

Ninth grade pupils' reading comprehension of English newspaper articles

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Appendices

1. Article from *BBC NEWS* – ‘Jolie tours refugee camp in India’
2. Article from *Glamour* – ‘Pink in her living room’, ‘Beyoncé in her bathroom’
3. Article from *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Becks’ Head in’
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Abstract

This essay compares ninth grade pupils' reading comprehension of four British newspaper articles that differ in style, content and level of difficulty. It investigates gender differences in reading comprehension and the effects of interests and reading habits of newspapers and English texts on reading comprehension. The pupils have read the articles and then filled out questionnaires with questions on the content, their opinions of the articles and level of difficulty, and the meaning of some words from the articles. The results have been complemented by previous gender studies and reports on school results and pedagogic theories about teaching reading. The boys knew more of the words from the articles. The girls did not generally have better results than the boys which might have been expected due to previous research. A close connection between interests and reading comprehension was found in this study.

Key words:

- Teaching
- Newspaper articles
- Reading comprehension
- Ninth grade pupils
- Gender differences

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

As a future English teacher it comes natural to think of ways to work with English as a subject and good ways to teach and learn it. When teaching a foreign language it is important to find good material that reflects real English that is used by its speakers and still is on the right level for the learners. The learners must not be introduced to texts that are too difficult which could scare them off, or texts that are too easy so that the learners do not learn anything. Authentic material is crucially important to use when teaching English as a foreign language since one ought to teach for real life. The learners should be prepared for using English in many possible situations that they may come across. Therefore it is important to not always use material that is adapted to the learners.

In the syllabus for English in compulsory school it says in 'goal to aim for' that pupils should develop their ability to read different types of texts for pleasure and to obtain information and knowledge. This means that the pupils should read different types of texts and one type is newspaper articles. The advantages with newspaper articles are that they are easily accessible authentic text material and that the texts are not too long, which makes them easy to work with.

But what kinds of newspaper are suitable to use for teaching? This essay will investigate ninth grade pupils' reading comprehension of four different newspaper articles. The girls' and

the boys' results will be compared in order to see if there are gender differences. This will be compared to previous results in reports on gender differences in school results and grades in English.

Further the factors that influence the pupils' comprehension of the articles will be studied. Factors such as the articles' style and content and the subjects' interests or pre-knowledge will be investigated to see if there are any connections to the subjects' comprehension ability.

The subjects' comprehension of the articles will also be compared to their reading habits of newspapers in any language, in order to find out if regular reading of newspapers helps improving the comprehension of English newspaper articles. The results will then be compared to the subjects' reading habits of English texts in their spare time, in order to find out if reading of English texts helps improving the reading comprehension of newspaper articles.

The four articles that will be used in this essay are different in form, style and level of difficulty. The differences of the articles will be discussed and analysed in this essay. The articles come from two British newspapers, *The Times* and *The Sun*, one magazine, *Glamour* and one news homepage *BBC NEWS*. *The Times* is a formal and serious newspaper, *The Sun* more informal but *Glamour* is even more informal in its style and content and finally, *BBC News* is different because it is not a newspaper but a news homepage with written texts similar to newspaper articles.

To deepen the understanding of the results an interview with the teacher about the pupils' ability, gender differences in class, working with newspaper articles and preparations when using newspaper articles etc. will complement the study in order to give a more complete picture.

The essay will also present and relate the results to didactic theories, reports on school results and gender research.

1.2 Purpose

The overriding purpose of this essay is to investigate what kinds of newspaper articles are appropriate to use when teaching ninth grade pupils by testing their reading comprehension of different articles. In order to get a more complete understanding of the subjects' reading comprehension, differences between different learners and factors that influence comprehension will be investigated.

The specific questions that will be investigated in this essay are:

- What kinds of newspaper articles are appropriate to use when teaching ninth grade pupils?

- Are there any gender differences in reading comprehension of newspaper articles?
- How do the pupils' interests and spare time activities influence their reading comprehension?
- How general newspaper reading habits influence the reading comprehension?
- How does reading habits in English influence the reading comprehension?

Investigating these questions should give a good picture of what kind of newspaper articles can be used when teaching ninth grade pupils English. It should also help choosing articles and texts for teaching.

My hypotheses are that the articles from *BBC News* and *Glamour* will be the easiest to understand for the subjects and also most suitable to use when teaching. *The Sun* article will probably be more appreciated by the boys since it is an article about football and an article that is more difficult to use for teaching. The article from *The Times* should be too difficult for the pupils to understand and not very suitable for ninth grade pupils. Due the previous reports on school results the girls should do better than the boys. I also suspect that the subjects' interests will influence their comprehension ability and finally, that the pupils with more frequent reading habits of newspapers and English texts will have better results on the questionnaires.

1.3 Previous Research

1.3.1 Pedagogic aspects

Reading is an important part of language teaching and there are therefore many theories about the importance of reading ability and how to work with it in class. Extensive reading is a term used in language teaching for reading texts besides ordinary schoolbooks. Hedge (2000:202) defines extensive reading and also describes various types of extensive reading. It can mean reading large quantities of material, reading consistently over time on a frequent basis, reading longer texts, or reading longer texts in class combined with individual reading at home. The reading material can be short stories, novels, newspaper articles and magazine articles.

Ericsson (1989:248) sees extensive reading as complementary to the other teaching. It is something that the pupils can do individually and it does not have to take place at the same time for all the pupils. The pupils should also be able to choose texts with different levels of difficulty. According to Ericsson (1989:248) it is not necessary that the pupils understand the

text completely. He also believes that the learners do not always have to be tested, but it is preferred if it is done sometimes since they often like to present their results. The test questions should not take too long time to do. Extensive reading should be quiet, individual reading at the pupils' own pace (Ericsson, 1989:247).

Hedge describes six types of knowledge that help when making sense of the text. Syntactic knowledge helps recognising different types of words in a text. With morphological knowledge connection between words are found. Then there is general world knowledge, sociocultural knowledge and topic knowledge that all concern pre-knowledge about how things in the world work. Finally, there is the genre knowledge that is about what to expect to find in certain texts depending on the text's genre (Hedge, 2000:189). By helping the learners to improve their different types of reading knowledge they can improve their reading comprehension. It is therefore important to teach both language knowledge and cultural knowledge in order to teach reading in English class. The pupils should also be introduced to different types of texts in order for them to be familiar with different text genres, thereby improving their reading ability.

The language knowledge influences the ability to read a text which Hedge describes. "...a fluent reader has a good knowledge of language structure and can recognise a wide range of vocabulary automatically." The situation for foreign language learners is different and is described as follows: "Clearly second language readers are going to have difficulties in processing texts which contain unfamiliar aspects of the English language. For example, inability to understand the cohesive devices in a text will impede understanding of the functional relationships of sentences" (Hedge, 2000:192). The relationship between reading comprehension and vocabulary is described by Hedge in the following way:

"Vocabulary is another major component of reading ability which language learners will experience difficulty, but the degree of difficulty will vary with the demands of the text, the prior knowledge of the reader, the degree of automaticity a learner has achieved in general word recognition, any specialist lexical knowledge a student might have, and the learner's first language" (Hedge, 2000:193).

On the other hand, Hedge points out that extensive reading can help the learners to build a knowledge of vocabulary and an awareness of features in written texts (Hedge, 2000:194).

