modela podučavanja engleskog jezika, te radovi koji naglašavaju (Graddol 2006: 11) da je engleski jezik današnjice novi fenomen te nipošto nije onaj engleski „koji smo u prošlosti podučavali kao strani jezik“. Uzimajući u obzir povijest razvoja učenja engleskog (Vilke 2007) i talijanskog jezika na području Hrvatske, opisuju se recentne studije usmjerene na nove mogućnosti nenamjernog, spontanog usvajanja EJ u hrvatskom kontekstu (Mihaljević Djigunović i Geld 2003) kao i u drugim zemljama gdje engleski nije službeni jezik. Usporedo s utjecajem izlaganja EJ izvan učionice, uzeli su se u obzir aktualni propisi i pravilnici o formalnom podučavanju stranih jezika u Europi, s naglaskom na Hrvatsku (European commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2017), koji pružaju uvid u organizaciju podučavanja EJ i TJ te u ono što se učenicima nudi unutar učionice, pedagoškim praksama u podučavanju stranih jezika u hrvatskim gimnazijama i strukovnim školama. Opisani su rezultati istraživanja s područja slučajnog izvanškolskog usvajanja EJ putem raznih medija na području Hrvatske i u drugim europskim zemljama (Danan 2004; Murphey 1990; Enever 2011), studija koje istražuju kako izloženost određenim medijima utječe na usvajanje EJ (Mihaljević Djigunović et. al 2006; Kuppens 2010) te donose zaključke o povezanosti specifičnih medija s određenim jezičnim kompetencijama, kao i studija koje su već u određenoj mjeri dokazale da hrvatski učenici smatraju kako mediji bitno

pridonose njihovoj kompetenciji na tom jeziku (Cergol Kovačević i Matijević 2015) te da je izlaganje medijima povezano sa školskim ocjenama iz engleskog jezika (Brodarić 2015).

Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je utvrditi učestalost i načine te povezanost izlaganja medijima na engleskom jeziku i EJ kompetencija te usporediti tu povezanost s povezanošću izlaganja medijima na talijanskom jeziku i TJ kompetencija učenika. Istraživanje je odgovorilo na sljedeća istraživačka pitanja: 1) Kojim su medijima na EJ srednjoškolci izloženi, a koji im pružaju mogućnost usvajanja tog jezika izvan formalnog obrazovnog sustava? 2) Jesu li učestalost i načini izlaganja medijima na EJ različiti od onih na TJ? 3) Na koji su način EJ kompetencije srednjoškolaca povezane s načinima konzumiranja medija na EJ izvan škole? 4) Razlikuje li se povezanost EJ kompetencija i konzumiranje medija na tom jeziku izvan škole od povezanosti TJ kompetencija s konzumiranjem medija na TJ izvan škole?

Ispitanici ovog istraživanja srednjoškolski su učenici drugih i trećih razreda škola s područja Grada Splita, kojima gravitiraju stanovnici urbanih i ruralnih krajeva Splitsko-dalmatinske županije. Uzorak uključuje preko 650 učenika općih, jezičnih, prirodoslovno-matematičkih, kao i privatnih gimnazija te učenika strukovnih škola. Instrumenti koji su se koristili u svrhu istraživanja dva su istovjetna upitnika od kojih jedan ispituje odnos i stavove učenika prema engleskom, a drugi prema talijanskom jeziku. Anonimni upitnici proveli su se osobnim posjetom doktorandice osam srednjih škola, poštujući pritom etičke mjere koje uključuju odobrenje svih ravnatelja škola, dogovor s nastavnicima EJ i TJ te prethodni pristanak i potpisanu suglasnost za sudjelovanje u istraživanju od strane svakog ispitanika koji ima 14 godina ili više. Polovica učenika ukupnog uzorka ispunila je upitnik o EJ dok je druga polovica ispitanika ispunila isti upitnik o TJ. Uz deskriptivnu analizu podaci su se statistički obradili kvantitativnim postupcima analize podataka u programu SPSS. Proveli su se Mann-Whitney statistički testovi kako bi se utvrdila statistička značajnost rezultata, te se za dio mjerenja povezanosti varijabli koristio Spearmanov koeficijent korelacije.

