INFORMAL LEARNING STRATEGIES OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
SEEKING TO LEARN ENGLISH VIA MASS AND/OR SOCIAL MEDIA

A Thesis by

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The following faculty members have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content, and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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DEDICATION

To my parents, my sister and my brother

Being fluent in a native language is to survive.
Understanding a second language is an option.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how English as a second language (ESL) university students benefitted from their use of mass and/or social media in their informal language learning as they prepared to come to the United States. In addition, the thesis was designed to explore whether respondents' use of mass and social media in their informal second language learning supports Stephen Krashen's second language acquisition theory. Using a survey methodology, a questionnaire was designed concerning what mass and/or social media international students used as they sought to learn English before arriving at their university, how much time they spent doing so, and other related concerns. In summary, the thesis's research demonstrates that the self-learning strategies of the ESL students surveyed in the research involved the use of mass and social media, particularly movies and other audio-visual resources, and that these practices consisted of activities that support Krashen's second language acquisition theory.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The number of international students studying at the United States colleges and universities has increased over the years. In 2015-2016, Project Atlas reported that 1,043,839 students from foreign countries studied at United States colleges and universities. International students who arrive in America with little-to-no proficiency in English are faced not only with the difficult task of becoming a member of an entirely new environment, but they must become fluent in English as quickly as possible. This process, usually referred to as the study of English as a Second Language (ESL), is typically a great challenge. New international students who come to the U.S. with poor English skills often take classes when they arrive. In addition, on their own initiative, many participate even before they arrive in what experts call informal language learning strategies that enhance their proficiency without the aid of classroom instruction.

The purpose of this thesis is to study how ESL students may have benefitted from their use of mass and/or social media in their informal language learning as they have prepared to come to the United States. For example, have they listened to the radio while driving or riding in a car, used social media applications, watched movies or TV shows, read books, in hopes of learning English? To learn about those strategies, the thesis's method has been designed to survey first- and second-year international students on their informal English language learning activities. The questionnaire is designed to elicit information on what mass and/or social media they have used as they have sought to learn English before arriving at school, how much time they spent doing so, and other related concerns.

My exploration of these research questions offers several benefits. First, the research findings will be useful to future international students seeking to learn English on their own. Second, the data collected will offer insights on how the newer forms of social media are being used by international students along with the older mass-mediated forms such as television and films for informal language learning. Third, the research will further Stephen Krashen's important work on second language acquisition theory. And finally, the information gathered in the research will be enlightening for ESL instructors, as they seek to facilitate the informal language learning of their students.

Personal Interests

This area of study interested me because I am an international student from Thailand. In my native country, since the first grade, I learned English with non-native speakers. When I lived in Thailand, there were only a few effective bilingual programs. My English classes met only one-to-two hours per week. At that time, I did not expect that I would need to use English as much as I am using it today. I did not know English well enough to be able to communicate smoothly until I came to the United States as an undergraduate college student.

Since arriving in the U.S., in 2010, I have noticed that learning English with native-English speakers helps me learn faster compared to speaking with non-native speakers. It's surprising to me how quickly I began speaking English without translating to Thai in my head. Within six months, I dreamt in English. About a year later, I started to understand movies without subtitles.

From 2010 to 2012, the most valuable method I used to help me learn English outside the classroom was watching the American animated cartoon sitcom *The Family Guys*. The show not

only helped me learn English, but about American culture. Indeed, the show provides humor, a factor that kept me wanting to watch more. I personally learn better when the method is enjoyable and easy to follow. This is an example of informal language learning, since I have no instructor, nor does this learning take place in a classroom.

Before beginning this thesis, I wondered why the amount of time it takes different people to learn English varies so much. Moreover, watching cartoons seemed to me to be a way to learn that helps students gain English language competence outside the classroom, especially in the improvement of their listening skills. It is because of my experiences in learning English that I am interested in this area of study. Moreover, I have wondered whether a learner's background is a variable that affects second language learning.

Before exploring Stephen Krashen's second language acquisition theory, the following literature review section reviews key terms and concepts that are crucial to the thesis, as well as other relevant scholarly literature.

Literature Review

Key Terms and Concepts

First language acquisition (FLA) is "the acquisition of a single language in childhood, regardless of the number of languages in a child's natural environment" (Cruze-Ferriera, 2011). One's first language is also referred to "mother tongue" or "native language." First language acquisition typically involves parents, siblings, and other significant people, as well as formal schooling once a child is old enough. In the early stages, first language learning is an unconscious experience, but later becomes a conscious, traditional grammar-based process. It consists of "skills that typically develop gradually and sequentially through the late preschool

period. They are developed with direct training and exposure"
(www.phonologicalawareness.org).

Second language acquisition (SLA) is defined as "learning and acquisition of a second language once the mother tongue or first language acquisition is established…[and involves] learning other languages in addition to the native language" (Singhal, 2012). A child whose native language is Thai starts learning English when she begins school. English is learned through the process of second language acquisition. In fact, a young child can learn a second language faster than an adult can learn a second language, especially when a child is being exposed to and surrounded by native speakers (Robinson, Keogh and Kusuma-Powell, 2013). An associated term is English as a second language (ESL), which involves the use of English by speakers with different native languages.

Second language acquisition involves three kinds of learning: formal, non-formal, and informal. Formal language learning, which takes place in classrooms, involves teachers who use textbooks and other learning materials to help their students become proficient writers and speakers of English. In addition, according to Werquin, "A great deal of valuable learning also takes place either deliberately or informally in everyday life" (2010).

Non-formal language learning takes place outside language-learning classrooms, but within organizational frameworks. Examples include an international student's joining a reading or church group not only to meet new people, but to help them learn English. Non-formal language learning results from daily life activities related to work, family or leisure. It is not structured in the ways formal learning is, with learning objectives, learning time, or learning support.

Finally, those seeking to learn languages participate in informal language learning, that is, that which takes place outside classrooms without the aide of a teacher or other organizational structure. Such learning often takes place by accident, since, as students go about their daily lives, they cannot help but learn experientially. In addition, those seeking to learn new languages often create their own informal learning strategies (Werquin, 2007). Since this study is concerned with informal language learning that uses mass and/or social media, this is explored more fully in the following section.

Language Learning via Mass and/or Social Media

Learning a second language has always involved the use of mass media. For example, Horn and Kan's research (2015) explored how storybooks and cartoons are useful tools for second language learners. They completed a study on Spanish-English bilingual preschool children through storybook reading and cartoon viewing. The results demonstrate that children learn unfamiliar words through cartoons, as well through storybook reading. According to these findings, both storybook and cartoon learning raise students' desire to learn new words.

In the 21st century, electronic devices, such as smartphone, tablets and computers, have enhanced the informal second language learning activities of students. Such electronic devices encourage second language learners to learn English using social media, watching television shows, read the news online, and adopt a wide range of other technologies. In fact, these communication tools have assumed a primary role in second language learning because they provide "real" environmental contexts (Thorne, Black and Sykes, 2009).

Mobile communication devices, such as iPhones, Samsung Galaxy devices, and Google phones, are among today's fastest moving technological developments. Smartphones offer audio,

video file reproduction, web browsers, videos and still cameras, voice mail, and other helpful features. Brett's research on the use of mobile devices for second and foreign language learning looked at several of their options: 1) text-based and image-based interactive vocabulary exercises, 2) media files with subtitles, and 3) all-in-one listening exercises containing a sound file, interactive quiz and transcription. The benefits of using mobile device as a tool of language learning are its convenience, since one can use them at almost any place or time. In fact, most people access the Internet through their phone more often than through computers (2011).

Music, in addition to smartphones, is instantly available free of charge on YouTube for anyone with a computer, tablet, or smartphone, and has become an important avenue for informal language learning. Lee studied the use of songs whose performers use the English language. This research reports that listening to music is an enjoyable activity that can improve learners' listening skills and help them learn vocabulary, sentence structures, and cultural references using contemporary American popular culture. Such learning is often so enjoyable that it can enhance motivation (Lee, 2012).