When choosing texts for reading the pupils' ability and interests should preferably be taken into consideration (Ericsson, 1989:247). Hedge points out the importance of a variety of topics, of length of text and of reading purpose, when choosing texts to use in class. Magazine articles can be used as a response to curiosity about a topic (Hedge, 2000:206). News articles

and news in brief can be used in order to know what is happening in the world (Hedge, 2000:207).

It is important to use authentic texts in teaching since most texts are specially made for language learners with adapted level of difficulty (Ericsson, 1989:252) This means that the language is adapted for the learners level, the language is therefore not authentic which could be a problem when encountering English in real life. With authentic texts the learners are prepared for using the language in real situations. Authentic texts could be novels, short stories, newspapers, magazines, and reports (Ericsson, 1989:253).

Ericsson (1989:249) suggests that the pupils should be given some questions on the content before they start reading the texts in order to motivate them in their reading. The teacher could also summarise the content in English, without revealing everything, in order to prepare them.

The pupils' comprehension can for instance be tested by letting the pupils retell the content or answering questions on the text.

1.3.2 Gender differences

There is a lot of research on gender differences and that chosen for this essay is connected to teaching and specialised on gender differences in the classroom and in school. The first part is taken from *The Gendered Society* by the American Michael S. Kimmel who has investigated the situation in American schools. He points out the differences between boys and girls in terms of education.

“The interplanetary theory of gender tells us that boys and girls are fundamentally and categorically different, that boys excel in science and math, play violently in the playground, and shout out in class; girls, on the other hand sit quietly, speak softly, play gingerly, and excel in French and in literature. And in the same time, of course, we sit in the same classroom, read the same books, listen to the same teachers, and are supposedly graded by the same criteria” (Kimmel, 2004:159).

According to Kimmel the gender roles are created by the people in school. “We learn – and teach one another – what it means to be men and women” (Kimmel, 2004:159). “Schools are like old-fashioned factories, and what they produce is gendered individuals.” Both official curriculum and textbooks etc, parallel ‘hidden curriculum’ becomes gendered in informal interactions with teachers and other students (Kimmel, 2004:159). In other words, the school is creating gender roles and placing the pupils in them.

In a historical perspective education was reserved for upper-class boys and men. When women finally got access to education it was suggested that males and females should be taught separately in order to avoid disastrous effects on both sexes. Some worried that the pace in school would be slowing down and that the standard would be reduced in order to

allow women to keep up. Some also feared that the females would assimilate to boys' ways and become defeminized and the boys would become feminized, which might even cause homosexuality (Kimmel, 2004:160).

Homosexuality is also something that can be feared when boys do not act or play like typical boys with trucks and cars and so on (Kimmel, 2004:161-162). Boys and girls learn appropriate behaviours for boys and girls in school. Many teachers assume that girls like reading and hate maths and science while they expect the opposite of boys. There are also studies that show that teachers call on boys more often and spend more time with them. The boys are often also more active in the classroom and call out their answers (Kimmel, 2004:162). In one of these studies the teachers were asked why boys get more attention. The teachers said things like: "Boys need it more", "Boys have trouble reading, writing and doing math" and "Boys can't even sit still" (Kimmel, 2004:163).

Children are also presented to gender roles through television, movies, and MTV videos (Kimmel, 2004:164). Commercials often show boys driving cars and girls playing with dolls (Kimmel, 2004:165).

The Swedish Department of Education presented a report on gender differences in education results in 2004, *Könsskillnader i utbildningsresultat*. Girls have a higher average grade than boys and many more boys do not pass the main subjects like Swedish, English and math in compulsory school. On the National Tests in English in 2002 more girls received higher grades than boys (*Könsskillnader i utbildningsresultat*, 2004:8). In upper secondary school girls also have a higher average grade than boys. Girls also have higher grades in English than boys (*Könsskillnader i utbildningsresultat*, 2004:9).

OECD's PISA-study in 2000 tested 15-years-old pupils' reading ability. In this test girls also scored higher than boys (*Könsskillnader i utbildningsresultat*, 2004:9). PISA is a study that compares 15-year-old pupils' reading ability, math knowledge and science knowledge in about forty countries (Björnsson, 2005:17).

After the report from the Department of Education the Swedish School Development Authority decided to make a study to look into gender differences in education more thoroughly and Mats Björnsson wrote the report *Kön och skolframgång - Tolkningar och perspektiv* (Björnsson, 2005:5). Girls used to do better in languages and the humanities-related subjects than boys who on the other hand did better in math and science than girls. Today the situation is different. Girls have better average grades and higher results on tests and are not doing worse than boys in math and science any more. That girls are achieving higher results is something that can also be found internationally and it is especially clear in the Nordic countries with Denmark as an exception. This can be connected to the

development towards a more equal society where women are becoming a greater part of the job market (Björnsson, 2005:7).

The report shows that gender is a major factor that influences education results and gender is more important than ethnicity and social class even if parents' education and profession do influence the pupils' education results. Pupils with higher social background achieve higher grades but gender differences are the same in all social classes. Gender differences are also similar in all regions and between pupils with Swedish background and pupils with foreign background (Björnsson, 2005:7).

Nickie Charles says in *Gender in Modern Britain* that schooling is a girl's world (Björnsson, 2005:34). Studies show that girls' behaviour in school has changed; they are not as quiet as before. Boys, on the other hand, seem to have stayed in a more traditional and unchanged gender identity (Björnsson, 2005:34). Studies also present femininity and masculinity as something that is created by boys and girls, by women and men and by environments and institutions such as the school. Attitudes, behaviour and subjects are being connected to a certain gender in school (Björnsson, 2005:35). Masculinity seems to be in contrast with those ideals that we have in schools today or even in contrast with the school as an institution. If boys take their school work seriously their heterosexuality might be questioned. It seems to be easier for a girl to do well in school and at the same time be popular than it is for a boy (Björnsson, 2005:41).

There is an established picture that the classroom is dominated by the boys. Some researchers claim that teachers give more attention to boys than to girls in the classroom. Others say that there are no differences or that girls in some cases get more attention (Björnsson, 2005:43). It has become more common with girls who speak up and it is also common with a few boys who are noisy and take up a lot of attention in the classroom (Björnsson, 2005:47). It is not certain if the gender of the teacher has any effect on the situation and gender differences in school, however, most teachers and staff in pre-school and school are women (Björnsson, 2005:48).

The number of boys with learning difficulties is also higher than the number of girls (Björnsson, 2005:54).

2. Method and Material

Four articles from two different newspapers, one magazine and one news internet page were chosen. They were chosen on the basis of topic and level of difficulty. Four different topics were chosen in order to have a variety of topics, level and difficulty in order to find

differences in the subjects' comprehension of the articles. The articles that were used in this study are:

- 'Jolie tours refugee camp in India' from *BBC NEWS*
- 'Pink in her living room', 'Beyoncé in her bathroom' from *Glamour*
- 'Macca's Axe did Becks' Head in' from *The Sun*
- 'How music lessons can improve young minds' from *The Times*

The articles were analysed in order to find out their level of difficulty and to compare them to each other. This was done by looking at language, sentence structure, style, topic and difficulty of the vocabulary such as the usage of common words versus more uncommon words. To each article a questionnaire with questions on the content, some words in the article and the subjects' opinions about the article was constructed in order to find out the subjects' comprehension of the articles. In addition to this one questionnaire with personal information about the subjects such as interests and reading habits and one questionnaire with questions to compare the articles to each other and the subjects' opinions on them were constructed to see if interests, liking of the articles and reading habits influence the ability to understand the articles.

The subjects are ninth grade pupils in a school in Göteborg. The parents of the subjects were contacted through the teacher by email where the survey was presented and explained and they were asked to give their permission for their children to take part in this survey to the teacher.

The first test with the subjects the investigation was presented and explained. I explained it in Swedish to make sure that they would understand everything perfectly. The subjects started filling out the questionnaire with personal information and the purpose of the questions was explained to them. The first two articles from *BBC News* and *Glamour* were given to the subjects to read individually and then fill out the questionnaire on each article. First, they read the article from *BBC News* since they have worked with *BBC News* articles before, and then continued with the article from *Glamour*. These two articles were assumed to be the two easiest in the analysis of the four articles. The subjects were allowed to ask questions about the questionnaires in order to make sure that they understood everything. In their own time they read the articles and filled out the questionnaires individually. In total it took one hour.

The second test with the last two articles was carried out a couple of days later when they had an English lesson again. This time the procedure was explained again in Swedish without presenting the articles and newspapers too much in order not to influence their expectations, impressions or opinions about the texts. As in the first test they were asked to start filling out a questionnaire with personal information. The subjects were asked to read the articles

starting with the one from *The Sun* and then continuing with the article from *The Times*. After reading the articles they filled out questionnaires with questions on content and vocabulary in the articles and their opinions about the articles, what it was like reading them and comments about the level of difficulty. When the subjects had read all the articles they filled out a questionnaire with questions to compare the articles to each other. The level of difficulty and the subjects' opinions on the articles were compared. There were also questions about using newspaper articles in school, whether it is good or not and how it could be done. This time the test also took about one hour. The subjects worked individually at their own pace.

To follow up what it is like working with newspaper articles in school an interview with the teacher was carried out with questions on how articles can be used while teaching and how it can be done. She was also asked about gender differences in English class and how to take advantage of the pupils' interests in school.

The result was analysed and compared in different aspects, looking at both groups in terms of gender, reading habits and interests. The subjects were divided into groups of boys and girls and their results were compared.

Next the subjects were divided into four groups depending on their spare time interests and activities. There was one group doing sports, one group playing computer games and other things involving computers, one group with music interest and one group that liked spending time with friends and having fun in their spare time.

Then the subjects were divided into groups depending on their newspapers reading habits in any language, which in this case mainly means Swedish newspapers since the subjects are Swedish pupils. Group one read newspapers several times a week and group two read newspapers once a week or less.

Finally, the subjects were divided into groups depending on their reading habits of English texts outside school and whether they like reading English texts or not. The first group did not like reading English too much and only read English on the internet, group two liked reading English texts and read English books and other texts and group three liked reading English texts and read English texts on the internet and in computer games.

All the groups' results were analysed and compared to each other in each perspective. Some of the groups in this study are quite small due to the number of subjects. It is therefore difficult and problematic to draw any general conclusions from the results.

3. Analysis of the articles

The four articles differ a lot in style and content. This variation of articles is intended to give a complete picture of the comprehension ability among the pupils. The difficulty of the articles

varies as well. The article from *The Times* is formal in style and language with quite a lot of difficult words. *The Sun* article is a bit more informal in style and language, however, the informality that is easy for mother tongue speakers might be difficult to language learners. The *BBC News* article is not like a typical article in style and language. It is however, quite easy to read. The *Glamour* article is the most informal article in style. It uses a lot of spoken language and is formed like a dialogue which should make the article easy to understand.

3.1 BBC NEWS – ‘Jolie tours refugee camp in India’

BBC NEWS is not a newspaper but a news channel and on their homepage there are written articles. There are articles about various topics, covering most news around the world. Why I have chosen to work with an article from *BBC*'s homepage, is simply because the pupils have worked with *BBC* articles in class this semester.

The topic of the article is a mixture of serious and entertainment news, since it is about the famous actress Angelina Jolie and her work for the UN. Reports from her work as a goodwill ambassador for the United Nations Refugee Agency is mixed with information about her current work as an actress and information about her personal life. This mixture also influences the language, which is a mix of styles. The language of the article differs from that of an ordinary newspaper article. The cohesion and coherence of the article is not perfect since the different sentences and the different information are not perfectly combined in a text. There is not a clear red thread that the reader can follow. The language is not too complex, the sentences are quite simple and there are not too many difficult words.

3.2 Glamour – ‘Pink in her living room’, ‘Beyoncé in her bathroom’

Glamour is a women's magazine filled with articles about fashion, beauty, celebrities, gossip and so on. The texts are supposed to be entertaining and accessible to many people. Two texts about two celebrities in the article series ‘Glamour House of Stars’ have been chosen.

The language in the article is quite easy with not too many difficult words. The topic of the article is famous people's homes, an informal topic which also influences the language. It is about something from everyday life that is easy to understand and relate to. In the interviews they talk about their rooms, their personalities and their lives without too much depth. The articles maintain a shallow perspective, they do not go deeply into the subject. The article is formed like interviews, dialogues, with the reporter's questions and the celebrities' answers. Due to this the language is close to spoken language which makes it more relaxed and informal. The language is simple and straight forward, there are not many complex sub clauses or other features that could make the text difficult to follow. The article also contains quite a few contractions and some ellipses which signal an informal style of the text.

3.3 *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Becks’ Head in’

The Sun is a newspaper with many pictures and big, catchy head lines. It is a tabloid that contains a lot of gossip, juicy subjects in comparison to other more serious newspapers.

The article is a sports article about David Beckham, probably England’s most famous soccer player. This is a familiar topic to those who are interested in sports and soccer and due to the fact that Beckham for many reasons, not just because of football, is a very famous person, most pupils should be more or less familiar with the topic.

The language is quite formal but has an informal tone especially due to informal expressions e.g. that Beckham has been dumped by England. There are no contractions but ellipses that give an informal sound to the text. The style is a mix between formal and informal. There are a lot of quotes in the article which bring spoken language into the text. The vocabulary is a bit more difficult than in the earlier articles, there are some special football terms and some words that might be difficult to understand for the pupils. There are also some idiomatic expressions that make the text more complicated. Some pre-knowledge about Beckham, football and Real Madrid should make it easier to understand the text e.g. since different nicknames for Beckham, the Real Madrid players and technical terms are being used. Knowledge about this should make the text easier to follow.

3.4 *The Times* – ‘How music lessons can improve young minds’

The Times is a daily newspaper, a newspaper which could be called serious. By serious I mean that it does not deal with too much gossip and shallow news concerning celebrities and the entertainment business. In other words it is not a tabloid. Its headlines do not have the main purpose to attract the reader but to be informative. The newspaper concentrates on important news and it does not use too many pictures. The text is what is important, not all articles have pictures and the pictures in *The Times* are clearly linked to the articles and are not taking up too much attention.

The style of the article is very formal. There are no contractions and many quite long and complex sentences which could be difficult to follow and to understand. The noun phrases in the article are often long and contain quite a lot of information which might not be too easy to sort out, since the reader comes across the verb late in the sentence and only then finds out what the meaning of the sentence is. The words in the article are not just common words that you come across frequently. There are also some difficult words that are not regularly part of everyday language but more academic, which the pupils might not have come across before. The article also contains some specific terms within the topic that might not be known to everybody without certain pre-knowledge. It is a topic that signals formality since it is about a study.