Rezultati istraživanja pokazali su da su gledanje audiovizualnih sadržaja i slušanje glazbe na engleskom jeziku putem internetskih platformi najučestalije aktivnosti kojima se učenici izlažu EJ, u većoj mjeri nego putem starijih formata medija, dok je najpretraživaniji sadržaj na engleskom jeziku glazba. Navedene aktivnosti pokazale su značajne statističke korelacije s EJ kompetencijama učenika, gdje su sve jezične vještine, kao i poznavanje gramatike te vokabulara, povezane s

izlaganjem *online* filmovima na EJ, dok slušanje glazbe na EJ doprinosi vještini govorenja i receptivnim vještinama. Rezultati ukazuju na to da, kod muških učenika, izlaganje videoigrama EJ sadržaja može znatno utjecati na fond riječi, poznavanje gramatike i vještinu pisanja. Nadalje, čitanje tekstova i pisanje na EJ na internetskim platformama dovodi se u korelaciju s EJ kompetencijama učenika gimnazija, koji češće pribjegavaju navedenim aktivnostima. Ispitanici su istaknuli da putem televizije, glazbe i društvenih mreža, posebice Instagrama, u najvećoj mjeri usvajaju engleski vokabular, dok je njih 50% sklonije gledati filmove na EJ uz engleske titlove ili bez titlova nego uz hrvatske titlove, što sugerira da posjeduju visoku razinu EJ kompetencija. S druge strane, znakovito je da je gledanje EJ sadržaja s hrvatskim titlovima u negativnoj korelaciji sa svakom od EJ kompetencija učenika, sugerirajući da upravo izbor korištenja ostalih medija generira natprosječne razine EJ kompetencija kod mladih u Hrvatskoj. Značajno, mnogi (68%) smatraju izvanškolsko izlaganje medijima neophodnijim faktorom vlastitog usvajanja EJ od formalne nastave EJ. Rezultati su pokazali da učenici koji smatraju da su njihove EJ kompetencije primarno rezultat izlaganja engleskim medijima također naveli statistički više razine svih EJ kompetencija. Potvrđene su značajne korelacije između izlaganja medijima i ukupne EJ kompetencije učenika, dok isto ne vrijedi za odnos između EJ kompetencija i trajanja formalnog učenja EJ u školi. K tome, rezultati sugeriraju da je pohađanje izvanškolske nastave u školama stranih jezika jedini vid formalnog učenja EJ koji u istoj mjeri može unaprijediti razinu EJ kompetencija učenika kao izlaganje medijima. Provedeni Mann-Whitney testovi pokazali su da niti jedan vid izlaganja talijanskim medijima nije usporediv s obimom izlaganja učenika medijima na EJ. Istraživanje odnosa EJ kompetencija i izloženosti EJ medijima u usporedbi s TJ kompetencijama i izloženosti TJ medijima s druge strane, ukazuje na to da većina učenika u potpunosti negira konzumiranje talijanskih medija, dok su TJ kompetencije značajno bolje kod manjine (10%) koja tvrdi da ima određeni doticaj s medijima na tom jeziku. Nadalje, razina ukupnih TJ kompetencija pokazala se statistički značajno nižom od razine ukupnih EJ kompetencija. Također, bitno je istaknuti da je, za razliku od EJ kompetencija, razina TJ kompetencija u pozitivnoj korelaciji s aktivnosti gledanja titlovanog sadržaja na hrvatskim TV programima, što dodatno ukazuje na već poznate blagodati koje tehnika titlovanja donosi u zemljama gdje se taj način prevođenja audiovizualnih sadržaja koristi, što nije slučaj u zemljama u kojima je uobičajena sinkronizacija. Pritom, rezultat dodatno skreće pažnju na činjenicu da je