Television viewing is a way to receive information from all over the world. Bahrani, who has worked in the field of second language learning and ESL for more than a decade, suggests that TV news works best for language learning. Having studied the role of audiovisual mass media news in language learning, he argues that TV news contains two types of content that can help second language learners: universal and specialized. Universal context refers to general topic news and entertainment news. Specialized content refers to topics that require knowledge in topics to comprehend (2011). Bahrani's study demonstrates that television or radio news can improve second language learners' comprehension, and, because of its lack of inappropriate pausing, can improve learners' speaking fluency.

The second-language learning studies of researchers Ydewalle and Van de Poel demonstrate that watching TV programs with English subtitles helps children between 8-12 years of age, as well as adults, incidentally acquire second languages. Their research findings suggest that viewing subtitled TV programs increases viewers' comprehension and knowledge of second languages, and that second language students at times remember the precise formulation of subtitles, as well as new words they see more than a couple of times. They also learned through their research that children exposed to films or other programming without subtitles learn second languages more quickly than adults, who benefit more from subtitles (1999).

Hayati and Mohmedi, who have studied the language learning of intermediate-level second language learners, claim programming with subtitles is more effective at enhancing listening comprehension than programming without subtitles (2010). They argue that one of the benefits of using video is that includes visual information that aides in comprehension. Moreover, films with English subtitles allow learners to observe the gestures, facial expressions and other aspects of body language, and this improves their comprehension even if their understanding of English vocabulary is limited. Their research suggests that videos with subtitles offer students' flexibility, although some of the research subjects concentrated more on reading the subtitles than on listening to what film characters say.

Webb and Rodgers, who completed a study on the vocabulary demands of TV programs on ESL learners (2009), concluded that second language learners will most likely not watch shows in second languages until their knowledge of vocabulary reaches a critical threshold. However, their research didn't address the question "What is the coverage necessary for adequate comprehension of television programs?"

In 2012, Bahrani and Sim studied informal language learning settings, focusing on technology and social interaction. They define this style of instruction as "learn[ing] a language outside the classroom," and highlight its unstructured nature. Out-of-class learning has been shown to be positively associated with growth in second language proficiency. In fact, successful second language learners often seek out and use various out-of-class opportunities for learning (Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2015). Second language learners learn new words through various incidental learning experiences during various activities throughout the day, such as at dinner, book discussions, and watching TV at health clinics and other places (Horn and Kan, 2015). Research demonstrates that out-of-class language learning is crucial for second language learners. One study found that out-of-class learning is made up of "diversified constituents that met the various needs in language learning and complemented in-class learning" (Lai, Zhu and Gong, 2015). Moreover, parents and teachers are significant sources of influence on the learners' out-of-class learning.

According to Bahrani and Sim, second language learners should take advantage of the wide array of computer technologies that offer increased opportunities for social interaction. They have divided these opportunities into two areas: 1) Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which refers to computer and video equipped classrooms, the Internet, and email, and, 2) Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which offer many different applications (apps) for language learning. They point out that the benefit of formal learning using CALL and MALL is significant because such technologies provide instant feedback on drill exercises and tests.

Ariza and Hancock (2003) highlight the benefits of learning second languages through use of computer software programs. Computers help learners with words they don't understand and help them correct their mistakes, all the while allowing them to work at their own pace. They

claim that using such programs enhances the learning of both beginner and advanced level students.

Zhang (2010), who supports the process of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), completed a study involving 40 first-year students from China. The study's results document that web-based learning can affect learners' attitudes. Zhang found that most students, more than 90 percent, learn more quickly if they use CALL. Other benefits of CALL are recognition of the diversity of learners, collaborative learning, tutorial help, a variety of instructional materials, and emphasis on individualized learning.

The goal of using CALL is to help learners enhance their experiential learning, motivation, student's academic achievement, and individualization. However, CALL does not only provide benefits to learners, but to teachers. With computer-assisted technology, teachers can adjust content and delivery of instruction to maximize success for all students (Zhang, 2010).

Ibrahim, Prain and Collet (2014) conducted an experiment on the use of Web 2.0 tools, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Wikis, by Malaysian ESL students outside the classroom. The learners learn a second language by interacting with computer systems and learning on their own without threatening or pressure from their peers. They learned English by adjusting their reading, rereading difficult text, and by pausing and thinking about what they are reading. Such steps help learners gain problem-solving skills. Indeed, anything that occurs online, and often outside formal educational settings, extended students' periods of language socialization, adaptation and language learning practice (Thorne, Black and Sykes, 2009).

In 2014, Coniam completed a language-learning study involving "chatbots," in which he defined them as "conversation practice machines." Chatbots are computer programs that carry on conversations with humans. Coniam learned that second language learners are motivated by their

interactions with chatbots, even though they know they're not human. Another benefit of chatbots is the ease with which students can enter interactive learning environments. Coniam mentioned, however, that chatbot responses tend to be "frequently predictable, redundant, lacking in personality and having no memory of previous responses, which could lead to very circular conversation" (p.548).

Today's social media sites and apps, such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram, are popular choices for many of today's second language learners. Social media sites and apps come in many languages (Terantino, 2011). Facebook, for example, provides opportunities for language learners to create naturalistic learning situations (Alm, 2015).

Social media sites and apps also create connections between educational institutions and second language learners, unlike college and university websites, which typically aren't as interactive. In fact, most people learn about Facebook by using it, rather than by reading a manual (Alm, 2015).

According to Peeters and Fourie (2016), Facebook is creating a new academic culture that allows students to connect outside of class with their peers, as well as with their teachers. Such flexibility helps second language learners through their acculturation process, since it offers opportunities for long-term communicative engagement (Thorne, Black and Sykes, 2009).

As of December 2016, Facebook had more than 1.7 billion monthly active users (www.statista.com). Alm, of the University of Otago, New Zealand, completed a study on how 190 ESL students regard Facebook's usefulness for informal language learning. More specifically, Alm studied how ESL students perceive Facebook as a multilingual environment, as a place for online writing practice, and their view on the educational value of their experiences (2015). Facebook is part of everyday routine for most people.

Peeter and Fourie (2016) explored the effectiveness of instructors' use of Facebook as an instructional tool. This research indicates that the use of Facebook in ESL classroom helps students feel more connected to their instructor, as well as other students. Students reported that they are more motivated to participate in classroom-based activities, since Facebook created a less restrictive environment. Moreover, Facebook appears to create a more student-centered language environment, and encourages student self-disclosure both inside and outside the classroom. This results in improved writing and reading skills.

Scholars offer a variety of theoretical perspectives on second language acquisition (SLA). Most studies that involve SLA focus on ESL students who study inside and outside the United States, as well as on immigrants. The next section will delve into some of this theoretical literature, with emphasis on the scholarship of Stephen Krashen.

Theoretical Perspectives

Learning a second language is a complex process in which learners acquire second languages at different rates, depending on his or her environment and culture and other factors (Westergaard, 2015). Second language learners benefit from acquiring a strong foundation (Malone, 2012). This means that if the second language learners are good at their native language, they can learn a second language more quickly. Myles called this foundation "the route of development." It is the nature of the stages that all learners go through when acquiring the second language (Myle, n.d.).

Motivation is the key factor for an individual to accomplish language learning. Bonola (2015) confirms that motivation has a direct effect on both quality as well as quantity of language learning. According to Gardner's (2011) socio-educational model of second language

acquisition, students with higher levels of motivation will do better than students with lower levels. Gardner found that motivation acts as an influencing factor in the realm of second language acquisition and learning. Within this model, motivation is composed of three aspects: effort, desire, and affect. He explains that effort refers to the time spent in studying the language and the drive of the learner. Desire refers to how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language. Affect indicates the learners' emotional reactions regarding language study (Gardner, 2010).

Gass argues that social interaction is the dominant factor in second language learning (Malone, 2012). In his research, he focuses on how learners use their linguistic environment, especially on conversational interactions, to build their knowledge of the second language. Additionally, Gass (2003) proposes that classroom interaction is important, not only to provide practice opportunities, but because interaction triggers acquisition processes. More specifically, Gass wrote, "Conversational interaction in a second language forms the basis for the development of language rather than being only a forum for practice of specific language features" (p. 87).

For effective speaking and listening, it is crucial that learners acquire conversational language skills. Duff states that "lack of English social or conversational language abilities make greater obstacle to integration than lack of academic language or cognitive skills" (2002, p. 104). Oral conversation with native speakers will help second language learners to acquire a second language faster.

Stephen Krashen, a professor emeritus at the University of Southern California, developed what is typically referred to as Second Language Acquisition theory (SLA). Second language acquisition is also known as second-language learning, or L2 acquisition (Menezes,

2013). Research in second-language acquisition is closely related to several disciplines including linguistics, sociolinguistic, psychology, neuroscience and education. Consequently, most theories of second-language acquisition can be identified as having roots in one of these areas.

Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, which he introduced in 1974, has had considerable impact on all areas of second language research and teaching (www.sk.com). Rather than stressing the rote learning of grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure, he argues that "understanding" best serves second language learners in acquiring a second language. He argues that acquiring language learning is enhanced when learners get comprehensible input in low anxiety environments (Krashen, 2013).

Krashen suggests that phonological awareness is fundamental to the initial stage of second language learners, and that motivation, self-esteem and a lack of anxiety will likely enhance a second language learner's progress (Krashen, 2013). For example, any student who is highly motivated, confident, and anxiety free, will probably learn a second language more quickly than one who is lacking in motivation and self-esteem, and is anxious. Krashen calls this a process of inductive output.

Krashen's research suggests that students just beginning their second language learning process should avoid trying to learn grammar and sentence structure. Instead, he recommends that ESL teachers begin their students' initial second language learning by teaching them vocabulary. He argues that learners who know more vocabulary are able to comprehend sentence structure and grammar more quickly (Krashen, 2013). Meanwhile, Krashen argues that listening is also a good method for students to start with. He told the story of a 5-year-old neighbor girl who had immigrated with her family from Japan. She did not know how to speak English, and she would not speak any word in English for five months. Krashen was trying to teach her

English at that time, but it did not work because she refused to speak English with him. By month six, she finally spoke English and surprisingly she was able to speak English almost as well as other kids in his neighborhood who are also from immigrant families. Krashen argues that the Japanese girl was absorbing how to pronounce words in her head, and only spoke them when she had gained enough confidence in her new knowledge.

Research Using Second Language Acquisition Theory

Many researchers have conducted studies within this field. Some researchers found that people acquire second languages start with vocabulary. Once these learners increase their vocabulary, they usually commit to extensive reading (www.transparent.com). Therefore, reading will help them acquire more vocabulary by seeing repeated words in the same reading or in different ones (Web and Chang, 2014). However, some researchers, such as Lee and Westergaard, argue that learning and acquiring a second language depends on learners' native languages, cultures and environments. They argue that teachers should not overlook the importance of learners' backgrounds.

A number of scholars have used Krashen's second language acquisition theory as a basis for their research on second language acquisition, particularly as it relates to motivation, sociocultural theory, and social interaction theory. Based on Krashen's approach, Oliveri and Haynes have identified five stages of second language acquisition, despite the fact that learners use different techniques and are not equally motivated (2012). They include the following:

1) Silent/receptive: Second language learners typically spend time learning vocabulary and practice pronouncing new words. Meanwhile, they may engage in self-talk, but they are afraid of

speaking in front of others. This stage may last from several hours to several months, depending on the learner.

2) Early production: This stage may last about six months. Second language learners typically acquire an understanding of up to 1,000 words, but grammatically they may not be able to comprehend yet.

3) Speech emergence: By this stage, second language learners acquire vocabulary of up to 3,000 words. They also learn to communicate by putting the words in short sentences or questions. Still, grammatically they may not fully comprehend yet.

4) Intermediate fluency: This stage may last for a year or more after the speech emergence stage. Second language learners typically have a vocabulary of as many as 6,000 words. They can use more complex sentences and start to think in a second language.

5) Continued language development/advanced fluency: It typically takes at least two years to reach this stage, and then up to 10 years to achieve full mastery of the second language in all its speaking, reading, listening and writing.

Robinson, Keogh, and Kusuma-Powell (n.d.), have written about the "silent period," wherein second language learners don't speak as they receive comprehensible second language. This period may last anywhere from just a few days to several months or even close to a year Malone (2012) argues that this technique works well because it is interactive and non-threatening.

Researchers have identified several obstacles to getting accurate research results. For example, interpreting the data is at times affected by the fact that participants may not fully understand the reasons for the research, and because they don't fully understand the instructions. Webb and Chang (2014) wrote that the result of extensive reading programs may not be reflected when the study allowed the students to select their own text. This is because the "participants

could discuss the stories; there may have been greater negotiation of the meanings of target words and the productive use of the target words" (p. 683).

Another conflict is the benefits of learning from technology or social interaction. Bahrani found that social interaction is not always a good method of learning second languages, since speaking with peers makes it seem easier than it will be when speaking with people outside of class. Bahrani (2011) confirmed that technologies such as film, television, and computer-based applications are more effective for those who want to more quickly improve their speaking fluency.

To summarize, Krashen's second language acquisition theory offers a rich perspective of insights into how people can best acquire second languages. Learning a second language is a complex process, which can be made much easier if appropriate methods and tools are employed. Each learner has his or her own way of learning, and today's mass and social mediums offer them a wide array of effective tools, including ones that are designed to help people learn second languages. Although Krashen's scholarly writing doesn't identify which mass or social media might be more effective for early learners, it can be argued that certain mediums would be more effective than others. Using movies and videos to learn languages are especially helpful for learning vocabulary, and for developing listening skills. Books, in contrast, are more effective for those stressing grammar and sentence structure in their studies.

Research Questions

My interest in international students' informal second language learning strategies, coupled with the research and theoretical perspectives of Krashner and other scholars on second language learning, has resulted in the development of the following four overarching research

questions. Together, these questions have guided me in my development of a methodology designed to answer them. These questions include the following:

1. Which mass and/or social media have ESL students used to learn English informally before coming to Wichita State?

2. Which mass and/or social media have ESL students found to be the most, and least, helpful as they have sought to learn English before arriving at Wichita State? Why?

3. Does the data collected in the research support Krashen's second language acquisition theoretical proposal that learners of second languages in the beginning of their studies favor vocabulary and listening activities over those that focus primarily on grammar and sentence structure?

Chapter two provides information on the thesis's methodology, as well as information about the research subjects who participated in the study.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

This thesis comes out of broad questions about the role informal learning strategies employing mass and social media may currently be playing in the preparation of non-English speaking international students to come to the United States to study at its colleges and universities. It uses a survey method, a form of inquiry used by many contemporary researchers representing a wide range of academic disciplines and professions that allows them to gather information quickly and efficiently about populations of interest (Babbie, E.R. (1990). *Survey Research Methods*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth). Surveys consist of sets of questions designed by researchers to provide information about whatever more general topic they are studying. Such questions are either open, or closed-ended in nature, thus allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. Questionnaires are administered in several ways: in-person, online, and via the telephone.

The survey instrument, i.e., questionnaire, used in this research was developed with special emphasis on the perspectives of ESL scholar Stephen Krasner. The general research questions guiding the development of this survey include the following:

1. Which mass and/or social media have ESL students used to learn English informally before coming to Wichita State University?

2. Which mass and/or social media have ESL students found to be the most, and least, helpful as they have sought to learn English before arriving at Wichita State University? Why?

3. Does the data collected in the research support Krashen's second language acquisition theoretical proposal that learners of second languages in the beginning of their studies

favor vocabulary and listening activities over those that focus primarily on grammar and sentence structure?

This chapter provides further background on the questionnaire, how it was administered, how research subjects were selected, and preliminary information on participants' ages, genders, language backgrounds and other demographic information.

Survey Instrument

Rather than ask the research subjects to complete the questionnaire online, I asked several college instructors to allow me to visit their classrooms so that their students could complete the survey there. To gather data for analysis, the survey was organized into three sections, including one seeking personal information, a second on their language backgrounds, and a third on their media and language learning profiles. The 15-page, double-spaced, questionnaire is included in an appendix.

Survey Procedure

Because this thesis concerns the informal learning strategies of international students whose first language is not English, it was important to administer its survey instrument in person rather than on line or over the telephone. This allowed the researcher to answer any questions informants had about the purpose of the research and/or about individual questionnaire items they were confused about.

The survey was administered during fall 2016 and spring 2017 semesters, at two required introductory level classes at Wichita State University: English Composition (ENG 100) and Public Speaking (COMM 111). After I introduced myself and explained why I was conducting

the research, I distributed the consent form and the survey. I remained in the classroom while the students completed the questionnaire to make sure that they could ask questions at any time. It took participants from 20 to 30 minutes to finish. I asked the instructors to remain in the classroom during the survey. Having already developed a rapport with their instructors, I thought that would help alleviate any nervousness the students might feel during the process.

Survey Participants

The students who completed the questionnaire are natives of countries outside the United States whose native language is not English. Over two semesters, a total of 72 students, in six sections of two required classes, English 100 (ENG 100) and Public Speaking (COMM 111), completed the questionnaire: 39 (54.2%) during fall semester 2016, and 33 (45.8%) during spring semester 2017. Fifty (69.4%) of the participants were COMM 111 students, and 22 (30.6%) were ENG 100 students.

Rather than visit classes at a more advanced academic level, lower-level classes were visited because the most up-to-date data on mass and social media use seemed more useful than the information that students who have been here longer could provide. Most of the participants (53, or 73.6%) were first year students, along with 14 (19.4%) sophomores, 2 (2.8%) juniors, and 3 (4.2%) seniors.

Of the 72 participants, 35 (48.6%) were female, and 37 (51.4%) male. A majority of the participants 45 (62.5%) were between the ages of 18-20, followed by 18 (25%) who were between 21-23 years old; 4 (5.6%) who were between 24-26 years of age; and 5 (6.9%) who were 27 years old or older.

Countries of Origin

The questionnaires indicated that the 72 students came from 30 countries. As it is shown in the list of country of origin, a majority of the participants are from Nepal (18%) and Saudi Arabia (13.9%). There is the total of 17 participants are from 17 different countries.

Table 1 - Countries	
Country of origin	**Number of participants**
Bolivia	1
Brazil	1
Cameroon	1
China	3
Congo	1
Czech Republic	1
Dominican Republic	1
France	1
Ghana	1
India	4
Italy	1
Japan	2
Kuwait	1
Libya	1
Malaysia	3
Mexico	4
Morocco	1
Nepal	13
Palestine	1
Paraguay	2
Russia	1
Saudi Arabia	10
Spain	4
Sri Lanka	3
Serbia	1
Switzerland	1
Taiwan	2
Thailand	2
United of Arab Emirates	1
Vietnam	3

The study's 72 participants are natives of 30 countries scattered across five different continents, including North and South America, Africa, Europe, and Asia (see *Table 2 or Pie Chart 1*). Two of the countries are in North America (Dominican Republic and Mexico), three in South America (Paraguay, Brazil and Bolivia), six in Europe (Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Czech Republic and France), five in Africa (Libya, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Morocco and Ghana), and 14 in Asia. A majority of the participants are from Asia (49, or 68 percent), followed by nine (12.6 percent) participants from Europe, five (6.9%) participants from North America, five (6.9%) participants from Africa, and four (5.6%) participants from South America.
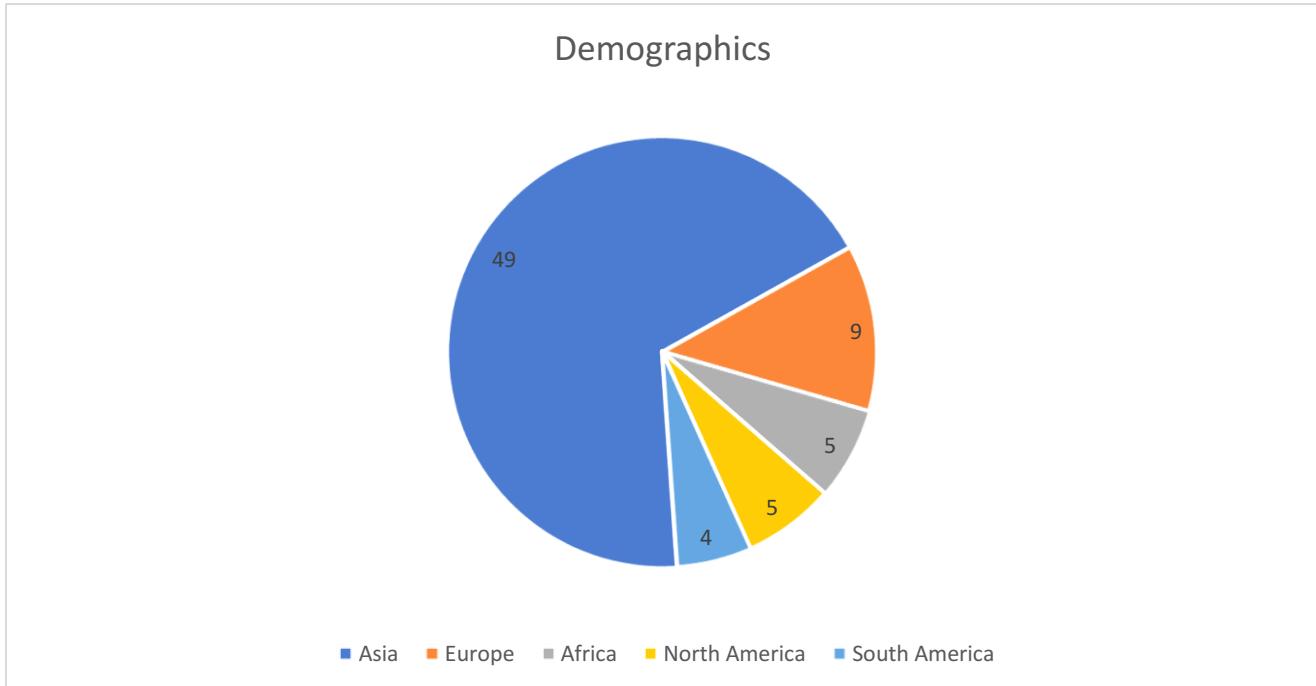
Pie Chart 1

Demographics

49   9   5   5   4

■ Asia ■ Europe ■ Africa ■ North America ■ South America

Table 2

Continents	Countries
Africa	Libya, Congo, Cameroon, Ghana, and Morocco (5 participants)
Asian	China, Taiwan, Thailand, India, Vietnam, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Nepal, United of Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Palestine (49 participants)
Europe	Serbia, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, Czech Republic and France (9 participants)
North America	Dominican Republic and Mexico (5 participants)
South America	Paraguay, Brazil, and Bolivia (4 participants)

The study's 72 participants, who come from 30 countries, represent 20 language groups (see *Table 3*). The first language of most of the students is their country's official language. In contrast, two of the study's 72 participants' first languages are not their country's primary language: A Malaysian student learned Chinese (Mandarin) rather than Malay, and a participant from Cameroon learned French instead of that country's native language, which is Bantu.

Table 3

Continents	Native Language
African	Bantu, Mashi (Nigeria, Dominican Republic), and Darija (Morocco)
Asia	Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese, Thai, Malay, Arabic, Nepali. <u>Indian language</u> – Kannada, Bengali, Gujarati, Sinhala, Tamil (Sri Lanka), and
Europe	Serbian, Czech Republic, French, and Spanish
North America	Spanish
South America	Spanish

As is reported in Table 4, the amount of time the participants had been in the United States when they completed the questionnaire ranged from less than a month to more than two years. This is helpful information, since it offers useful insights into each participant's language background and experience in an English environment.

Table 4

Length of Time in the Unites States	Number of Participants
Less than 1 month	5 participants (6.9%)
≤ 4 months	20 participants (27.8%)
≤ 8 months	8 participants (11.1%)
≤ 1 year	13 participants (18.1%)
Between 1 – 2 years	12 participants (16.7%)
More than 2 years	14 participants (19.4%)

Half of the participants reported that their newly acquired proficiency in the English language was their only experience with languages beyond that of their native countries. A Nepali student reported proficiency in 4 languages beyond his/her native language.

Almost half of the participants reported that they began learning English when they were 5-years-old or younger (29, or 40.3%), whereas 18 (25%) of the participants did so between the ages of 5 to 10 years; 19 (26.4%) between 11 and 15; and 6 (8.3%) when they were 16 years or older. Most of those who did not learn English until they were 16 years or older are from Saudi Arabia. According to their questionnaires, most of them didn't start to learn English until they came to the United States.

With the help of Wichita State University's Intensive English Program (IE program), 23 of the study's 72 participants (31.9%) were able to pass the English "clearance" exam required

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by Wichita State University, meaning they could become full-time academic students after they completed the IE program. The students not required to attend IE program had previously passed the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) with a score of 72 or higher, or the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) with a score of 6.0 or higher, in order to meet the English requirements and to become full-time academic students.

In summary, this chapter has presented the thesis's research method and background information about the research participants. Chapter three reports on the results of this research, describing in depth how the participants used mass and/or social media to learn English informally prior coming to the United States to a program of higher education.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

This chapter of the thesis reports on the data collected in the questionnaires completed by 72 non-English speaking international students required to become proficient enough in the language to gain full admission to Wichita State University. The research is particularly concerned with whether the informal language learning strategies of such students involved the following 11 types of mass and/or social media: books (fiction or non-fiction, excluding textbooks), textbooks, newspapers, magazines, radio, podcasts, video, movies, television, social media, and the Internet. In addition, the research delves into whether the participants choose mediums involve vocabulary and listening activities, rather than grammar and sentence structure activities.

Mass and Social Media Use of Respondents

Questions one and two asked informants to indicate whether they have used mass and/or social media to learn English informally before arriving at Wichita State University, and, if they have done so, to provide information on how much time they have spent using such media, as well as why they were helpful (or not).

Survey results indicate that all of the ESL students who filled out the questionnaires have used at least one of the 11 mediums included in the research. However, none of participants used all 11 of the mediums to learn English. Instead, they chose a few of the mediums they found especially helpful. They indicated that they had to enjoy the media they used in order to maximize the quality of learning.

Table 4 includes the responses of the 72 participants on each of the mass and social mediums included in the research. Two "audio-visual" mediums – movies and videos – were reported as the most popular among the ESL students who completed the questionnaire. The least popular medium among the 72 participants was the podcast.

Table 5: Medium and the participants of each media.

Medium	Participants who used this medium	Percent	Rank
Movies	49	68.1%	1
Video	46	63.9%	2
Books (non-textbook)	37	51.4%	3
Internet	34	47.2%	4
Social media	33	45.8%	5
Television	27	37.5%	6
Textbooks	26	36.1%	7
Radio	26	36.1%	7
Newspapers	20	27.8%	8
Magazines	11	15.3%	9
Podcasts	8	11.1%	10

Starting with movies, the medium reported most heavily used by the survey's 72 respondents, the following sections provides further information on each of the 11 mass and social mediums included in the research.

<u>Movies</u>

Forty-nine of the study's 72 participants (68.1%, rank 1) reported that they used movies to learn English. Among this group, the top three types of movies were action, comedy, and romance. A majority of the participants chose to watch more than one type of movies. They reported that they spent approximately 2 to 3 hours per week watching movies. In response to the question about particularly helpful movies, some said they could not remember their titles. Those who did recall films that were especially helpful listed these films: the Harry Potter series, Star Wars series, X-Men series, and Me before You. Several reported that movies with characters with British accents were more difficult to follow.

Thirty-six of the 49 participants reported they used them to learn English because they enjoyed watching them. The second most cited reason they used them was because movies helped them learn English more quickly than other mediums. Some of the participants reported that it was convenience, especially when they travelled. Some reported it was enjoyable as well as to learn American jokes, communication skills, and good source of entertainment. More importantly, they could watch it anywhere and whenever they wanted.

Here are some of the comments from the participants saying how they use the media to learn English:

- "If I did not understand the movie, I paused it and replayed to hear it again what I did not understand."

- "I used subtitles."

- "First, I started to watch movies with the subtitle, but eventually I did not need it anymore."

- "I listened for words that were not familiar to me, then I looked up in dictionary."

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- "I learned new words and learned more about grammar from their conversations."

From the comments, it is evident that subtitles are helpful to students who watch movoies to learn English.

Videos

The 46 informants who reported that they used videos to learn English (63.9%; rank 2) stated they especially enjoyed music videos (more than 75 percent of the 46), cartoons, and educational videos. They reported that they spent approximately 45 minutes to an hour per week to watch videos. All participants chose to watch more than one category. Nearly all of those who reported using videos to learn English (45 out of 46) watched them on YouTube. Three participants reported that they also watched videos on Netflix, the Ted Talk website, and on CD/DVDs. Thirty-five of the participants wrote that they chose to watch videos to learn English because they enjoyed them so much. Fourteen of the participants stated that they used videos because they helped them learn English more rapidly than other mediums.

Here are some of the comments from the participants about their use of videos to learn English:

- "I would just listen and replay them every time I did not understand something."
- "I watched videos on my phone or computer on my spare time."
- "At the beginning, I was using the subtitles. Now, I just watch videos that are interesting without subtitles."
- "I watched English videos with subtitle and whenever I was ready, I turned it off."
- "I just tried to catch as many words as possible. Tried to catch American accent."
- "Always, concentrated on English, and if there is subtitles, it was easier."

- "Learned something while enjoying, it made everything became more interesting. So I just tried to enjoy and learned at the same time."

From some of the comments above, it appears that videos offer not only an effective way to learn English, but that they are an enjoyable way to do so. With the help of subtitles, the learners were able to understand the context of videos. Moreover, the advantage of watching videos is the learners can pause and play or replay it anytime they need. This way, they can learn English at their own pace without pressure to catch up like in classrooms. Watching videos can also help with pronunciation, especially in conversation context.

Books (fiction/non-fiction, non-textbooks)

Slightly more than half (37 students, or 51.4%) of the participants reported that they read books (non-textbooks) approximately 1-to-2 hours each week to learn English. Romance novels were popular among the respondents. Among those identified as favorites were: the Harry Potter series, Lord of the Rings series, Game of Thrones series, the Vampire Diary series, as well as *The Great Gatsby*, *Me Before You*, and the non-fiction book *Code of the Street*.

Most respondents reported that such books offer the advantages of being enjoyable and educational at the same time. Some commented that this kind of reading offers opportunities to learn new words, as well as to learn about sentence structures. Many of the participants' reports on how they use such books to learn English are similar: A majority said they take notes and look up words that they do not know. Importantly, they chose the books to read based on their personal interests. Only a few participants reported that they read such books because they were required by their instructors to do so. One student reported that the Bible was particularly helpful.

Here are some of the participants' comments describing how they used books (non-textbooks) to learn English:

- "I read book and whatever words I did not understand; I would look for it and write them down in a notebook."

- "When I read books, I tried to look up most of the words I did not know."

- "Learn new vocabulary and then learn how to use it in sentences from the book."

- "I have a dictionary with me while reading and taking notes."

The Internet

Among the 34 participants who reported that they used the Internet to learn English (47.2%, rank 4), a majority spent approximately three to five hours each week browsing the Internet. The primary reason participants chose to use the Internet as one of their English learning methods was that they liked learning English at their own pace. The second reason was to help memorize new words, or to learn grammar.

Here are some of the comments from the participants saying how they use the media to learn English:

- "It was faster to find definitions."

- "I can find words that I was looking for immediately."

- "Quality of content in English."

- "I have my phone with me 24/7."

- "Whenever I saw grammars I did not know, I used the internet to look up for explanation."

- "I used the internet to find the quizzes in English to see my scores after that."

From the comments, it looks like most participants used the Internet as a tool to access to others content, such as online quizzes, YouTube, or the dictionary. They also agreed that the

Internet is a convenient source of information because it is so easy to log on. In fact, it was reported that it is faster for them to use Google when they do not understand something.

<u>Social media</u>

Thirty-three of the study's 72 participants (45.6%, rank 5) reported that they used social media to learn English. Facebook was the most popular social medium cited (31 users), and others included: 27 users for YouTube, 18 users for Instragram, 12 users for Twitter, and 11 users for Snapchat. All of participants used more than one social medium. The amount of time spent using social media varied greatly: Some participants reported that they used social media throughout the day, while some used social media only 15 minutes a day.

Here are some of the comments from participants about how they used social media to learn English:

- Twitter –
    - "In China, we cannot use Face, Twitter, and Instagram."
    - "Followed some English speaking people and read their tweets."
    - "I looked through tweets and they taught me lot of new words."
- Facebook –
    - "Talking with friend on Facebook in English."
    - "Talking to International friends."
    - "Followed English pages."
    - "My Facebook was in Mandarin, so I did not really learn English from here."
    - "Contacted with my friends. See news."
    - "Talking with friends and reading some status."

- Instagram –

  - "Reading captions"

  - "Read and watched videos in English."

  - "Followed accounts in English."

- Snapchat –

  - No comments

- YouTube –

  - "Watched music videos and funny videos."

  - "Learned to way of pronunciation."

From the comments, it appears that the number one reason most participants used social media was to connect with friends, especially their international friends. The second reason was they preferred to learn English at their own pace. However, social media is widely known around the world, so the users are able to see what's going on around the world on social media as well, not only to communicate with friends.

Television

Twenty-seven of the study's 72 participants (37.5%; rank 6) reported that they viewed television programs to learn English, for approximately an hour and a half to three hours per week. The top three TV shows reported were *Breaking Bad, Friends,* and *Game of Thrones*. Sixteen participants reported that they watched TV shows as one of their English learning methods because they found them so interesting.

Here are some of the comments from the participants saying how they used television to learn English:

- "Helped in learning about different cultures."

- "Television shows were generally aired everyday and night. They were very helpful in entertainment and education purposes. So I used to spend 30-45 minutes per day watching sitcoms and series."

- "TV shows made me focus more in what people were saying because I wanted to understand the shows."

- "I said out loud the words I found funny or interesting."

- "I used to watch the shows in my native language with English subtitle to understand every word, but now I do not need it."

- "First, I used subtitle in Arabic, then watching it until I don't need subtitle."

- "Easy to understand, I put subtitle in English and the audio in English. At the beginning, it was difficult but later I stated to make a progress and then I understand most of the things."

Even though some respondents reported that television shows were not as effective as movies for their learning, the process of learning was almost the same. Most participants stated that they started learning using the subtitles, whether in English or their native languages, and from there they were gradually able to comprehend them without subtitles. Some participants reported that they not only learned English when they watched TV shows, but they also learned cultural differences. There is 37.5% (rank 6) of participants who chose to watch TV shows as one of their English learning methods.

<u>Textbooks</u>

The 26 participants who reported that they used textbooks to study English before arriving in the U.S. (36.1%, rank 7) indicated that those they used most frequently were devoted to teaching grammar, TOEFL (or IELTS), and vocabulary. Most reported that they read textbooks about once or twice per week for approximately 1-to-2 hours. They explained that they used textbooks because they considered them especially helpful because of their clear explanations of their topics.

Here are some of the comments from the participants saying how they use textbooks to learn English:

- "I did exercises which were in the book. Then, I corrected the answers and learned from there."

- "While I was reading if I found words while I was not familiar I looked them up in dictionary. I also translated them in my language."

Such comments indicate that textbooks are an effective resource for ESL students. Not only can ESL students use them at their pace, but their explanations and examples help them understand grammar.

<u>Radio</u>

Twenty-six of the 72 respondents (36.1%; rank number seven, along with textbooks) reported that they listened to the radio to learn and/or practice their English. In response to the questions concerning which of the following three categories of radio programming were their favorites – music, talk shows, and news –music scored the highest, with the average being one to two hours per week. The second-most popular among the choices was talk shows, which they

listened to approximately 30 minutes to an hour per week. Their least favorite type of radio programming was news, which they listened to approximately 15 minutes to 30 minutes per week.

The reasons informants provided in response to the question about why they used radio as an informal language learning tool was that they enjoyed the music, wanted to improve their listening skills, and that it was convenient, especially when they were riding in, or driving, an automobile. Some mentioned they enjoy American music more than that of their own country.

Among their comments about how they used the radio to learn English were the following:

- "I was listening to the certain songs, then looked for the lyrics on the internet. Then, I realized where I made mistake."

- "Listened to music, search for unknown words, sing them out loud."

- "I could improve listening skill by listening to DJ talked."

- "Enjoyed the music because it helped me learn English. Remember the meaning of the words."

- "Listened to those songs which I liked, then memorized the lyrics. It helped me improve my listening skill."

From these comments, its clear that radio helped the respondents not only learn English, but that it entertained them. Interestingly, most of the participants used the same strategies to benefit from their radio listening: First, they listened to certain songs; next, they looked up the lyrics; finally, they attempted to sing along.

<u>Newspapers</u>

Nearly 30 percent (20 out of 72 respondents; 27.8%) respondents indicated that they used the newspaper to study English. In addition, they reported that their favorite newspaper sections were sports, entertainment and celebrity, and government and politics. Most of the participants reported that they read more than one category of news, and spent approximately 30 minutes to an hour reading newspapers each week. Seven participants read newspapers online, while six participants read print versions. However, another seven participants read newspaper from both sources, online and printed. The primary reason respondents said they read newspapers to learn English is they wanted to stay up to date. The second reason is to learn new words.

Here are some of the comments from the participants saying how they use the media to learn English:

- "I chose the title of articles which I was interested in, then I read it. Then, discussed with people around me."

- "It was more for knowledge than learning English. Since both are helpful so I chose to read newspapers."

- "I read these newspapers and got to know more about things around the world. I also got to learn more words and grammars."

- "First, I read the title of the news to see whether I would be interested in or not. Then, I read it (skim actually). Then, I looked up the words that I did not understand."

Despite the fact that only 20 of the 72 respondents used newspapers to learn English, from their comments, it seems they could be a good source to learn English, as well as to learn what is going on around the world.

<u>Magazines</u>

Eleven of the study's 72 participants (15.3%) reported that they spent approximately 15 to 30 minutes per week reading magazines, and especially appreciated articles related to sports, lifestyle, entertainment and celebrities. Four participants reported that they read magazines online; three read only printed copies; and four read both online and printed magazines. They reported that the main reason they read magazines was to stay up to date about their favorite topics.

Here are some of the comments of participants that explained their motivations:

- "[I wanted] To know interesting things about my favorite celebrity."

- "It helped with various fun facts."

- "It helped with art and culture."

Obviously, magazines were not one of the informants' favorite methods of learn English. From the comments, it seems they read magazines as a leisure time activity rather than strictly to learn English.

<u>Podcasts</u>

The least popular of the 11 mediums were podcasts. Eight of the questionnaire's respondents (11.1% of the 72 students) stated that they have used podcasts to learn English, and that they spent approximately 30 minutes to an hour each week doing so. News and public affairs podcasts were the most popular among the eight students who reported that they used them. They stated that they used them to improve their listening skills, and some mentioned their educational value. A number of the questionnaires' participants mentioned that they were not familiar with podcasts, which likely explains why they were not as heavily used for language learning.

Support for Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory

Krashen argues that the most successful way to teach students in the early stages of learning a second language is to emphasize vocabulary and listening activities. The thesis's data offers support for this hypothesis. Responses of participants to questions about their favorite informal language learning mediums indicate they preferred vocabulary and listening-oriented mediums, such as movies and video, over mediums that don't offer their advantages, such as newspapers and magazines. Movies were by far the favorite medium of respondents (49 out of 72; 68.1%), and videos ranked second (46 out of 72; 63.9%). In contrast, newspapers and magazines, which depend largely on reading, were not nearly as popular among respondents. Of the 72 participants, 20 (27.8%) reported they read newspapers, and 11 (15.3%) reported they read magazines, in their informal second language learning process.

Respondents stress in their comments that they prefer to watch movies and videos because they find them to be more enjoyable compared to other mediums. One of the respondents commented that listening to actors' or others' voices, and seeing their facial expressions, is enjoyable, and helps in their overall understanding of English. In addition, respondents also agreed that reading English subtitles while watching movies helps them learn vocabulary.

Although radio and podcasts were not among respondents' favorite mediums, they are excellent ways to develop one's listening skills, and foster better pronunciation. Respondents reported that they learned new words from listening to the radio and podcasts, in part because they looked up song lyrics and sang them out loud. Many reported how enjoyable it was to learn English and listen to music at the same time. In addition, some participants reported that listening to DJs talk on the radio helped them learn about American slang and culture.

Half of the respondents reported that they read books to gain knowledge of vocabulary and writing structures. Most of the respondents reported that their reading introduces new words that they then look up the dictionary. Others reported that reading helped them learn different ways of writing that they then tried on their own.

Additionally, participants who used textbooks reported that they used them to improve their writing English skills, especially their knowledge of grammar and sentence structure. Few of the participants commented that they encountered new words in textbooks.

Although there were few respondents who reported that they used newspapers and magazines in their informal second language learning activities, those who did offered interesting comments. A few reported that they learned new vocabulary reading newspapers and magazines, while a large number of them stated that they were convenient and enjoyable.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Although the thesis uses a case study approach and is therefore not generalizable, it is likely that many international students use mass and social media in their informal ESL learning, and that many prefer mediums that allow them to learn vocabulary through listening and viewing. This chapter's following sections expand on these ideas.

Informal Language Learning Should be Encouraged among all Second Language Learners

Particularly noteworthy in the data regarding mass media were the comments of participants about their use of movies, videos, and television programs for second language learning. A number of the respondents stated that they used subtitles in their native languages as they began learning English. This result supports Krashen, who argues that listening for comprehension is crucial for beginners (2013). Additionally, seeing movie characters' facial expressions helped learners guess the meaning of words they saw on the screen. They may or may not understand the words from the first time they see them, but they gradually learn those words by seeing them multiple times.

Another benefit of movies and videos, as well as television programs viewed via instant Internet streaming, is that viewers can play and pause them as needed. Some of the participants reported that they paused videos when they failed to understand something, looked up the words, and attempted to pronounce them just as the actors had. This way can also help with speaking, especially pronunciation.

Social media provides great benefit in terms of language learning as well. The concept of using social media and mass media is very similar, but social media requires the user to be more interactive. As they have grown in number, social media have become important parts of many people's lives. The social media sites that are most popular today are Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Snapchat. The data gathered in the questionnaires demonstrate that respondents prefer to learn at their own pace. Because social media users have to interact with their online "friends," the users will sometimes reply to comments, post status, or chat. This is where the second language learning occurs. However, each learner has his/her own learning strategy. Most learn from others' posts. For example, they run into words that they do not know or may never have seen before, so they look up the words. Being on social media provides more benefits than we assume. In line with the research results of Ibrahim, Prain, and Collet (2014), second language learners are not just on social media to absorb news or get updates of their friends, but they also learn new words. For the beginner, changing the social media sites to English instead of their first language will already help with the second language learning.

Motivation and the Use of Media

Motivation is a crucial factor in order to learn anything, not only a second language. To be efficient, learners need to have a self-drive and the willingness to learn a second language. Motivation is the key to success. Again, Krashen (2013) mentioned the importance of motivation. Effective second language learners should have high motivation to learn, low anxiety while learning, and high confidence to use the second language.

This research demonstrates that second language learners are more willing to learn when topics are of interest to them. For example, some responded they would rather read books of their

own choosing than those selected for them by their teachers. Even though reading is not their favorite activity, they still read because they liked the books. This desire to choose one's language learning content was seen in the respondents' comments about movies and TV shows viewing. Some of the participants reported that it was enjoyable to watch or read content outside of their school requirements.

Social media are helpful to second language learners because they can use them to chat with their international friends as they learn English. Respondents stated social media is convenient and easy to access. Some of the participants reported that they are on social media throughout the day. In the future, it won't be surprising if more ESL learners use social media. This will allow them to integrate their language learning with the world at large.

In addition, learning a second language can take place anywhere. Informal learning occurs when the learners unconsciously learns a second language. For example, a learner may see new words on signage along the road while they are on the way to school. They may be browsing on the Internet in English, and somehow learn from that experience. From the respondents' comments, it seems that they learn languages informally throughout their days, even when they might not be thinking about it. One of the participants reported that she always listened to American music while commuting. She said she absorbed the songs' words and tried singing. It is clear that each language learner develops his/her own strategies to learn second languages.

Social Interactions vs. Self-Learning

The research results indicate that social interactions and self-learning are both effective ways to learn second languages, and that each language learner should seek to find methods that

work best for them. Some participants reported that they enjoyed using textbooks because they can learn on their own pace, in a non-threatening environment, without an instructor who gives them pressure. This strategy may work or may not work for everyone. Some learners may prefer to watch movies in order to gain vocabulary, while others may prefer to be on Facebook to gain their reading and writing skills (Bahrani, 2011).

Social interaction is also an important factor in learning a second language. Social interaction will help a lot in terms of conversational context. Also, learners can gain confidence from using a second language with people. There is also a chance that learners may lose their confidence by using the second language mistakenly. Krashen found the way for second language learners to learn from making conversation with native speakers. He called it "inductive output." It occurs when ESL learners speak a second language and the native speaker corrects the mistakes. This research did not measure whether social interaction is a great help in learning a second language or not, but future research among college-bound international students could explore this area.

In summary, all of the above factors – including the use of mass and social media, the importance of motivation, as well as the effectiveness of self-learning – are important for second language learners. Some learners may prefer to use one factor more than another, but that depends on what works best for them. However, the learners will learn well if they are in a supportive environment. The best support environment is parents or instructors. Again, they can influence learners by increasing their levels of motivation.

Limitations

The thesis research was limited in several ways. First of all, like many case studies, it involved a relatively small number of respondents, who were selected because of their convenience. For the results to generalizable, a larger, more statistically appropriate sample would be needed.

Second, the survey itself is quite long, making it troublesome for some of the students to focus on its entirety. As a result, some students did not complete all of the questionnaire's questions. This limited the impact of the data in some areas.

In conclusion, this thesis provides extensive information on ESL students and their uses of mass and/or social media to learn English informally prior coming to an American university or college. Even though this case study is based on the comments of only 72 participants, what they report should not be overlooked. Future research could expand upon the number of respondents, and identify additional questions based on how these students answered the questionnaires. This study is timely because the questionnaires include questions about the interaction of ESL students with not only mass media, but social media. The results will be beneficial to ESL students, ESL instructors, parents, and other people who may be involved with a second language learning. Learning in a classroom provides benefits of social interaction skills to students as well as knowledge about subjects, while mass and/or social media provides real-life experience of using English (Thorne, Black and Sykes, 2009). Thus, ESL students need both formal and informal learning to master the second language.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR THIS RESEARCH

To questionnaire respondents:

This questionnaire is part of my master's thesis research at Wichita State University's Elliott School of Communication. I am studying how International students have used mass- and social media on their own to learn English before they arrive at Wichita State University. Please read each question carefully and answer them to the best of your ability. Your answers are important to my research.

Yours truly,

Yokkie Mahajaroenkul

Section 1: Profile

1. Class: ENGL 100   COMM 111

2. I am a: Freshman   Sophomore   Junior

      Senior

3. Gender: Male   Female

4. Age: _____years old.

5. Which country are you from? _____.

6. How long have you been in the United Stated? _____.

Section 2: Language Background

7. What is your first language? _____.

8. Is your first language your native language?   Yes   No

   8.2 If no, what is your native language? _____.

9. Beyond your native language, how many languages can you speak?

   _____language(s).

   9.2 What are those languages? _____.

10. When was the first time you learned English? When I was _____ years old.

11. How long have you been studied English in language learning environment?

_____years.

12. Have you taken Intensive English classes?

Yes   No

13. If yes, where did you take it?

WSU   Other: _____

14. If you took it at WSU, what level did you start at? (Circle one)

Beginner I   Beginner II   Intermediate I   Intermediate IIAdvance I

Advance II   IAS

This section of the survey is designed to learn about what mass media (books, magazines, newspapers, television, etc.) and/or social media (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) you may have used to teach yourself English **before you became a college student at Wichita State University.** Please think back carefully and respond as accurately as possible.

Section 3: USING MASS & SOCIAL MEDIA TO LEARN ENGLISH

A. BOOKS (Non-Textbooks)

1. When seeking to teach yourself English before coming to WSU, did you read books (other than textbooks) published in English?

Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the rest of the following questions in this section. If no, move to the next section.

3. List the type(s) of books you read before you came to WSU (e.g., children's, romance, mystery, non-fiction, etc.)? Please list them.
-

4. List your favorite books among those you read to help you learn English. (out of the ones you read to help you learn English).

-

5. How often did you read books when you were seeking to learn English?

_____ Once in awhile

_____ Once or twice per week

_____ Most days

_____ Every day

6. When reading such books, how much time – on average – did you devote to this activity per day? (Round up to the next quarter hour.)
-

7. I chose to study using books (non-textbooks) to improve my English because _____.
     (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)
     ___ I enjoyed it.
     ___ I could learn new words.
     ___ Convenience (please explain)

_____
     ___ Other reasons (list them): _____

8. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)

-

B. TEXTBOOKS

1. When seeking to teach yourself English before coming to WSU, did you seek to improve your skills by reading textbooks published in English?
     Yes _____ No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the rest of the following questions in this section. If no, move to the next section.

3. What kinds of textbooks were most helpful? (Please list)

-

4. How often did you read textbooks to learn English?

_____ Once in awhile

_____ Once or twice per week

_____ Most days

_____ Every day

5. When reading such textbooks, **in an average day**, how much time did you typically devote to this activity? (Round up to the next quarter hour.)
-

6. I chose to study in textbooks to improve my English because _____.
      (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 5 is the least)
      ___ I liked to study at my own pace.
      ___ Textbooks provided clear explanations, as well as examples.
      ___ Convenience (please explain)_____
      ___ I often came across new words in textbooks.
      ___ Other reasons (list them): _____

7. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)
-

C. NEWSPAPERS

1. Did you read newspapers to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

        Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. What type(s) of news did you read to help you learn English?

Types of news	Check all that apply	How much time per day? List approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
Government		
Political		
Sports		
Business/finance		

Entertainment/Celebrity		
Art & Culture		
Health & Education		
Science & Technology		
Local		
National		
International		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

4. Did you read printed newspapers, online newspapers, or both? Check whichever applies.

Online _____   Printed _____   Both _____

5. I chose to read newspapers to improve my English because_____.

(Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)

___ I wanted to know what was happening in the world around me.

___ To learn new words.

___ Convenience (please explain)

_____

___ Other reasons: _____

6. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)

-

D. MAGAZINES

1. Did you read magazines to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

What type(s) of magazines did you read to help you learn English?

Types of news	Check all that apply	How much time **per day**? Depending on your habits, list approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
News magazines		
Political magazines		
Sports magazines		
Fashion magazines		
Business/finance magazines		
Lifestyle magazines		
Entertainment/Celebrity magazines		
Art & Culture magazines		
Health & Education		
Science & Technology		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

3. Did you read printed magazines, online magazines, or both? Check whichever applies.

Online _____   Printed _____   Both _____

4. I chose to read magazines to improve my English because_____.

(Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)

___ I wanted to know what was happening in the world around me.
___ To learn new words.
___ Convenience (please explain)_____
___ Other reasons: _____

5. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)

-

E. RADIO

1. Did you listen to the radio to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

What did you listen to on the radio?

Type of radio programming	Check all that apply	How much time per day? Depending on your habits, list approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
News		
Music		
Talk-shows		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

3. I chose to listen to the radio to improve my English because_____.
(Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 5 is the least)
____ I wanted to improve my listening skill.
____ I enjoyed listening to music.
____ Convenience (please explain)

_____
____ I liked to listen to DJs talk.
____ Others: _____

4. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)
-

F. PODCASTS

1. Did you listen to podcasts to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. What did you listen to on podcasts?

Type of podcasts	Check all that apply	How much time per day? Depending on your habits, list approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
News/public affairs		
Humor		
Politics		
Art/culture		
Religion		
Sports		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

4. I chose to listen to podcasts to improve my English because_____.
(Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)
    ___ I wanted to improve my listening skills.
    ___ Education
    ___ Convenience (please explain) _____
    ___ Other reasons: _____

5. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)
-

G. VIDEOS

1. Did you use video to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

       Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. What types of videos did you watch to learn English before starting at WSU?

Type of video	Check all that apply	How much time per day? Depending on your habits, list approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
Music video		
Cartoons		

Education related		
News		
Sports		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

4. Where did you get most of the videos you watched to learn English?

    ____ YouTube

    ____ Library

    ____ Other sources (please list): _____

5. I chose to watch videos to improve my English because ____.

    (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)

    ___ I enjoyed watching videos.

    ___ Convenience (please explain)

_____

    ___ I believed I could learn English faster from watching and listening rather than listening or reading alone.

    ___ Other reasons: _____

6. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)

-

G. MOVIES
H.

1. Did you watch movies to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

    Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. What type of movies did you watch?

Types of movies	Check all that apply	How much time per day? Depending on your habits, list approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.
Action		
Sports		
Romance		

Horror		
Adventure/War		
Documentary		
Crime/Investigation		
Comedy		
Romantic Comedy		
Other (If "other," please identify.)		

4. Which movies did you find it most helpful in learning English? Write down as many movies as you can think of.

   -

5. I chose to watch movies to improve my English because_____.
   (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 5 is the least)
   ___ Education
   ___ Convenience (please explain) _____
   ___ I enjoyed watched movies to relax or hang out with friends and/or family.
   ___ Movies helped me learn English faster than other media.
   ___ Other reasons: _____

6. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)
-

I: TELEVISION SHOWS

1. Did you watch television shows to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

   Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. On average, how much time did you spend on watching TV shows a day?
(Please write approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.)

   I watched TV shows _____ minutes/hours a day.

4. What TV shows did you find it most helpful in learning English? Write down as many TV shows as you can think of.
-

       I chose to watch TV shows to improve my English because _____.

       (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 5 is the least)

       ___ I was interested in the shows.

       ___ I watched TV shows when I wanted to relax or to hang out with my friends or family.

       ___ I believed I could learn English faster from watching and listening.

       ___ Convenience (please explain)

_____

       ___ Other reasons: _____

5. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)
-

J. SOCIAL MEDIA

1. Did you use social media to help you learn English before arriving at WSU?

         Yes _____   No _____

2. If yes, please respond to the next set of questions. If no, go on to the next section.

3. Please indicate which of the following social medium platforms you used to teach yourself English, how much time you used them during an average day, and describe the process you created to use them to learn English.

Social Medium	Minutes/hours a day (On an average day; please round up to next quarter hour)	Process (Step-by-step, how you used the medium to learn English) You can describe it in 2-3 sentences
Twitter		
Facebook		
Instagram		

Snapchat		
YouTube		
Other		

4. I chose to use social media to improve my English because _____.

    (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 5 is the least)

    ___ I preferred to learn English at my own pace.

    ___ Connecting with friends was enjoyable.

    ___ Exposure to new words.

    ___ Convenience (please explain)

_____

    ___ Other reasons: _____

K. THE INTERNET

1. Did you browse on the Internet to learn English before coming to WSU?

           Yes   No

2. If yes, how much time did you spend on browsing on the Internet?

(Please write approximate number of minutes or hours. Round up to next quarter hour.)

    I spent _____ minutes/hours a day browsing on the Internet.

3. I chose to browse on the Internet to improve my English because _____.

    (Please rank in order of importance. 1 is the most and 4 is the least)

    ___ Reading and writing helped me memorized new words or grammar faster.

    ___ I liked to learn English at my own pace.

    ___ Convenience (please explain)

_____

    ___ Other reasons: _____

4. Describe your step-by-step process as you used this mass medium for learning English on your own. (You can briefly describe it in 2-3 sentences)

-

L. RANKING MY MASS MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA USE TO LEARN ENGLISH BEFORE COMING TO WSU.

Which types of mass and/or social media were most helpful to you as you sought to learn English before coming to WSU?
-

Please **rank** the following media categories by preference, from most (#1) to least favorite (#11), along with reasons why you found them to be helpful (or not).

Media	Rank	Reason(s)
Books (non-textbooks)		
Textbooks		
Newspapers		
Magazines		
Radio		
Podcasts		
Video		
Movies		
Television Shows		
Social media		
Internet		

M. ANYTHING ELSE?

If there is anything else you would like to add to the above information about your use of media to learn English, please use the space below to do so.