4. Results

Twenty subjects took part in the survey six of whom were girls and fourteen boys. One girl was not able to finish the article from *Glamour* and one boy was not present at the second session of the survey and therefore neither read the articles from *The Sun* and *The Times* nor filled out the questionnaires.

It is important to remember that some groups in this study are quite small which makes the interpretation of the results problematic. The gender groups are not equally big which could influence the results. The interests groups, apart from the sports group, are small, but the groups are so different from each other that it would seem reasonable to divide them this way. The group that does not like reading English texts when comparing subjects with different reading habits of English texts, is also small but their dislike for reading clearly separates them from the other subjects so they should form a group of their own.

4.1 Gender differences

4.1.1 *BBC News* – ‘Angelina Jolie tours refugee camp in India’

The girls had an average of 2,67 on correctly answered questions. Almost all the boys answered all the questions correctly who had an answer average of 3,64.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	2,67	3,64

The majority of the girls only knew one to three of the words or none out of seven. Most of the boys knew four or more words and fifty percent knew four or five words. The boys had a higher average result than the girls.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	1,83	2,86

On the question if there were many words in the article that they did not understand did most of the girls and the boys answered that there were not.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Yes</i>	33,3%	21,4%
<i>No</i>	66,7%	78,6%

The opinions about the article were quite similar among boys and girls. Most of them thought it was an interesting article. More boys than girls thought that the article was boring. One boy wrote that it was boring because he did not understand it.

<i>Opinion about the article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Interesting</i>	66,7%	50%
<i>Boring</i>	16,7%	28,7%
<i>OK</i>	16,7%	7,1%
<i>No answer</i>	0	14,3%

When it comes to the level of difficulty of the article most boys and girls thought that the article was easy. One boy answered that the article was easy but confusing.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Easy</i>	66,7%	64,3%
<i>Difficult</i>	16,7%	21,4%
<i>Both</i>	16,7%	14,3%

4.1.2 *Glamour* – ‘Pink in her living room’, ‘Beyoncé in her bathroom’

Five girls and fourteen boys took part in this survey.

The girls had higher result on the questions than the boys.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	4	3,5

The boys did better on the translation of words, where most girls did not know any of the words.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 6)</i>	1	2,36

Most subjects in both groups thought that they understood most of the words in the article.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Yes</i>	20%	35,7%
<i>No</i>	80%	64,3%

Most boys and girls thought that the article was interesting or fun, but quite a few boys thought that it was boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Interesting/ Fun</i>	80%	50%
<i>Boring</i>	20%	35,7%
<i>OK</i>	0	7,1%
<i>No answer</i>	0	7,1%

Most subjects thought that the article was easy, nobody found it to be difficult.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Easy</i>	80%	78,6%
<i>Both</i>	20%	21,4%

4.1.3 *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Beck’s Head in’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire.

The boys did much better than the girls on the questions. A strong majority of the boys had four correct answers compared to one third of the girls, and all the boys knew at least three questions.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	2,67	3,85

The boys also knew more words than the girls.

Words correctly translated	Girls	Boys
Average score (Maximum 7)	1,83	2,38

Most subjects, slightly more boys than girls, thought they understood most of the words in the article.

Many words not understood	Girls	Boys
Yes	33,3%	23,1%
No	66,7%	76,9%

Most boys thought that the article was interesting or fun while most girls found it boring.

Opinions about the article	Girls	Boys
Interesting/ Fun	33,3%	61,5%
Boring	66,7%	23,1%
OK	16,7%	7,7%
No answer	0	7,7%

The majority of boys and girls, more girls than boys, found the article easy. One comment was that there were many hard sentences in the article.

Level of difficulty	Girls	Boys
Easy	83,3%	69,2%
Difficult	16,7%	0
Both	0	30,8%

4.1.4 *The Times* – ‘How music lessons can improve young minds’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire.

The girls had better results on the questions.

Questions correctly answered	Girls	Boys
Average answer (Maximum 4)	3,83	3,62

The boys knew more words than the girls.

Words correctly translated	Girls	Boys
Average score (Maximum 7)	2,5	3

The results on if there were many words that they did not understand were similar in both groups.

Many words not understood	Girls	Boys
Yes	16,7%	23,1%
No	83,3%	76,9%

More girls thought that the article was boring in comparison to the boy’s results where more subjects found the article interesting, fun or good. One boy wrote that it was interesting but too long.

Opinions about the article	Girls	Boys
Interesting/Fun/Good	33,3%	53,8%
Boring	50%	38,5%
No answer	16,7%	7,7%

More boys thought that the article was easy in comparison to the girls who were more divided.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Easy</i>	33,3%	53,8%
<i>Difficult</i>	33,3%	7,7%
<i>Both</i>	16,7%	30,8%
<i>No answer</i>	16,7%	7,7%

4.2 Interests

4.2.1 *BBC News* – ‘Angelina Jolie tours refugee camp in India’

The subjects were divided into groups depending on their interests and spare time activities. Almost all the boys play computer in their spare time, but if they also practise some kind of sport they were put in the sports group. Group one consists of nine boys and two girls and all of them practise sport in their spare time. Group two is four boys who play computer games in their spare time. Group three is one boy and girl who have music, theatre and reading as spare time interests. The last group, group number four consist of three girls who do not have any special spare time activity except spending time with friends.

Most of the subjects in group one and three answered all the questions on the article correctly, while group two and four did a little worse.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	3,64	2,75	4	2,67

Group three had the best result on the translation of words followed by group one where more than fifty percent knew four words or more. Group four had the worst result where none of them knew more than three words.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computer</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	3,27	3	5	1,33

Most subjects in all groups answered that there were not many words that they did not understand, and here group one and three had the highest results as well.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Yes</i>	18,2%	50%	0	33,3%
<i>No</i>	81,2%	50%	100%	66,7%

Most subjects in group one and four found the article interesting in comparison to group two where the majority found the article boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Interesting</i>	63,6%	0	50%	100%

Boring	18,2%	75%	0	0
OK	9,1%	0	50%	0
No answer	9,1%	25%	0	0

Most subjects in group one, three and four found the article easy.

Level of difficulty	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Difficult	9,1%	50%	0	33,3%
Easy	63,6%	50%	100%	66,7%
Both	27,3%	0	0	0

4.2.2 Glamour – ‘Pink in her living room’, ‘Beyoncé in her bathroom’

The groups are the same as in the first article, except group four that only has two girls in this article survey.

All groups except group two had high results on four correct answers.

Questions correctly answered	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Average answer (Maximum 4)	3,82	2,75	4	4

Group three did best on the word translation followed by group one. Group four who did not know any of the words did worst.

Words correctly translated	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Average score (Maximum 6)	2	1	4,5	0

The majority in group one thought that there were not many words that they did not understand, in comparison to the rest of the groups were it was half to half.

Many words not understood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Yes	18,2%	50%	50%	50%
No	81,8%	50%	50%	50%

The majority in group one and four thought that the article was interesting or fun, while group three found it boring.

Opinions about the article	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Interesting/Fun	63,6%	50%	0	100%
Boring	27,3%	25%	100%	0
OK	9,1%	0	0	0
No answer	0	25%	0	0

The majority of group one, two and three thought that the article was easy.

Level of difficulty	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4
	Sports	Computers	Music	Friends
Easy	81,8%	75%	100%	50%
Both	18,2%	25%	0	50%

4.2.3 *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Beck’s Head in’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. The groups are the same as previously except group two where there were three boys.

Group one and three had the highest results on the questions where group four had the lowest result.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	3,73	3,67	4	2

Group one and three knew most words followed by group two who all knew some words.

<i>Words correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	2,27	1,67	4	1,33

Group one had most subjects who thought they understood most words.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Yes</i>	18,2%	33,3%	50%	33,3%
<i>No</i>	81,8%	66,7%	50%	66,7%

Most of group one thought that the article was interesting and fun while the other groups were more divided and not too fond of it.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun</i>	72,7%	33,3%	0	33,3%
<i>Boring</i>	27,3%	33,3%	50%	33,3%
<i>OK</i>	0	33,3%	0	33,3%
<i>No answer</i>	0	0	50%	0

Most subjects in group one, two and four thought that the article was easy.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Easy</i>	72,7%	100%	50%	66,7%
<i>Difficult</i>	0	0	0	33,3%
<i>Both</i>	27,3%	0	50%	0

4.2.4 *The Times* – ‘How music lessons can improve young minds’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. The group are the same as in the survey of the article from *The Sun*.

All the groups did well on the questions with similar results, except group three who did better.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	3,64	3,67	4	3,67

Group three knew most words followed by group one.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group2</i>	<i>Group3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	<i>3,09</i>	<i>1,33</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>2</i>

All groups had a majority who thought they understood most words and group three and one had the highest results.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group2</i>	<i>Group3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>18,2%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>81,8%</i>	<i>66,7%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>66,7%</i>

Group three thought that the article was interesting while most subjects in group four thought it was boring. Group one was half and half divided between negative and positive opinions.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group2</i>	<i>Group3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun/Good</i>	<i>45,5%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>Boring</i>	<i>45,5%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>66,7%</i>
<i>No answer</i>	<i>9,1%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

Group one, two and three had a majority who thought that the article was easy while group four thought it was difficult.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group2</i>	<i>Group3</i>	<i>Group 4</i>
	<i>Sports</i>	<i>Computers</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>Friends</i>
<i>Easy</i>	<i>45,5%</i>	<i>66,7%</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Difficult</i>	<i>9,1%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>66,7%</i>
<i>Both</i>	<i>36,4%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>No answer</i>	<i>9,1%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>

4.3 Reading habits of newspapers

4.3.1 *BBC News* – ‘Angelina Jolie tours refugee camp in India’

The subjects were divided into two groups. Group one consists of fourteen subjects, nine boys and five girls, who read newspapers several times a week. The second group has subjects that read newspapers once a week or more rarely. There are one girl and five boys in the second group.

The results of subjects in both groups are similar but group one has slightly better results.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	<i>3,36</i>	<i>3,17</i>

Group two have slightly higher results on the translation of words and all subjects in group two knew at least one word which was not the case in group one.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	<i>2,93</i>	<i>3,33</i>

More subjects in group two thought that they were not many words that they did not understand than in group one.

Many words not understood	Group 1 - Several times a week	Group 2 - Once a week or less
Yes	28,6%	16,7%
No	71,4%	83,3%

More subjects in group one thought that the article was interesting, however, there were also more subjects in group one than in group two that thought the article was boring.

Opinions about the article	Group 1 - Several times a week	Group 2 - Once a week or less
Interesting	57,1%	50%
Boring	28,6%	16,7%
OK	7,1 %	16,7%
No answer	7,1%	16,7%

The results on level of difficulty were similar in the two groups, and most subjects thought that the article was easy.

The level of difficulty	Group 1	Group 2
	Several times a week	Once a week or less
Easy	64,3%	66,7%
Difficult	21,4%	16,7%
Both	14,3%	16,7%

4.3.2 Glamour – ‘Pink in her living room, Beyoncé in her bathroom’

The groups are the same as in the first article, but with one girl missing which affects group one that has only four girls and nine boys in this survey.

The results on the questions were similar in both groups.

Questions correctly answered	Group 1	Group 2
	Several times a week	Once a week or less
Average answer (Maximum 4)	3,62	3,67

The results on translated words were quite similar but group two knew more words.

Words correctly translated	Group 1 - Several times a week	Group 2 - Once a week or less
Average score (Maximum 6)	1,69	2,17

Both groups had similar results on if there were many words they did not understand.

Many words not understood	Group 1 - Several times a week	Group 2 - Once a week or less
Yes	30,8%	33,3%
No	69,2%	66,7%

The majority in both groups, highest in group one, thought that the article was interesting or fun. About one third in both groups thought that the article was boring.

Opinions about the article	Group 1 - Several times a week	Group 2 - Once a week or less
Interesting/Fun	61,5%	50%
Boring	30,8%	33,3%
OK	7,7%	0
No answer	0	16,7%

The results on the level of difficulty were similar in both groups.

<i>The level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Easy</i>	<i>76,9%</i>	<i>83,3%</i>
<i>Both</i>	<i>23,1%</i>	<i>16,7%</i>

4.3.3 *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Beck’s Head in’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. Group one consists of five girls and eight boys and group two consists of one girl and five boys.

The results on the questions were similar in both groups, slightly better in group one who all knew at least two questions.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	<i>3,54</i>	<i>3,33</i>

Group one had better results on the translation of words.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
	<i>Several times a week</i>	<i>Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	<i>2,38</i>	<i>1,83</i>

All subjects in group two thought that they understood most of the words in comparison to the majority with sixty percent in group one.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
	<i>Several times a week</i>	<i>Once a week or less</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>38,5%</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>61,5%</i>	<i>100%</i>

Most subjects in group one thought that the article was interesting or fun while half of group two thought it was boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun</i>	<i>53,8%</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>Boring</i>	<i>23,1%</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>OK</i>	<i>15,4%</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>No answer</i>	<i>7,7%</i>	<i>0</i>

More subjects in group one thought that the article was easy.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Easy</i>	<i>76,9%</i>	<i>66,7%</i>
<i>Difficult</i>	<i>7,7%</i>	<i>0</i>
<i>Both</i>	<i>15,4%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>

4.3.4 *The Times* – ‘How music lessons can improve young minds’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. The groups are the same as in the survey of the article from *The Sun*.

The results on the questions were similar in both groups.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	<i>3,69</i>	<i>3,67</i>

The results were very similar in both groups.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	<i>2,85</i>	<i>2,83</i>

On the question whether there were many difficult words or not the results were similar.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>
	<i>Several times a week</i>	<i>Once a week or less</i>
<i>Yes</i>	<i>23,1%</i>	<i>16,7%</i>
<i>No</i>	<i>76,9%</i>	<i>83,3%</i>

Group two was divided between boring and interesting while group one was more positive than negative about the article.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun/Good</i>	<i>46,2%</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>Boring</i>	<i>38,5%</i>	<i>50%</i>
<i>No answer</i>	<i>15,4%</i>	<i>0</i>

More subjects in group one thought that the article was easy in comparison to group two were more subjects thought that the article was difficult.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1 - Several times a week</i>	<i>Group 2 - Once a week or less</i>
<i>Easy</i>	<i>53,8%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>Difficult</i>	<i>7,7%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>Both</i>	<i>23,1%</i>	<i>33,3%</i>
<i>No answer</i>	<i>15,4%</i>	<i>0</i>

4.4 Reading habits of English texts

The subjects were divided into three groups depending on whether they like reading English texts and their reading habits of English texts outside school. Only one boy out of the subjects does not read any English outside school. The first group does not like reading English too much or only sometimes and read only English texts on internet in their spare time. The second group likes reading English texts and reads English books and English on the internet. Group three likes reading English and read English texts on the internet and in computer games.

4.4.1 BBC News – ‘Angelina Jolie tours refugee camp in India’

There are three boys and one girl in group one, group two consists of four girls and six boys and in group three there are one girl and five boys.

Group one had the highest individual result with four correct answers to the question, but also had one subject who only had one correct answer.

<i>Question correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	<i>3,25</i>	<i>3,3</i>	<i>3,33</i>

Group two did clearly best on the word translation followed by group three.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like, Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	2,25	3,6	2,67

Group two also had most subjects who did not think there were many words they did not understand.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, Computers</i>
<i>Yes</i>	25%	20%	33,3%
<i>No</i>	75%	80%	66,7%

Most subjects in group one and two thought the article was interesting, while the majority in group three thought that it was boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Interesting</i>	50%	60%	33,3%
<i>Boring</i>	25%	10%	66,7%
<i>OK</i>	0	20%	0
<i>No answer</i>	25%	10%	0

Most subjects in group two thought that the article was easy, many more than in the other two groups.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Easy</i>	50%	80%	50%
<i>Difficult</i>	25%	10%	33,3%
<i>Both</i>	25%	10%	16,7%

4.4.2 *Glamour* – ‘Pink in her living room, Beyoncé in her bathroom’

The groups are the same as in the first article except for group two that has three girls and six boys in this survey.

Group one and two had the highest and similar results on the questions.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like - Books</i>	<i>Like - Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	3,75	3,78	3,33

Group two did clearly best on the translation of words followed by group three.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 6)</i>	1	2,33	1,67

All groups did not think that there were many words they did not understand and with similar results.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
	<i>Do not like</i>	<i>Like – Books</i>	<i>Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Yes</i>	25%	33,3%	33,3%
<i>No</i>	75%	66,7%	66,7%

Most subjects in all groups thought that the article was fun or interesting. One third in group two and three thought that it was boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun</i>	50%	55,6%	66,7%
<i>Boring</i>	25%	33,3%	33,3%
<i>OK</i>	25%	0	0
<i>No answer</i>	0	11,1%	0

All subjects in group two thought that the article was easy as well as the majority in group three.

<i>Level of difficulty</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Easy</i>	50%	100%	66,7%
<i>Both</i>	50%	0	33,3%

4.4.3 *The Sun* – ‘Macca’s Axe did Beck’s Head in’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. Group one has one girl and three boys, group two has four girls and six boys and group three has one girl and four boys.

Group one did best on the questions where all subjects knew at least three questions.

<i>Questions correctly answered</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average answer (Maximum 4)</i>	3,75	3,4	3,4

Group two did best on the word translation followed by group three.

<i>Words correctly translated</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Average score (Maximum 7)</i>	1,5	2,6	2

More subjects in group two also thought that they understood most words.

<i>Many words not understood</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Yes</i>	25%	20%	40%
<i>No</i>	75%	80%	60%

The majority of group two and three thought that the article was interesting or fun in comparison to group one where half the group thought it was boring.

<i>Opinions about the article</i>	<i>Group 1 Do not like</i>	<i>Group 2 Like – Books</i>	<i>Group 3 Like – Internet, computers</i>
<i>Interesting/Fun</i>	50%	50%	60%
<i>Boring</i>	50%	30%	20%
<i>OK</i>	0	10%	20%
<i>No answer</i>	0	10%	0

Group two had most subjects who thought that the article was easy, followed by group three.

Level of difficulty	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Easy	50%	80%	80%
Difficult	0	0	20%
Both	50%	20%	0

4.4.4 *The Times* – ‘How music lessons can improve young minds’

Six girls and thirteen boys read the article and filled out the questionnaire. The groups are the same as in the survey of the article from *The Sun*.

Group two had definitely the best results followed by group one.

Questions correctly answered	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Average answer (Maximum 4)	3,75	3,9	3,2

Group two also knew most words followed by one.

Words correctly translated	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Average score (Maximum 7)	2,75	3,2	2

All subjects in group two thought that they understood most words.

Many words not understood	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Yes	50%	0	40%
No	50%	100%	60%

The majority of group two found the article interesting, while the majority of group one found it boring.

Opinions about the article	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Interesting/Fun/Good	25%	70%	40%
Boring	75%	20%	40%
No answer	0	10%	20%

The opinions about the level of difficulty were divided in the groups.

Level of difficulty	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
	Do not like	Like – Books	Like – Internet, computers
Easy	50%	50%	40%
Difficult	0	20%	20%
Both	50%	20%	20%
No answer	0	10%	20%

4.5 Comparison of the articles

Six girls and eleven boys filled out the questionnaire to compare the articles to each other.

The boys thought that the article from *The Sun* was the easiest, while the girls found the articles from *Glamour* and *The Sun* easiest.

<i>The easiest article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>BBC</i>	16,7%	9,1%
<i>Glamour</i>	33,3%	18,2%
<i>The Sun</i>	33,3%	63,6%
<i>The Times</i>	0	9,1%
<i>No answer</i>	16,7%	0

Most boys and girls found *The Times* to be the most difficult article.

<i>The most difficult article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>BBC</i>	16,7%	18,2%
<i>Glamour</i>	0	18,2%
<i>The Sun</i>	0	0
<i>The Times</i>	50%	54,5%
<i>No answer</i>	33,3%	9,1%

Most girls found the article from *Glamour* to be most enjoyable while most boys found that the article from *The Sun* was most enjoyable.

<i>Most enjoyable article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>BBC</i>	0	9,1%
<i>Glamour</i>	50%	18,2%
<i>The Sun</i>	16,7%	63,6%
<i>The Times</i>	0	0
<i>No answer</i>	33,3%	9,1%

Most girls thought that *The Times* article was the most interesting while it was *The Sun* article for most boys.

<i>The most interesting article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>BBC</i>	0	0
<i>Glamour</i>	16,7%	9,1%
<i>The Sun</i>	16,7%	54,5%
<i>The Times</i>	50%	36,4%
<i>No answer</i>	16,7%	0

The majority of both girls and boys thought that *The Times* was the most boring article.

<i>The most boring article</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>BBC</i>	16,7%	9,1%
<i>Glamour</i>	0	18,2%
<i>The Sun</i>	33,3%	9,1%
<i>The Times</i>	50%	63,6%

The majority of girls and boys think that it is fun to use newspapers in class.

<i>Fun to use newspapers</i>	<i>Girls</i>	<i>Boys</i>
<i>Yes</i>	66,7%	90,9%
<i>No</i>	33,3%	9,1%

Answers to why it is fun to use newspapers in school were that it is good learning, a good way to learn new words and another way of learning English. It is more fun, better and more interesting than textbooks. Some thought that it is fun to read authentic English texts.

4.6 Interview with the teacher

An interview with the teacher was carried out and these are her views on using newspapers when teaching and gender differences when teaching English.

The advantages from working with newspaper articles are that it is current and fresh material, it is fun for the learners to work with texts that are not adapted and they can learn modern words. It is easy to get materials when using the internet. The downside is that it means more work with preparations for the teacher, but one could on the other hand, use the pupils and let them choose texts after they have been working with articles a few times. Another disadvantage is that it is difficult to find audio aids to work with while using articles.

The preparations that are necessary when working with articles are finding texts, reading them, checking on words and perhaps making questions and choosing difficult words for the pupils to work with. It is important to know the group in order to know which words to choose and what they need to practise. It is difficult to know the level of difficulty on the texts when working with authentic texts.

When working with articles while teaching you can choose to work traditionally, reading, translating the text and learning words. The pupils can also use articles when practising speech. They can, for instance, use articles as a basis for oral presentations, have a newscast that the pupils prepare or let the pupils retell articles they have read in small groups.

It is in the end time or rather the lack of time that decides whether it is difficult or not to use articles when teaching, more difficult articles need more preparations.

It is important to use different types of texts when teaching, especially if the textbook and other learning materials that are used are not good enough. It is important to use authentic texts that are not adapted. Using articles can show the pupils other material than the textbook, how to learn more English and make the lessons more varied. It can also lead to individual studies for the pupils on their own.

Girls are generally better in English, they work harder, do their home work and are more thorough while working on their exercises and so on. There are however, always exceptions as for instance in this class where the pupils with the highest grades are boys. Another difference is that boys who are troubled and have lacking interest in school work tend to be noisy and disturb in class while girls with trouble tend not to attend classes at all.

The pupils' interests are not being considered a lot in the teaching. One reason is lack of time because social problems and pupils with problems take too much time in school. Working with speech exercises it is, for instance, convenient to let them use their interests. The pupils are also allowed to influence the planning at the start of the semester and choose what they want to work with. Over periods the pupils get to work with individual planning

and take responsibility for their own work. But many pupils need strict ways of working where they know what to do and how to do it in order to get anything done. They are not mature enough to take the big responsibility of their own learning or do not have the interest, and so they need to practise in small doses. It can also be hazardous to let the pupils choose their subjects and what to work with too much. It is important to introduce them to different topics, let them read about different persons and read text from different writers. They would miss out on many things if they always got to choose for themselves.

5. Discussion

5.1 Gender differences

In all questionnaires about the articles, the boys did better than the girls on the translation of words. They could translate more words from all articles than the girls.

When looking at the results on the questions to the articles the results varied. The boys did better on the articles from *BBC News* and *The Sun*, while the girls' results were better on the articles from *Glamour* and *The Times*. Many more boys knew all questions on the *BBC* article where the majority of girls knew three or four questions.

The boys' results on the article from *The Sun* were a lot better than the girls', which could be connected to the fact that it is a typical article that boys like to read and read, an article about football. In this group most of the boys have some kind of sport as a spare time activity which should make most of them interested in reading about sports. Most of the girls also thought that the article was boring and therefore a lack of interest and a big interest could be the explanation to the big difference between boys and girls.

All the girls knew all questions on the *Glamour* article which was a much better result than the boys'. Here the explanation can also be connected to the topic of the article. This article is from a woman's magazine and about celebrities. A type of article that many of the girls probably have come across before. Fifty percent of the girls have hanging out with friends and having fun as their spare time interests which also might include reading magazines like *Glamour* and articles of this type.

The girls also had higher results on the questions to the article from *The Times*, which in the analysis of the articles is considered to be the most difficult text. This is an interesting result that is difficult to explain. It cannot really be explained by the topic, since it is not a specific female topic. What distinguishes this article from the others is the style that is very formal and that the content is strictly serious. The conclusion that could be drawn from this is that girls may be better at more difficult and/or formal texts. A great majority of the girls read

newspapers often which could give them more tools to understand this article. This explanation is however, difficult to prove from this study and its results.

On the question whether there were many difficult words in the texts, most results were applicable to the results from the word translations except the article from *Glamour*. Here the results from the translation were worse than the number of subjects who thought they understood most of the words. It is possible that the subjects overrate their own ability but the results from the rest of the articles do not support this theory. Furthermore, the reason for this contradiction in the results is possibly because the article was very easygoing and easy to understand. However, its informal style also came with quite a few informal words that are common in everyday language but difficult for a foreign language learner. Many of the words that were chosen for the translation were not too common and hard for the subjects, but in contradiction with the general level of difficulty of the article.

When it comes to the subjects' opinions about the articles, the girls found the articles from *BBC News* and *Glamour* interesting or fun and the articles from *The Sun* and *The Times* boring, while the boys found the first two articles more boring and the articles from *The Sun* and *The Times* interesting, fun or good. That the girls liked the article from *Glamour* and that the boys like *The Sun* article is not very surprising. Those two topics respond to the stereotypic interests of boys and girls. The *BBC* article has a similar topic as the *Glamour* article which could explain the results. The explanation for the opinions about *The Times* article cannot be connected to gender differences and its reasons could be others than gender differences.

The boys found all articles easy, while the girls found the first three easy but were more divided about the last one. The article from *The Times* is not an easy text for the subjects, which explains the girls' results.

One boy found the *BBC* article easy but confusing which can be explained by the lacking cohesive devices in the article that makes it difficult to follow, since there are not always clear connections between the presented facts.

The results from this investigation do not show that the girls did clearly better results than the boys, which might have been expected when looking at previous reports on pupil's results and grades in English. But if the interview with the teacher is taken into account the results are not surprising since the boys are doing better results than the girls in this class and are getting higher grades. This explains that the results are not similar to previous research. The boys also knew many more words than the girls in all articles.

5.2 Interests

The two groups who did best throughout the test were the sports group and the music group. Group three, the music group, was among the best in each survey when looking at the results from the questions on the content and the translation of words. Group two, the computer group, often had low results compared to the other groups. Group four, the friends groups often had the lowest results apart from the results on the questions on the *Glamour* article where all of them knew all questions. This could be explained by the fact that it is a topic that is related to their main spare time interests, being with friends and having fun, which are likely to include reading of women's magazines like *Glamour*.

Group one, three and four all had articles that related to their interest, which was not the case for group two with computers. The sports group did well on the sports article, the friends group had a high result on the celebrity article and group three did clearly better than the others on the music article.

The interests of the subject also influence the opinion of the articles. *The Times* article about music was the only article the music group thought interesting. The sports group had the highest percentage of positive opinions about the sports article. Group four liked the first two articles that were about celebrities. The computers group were divided on their opinions about the articles except on the *BBC* article which they thought was boring.

The sports group thought that all the articles were easy, while the computer group was divided about the *BBC* article, the music group about *The Sun* article, and group four was divided about the *Glamour* article and found *The Times* article difficult.

In this investigation the conclusion that there is a clear connection between the subjects' interests and the results can be drawn. The reasons might be that they are interested in reading about topics related to their spare time interests, and if something is interesting it is often also easier to understand. Another reason might be that they have pre-knowledge about the topics if they are related to their interests, which helps them to understand the texts.

5.3 Reading habits of newspapers

The two groups divided by their general newspaper reading habits had similar results throughout the survey, and there are no clear conclusions that can be drawn on the effects of newspaper reading.

The results on the questions were similar with all articles. Group two, who read newspaper less often, had better results on most word translations.

Group one with more reading habits of newspapers was more positive in their opinions about the newspapers which could be an effect from reading of newspapers, that they are more used to it or that they just like it more.

There is a difference between the subjects' determination of the articles' level of difficulty on the two most difficult articles from *The Sun* and *The Times*. More subjects in group one found *The Sun* article easy and they also found *The Times* article easy while group two were more divided. This might imply that it was easier for group one to follow the article and understand it, but since this was not shown in the rest of the results it is difficult to decide on. The subjects in group one might be more used to newspaper language and its style despite the language, which would help them to understand an English newspaper article. This genre knowledge may be more important when coming across a more difficult text.

5.4 Reading habits of English texts

There were more differences to be found between the groups with different reading habits of English texts. Group two, who like reading English texts and read books, had better results on the questions than the other groups. Interestingly enough, group one who do not like reading English had better results on the questions than group three who like reading English on the internet.

Group two had the clearly best results on the word translation followed by group three. The effect on word knowledge of reading a lot of English is obvious from the results.

Group two found all articles interesting or fun, where group one and three were more divided between interesting, fun and boring. Group one did not like the articles from *The Sun* and *The Times* and group three did not like the *BBC* article or *The Times* article.

Group two thought that all the articles were easy with a higher majority than group three. Group one was more divided between easy and both on all articles except on the one from *BBC* that they found easy.

The conclusion that can be drawn here from this investigation is that it is important to read a lot of English texts in order to improve one's reading comprehension. This investigation also shows that the type of texts that is most successful in improving the English skills is books. The group who read English books in their spare time had the best results on all tests, which was especially clear in terms of word knowledge.

5.5 Comparison of the articles

The boys found the article from *The Sun* to be the easiest, the most interesting and the article that was most fun. This implies again that interest helps to make a text easier. Both girls and boys thought that *The Times* article was the most difficult one. This is not very surprising

since it was found to be the most difficult one of the articles in the analysis of the articles, due to its topic, style and vocabulary.

The girls thought that the article from *Glamour* was the article that was most fun. The reasons for this are probably the topic that is celebrities and that it is from a woman's magazine.

Both boys and girls thought that *The Times* article was most boring; however, the girls also found it to be the most interesting article. That it would be the most boring one, could be explained by the fact that it is more academic or more scientific than the others.

There were no big surprises in the comparison of the articles. It shows that interests are closely connected to gender and the topic should therefore be considered when choosing articles since one of the conclusions in this essay is that the pupils' interests also influence their ability of understanding a text.

6. Conclusion

To compare the results and discussion with the hypotheses, this study shows that all the articles could be used in a ninth grade class, which is an interesting result that was not expected. More difficult articles may however need more preparation and more help such as translation of words and idiomatic expression should be given to the pupils in order for them to completely understand the articles, which was also suggested in the interview with the teacher. The hypotheses about the articles from *BBC News* and *The Sun* were not corroborated since the results on the *BBC* article were not better than on *The Sun* article which also was found to be the easiest one by the boys. *The Sun* article was, as in the hypothesis, more appreciated by the boys which also influenced their results positively. *The Times* article was the most difficult for the subjects to understand, which corroborates the hypothesis.

The result also suggests that it is not always necessary that the pupils understand all the words in order to understand the content.

In this study the gender differences are not the same as in other studies since the boys' results were in a way better or at least not worse than the girls' results. This shows that one can never make assumptions on pupils' knowledge based on their gender. The hypothesis that boys have better vocabulary knowledge was corroborated.

A close connection between interests and comprehension ability was found as predicted. A topic connected to the subjects' interests improved the ability to understand the article and the opinion of it. Frequent reading of English texts like books does improve pupils' reading comprehension; however, the positive effects of general newspaper reading could not be proved.

7. Summary

The purpose of this essay is to investigate ninth grade pupils' reading comprehension of different newspaper articles in order to find out which ones that are suitable for teaching. The articles were analysed and compared to each other. The questions that were investigated in this essay were. What kinds of newspaper articles are appropriate to use when teaching ninth grade pupils? Are there any gender differences in reading comprehension of newspaper articles? How do the pupils' interests and spare time activities influence their reading comprehension? How do general newspaper reading habits influence reading comprehension? How does reading of English influence the reading comprehension?

Four articles from two British newspapers, *The Sun* and *The Times*, one magazine, *Glamour*, and one News homepage, *BBC News*, were chosen.

An English class with twenty subjects took part in this survey. They read the articles and filled out questionnaires with questions on the articles' content and their opinion about the articles' and their level of difficulty. They were also asked to try to translate some words from the articles.

The subjects were divided into different groups in order to analyse the results from different aspect. They were divided into groups depending on gender, spare time interests and general newspaper reading habits and reading habits of English texts.

This study shows that all the articles can be used in a ninth grade class. The more difficult articles may need more preparation and the pupils probably need more help in order for them to completely understand the articles. The article from *The Times* was the most difficult to understand but still possible to use in teaching. The boys liked the sports article from *The Sun* the most while some of the girls liked the article from the woman's magazine *Glamour*.

In this study the gender differences are not the same as in other studies since the boys' results were in a way better or at least not worse than the girls' results. The boys' results on the translation of words were better.

The results show a connection between interests and comprehension ability. A topic connected to the subjects' interests improved their ability to understand the article and the opinion of it.

Frequent reading of English texts like books does improve pupils' reading comprehension; however, the effects of newspaper reading could not be proved.

The subjects liked using newspaper in school, which is positive for a future teacher.

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1. Why did Jolie visit refugee camps in India?

2. What does Jolie think about India and their opinion about refugees?

3. What is she doing in India?

4. What does Angelina think about the refugees?

5. Translate or explain the following words
refugee
praise
stance
statement
gracious
abduction
beheading

6. Where there many words in the article that you did not understand?

7. What did you think of the article? (interesting, fun, boring etc.)

8. Was the article easy or difficult to understand?
Glamour
Pink in her living room

1. What is special about Pink's living room?

2. What is special about her couch?

Beyoncé in her bathroom

3. What does Beyoncé say about herself as a person?

4. Why did Beyoncé write the song Bootylicious?

5. Translate or explain the following words

suburban

lounge

springs

shrine

pampering

gained

6. Where there many words in the article that you did not understand?

7. What did you think of the article? (interesting, fun, boring etc.)

8. Was the article easy or difficult to understand?

The Sun - Macca's Axe did Becks' Head in

1. What does Capello think of Beckham?

2. Why is Beckham having difficulties?

3. What does a coach need to do according to Capello?

4. How does coach Capello consider himself?

5. Translate or explain the following words

anguish

regain

composure

resigned

captaincy

urged

foundations

6. Where there many words in the article that you did not understand?

7. What did you think of the article? (interesting, fun, boring etc.)

8. Was the article easy or difficult to understand?

The Times - *How music lessons can improve young minds*

1. What happens to children who have been given music lessons?

2. What skills do music lessons improve?

3. What happens to older children who become music lessons?

4. What kind of tests were the children in the study doing?

5. Translate or explain the following words

improve

literacy

extracurricular

school curriculum

ability

examined

explores

6. Where there many words in the article that you did not understand?

7. What did you think of the article? (interesting, fun, boring etc.)

8. Was the article easy or difficult to understand?

Comparison of the articles

1. Which article was the easiest to understand?

2. Which article was the most difficult to understand?

3. Which was the funniest article?

4. Which was the most interesting article?

5. Which was the most boring article?

6. Is it fun to use newspapers in the English class?

7. Why/ Why not?

8. How can newspaper articles be used in school?

Interview with the teacher

Questions

What are the advantages/disadvantages when using newspaper articles while teaching?

What preparations are necessary?

How can newspapers be used in class?

Is it important to use newspapers when teaching?

Why should they be used?

Are there any differences between boys and girls in English?

Are the pupils' interests considered in school?