izvjesnije, kada je riječ o engleskom, da će drugi dostupni izvori u hrvatskom kontekstu, u većoj mjeri nego izlaganje titlovanim TV programima, unaprijediti EJ kompetencije učenika. Značajne razlike pokazale su se kod percepcije ispitanika o glavnim izvorima njihovih EJ kompetencija u odnosu na TJ kompetencije, gdje većina učenika (85%) tvrdi da usvaja TJ isključivo putem formalnog obrazovanja. Nadalje, neovisno o stoljetnoj lokalnoj uporabi talijanskog i njegovog utjecaja na lokalni govor, rezultati pokazuju da su mlade generacije u Splitu i okolici rijetko izložene tom jeziku u neformalnom okruženju, te da se u današnje vrijeme talijanski može smatrati isključivo stranim jezikom, za razliku od engleskog jezika čije je neformalno usvajanje postalo svakodnevno zbog njegove sveprisutnosti u medijima.

Istraživanje je doprinijelo stjecanjem spoznaja o: različitosti prirode učenja engleskog jezika s jedne strane i talijanskog kao oglednog primjera ostalih jezika koji se podučavaju u školama diljem Republike Hrvatske; razmjeru kojim izvanškolsko izlaganje engleskom jeziku putem medija utječe na poznavanje tog jezika kod hrvatskih srednjoškolaca uz znanje koje im pruža nastava ili neovisno o njemu; percepciji engleskog jezika kod nove generacije učenika koja ga uvelike usvaja putem medija, a koje mogu pomoći kod savladavanja izazova na nastavi.

Ključne riječi: neformalno usvajanje jezika; usvajanje drugog jezika; izloženost medijima; engleski kao strani jezik; engleski kao drugi jezik; talijanski jezik; hrvatski sredjoškolci

APPENDIX

Questionnaire **E / T[78]**

UPITNIK O STRANOM JEZIKU

Molimo Vas da sudjelujete u istraživanju koje će obuhvatiti učenike srednjih škole. Upitnikom se ispituju stavovi i navike vezane za usvajanje stranog jezika. Ispitivanje je anonimno, a Vaši će se odgovori koristiti isključivo za potrebe znanstvenog istraživanja.

Unaprijed Vam hvala na suradnji!

1. Spol: ženski ☐ muški ☐

2. Koju školu pohađate?_____
Usmjerenje: _____

3. Koji razred srednje škole pohađate? _____

4. Koliko dugo učite ovaj strani jezik?
Upišite broj godina _____

5. Ovaj strani jezik sam učio/la (označite <u>sve točne</u> odgovore):

1. u hrvatskim (osnovnim/srednjim) školama ☐
2. u osnovnoj/srednjoj školi u inozemstvu ☐
3. u školi stranih jezika ☐
4. privatnom podukom ☐
5. na tečaju jezika na tom govornom području ☐
6. ostalo: _____

6. Koliko ste često u dodiru s ovim stranim jezikom i kulturom **u kući (s obitelji) ?**
(broj 1 podrazumijeva – *nikad ili skoro nikad***, a broj 5** – *često ili svakodnevno***)**

nikad 1 2 3 4 5 često

7. Koliko ste često u dodiru s ovim stranim jezikom i kulturom **u interakciji s prijateljima i poznanicima?**
(broj 1 podrazumijeva – *nikad ili skoro nikad***, a broj 5** – *često ili svakodnevno***)**

nikad 1 2 3 4 5 često

[78] The participants were orally instructed to circle the letter "E" if they were asked to respond in relation to the English language or "T" if they were to give answers regarding the Italian language.

8. Molimo Vas da označite odgovore na ljestvici od 1 do 5.
(broj 1 podrazumijeva – *u potpunosti se **ne** slažem***, a broj 5** – *u potpunosti se slažem*)**.**

1.	Na stranom jeziku mogu nesmetano sudjelovati u raspravama, odgovarati na pitanja ili čitati na glas.	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Kad slušam izvorne govornike, profesore, ostale učenike i snimke, razumijem jezik.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Razumijem pročitane tekstove na stranom jeziku.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Lako se pismeno izražavam na stranom jeziku	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Ispravno koristim strani jezik i rješavam sve gramatičke zadatke.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Imam širok raspon vokabulara, poznajem vokabular koji se odmene očekuje, ispravno upotrebljavam vokabular u različitim situacijama.	1	2	3	4	5

9[79]. Ovaj strani jezik do sada sam naučio/la:
(zaokružite **sve** točne odgovore na ljestvici od 1 do 5, gdje **broj 1 podrazumijeva** – *gotovo **ništa** nisam tako naučio/la***, a broj 5** – *gotovo **sve** sam tako naučio/la*)

1.	pretežno u školi	1	2	3	4	5
2.	pretežno uz medije	1	2	3	4	5
3.	podjednako u školi i preko medija	1	2	3	4	5
4.	ostalo:_____					

10[80]. Na kojem stranom jeziku slušate glazbu? (broj 1 podrazumijeva – *nikad ili skoro nikad, a* **broj 5** – *često ili svakodnevno***)**

		nikad				*često*
1.	engleskom	1	2	3	4	5
2.	talijanskom	1	2	3	4	5
3.	njemačkom	1	2	3	4	5
4.	francuskom	1	2	3	4	5
5.	nekom drugom _____	1	2	3	4	5

11. Molimo Vas označite koliko često radite navedene aktivnosti na ljestvici od 1 do 5 (broj 1 – *nikad ili skoro nikad,* **a broj 5 podrazumijeva** – *često ili svakodnevno*)**.**

Kada **nisam u školi**, **na stranom jeziku:**		*nikad*				*često*
1.	Gledam filmove, serije, emisije na stranom jeziku s titlovima na hrvatskim televizijskim programima	1	2	3	4	5

[79] The students did not respond to the given question in a uniform way and as requested in the explanation. Consequently, some students replied by circling only one option out of 1), 2) or 3), or by rating only one of three options. The study analyses the answers to questions 1) and 2), while option 3) was deemed inessential upon observing the aforementioned students' response patterns.

[80] The results pertaining to this question are not presented in this study as they are later judged as subsidiary information to the aims of the study.

2.	Gledam filmove, serije, emisije na stranom jeziku na satelitskim programima Ako gledate, navedite programe:	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Gledam filmove/serije/emisije na stranom jeziku koje Pronađem na internetu (*download, streaming*, YouTube i sl.)	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Slušam glazbu na stranom jeziku (s MP3 *playera*, CD-ova i ostalih nosača zvuka)	1	2	3	4	5
5.	Slušam glazbu na stranom jeziku na radijskim postajama i televizijskim programima Ako slušate, navedite stanice i programe:	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Slušam glazbu na stranom jeziku na internetu (*YouTube, SoundCloud, Last.fm*, podcastovi i sl.) Ako slušate, navedite web-stranice:	1	2	3	4	5
7.	Razgovaram na stranom jeziku s prijateljima, obitelji, turistima	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Igram videoigre/*online* igre s jezičnim sadržajem na stranom jeziku Ako igrate, navedite nazive igara:	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Čitam vijesti i članke na stranom jeziku na internetskim portalima, blogovima i sl. Ako čitate, navedite nazive web-stranica:	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Koristim strani jezik pišući komentare ili sudjelujući u diskusijama na društvenim mrežama/blogovima/ portalima i sl. Ako koristite, navedite nazive portala/društvenih mreža:	1	2	3	4	5

12. Koje sadržaje na ovom stranom jeziku posjećujete na internetu i koliko često? (zaokružite **sve** točne odgovore na ljestvici od 1 do 5, gdje **broj 1 podrazumijeva**– *nikad ili skoro nikad***, a broj 5** – *često ili svakodnevno*)

1.	sport	1	2	3	4	5
2.	moda	1	2	3	4	5
3.	glazba	1	2	3	4	5
4.	dnevna događanja	1	2	3	4	5
5.	politika	1	2	3	4	5
6.	kuhinja	1	2	3	4	5
7.	kultura/umjetnost	1	2	3	4	5
8.	žuta štampa	1	2	3	4	5
9.	crna kronika	1	2	3	4	5

13. Filmove na ovom stranom jeziku volim gledati (označite <u>samo jedan</u> odgovor):

1. s titlovima na **stranom jeziku** ☐
2. s titlovima na **hrvatskom** ☐
3. bez titlova ☐
4. ništa od navedenog ☐

14. Volio/voljela bih da su filmovi na ovom stranom jeziku sinkronizirani na hrvatski (označite <u>samo jedan</u> odgovor):

1. da, jer bi mi tako bilo lakše pratiti filmove ☐
2. da, ali to mi nije važno ☐
3. svejedno mi je ☐
4. ne, to mi nije važno ☐
5. ne, jer na taj način mogu učiti strani jezik ☐

15. Označite odgovor koji najviše odgovara Vašem stavu na ljestvici. (broj 1 podrazumijeva – *tako* ***uopće nisam*** *naučio strane riječi*, **a broj 5** – *tako sam naučio veliki broj novih stranih riječi)*
Izvan razreda riječi i izraze ovoga stranog jezika naučio/la sam preko:

1. glazbe	1	2	3	4	5
2. filmova/televizije	1	2	3	4	5
3. videoigara i *online* igara	1	2	3	4	5
4. društvenih mreža	1	2	3	4	5

Navedite nazive:_____

5. drugih web-stranica/web portala	1	2	3	4	5

Navedite nazive:

_____

6. na putovanju (boravak u stranim zemljama u kojima se taj jezik govori)	1	2	3	4	5
7. s obitelji i prijateljima	1	2	3	4	5

Hvala Vam na suradnji!

Sara Brodarić Šegvić

is a Master of English and Italian Language and Literature. She attended an eight-year primary education in both England and Italy, and is now based in her hometown of Split, Croatia. After graduating from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Split in 2009, she worked as a secondary school English and Italian foreign language teacher until 2017 – work experience which has inspired present research. In that period, Brodarić Šegvić mentored graduate university students as part of the English language course: Practicum and Teaching Practice (2012 – 2016), mentored her own students at county-level English-language competitions (2012 – 2016), attended 15 professional training seminars and workshops organized by the Croatian Education and Teacher Training Agency (AZOO), and was a guest lecturer at one of the workshops in 2014.

To date the author has published four scientific articles (2015 – 2020) mainly related to research in the field of English as a foreign language, incidental language acquisition, media exposure. She has presented her research at five international scientific conferences (2014 – 2020) of the Croatian Applied Linguistics Society (CALS) which she is a member of since 2017, as well as at international summer schools organized by Technische Universität Chemnitz (2018), and the University of Split School of Medicine (2018), in collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Split.

Alongside the teaching profession and work in research, the author is also active as a musician since 2003, the co-founder of Split at Night Jazz Festival and Split at Night Association for the promotion, development and improvement of music and preforming arts, cultural events and festivals since 2018, as well as a freelance translator and foreign-language expert in the digital marketing sector since 2017.

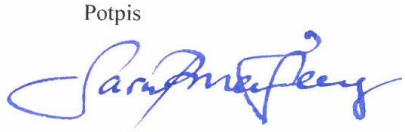
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Split, 21. svibnja 2021

Potpis



Izjava o pohrani doktorske disertacije u Digitalni repozitorij Filozofskog fakulteta u Splitu

Doktorand/ica: Sara Brodarić Šegvić

Naslov disertacije: Media-exposure and its influence on English vs. Italian language competences of high school students in Split

Znanstveno područje: Humanističke znanosti

Znanstveno polje: Lingvistika

Vrsta rada: Doktorska disertacija

Mentor/ica disertacije:
Kristina Cergol, Doc.dr.sc.

Komentor/ica disertacije:
Darko Hren, Izv.prof.dr.sc.

Članovi povjerenstva:
dr. sc. Danica Škara, prof. emer., predsjednica (Sveučilište u Splitu)
(ime i prezime, akad. stupanj, zvanje)
prof. dr. sc. Maslina Ljubičić, članica (Filozofski fakultet u Zagrebu)
(ime i prezime, akad. stupanj, zvanje)
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Mjesto, nadnevak: U Splitu, 21. svibnja 2021.

Potpis doktoranda/ice: