

ABSTRACT

An abstract of the thesis of Tracey Louise Knight for the Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages presented October 22, 2007.

Title: Beyond the Classroom Walls: A Study of Out of Class English Use by Adult Community College ESL Students

Research in Second Language Acquisition indicates that using English outside of the classroom is an important part of the language learning process. However, studies done on university level ESL and EFL students indicate that students use English minimally when outside of the classroom. This thesis furthers the research on English use outside of the classroom in order to more fully understand all types of language learners and the link between language proficiency and out-of-class English use.

The purpose of the present study is to fill two gaps in the literature previously done on out of class English use: this study examines the English use of adult community college ESL students, while previous studies concentrated mostly on ESL or EFL students in a university setting; and this study examines the correlation between out-of-class English use and English language proficiency, which has not been addressed in previous literature.

This study sought to answer the following questions: 1) *What types of activities do adult ESL students studying at a community college in the United States participate in using English outside of the classroom and how often do they participate in these activities?* 2) *Is there a correlation between the students' proficiency in English and the amount of out-of-class English use?*

Data used in this study were gathered from the Portland State University Adult ESOL Labsite's LSS study. Participants were given questionnaires, which asked about their out-of-class English use, and the data taken from 41 participants were used in this study.

Results of the study indicated that the learners participated in both individual activities and activities requiring interaction with others in English when outside of the classroom. This finding was not consistent with previous research, indicating that one cannot generalize to all types of ESL learners regarding out-of-class English use. Two Pearson Correlation tests also indicated that there was a statistically significant correlation between out-of-class English use and English language proficiency.

BEYOND THE CLASSROOM WALLS:
A STUDY OF OUT OF CLASS ENGLISH USE
BY ADULT COMMUNITY COLLEGE ESL STUDENTS

by

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INTRODUCTION

Language learning can be a challenging and exciting task, especially for those who have relocated to a new place where the people speak a different language. I studied French in a classroom here in the United States from the time I was in elementary school until the time I graduated from college. I remember, though, that it wasn't until I lived in France for a year during my junior year that I really felt I was "getting" the language and becoming fluent. Sure – I had read French novels, studied grammar books, and watched countless French movies in my classes; but, the non-classroom experiences and language challenges I went through living in France quite rapidly increased my language skills in a way that I don't think would have been possible in the classroom. In the French-speaking environment, I was immersed in the language and I was forced to use what I had learned in the classroom in an authentic way – talking to French people, going to the doctor, buying subway tickets, arranging health insurance – and I rapidly solidified what I already knew and added much more language knowledge. Though the experience was challenging, it was very exciting and allowed me to develop my language skills to an extent that would not have been possible had I remained in the classroom in the United States.

This story illustrates that learning a new language is something that can take place inside or outside of the classroom. Formal classroom learning is one way to practice and learn a new language, but multitudes of opportunities for learning a

new language exist outside of the classroom in second language contexts. It is my belief, and I'm sure one that's shared by many others, that practicing a language outside of the classroom in the target language environment is essential to develop a high level of language proficiency.

Like my experience being immersed in French while living in France, many English as a Second Language (ESL) learners studying in the target language environment are immersed in English on a daily basis and have many opportunities to practice English when outside of the classroom. Once students step out of the classroom there are bus schedules, menus, billboards, newspapers, magazines, books, and fliers to read – all in English. English abounds on TV, in theaters, at the movies, and on the radio. There are countless opportunities to communicate in English, whether with classmates, cashiers at the grocery store, or friends at a party. An English world surrounds these ESL students providing them with many opportunities to practice the language in an authentic way if they are able and willing to do so.

Despite these opportunities that are available to practice and learn English, it was my experience while working with ESL students during my studies at Portland State University that many ESL students don't take advantage of these learning experiences. I tutored university level ESL students who had come to the United States specifically to study English. It often came up in conversations that they didn't speak much English when they were not in class and they did little to

practice the language other than their assigned homework. Steed (1996) found a similar situation from surveying ESL students at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville and found that few of the students he interviewed used English once they stepped outside of the classroom. Based on my personal observations and conversations with ESL students in Portland, it seems that some ESL students minimally use opportunities to practice English outside of class in their language learning process.

It seemed to me that these students were missing out on a great way to improve their English by avoiding using English outside of the classroom. I would tell them about my experience in France and about how I truly believed that practicing English when not in class would improve their English, but I'm not sure if any of the ESL students took my advice. But finding out this information about the ESL students I tutored and how they were hesitant to use English outside of the classroom gave me an idea when it came time to start writing my thesis. Were most ESL students not using English outside of the classroom or was it just the handful I had interacted with who were not? I became very interested in the English use of ESL students outside of the classroom and how it appeared that many minimally used English when not in class. To investigate whether this was true for other ESL learners or just for the select students I had interacted with, I chose to do my thesis research on ESL students and English use outside of the classroom. This research adds to the literature on out of class language use by

learners in many ways: by discussing out-of-class language use and its correlation with language proficiency, by discussing out-of-class language use by a group of students usually not considered in the past research and by describing the English use and English language activities participated in outside of the classroom by adult ESL students at Portland Community College.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of the pertinent literature from the fields of Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition is needed to begin discussing research on the topic of English use outside of the classroom. In order to present the reader with theoretical knowledge of why language use outside of the classroom is important in the language acquisition process and with empirical evidence of what researchers have already learned about English use outside of the classroom, this literature review will cover two main topics: second language acquisition and previous studies on English use outside of the classroom by ESL students.

To understand the importance of out-of-class language use in the language learning process, the first section will review the literature on second language acquisition and the role that of out-of-class language use plays in the acquisition process. This section's literature is divided into three sub-topics: Input and Interaction, Communicative Competence, and Successful Language Learners.

All three of these subtopics are important to examine because they show that language use outside of the classroom is an important part of the language learning process. For example, linguistic theory indicates that input and interaction are important factors in the language acquisition process. In a second language context, the potential for large amounts of input and interaction in the target language is great outside of the classroom. Communicative Competence is also an important factor in a learner's ability to reach a high level of proficiency in a

second language. Communicative Competence is another language area that has the potential to be strengthened by using language outside of the classroom.

Finally, by examining successful language learners we see that using language outside of the classroom is a trait shared by many learners who achieve high levels of language proficiency in a new language.

As such, the research on these three topics will be examined to expose the importance of out-of-class language use in a learner's language learning process. By examining this literature on second language acquisition, we see that out-of-class language experiences play an important role in second language acquisition. Thus, research on this topic is important and needed in order to better understand the language acquisition process and the learners themselves.

The second section of the literature review focuses on the literature regarding previous studies done in the area of English use outside of the classroom by ESL learners. Though there seem to be few studies concerning this topic, those that have been done can shed light on how much ESL learners do use English outside of the classroom and what kinds of activities they do most often.

I. Second Language Acquisition and Out-of-Class Language Use

A. *Input and Interaction*

Second language acquisition theory does not explicitly address out-of-class language use very often. Some of the theoretical literature does, however, refer to this topic implicitly. One example of this is Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985). It is evident that learners need input to learn a language. Exposure to a language, in some form, is necessary to learn that language. Krashen's Input Hypothesis expanded on this notion further by stating that we develop language by receiving *comprehensible input*. This is language input just beyond the learner's current level of knowledge, which is referred to as $i + 1$ (Krashen, 1985). The input is challenging for the learner, but not too difficult so that it is incomprehensible. According to Krashen, input of this type is necessary for language acquisition.

Many forms of input are available in the language classroom and this may be enough to learn a language; however, the availability of input can be great for the ESL learner outside of the classroom. One can see this with an example of an ESL student studying in the United States and taking an hour-long English class every day. The English input they are receiving in the classroom is one hour per day; whereas, they have 23 hours per day *outside* of the classroom to receive English input. This input can take the form of books, native speakers, movies, TV, the Internet, and countless other forms. Input may surround the learner outside of

the classroom, but input that is challenging yet comprehensible is necessary in order for the learner to use it for language acquisition. While some input outside of the classroom might be too challenging for learners, much of it can indeed be comprehensible. For instance, native speakers can often be sensitive to a learner's developing language and will adjust their speech to a comprehensible level for them (Ferguson, 1971; Parker & Chaudron, 1987). Also, learners can choose activities outside of the classroom that are at a challenging, yet comprehensible level for them. Interacting with English both inside and outside of the classroom can increase the learner's input and their opportunities for language learning.

Bialystok also theorizes that input and out of class language use are important components of the second language acquisition process. Input plays a role in Bialystok's (1978) theoretical model of second language acquisition, which divides language learning into three levels – Input, Knowledge, and Output (see Figure 1). The language input level is defined as all contexts where language exposure occurs. According to this model, all input is important for the learning process, whether inside a classroom or outside of the classroom. Two types of input are defined by Bialystok (1978): formal practicing and functional practicing of the language. Formal practicing focuses on the language code and form, for example grammar and spelling. Formal practice often occurs in the classroom, but can take place out of the classroom if the learner studies a grammar book, for example. Functional practice is “increased exposure to the language for

communication” (Bialystok, p.77). Examples of this form of practice would be buying movie tickets, calling a plumber or talking with native speakers over dinner.

Different types of knowledge are also incorporated into Bialystok’s model. Explicit knowledge is all the conscious facts a learner knows about the target language, such as grammar rules and vocabulary. Implicit knowledge refers to intuitive information which the learner uses to comprehend and produce the target language. Implicit knowledge is all of the information about the language that is automatic and used spontaneously in language use.

A visual representation of Bialystok’s Model of Second Language Learning follows as Figure 1 and the reader can note especially how functional practice (out of class language use) links the input to the knowledge levels.

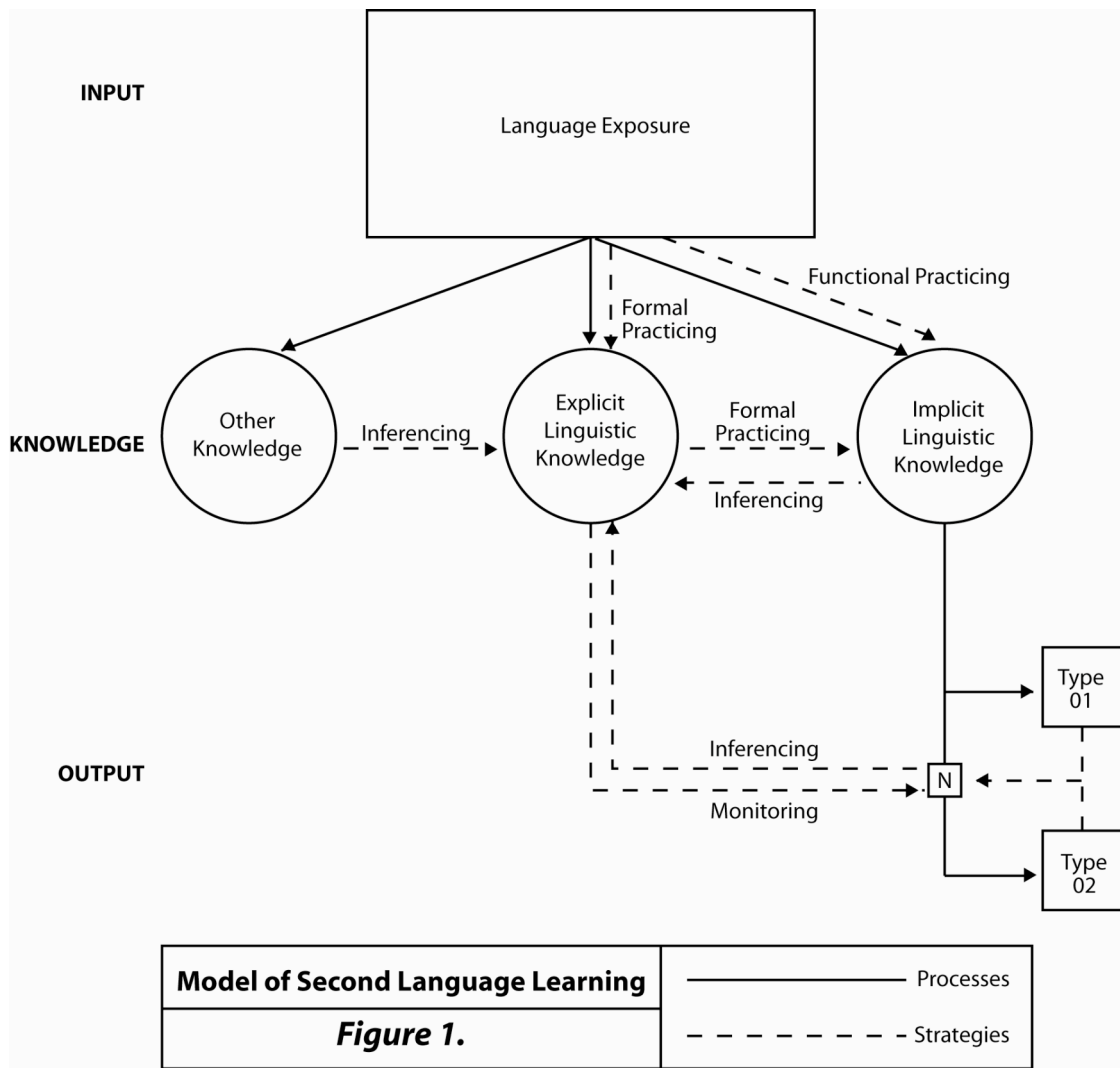


Figure 1: Bialystok's Model of Second Language Learning

As Figure 1 (Bialystok, 1978, p. 71) indicates, formal practicing of a language affects the learner's explicit knowledge of the language. Functional practice increases the learner's implicit linguistic knowledge. These two kinds of linguistic knowledge then interact to produce a complete knowledge of a language.

Functional practice, often out-of-class experiences, provide the learner with opportunities for communicational exposure to the target language and this, combined with immersion in the target language culture, has a great effect on implicit knowledge. Unlike many experiences inside the typical classroom, learning and communication that takes place outside of the classroom is functional and often not focused on new forms or meanings (such as a correct verb tense or correct sentence structure); nevertheless, repeated exposure to the language in this type of situation can improve a learner's proficiency by incorporating the new forms into the learner's own inter-language. As such, the learners' acquire the new forms of the language by communicative use and not by formal practice (Bialystok, 1978). Bialystok notes that the greater the learner's implicit knowledge source is, the greater fluency they will have in the L2. This model demonstrates that out-of-class learning experiences are a very important part of the language learning process because they can supplement the explicit knowledge learned in the classroom with important implicit knowledge of a language.

Long's Interaction Hypothesis (Long, cited in Mitchell and Miles, 1998) also implies the importance of out-of-class language use in the second language acquisition process. Interaction is "the interpersonal activity that arises during face-to-face communication" (Ellis, 1999, p. 3). Long's hypothesis states that the interaction between native-speakers (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) and the speech adaptations both make while communicating are important to the NNS's

language acquisition process. For example, when non-native speakers (NNS) and native-speakers (NS) talk and interact with one another, the NS will often modify the conversation to avoid misunderstandings or use modified speech to help the language learner comprehend meaning.

Ferguson (1971) also claimed that NS's make adjustments in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary when speaking with NNS's and he called this modified speech "foreigner talk." Some examples of the differences between foreigner talk and regular speech are that foreigner talk has a slower speech rate, less slang and idioms, shorter and simpler sentences, and often offers corrections to the NNS (Ferguson, 1971). Similar traits of foreigner talk have been found in many languages such as English, German, French, and Finnish (Meisel, 1977). Other modifications in speech made by NS's talking to NNS's, which are neither syntactic nor phonological, include providing more information for the NNS's such as restatements, repetitions, and elaboration of responses (Gass & Veronis, 1985). Long believed that all these modifications made by the NS during communication with a NNS help the NNS to communicate in the language and scaffold them into language acquisition.

Long (1980) also suggests that the structure of conversations is also altered between native and non-native speakers. For example, some types of communication are present in NS-NNS conversations which are not usually seen in conversations between native speakers such as confirmation checks,

comprehension checks, and clarification requests. Speakers also shift conversation topic more abruptly when the conversation is between NS's and NNS's (Long, 1980). Non-native speakers must also work to make their utterances comprehensible when speaking with native speakers. Pica (1998) examined NNS's responses to clarifications requests by NS's during conversations. Although the NS's requested clarifications, they usually modeled the target version of the language in the question, so NNS's did not have to modify their speech on their own. This suggests that non-native speakers do have to work to make their meaning understood, but that native speakers often scaffold the learners by providing target language examples.

As these studies show, native and non-native speakers involved in conversations work together to get their meaning across and to make their language comprehensible. As such, the native-speaker is working to adjust the language input, to make it comprehensible for the language learner, so that it is not too easy and not too hard for the learner. Mitchell and Miles (1998) state, "the partnership is incidentally fine-tuning the L2 input, so as to make it more relevant to the current state of learner development" (p. 128). These types of interactions between native and non-native speakers, which increase helpful input for the learner, are rare in the classroom. Although often challenging for the learner, interactions with native speakers outside of the classroom can give them opportunities to practice their language and negotiate meaning in an authentic context. Participating in activities

with other speakers of English out of the classroom is essential to increase this interpersonal interaction advocated by interactionist theories.

While Long and others stress the importance of interaction between individuals in the language acquisition process, other theorists have suggested that interaction with the L2 can also take place with a learner alone. Ellis (1999) proposed that interaction can also be “the intrapersonal interaction involved in mental processing” (p. 3). This type of interaction goes on in the learner’s mind, often called Inner Speech, when they are thinking and talking to themselves while engaged in a difficult task (Ellis, 1999). So many activities that a learner can participate in out of the classroom may provide opportunity for both inter and intrapersonal interaction – from reading a challenging text to going to the grocery store. Experiences and environments outside of the classroom are ideal opportunities for interaction to occur, which can often increase language learning and are important to supplement formal classroom learning.

B. Communicative Competence

Studies of interaction have focused on how learners negotiate language meaning and language structure (grammar); yet, language learning extends beyond just acquiring the structure of a language. To effectively communicate in a second language, learners must also understand how members of a speech community use the language to accomplish communication goals. In other words, learners must learn the grammar of a language, but also how to use it appropriately. Hymes called this ability “communicative competence” (1971).

Canale and Swain developed a framework for communicative competence in their 1980 paper and listed these components of communicative competence: 1) Linguistic/Grammatical competence, 2) Sociolinguistic competence, 3) Discourse competence, and 4) Strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the knowledge of the structural properties of a language: phonology, vocabulary, syntactic rules, etc. of a language. Sociolinguistic competence includes appropriate use of politeness, appropriate language adjustments according to interlocutor, and appropriate language use in different social contexts. The ability to create lengthy texts and combine phrases smoothly is called Discourse competence, while Strategic competence refers to an individual’s strategies that they employ to successfully communicate (Canale and Swain, 1980).

In a formal classroom setting, many language classrooms have linguistic or grammatical competence as the goal of instruction. To gain knowledge beyond the

structure of a language in the other three competencies, which are important to language acquisition, a learner would likely benefit from exposure to appropriate contexts outside of the classroom. If a learner is only using English inside of the classroom, for example, they are unlikely to gain communicative competence in the second language.

When in the out-of-class environment, the ESL learner can also learn about another component of communicative competence, which is the learner's ability to participate appropriately in "speech events." A speech event could be an apology, a job interview, a phone conversation, or a doctor's visit (Mitchell & Miles, 1999). Speech events and appropriate language and behavior for speech events are not taught in the classroom as frequently as grammar and vocabulary (Ohta, 2000). It is the out-of-class language situations where learners most often have the opportunity to practice and learn the true cultural norms for specific speech events. These aspects of communicative competence are difficult to teach in a classroom. To teach students how to participate in various speech events would involve teaching many different components including politeness strategies for each event, appropriate phrases to use and acceptable behavior for each specific event. Due to the content involved, many teachers do not have the time or knowledge required to teach this. It can also be difficult for teachers to base lessons on speech events because the classroom often does not provide meaningful contexts where speech events can be practiced. It is the communicative experiences that a learner has

available outside of the classroom that have the potential to best develop their communicative competence.

C. Successful Language Learners

Literature which examines successful language learners also discusses the role of out-of-class language use in the second language acquisition process.

Successful language learners are thus named because they have achieved a high level of language proficiency. Because some people seem more adept at learning languages than others, research has examined what makes some language learners “good” and if they have unique characteristics or strategies which they use while learning. As this section will indicate, language use outside of the classroom is a recurring theme associated with successful language learners.

Rubin (1975) listed three variables in his study of what he called “good language learners” which result in successful language learning: aptitude, motivation, and opportunity. Rubin stated that good language learners are highly motivated to communicate. Communication in the L2 may be necessary for some learners outside of the classroom (to express needs during an emergency when only English speakers are present, to buy things, or to ask necessary questions, for example), so motivation to speak may be much higher outside rather than inside the classroom. Further, good language learners choose to seek out opportunities to use the language outside of class time. Rubin (1975) also identified seven strategies used by good language learners, one of which is that they practice outside of the classroom.

Nunan's (1991) research focused on 44 language learners that he identified as successful to see if they had shared patterns or experiences which could explain their language success. Participants in the study had learned English as a foreign language in various Southeast Asian countries and were considered "good" learners because they were bilingual and were all English teachers. Nunan surveyed the participants about what they did to learn English and what learning methods were most and least helpful for them. The results indicated that all of the good language learners agreed that formal classroom instruction was insufficient to learn a language. The learners were successful because they were willing to apply their language skills outside of the classroom by participating in activities such as reading newspapers, watching TV, talking with friends in English and talking to native English speakers.

Norton and Toohey (2001) did a study of two good language learners – one adult immigrant, Eva, and one child of immigrant parents, Julie. They found that the success of these learners was due to access to a variety of English conversations in the learner's community and access into an Anglophone social network. The two English language learners participated in specific local contexts which created possibilities for them to learn English. For example, Julie was placed in a regular classroom soon after starting grade school (not an ESL class) and was encouraged to participate in English by the classroom activities and scaffolding of her teacher. Eva worked at a fast food restaurant where she had one of the lowest level jobs

(cleaning bathrooms) that required no interaction with customers and which was a position usually held by immigrant employees who had low English skills. The restaurant sponsored monthly outings for all of their employees, attended by both native English-speaking employees and employees who had low English skills. At these outings, Eva was able to build her Anglophone social network, learn more English, and then in turn use more English at the workplace and get more desirable duties. Though formal language learning played a part, the language success of Eva, the adult learner in Norton and Toohey's study, was due largely to an out-of-classroom context: the monthly employee outings.

As these studies show, many language learners are successful in part because of their motivation and ability to participate in both English classes and English language activities outside of the classroom. Whether watching television, reading, or conversing in English with members of the community, successful language learners utilize out-of-class language opportunities to become successful speakers of a new language.

II. Previous Studies on Out-of-Class English Use by ESL Learners

As the previous section of the literature review indicated, language use that takes place outside of the classroom is an important piece of the language learning process. Research on second language acquisition has shown that interaction with English and using English out of the classroom is an effective way to learn and practice English. Several studies have also examined what kinds of target language activities second language learners of English may be engaging in outside of the classroom. Most studies on out-of-class English use by English language learners indicate that students participate in only a limited amount of activities using English when outside of the classroom and indicate that students most often choose independent activities. Most of these studies have concentrated on students who were not, at the time of the study, settled in the target-language culture, that is, university level English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. These studies will be reviewed in this portion of the literature review.

In his study, Pickard (1996) interviewed and gave a questionnaire concerning out-of-class learning strategies and English use to 20 German EFL undergraduate students of varying language proficiency levels. The results of Pickard's study showed that the students most often participated in independent activities using English when outside of the classroom like reading newspapers and

novels or listening to the radio and TV. The students in the study indicated that they did these activities for leisure and interest and because they were easily accessible.

Suh, Wasanasomsithi, Short, & Majid (1999) interviewed eight ESL students at Indiana University and found similar results. This study used student interviews to examine what kind of out-of-class English activities the students participated in and whether they thought they were successful or unsuccessful in improving their English conversation skills. All assessments of conversational skills and any improvements were self-reported by the English learners. The findings indicated that the students relied mostly on independent leisure activities to practice English outside of the classroom and some subjects stated that the activities improved their listening comprehension. Watching television was the most common independent activity that the students participated in out of the classroom. The students indicated that watching television and going to movies improved their conversation skills.

Some students in Suh *et al's* (1999) study also met with conversation partners to practice using English when outside of the classroom. One main finding of the results section of this study was that learners had different perceptions of what English activities outside of the classroom improved their conversation skills. What seemed to be helpful for one student was not helpful for another in the learning process. This study points out the important fact that

different English activities used outside of the classroom will be preferred by and beneficial to different types of students.

A case study on out-of-classroom English use by Thomas (1996) focused on second language acquisition and learner perceptions of their own language learning. Thomas states that learner beliefs about the target language and the language learning process can affect the acquisition of the new language. To examine this idea, Thomas (1996) documented one English language learner, Li, who focused more on out-of-class learning than the formal in-class learning environment. The learner chose to use newspapers, television, and conversations with native English speakers to acquire language. Though Li was enrolled in an intermediate level English language program, he often skipped class and did not do any assigned homework. Despite this, the learner's language skills did improve. Thomas concludes that "there existed a contradiction between successful learning as defined in the academic setting and successful learning as defined, more personally, by Li" (Thomas, 1996, p. 49). Whereas the English program was more focused on grammar and vocabulary, Li was interested in "free talking" and perhaps defined successful language learning more in terms of communicative competence (Thomas, 1996, p.43). This study indicates that out-of-class English activities can be more appropriate for certain learners than classroom learning and that they can be used successfully to learn a language.

Out-of-class language use is also emerging as an important area of interest in research on learner autonomy (Benson, 2001). Chan, Spratt, and Humphrey's (2002) study on autonomous language learning had a much larger number of participants than the other studies previously reviewed in this section and were conducted on 508 undergraduate students at a university English program in Hong Kong. Even with a larger number of participants, results of this study were similar to the previous studies. When surveyed on their English use outside of the classroom, learners indicated that they participated most frequently in independent activities using English outside of the classroom and the most common activities were sending emails, surfing the Internet and watching movies.

Hyland (2004) also did a large study on 228 trainee and practicing ESL teachers in Hong Kong to examine their activities using English out of the classroom. She found that nearly 40% of the participants surveyed were unmotivated or unable to find ways to use English outside of their teaching or school environments. If the participants did use English out of the classroom, they also engaged in independent activities. The most common activities the participants participated in using English were writing emails, reading books, surfing the internet, watching TV, and listening to music.

Using interviews, Hyland (2004) was able to gather more information about the reasons why the participants spoke little English out of the classroom and chose mostly independent activities. The reasons the participants gave for not speaking

English were because doing so made it appear that they were showing off, made it seem like they were trying to be proud or superior (to those who spoke Cantonese) or because it made them feel uncomfortable. Even though they were future teachers of English, the culture that the learners belonged to, which is part of their identity, seemed to prohibit English language use outside of the classroom.

The language learners in Hyland's study preferred the private, rather than the public domain for practicing English. Hyland (2004) stated that due to the results of the study, future research must consider the individual and the social/political factors affecting language use in order to further understand the reasons why learners avoid speaking English outside of the classroom.

Previous studies on out-of-class language use indicate that there are many English language learners who do not take advantage of English language activities outside of the classroom and miss the potential that this forum has to improve their language abilities. When learners do practice and use English outside of class time, it is within a limited scope of activities and most often done individually. Speaking English seems to be the least utilized activity by ESL learners outside of the classroom. Based on the second language acquisition literature reviewed in the previous section of this literature review, these findings from previous studies on out-of-class English use indicate that ESL and EFL learners are not participating in many valuable learning opportunities that exist outside of the classroom.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As the literature review section indicated, the benefits of English language use outside of the classroom in an L2 context are numerous for the English language learner. Research in the field of second language acquisition indicates that, when possible, language learners should take advantage of these opportunities because they play an important role in the language acquisition process. However, the research done on out-of-class English use is limited; what research has been conducted is focused on one particular type of learner –ESL and EFL students in a university academic setting. More research needs to be done in order to have a more thorough and in-depth understanding of the out-of-class English use of English language students. Specifically, more research needs to be done with learners from other contexts and with other characteristics. By examining English use outside of the classroom of a range of learners, we are better able to inform pedagogy and service providers about out-of-class English use in general and better able to make specific proposals about specific student populations.

Further, the studies done on out-of-class English use by English language learners also reveal another gap in the literature. They do not provide any information on whether there is a correlation between English language proficiency and out-of- class use of English. While research in second language acquisition suggests that out-of-class English use might lead to higher language proficiency, this has not been discussed in the previous literature. To enrich this area of

research, the present study will examine whether a correlation can be made between out of class English use and English proficiency.

To add to the research on out-of-class English use, this thesis examines the English use outside of class by adult ESL students studying at the community college level in the United States because there is little literature in the field of Applied Linguistics discussing the out-of-class English activities of this student population. Adult ESL students enrolled in community colleges in the U.S. are different in many ways from the typical university ESL student studying Academic English. They are, in most cases, immigrants to the U.S. They are often older, studying English while raising families and working, and may have different motivations for learning English such as career advancement or assimilation into their communities. This research describes the English language use outside of the classroom of this student population in order to examine if the results differ from previous literature and to determine whether a correlation exists between the English language proficiency of the students and the amount of English they use outside of the classroom.

This research aims to answer the following questions:

- 1) *What types of activities do adult ESL students studying at a community college in the United States participate in using English outside of the classroom and how often to they participate in these activities?*
- 2) *Is there a correlation between the students' proficiency in English and the amount of English they use outside of the classroom?*

By examining the answers to these questions, one can see if the out-of-class English use of adult community college ESL students differs from what has been presented in previous literature. The results will also present whether a correlation exists between the students' proficiency in English and the amount of out-of-class English they use. The answers to both questions will provide information to fill the gaps in the previous literature on this topic. The findings will help inform future pedagogy by providing a more comprehensive portrait of the community college ESL learner and hopefully steer classroom policy makers towards incorporating out-of-class English use into the ESL curriculum.

METHODOLOGY

A. Setting

The research for this thesis was concentrated on data previously collected by Portland State University's National Labsite for Adult ESOL. PSU's Adult ESOL Labsite (called the Lab School) conducts research in adult language learning and is a partnership between Portland State University and Portland Community College (Reder, et al., 2003). The Lab School and the research facilities are located at Portland State University, and the ESL student participants, their curriculum, and their teachers are from Portland Community College.

The data used for this study were collected as part of the Labsite Student Study (LSS). The LSS was a four-year longitudinal study which collected data on adult English learning with yearly in-home interviews. The LSS collected data on Lab School students such as first language, educational background, work and educational goals, and first and second language use outside of the classroom. The LSS also documented changes in students' oral and written language over time through standardized language assessments and gathered data on L1 and L2 reading habits. While much of the lab site's research was collected from classroom observation, the LSS was unique in that it investigated aspects of language learning which were often not the focus of language learning studies. These included learners' language use at home, in the workplace, and in the community; the role of work in the learner's life, learners' reasons for immigration to the U.S. and life

goals; and learners' awareness of effective teaching strategies for language learning. The LSS was a rich source of data from which much could be learned concerning the English use which takes place outside of the classroom of adult community college ESL students.

B. Participants

Participants in the LSS were ESL students recruited from PCC ESOL classrooms during the fourth week of each ten-week term. They were recruited from all class levels at Portland Community College – from the lowest level A (beginners) to the highest level D (upper-intermediate proficiency). Participants spoke one of the five languages in which the interviews were conducted (Spanish, Chinese, Vietnamese, Russian, or French) and were given an annual financial compensation of \$30 if they chose to participate in the project. LSS project staff (not the teachers) visited the classrooms to explain the study and gave out written summaries to the students which were translated into the five languages. Students self-selected to be a part of the study and interviewers were present during the classroom visit to answer any of their questions.

Most of the 203 students who participated in the LSS were recent immigrants to the U.S. and had been here for one year or less. The average level of education of the participants was 11.01 years. Sixty-two percent of the LSS participants had not formally studied English prior to immigrating to the U.S.

The LSS had three groups of participants, recruited annually, which are referred to as Cohort 1, Cohort 2, and Cohort 3. During the 2002-2003 academic year, 63 students were recruited from PCC levels A and B into Cohort 1. During the 2003-2004 academic year, 65 students were recruited from PCC levels A, B, C, and D into Cohort 2. In the 2004-2005 academic year, 75 students were recruited from PCC levels A, B, C, and D into Cohort 3.

Of those students, not all are represented in the current study; however, the participants I chose to study for this paper are those from Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 that were given the Wave 1 and Wave 2 questionnaires. This study uses the information collected from the Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students from the Wave 2 questionnaire only. The Wave 2 questionnaire was focused on exclusively because it contained the most questions pertaining to English use at work and at home and collected the most data out of all 3 questionnaires on out of class English use.

Further, because I was only interested in the out of class English use of ESL students, only participants that were currently enrolled in an ESL program at the time of the LSS study, thus current students, were used in the study (some LSS participants were no longer students). There are 25 participants from Cohort 1 and 16 from Cohort 2, with a total of 41 participants in this study. In order to provide the reader with more information about this specific set of participants who responded to the LSS Wave 2 questionnaire, this section provides some description

of the students. Table 1 provides the data indicating what country the students were from and how many were from each country.

Table 1: Student Country of Origin

<i>Country</i>	<i>Number of Students</i>
Taiwan	1
Nicaragua	1
Russia	1
Rwanda	1
Morocco	1
Congo	2
Cuba	4
Vietnam	7
Mexico	9
China	14
Total students	41

As Table 1 indicates, the largest number of students participating in the study were from China (14). This was followed by students from Mexico (9), Vietnam (7), and Cuba (4). Just 1 or 2 two students were from the remaining countries: Taiwan, Nicaragua, Russia, Rwanda, Congo, and Morocco.

As part of the questionnaire, students were asked, “What language do you usually speak outside of the home?” As Table 2 indicates, 65.9 % of the 41 student respondents indicated that they usually spoke English outside of the home, while 31.7% reported that they spoke another language outside of the home. So while over half of the students used English when outside of the home, a large portion of

the participants did indicate that they spoke a language other than English when outside of the home. It is interesting to see that such a large number of students reported that they did not usually use English outside of the classroom – this leads us to ask two questions: Why weren't they using English? How much English did the students use exactly? This study will further examine language use outside of the classroom to determine how much English the students are really using when not in the classroom and for what kinds of activities they are, or are not, using English.

Table 2: Language Spoken Outside of the Home

		# of Participants	Percent of Total Participants
	English	27	65.9 %
	Other	13	31.7 %
Missing responses		1	2.4 %
Total responses		41	100.0 %

If students indicated that they usually spoke a language other than English when outside of the home, it was their first language that they spoke instead of English: Chinese, Spanish, Russian, or Vietnamese. Table 3 provides the reader with the number of students that spoke each language outside of the home and the percentage of each language group that reported using their L1 outside of the home.

One can see that of all the Chinese students in the study, 42.8% spoke Chinese, not English, when outside of the classroom. 30.8% of the Spanish speakers did not speak English when outside of the classroom, the only Russian student did not, and 28.6% of all the Vietnamese participants did not speak English outside of the classroom.

Table 3: Percentage of Language Groups Using L1 Outside of the Home

	# Participants	Percentage of Language Group
Chinese	6	42.8 %
Spanish	4	30.8 %
Russian	1	100 %
Vietnamese	2	28.6 %
Total	13	

The LSS questionnaire also asked students about their employment status. The results listed in Table 4 indicate that 58.6% of the students were employed either part-time or full-time and that 34.2% of the students were unemployed. 7.3% of the students fell into the “other” employment category, which means that they were either retired or had another situation that prevented them from working. This employment information is important because employment status of the participants in the study affected their responses to some of the questions on the questionnaire concerning talking to co-workers, supervisors, and customers in English. Additionally, employment status will be examined later in this study to

see how this affects the amount of English used outside of the classroom by the participants.

Table 4: Employment Status

	# Participants	Percent
Employed Full-time	12	29.3
Employed part-time	12	29.3
Unemployed, looking for work	5	12.2
Unemployed, not looking	9	22
Other	3	7.3
Total	41	100.0

The descriptive statistics given in this section concerning language use outside of the home and employment status are provided for the reader in order to give a more comprehensive description of the students in the LSS study. In sum, the participants in this study had recently arrived in the U.S., were enrolled in an ESL program, and over half of them were employed either full-time or part-time. The participants were from 10 different countries, with the majority of participants being from China, Mexico, and Vietnam. The research presented in this thesis thus represents data collected from students of different employment statuses, of a wide

range of language backgrounds, and of a wide range of English language proficiency levels.

C. Data gathering

This thesis research is focused on the LSS study, which was conducted using a survey design. It is considered a survey design because the primary instrument for data collection was a questionnaire. Surveys and questionnaires can be useful research tools because they allow for many participants to be surveyed in a short amount of time. Additionally, surveys provide information and data that can be easily quantified.

As previously mentioned, the data for the LSS project were gathered annually with in-home interviews using a questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in the subject's first, home, or primary language other than English. The interviewer orally asked the participant the questions on the questionnaire and recorded their responses. Additionally, at the end of the questionnaire, each student was videotaped giving a brief oral narrative designed for an English speaking audience.

The questionnaires gathered data concerning students' educational backgrounds, first language, work and educational goals, first and second language use outside of the classroom, reading habits, and standardized language test scores. The questionnaire used each year was different, but consisted of many of the same

questions, with additional questions added each year. The similarity of the questionnaires is important because it allows researchers to compare data longitudinally as participants were interviewed in consecutive years. The questionnaire used in the first year of the study is referred to as *Wave 1*, the second year *Wave 2*, and the third year *Wave 3*. The same students were interviewed each year and given the questionnaires in consecutive order. Following in Table 5 is a summary of the student cohorts and questionnaires:

Table 5: Summary of Student Cohorts

Student Cohort	Academic Year Recruited	Questionnaire Given
Cohort 1	2002-2003	Wave 1, 2, 3,
Cohort 2	2003-2004	Wave 1, 2
Cohort 3	2004-2005	Wave 1

To gather further data, students were recorded giving a brief narrative in English after they had completed the questionnaire. Students chose to respond to one of a few prompt questions and were given several minutes to prepare what to say before the camera was turned on. Due to variances in English ability, the interviews vary in length. During the Wave 1 interviews, students were asked to state their names, their home country and answer one of four questions concerning why they came to the U.S. and what their initial experiences were after arrival.

For Wave 2, students were asked to talk about changes in their lives since the last interview, including changes in their family life and their English language learning. Students were asked to answer questions about their goals in Wave 3. They were asked about what their goals were when they first arrived in the United States and what they were for the upcoming year. Students were also asked to describe a memorable English learning experience that they had gone through.

D. Data Analysis

This section explains how the data were analyzed in order to answer each research question. I analyzed the data collected by the LSS interviews to describe the English use outside of the classroom by the student participants. I looked at the responses of the Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 students, who were enrolled in an ESL program at the time of the interview, and who responded to the Wave 2 questionnaire (See Appendix A). As noted earlier, 41 students' responses to these questionnaires were analyzed.

The first research question presented in this thesis is: *What types of activities do adult ESL students studying at a community college in the United States participate in using English outside of the classroom and how often do they participate in these activities?* To answer this question, I focused on specific questions from the Wave 2 questionnaire, which dealt with English use outside of

the classroom. The responses to the following questions are the ones which I analyzed:

Questions on Wave 2 questionnaire

1. *What language do you usually speak outside the home?*
2. *What is your current job status?*
3. *What do you do in English at work? How often each week? How long each time?*
 - a. *Do you talk to your supervisor in English?*
 - b. *Do you talk to customers in English?*
 - c. *Do you talk to co-workers in English?*
 - d. *Do you read safety manuals and signs?*
 - e. *Do you write forms or reports in English?*
 - f. *Do you read forms or reports in English?*
 - g. *Do you read labels in English?*
 - h. *Do you write time sheets in English?*
4. *What do you do in English in your daily life (outside of work)? How often each week? How long each time?*
 - a. *Do you ask questions at the bank in English?*
 - b. *Do you use English when you go shopping?*

- c. Do you read material for your school?*
- d. Do you read newspapers or books in English?*
- e. Do you watch TV in English?*
- f. Do you listen to the radio in English?*
- g. Do you speak with friends in English?*
- h. Do you ask questions about the bus route?*
- i. Do you talk to your children's teachers in English?*
- j. Do you read materials from your children's school?*
- k. Do you read purchase/sale/lease agreements in English?*
- l. Do you talk to your doctor in English?*
- m. Do you use English at restaurants?*
- n. Do you apply for jobs using English?*
- o. Do you read bills in English?*
- p. Do you write notes or letters in English?*

In order to analyze the data quantitatively, the responses to each question reported by each subject, in terms of total minutes per week, were recorded into an SPSS database. Once the responses were recorded, descriptive statistics for each question were created. With this analysis, I was able to determine what kind of activities the students used English for outside of the classroom and how often they participated in each activity per week. The sum of the English use for all

participants was determined for each question, which allows one to see the activities the participants used English for most and least frequently.

I also analyzed the data to determine how employment status affected the amount of English use outside of the classroom by the participants. The activities the students participated in using English outside of the classroom were divided into “work” and “daily life (outside of work).” The total minutes of English use were then reported for each of these subdivided activities to see if the participants were using English more at work or in their daily lives. To further analyze how employment affected English use outside of the classroom, job status and total minutes of English used outside of the classroom were reported for each individual participant. This allows us to see if those that were employed or those that were unemployed used more English outside of the classroom. The mean number of minutes of English use per week of the participants in the ‘employed’ and ‘unemployed’ categories was also determined. To account for the large standard deviation and variance between students’ reported minutes of English use per week (from 20-5790), I did a square root transformation of the data. This data was used to perform an independent samples t-test to determine whether the difference between these means was statistically significant. Additionally, I did a Mann-Whitney test of medians for this data. The results of these tests help determine if there is a significant difference between the amount of English that employed and unemployed participants used outside of the classroom.

Once descriptive information from the questionnaire was determined, I looked for a correlation between minutes of English use outside of class and learner proficiency in English, which was determined by student scores on the PPVT-III English proficiency test. PPVT test scores were also collected as part of the LSS study. Although both PPVT and BEST Plus scores for the participants were collected as part of the LSS study, I chose to use the PPVT scores for this analysis because they were reported for all students. The BEST Plus scores were missing for many students at the time of the Wave 2 questionnaire. This analysis was done in order to answer the second research question of this thesis: *Is there a correlation between the students' proficiency in English and the amount of out-of-class English use?*

A Pearson Correlation statistical analysis was used to determine if there were any significant correlations. Using the SPSS program, I chose two variables for the statistical test: total minutes using English per week for each student and the participant's score on the PPVT English proficiency test. The SPSS program indicated whether there was a statistically significant correlation and whether this correlation was positive or negative.

Additionally, to test for a correlation between language proficiency and amount of English used outside of the classroom, a Spearman's rho test was done to test the relationship between the variables of total minutes using English per week for each student and PCC instructional level. Students were in one of five

PCC levels – from the lowest A to the highest E (encompasses ENL and content courses). Only 25 of the 41 participants were used in this analysis as only 25 were enrolled at PCC at the time of the Wave two questionnaire (though they were all students, some were enrolled in classes elsewhere). This test indicated whether there was a statistically significant correlation between these variables, amount of English used outside of the classroom and English language proficiency, and whether the correlation was positive or negative.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of the Wave 2 questionnaire that was given to the 41 community college ESL students that participated in the LSS. This chapter is divided into two sections. The first section presents results which describe the types of activities the ESL students participated in using English outside of the classroom and the frequency per week for each activity. The second section presents results about correlations between student proficiency in English and out-of-class English use.

Section 1

This section provides the results from the questionnaire which describe the kinds of activities subjects used English for outside of the classroom and the frequency in minutes per week for which they used English for the activities. The results concerning participants' uses of English at work and in daily life are provided.

The results presented in Table 6 provide descriptive statistics for each question and include the minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviation for each. Table 7 provides the sum of total minutes of English language use outside the classroom for all participants for each question.

Table 6: Activities Using English Outside of the Classroom

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Median	Standard Deviation
Do you talk to your doctor in English? Total minutes each week	0	10	.7	0	2.1
Do you ask questions about the bus route in English?	0	35	1.8	0	6.5
Total time each week writing timesheets in English	0	50	2.1	0	7.9
Total time each week asking questions at the bank in English	0	70	4.4	0	11.9
Do you read bills in English? Total minutes each week	0	75	7.8	0	16.2
Total minutes each week reading safety manuals and signs	0	75	8.3	0	19.1
Total minutes using English each week to apply for jobs	0	120	8.7	0	24.9
Do you read materials from your children's school in English?	0	105	8.9	0	22.9
Do you talk with your children's teachers in English? Total minutes each week	0	360	10.9	0	56.9
Do you write notes or letters in English? Total minutes each week	0	120	13.3	0	30.9
Total minutes each week using English at restaurants	0	210	15.3	0	36.4
Total minutes each week reading purchase/sale/lease agreements	0	420	22.1	0	77.7

Total time each week reading forms or reports in English	0	630	26.1	0	99.6
Total time each week writing forms or reports in English	0	630	27.4	0	102.1
Total minutes each week talking to supervisor in English	0	420	39.6	0	98.1
Do you use English when you go shopping? Total minutes each week	0	360	42.1	20	71.0
Total time each week reading labels in English	0	1500	47.3	0	235.1
Total minutes each week talking to co-workers in English	0	600	54.9	0	123.5
Total minutes each week reading English books or newspapers	0	630	88.8	45	131.4
Do you speak with friends in English? Total minutes each week	0	840	104.6	20	180.1
Do you listen to the radio in English? Total minutes each week	0	2400	188.9	0	464.7

Do you read material for your school in English? Total minutes each week	0	1620	261.9	120	328.6
Total minutes each week talking to customers in English	0	4200	361.3	0	817.8
Do you watch TV in English? Total minutes each week	0	1260	361.8	210	342.2

As Table 6 indicates, there is a wide range in the amount of time each subject participated in the various activities using English outside of the classroom. For every question there was at least one participant who stated that they did not participate in the activity using English outside of the classroom at all (i.e. 0 minutes). Some participants reported not using English for the activity, while others had a high number of minutes using English for the same activity. The standard deviations reported for each question are also quite high and vary widely, further indicating that participants differed greatly in the amount of time they spent outside of class doing each activity in English.

These findings indicate that English use outside of the classroom varied greatly depending on the individual participant. Although all participants were adult ESL students at a community college and shared this common trait, something about them as individuals led to differences in the amount of time they

participated in the various activities outside of class using English. This could relate to what Rubin (1975) and Nunan (1991) described as the traits of successful language learners in their studies. Some students are more motivated than others and seek out opportunities to use English when not in the classroom.

Also, work and family life are additional factors that can strongly influence the amount of English some students use outside of the classroom (Hellermann & Brillanceau, 2007). Work and family situations could provide or hinder participation or opportunities to use English outside of the classroom. Although all of these factors, plus others, cannot be explored further in this thesis, it would be very interesting for future research to explore these issues. It would be interesting to examine individual ESL students and their personal situations and characteristics to study how this affects English use when the students are not in the classroom. I was able to examine one factor among those previously mentioned based on the LSS questionnaires. How job status affects English use outside of the classroom is one factor examined in this thesis and will be discussed in the following section entitled *Work vs. Daily Life*.

The following Table 7 shows the sum of total minutes of English language use outside the classroom for all participants per question. The activities outside of the classroom the participants used English for least and most frequently were also determined.

Table 7: Sum of Total Minutes for all Participants per Question

Activity	Total Minutes per Week by all Participants
Talk to Doctor	28
Ask questions about Bus Route	75
Writing timesheets in English	86
Asking questions at the bank in English	182
Read Bills	321
Reading Safety Manuals and Signs	340
Use English to apply for jobs	355
Read Materials from your Children's School	365
Talk with Children's Teachers	446
Write Notes or Letters	547
Using English at restaurants	628
Reading purchase/sale/lease agreements	910
Reading Forms or reports	1070
Writing Forms or reports	1123
Talking to Supervisor	1622
Shopping	1728
Reading Labels in English	1938
Talking to Co-workers	2253
Reading English newspapers or books	3640
Speak with Friends	4287
Radio	7744
Read Material for your School	10741
Talking to Customers	14815
Watch TV	14835

Based on the results presented in Table 7, the most and least popular activities using English outside of the classroom were determined. The activity the participants used English for least frequently outside of the classroom is *talking to the doctor*, followed by *asking questions about the bus route* and *writing timesheets in English*. The fact that the two activities least frequently participated in using

English by the participants were those that involved talking to others in English concurs with previous studies done on out of class English use, which indicated that ESL learners infrequently chose activities involving interaction with others using English (Pickard, 1996; Suh et al, 1999; Chan et al, 2002; Hyland 2004).

The activity the subjects participated in most frequently using English outside of the classroom was *watching TV*. This finding correlates with the previous studies done on out of class English use (Pickard, 1996; Suh et al, 1999; Chan et al, 2002; Hyland 2004) that indicated that the ESL students surveyed most often participated in individual or passive activities using English when outside of the classroom. If we examine the top 10 most frequent activities the participants indicated they used English for outside of the classroom in this study, we see that 5 of those (*watching TV, reading material for your school, listening to the radio, reading English newspapers and books, reading labels in English*) are individual activities which further supports the findings of previous studies.

However, 5 of the top 10 most frequent activities using English (*talking to customers, speaking with friends, talking to co-workers, shopping, talking to supervisor*) are not individual activities, but those which involve talking to another person in English. Indeed, the second most frequent activity, *talking to customers*, was participated in only 20 minutes less than *watching TV* overall. These findings seem contrary to the studies previously done on out-of-class English use, which seemed to indicate that ESL learners usually chose individual activities using

English when outside of the classroom, not those which involved talking to others in English. As mentioned earlier, previous studies of out-of-class English use had participants who were ESL and EFL students in a university academic setting. This study broadens the research in the area of out-of-class English use and examines the English use of ESL students in the community college setting. The results shown in Table 7 indicate that one can not generalize among these two populations regarding out-of-class English use. The fact that two of the top 5 most frequent activities using English were ones which could only occur at a workplace (talking to customers and talking to co-workers) now leads us to examine how employment can affect out-of-class English use.

Work vs. Daily Life

To examine this last statement a bit further, I will now discuss the results presented in Table 7 as divided into English use in daily life and English use at work. Community college ESL students are often older than ESL students in a university academic setting, are often studying English while working, and may potentially have different motivations for learning English than the ESL student in the academic setting, such as career advancement. Because of this, I subdivided the results for total minutes of English use per activity into “Work” and “Daily Life (outside of work).” We can see in Table 8 how working may affect out-of-class English use by subdividing these results.

Table 8: English Use at Work vs. Outside of Work

WORK	Total minutes per week by all participants	OUTSIDE OF WORK	Total minutes per week by all participants
Writing timesheets in English	86	Talk to Doctor	28
Reading Safety Manuals and Signs	340	Ask questions about Bus Route	75
Reading Forms or reports	1070	Asking questions at the bank in English	182
Writing Forms or reports	1123	Read Bills	321
Talking to Supervisor	1622	Use English to apply for jobs	355
Talking to Co-workers	2253	Read Materials from your Children's School	365
Talking to Customers	14815	Talk with Children's Teachers	446
		Write Notes or Letters	547
		Using English at restaurants	628
		Reading purchase/sale/lease agreements	910
		Shopping	1728
		Reading Labels in English	1938
		Reading English newspapers or books	3640
		Speak with Friends	4287
		Radio	7744
		Read Material for your School	10741
		Watch TV	14835
WORK TOTAL	23247	OUTSIDE OF WORK TOTAL	46832

The results displayed in Table 8 indicate that overall, the adult immigrant English learners in this study used English twice as much outside of class when not at work than when at work. However, if we look at the activities the participants used English for most frequently in their daily lives, the results coincide more with the previous studies on out-of-class English use, such that the majority of the activities are individual activities using English. It is only when we add in the activities using English at work do we get the results that participants are doing non-individual, or interactive activities, using English when outside of the classroom, which contradicts the results of previous studies. This suggests that English use at work is an important factor affecting the results of this study. Previous studies on out-of-class English use did not take English use at work into consideration. As noted earlier, 58.6% of the subjects of this study were employed either part-time or full-time. Because adult ESL community college students may be working more than ESL learners in the university academic setting, their English use outside of the classroom may be different.

The job status of the individual participants can also be examined to see how this correlates to English use outside of the classroom. From the data, this is what we can examine here from among the individual differences mentioned earlier among students. Table 9 shows the job status of each participant and the total minutes of English they reported using outside of the classroom each week. As Table 9 indicates, participants who were employed, on average, used more minutes

of English outside of the classroom than the unemployed participants. The average number of minutes of English use outside of the classroom per week for the employed participants is 1,945; for the unemployed participants, 1,376. While there was a wide range of reported minutes of English use outside of the classroom among participants in each category, it appears that overall, the participants who were employed used English more frequently when outside of class. This could indicate that they were using English at their jobs frequently and this was an opportunity to practice and use the language which was not available to the unemployed participants. More generally, this indicates that the fact that they were employed may have provided more opportunities for some participants to use English outside of the classroom – at work, or in other contexts outside of the home.

Table 9: Job Status and English Use Outside the Classroom

Average minutes of English per week for employed participants	1945
Average minutes of English per week for unemployed participants	1376

The data shown in Table 9 can also be analyzed statistically to determine whether the difference in means of English use outside of the classroom between employed and unemployed learners is statistically significant. Recall that employed participants used English outside of the classroom for 1945 minutes per week on average, while unemployed participants used English outside of the classroom for 1376 minutes per week on average. By looking at these means we see that employed participants used English more, but the data shown in Table 11 and Table 12 indicate that this difference is not statistically significant. The following tables provide the results of an independent t-test comparing the root transformations of the means and a Mann-Whitney test of the different groups:

Table 10: Group Statistics

Employment Status	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Mean Error
emp	24	1944.9583	1793.38496	366.07317
unemp	17	1376.4706	880.17939	213.47486

Table 11: T-test of Means of English Use and Employment Status

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
square									Lower	Upper
	Equal variances assumed	3.329	.076	.794	39	.432	4.44314	5.59314	-6.87006	15.75633
	Equal variances not assumed			.856	38.650	.397	4.44314	5.19286	-6.06346	14.94974

Table 12: Mann-Whitney Test

	jobstatus	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
English	employed	24	21.60	518.50
	unemployed	17	20.15	342.50
	Total	41		
English				
	Mann-Whitney U			189.500
	Wilcoxon W			342.500
	Z			-.384
	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)			.701

The results shown above in Table 11 and Table 12 indicate that although there is a difference in the means tested, the difference between them is not statistically significant at the .05 level. Based on the results reported in both tables, employment status may or may not be a factor affecting the amount of English used outside of the classroom by the participants. A significant difference in the amount of English used outside of the classroom by these two groups of students, those employed and those unemployed, was not found. Though the employed participants reported using more English outside of the classroom than the unemployed participants, we cannot make any definitive claims that those who are employed use English more outside of the classroom. This may be the case for some learners, but we cannot expand this statement to encompass all English learners.

In sum, this section has answered the first research question of this thesis: *What types of activities do adult ESL students studying at a community college in the United States participate in using English outside of the classroom and how often to they participate in these activities?* The results showed that while the participants often did use English outside of the classroom for independent activities in their daily lives, they often used English for interactive activities both when at work as well in their daily lives. As such, the results did not all concur with previous studies on out-of-class English use, which suggests that the lives of adult immigrant English language learners provide different contexts for English

language use than other groups of English language learners. One cannot make generalizations about out-of-class English use of ESL students in general, but one must take into consideration the specific type of ESL learner

Section 2

This second part of the *Results and Discussion* section presents results concerning whether there was a correlation between student proficiency in English (PPVT score) and amount of out-of-class English use. A Pearson Correlation statistical analysis revealed that there was a statistically significant correlation between these two variables. Table 13 provides the statistical results.

Table 13: Correlation between Language Proficiency and English Use Outside of the Classroom

		Total minutes using English per week for each student	PPVT
Total minutes using English per	Pearson Correlation	.318*	.218*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.021	.021
	N	41	41
PPVT	Pearson Correlation	.318*	.218*
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.021	.021
	N	41	41

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

The significance indicated in Table 13 from the Pearson statistical test, .021, indicates that there is a statistically significant correlation between amount of English use outside of class and English proficiency (PPVT score). The correlation shown in this test is not due to chance. The Pearson Correlation, .318, is a positive number which means that as one variable goes up, so does the other. So as English proficiency increases, so does the amount of time using English outside of the classroom. If a student has a higher PPVT test score, that student is also likely to be using English outside of the classroom and vice-versa. Although the results in Table 13 indicate that there is a correlation between English proficiency and English use outside of the classroom, there is no way to determine from the current data whether English proficiency increased due to increased language use out of the classroom or whether it is an opposite effect – increased language use outside of the classroom resulting in increased language proficiency. Further studies in the area of out-of-class English use need to be conducted to test which variable is affecting the other and how the two relate.

To more thoroughly test for a correlation between language proficiency and out of class English use, the results of a Spearman's rho statistical test are presented in Table 14. This test used the participants PCC level for English language proficiency and tested for a correlation with this and total minutes of English use per week by the participants. The results follow in Table 14:

Table 14: Correlation of PCC Level and English Use

			PCC level	total
Spearman's rho	PCClevel	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.399(*)
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.	.024
		N	25	25
	total	Correlation Coefficient	.399(*)	1.000
		Sig. (1-tailed)	.024	.
		N	25	25

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

This test further confirmed that there is, indeed, a statistically significant correlation between English proficiency and amount of English used outside of the classroom. The significance indicated of .024 shows that there is a statistically significant correlation. Also, the Correlation Coefficient of .399 is positive, so as PCC level goes up, so does amount of English used outside of the classroom. The results shown in Table 14 are very similar to those in Table 13 and indicate that whether PPVT scores or PPC level are used to represent proficiency in English, both indicate a positive and statistically significant correlation with English use outside of the classroom.

In sum, this section fills a gap in the research done on out-of-class English use by providing the answer to the second research question of this thesis: *Is there a correlation between the students' proficiency in English and the amount of out of class English use?* The results presented in this section indicate that there is a

statistically significant correlation between student proficiency in English, as measured by the PPVT and by student progress through the PPC program, and the amount of out-of-class English use.

This finding of the significant correlation between English language proficiency and out of class English use is one that might have been expected based on the information discussed earlier in the literature review section of this thesis on the importance of out-of-class language use in language acquisition. Many linguistic theories allude to the fact that out-of-class English use is crucial for the attainment of a high level of language proficiency. Recall Krashen's Input Hypothesis (1985), for example. By participating in many activities using English outside of the classroom, learners increase their comprehensible input, which is an important factor in the language acquisition process. Bialystok's theoretical model of language acquisition (1978) also stresses the link between successful language learning and out of class English use. By using English outside of the classroom, learners develop both formal and functional language skills and increase their explicit knowledge, which may be very difficult to do inside of a classroom. These theories certainly suggest that there would be a strong correlation between language proficiency and out-of-class English use.

Further, we can also revisit Long's Interaction Hypothesis (1998) and the theory of communicative competence (Hymes 1971, Canale & Swain, 1980). Long proposed that interaction between native-speakers of a language and non-native

speakers of a language was very important to language development. Obviously, a learner has many more opportunities for this type of interaction outside, rather than inside, of the classroom. Learners also are very unlikely to develop communicative competence if only using language inside of a classroom. This type of language proficiency is yet another thing that is most likely learned outside of the classroom. Out of class English use is essential for most learners to develop a high level of English language proficiency. In theory this is supported as reviewed here and it is evident in this study as confirmed by the correlation between amount of English used outside of the classroom and English language proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Potential Limitations

This study is valuable to the field of Applied Linguistics because it adds to the research on out-of-class English use and focuses on a type of learner, adult community college students enrolled in an ESL program in the United States, previously not represented in the literature. The present study also fills another gap in the previous research done in this area by addressing the correlation between out-of-class English use and learner proficiency in English. Despite its value, there are potential limitations to the study.

First, because the study is based on a limited number of students enrolled at Portland Community College, I am not able to make generalizations about out-of-class English use which can apply to all English language learners. While I may speculate that the results presented in this study might be similar among all adults studying English at community colleges in the United States, my study is not able to verify this. Similar studies on the out-of-class English use of adults enrolled in community colleges in the U.S. need to be conducted in order to generalize the results.

A limited number of participants are included in the study, in part, because I chose only to look at students who were currently enrolled in an ESL program at the time of the LSS questionnaire. Some participants in the LSS had been enrolled in ESL classes, but were no longer enrolled when they participated in the LSS

study. I chose not to include these participants in my research because I specifically wanted to look at the English use outside of the classroom of students enrolled in a community college ESL program. Though former students might use English more in their daily lives and an examination of these participants might have revealed interesting findings on the English use of this learner population, I did not examine these learners. From an ESL teacher's perspective, and for the purpose of this study, I was only interested in the population of learners who were currently enrolled in an ESL program.

The nature of the LSS questionnaires also represents a limitation to the data used in this thesis. The data collected with the questionnaires were self-report data. In other words, students self-reported how many minutes they used English each week for the various activities outside of class. It is often difficult to collect perfectly accurate data with this kind of method, as there is possible measurement error with self-reporting. However, the LSS questionnaires were pilot tested and interviewers asked how many times per week the participants did each activity per week and for how many minutes. Then, the calculation of total minutes per week was made by the interviewer. Since the participants were not asked to give the overall time as a total sum, this helped to avoid measurement errors.

Another limitation is that participants in the study were recruited in a voluntary manner from their classrooms. Students who volunteer for this type of study could be a similar type of learner. They could be more comfortable with

English, better learners, or more outgoing, etc. All of these factors could cause them to be learners who use English more frequently when not in the classroom as well. Ideally, all learners in the classes at PCC would have been given the LSS questionnaires in order to avoid attracting specific types of learners. Despite this limitation, I do believe that a participant sample was used which could represent a large number of ESL learners. The participants in this study represent a spectrum of students. For example, students represent a variety of English proficiency levels (all four PCC levels), were from 10 different countries, represented 5 language backgrounds, were of different ages, and had different family and employment situations. Due to this representation of many types of students, I do believe that the results of this study can suggest that the use of English outside of the classroom may foster English language development for a number of different learners.

A final limitation to this study is the use of the PPVT as a measure of the learners' English language proficiency. Though this test provides one representation of language proficiency, it is a receptive language and vocabulary test that does not measure all components of language proficiency. Despite this limitation, the PPVT is a valid measure of one aspect of English language proficiency and provides one reflection of learners' language level that can be used in the tests for a correlation between English language proficiency and amount of English used outside of the classroom.

Summary

For learners living in the target language environment, the opportunities for language learning are numerous. Adult immigrant language learners studying at community colleges in the U.S. are constantly surrounded with English input. Literature in the field of second language acquisition suggests that English use outside of the classroom is an important part of the language learning process. The literature also shows that many students don't or are not able to take advantage of these valuable learning opportunities. Though some studies have shown that relying on non-classroom language practice alone can result in fossilization and prohibit attainment of a high level of language proficiency (Schmidt, 1983), this study shows that English use outside of the classroom can be a useful supplement to classroom instruction that can be an important part in a learner's language acquisition process.

This study found that one can not generalize the findings of previous studies on out of class English use to all ESL learners in general. Some findings concurred with previous results, for example that adult community college ESL students frequently used English in their daily life for independent activities. However, the participants indicated that they also used English frequently for activities which involved interacting with others, particularly at work. As a result, it seems that

adult community college ESL students use English for different kinds of activities outside of the classroom than other ESL student populations.

A correlation between the amount of English students use English outside of the classroom and English language proficiency was found in the results of this study. The research supports, in particular, the Interactionist theories and models of second language acquisition. The data revealed a correlation between the amount of English learners use outside of the classroom and English language proficiency. This finding seems to relate to the theories proposed by Long (1980) and Bialystok (1978).

In his Interaction Hypothesis, Long stated that the interaction between native-speakers and non-native speakers is an important part of the learner's language acquisition process because of the negotiated input that learners receive from their interaction with native speakers. As noted previously, native-speaker and non-native speaker interactions can be rare in the classroom. Authentic opportunities for this type of interpersonal interaction, which is advocated by Interactionist theories, most often occur outside of the classroom. If this theory is applied to the finding that a correlation exists between English language proficiency and out of class English use, it suggests that native-speaker/non-native speaker interaction outside of the classroom may be fostering language proficiency for the learners.

Bialystok's Theoretical model of second language acquisition (1978) also advocated interaction using English outside of the classroom. Bialystok's model proposed that language use outside of the classroom for communication purposes, or functional language practice, leads to an increase in a learner's implicit knowledge. Bialystok stated that the greater a learner's implicit knowledge of a language, the greater their fluency in that language. As such, this model is stressing the importance of interaction in the language outside of the classroom as a key part of language development. Again, the correlation found in this research between English language proficiency and English use outside of the classroom seems to agree with this model. If learners are using English outside of the classroom, particularly for authentic communication purposes, their English language proficiency may increase.

Implications

This study adds to the literature on out-of-class English use and provides a different viewpoint by focusing on non-traditional learners. The results can help better understand the out-of-class English use of all types of English language learners. Understanding learning that goes on both inside and outside of the classroom can provide a more comprehensive look at the second language acquisition process.

Also, by researching language use outside of the classroom, we can better understand language learners themselves. In doing so, we are better able to design classroom curriculums and create innovative language programs. Since language use outside of the classroom is an important component of second language acquisition, we can encourage students to practice English outside of the classroom and incorporate this into the classroom. If the out-of-class English use is studied of different types of ESL learners, we can build upon what they already do and encourage different activities.

Focusing on what goes on outside of the classroom allows us to see a more comprehensive portrait of the learner and thus we can better assist them with their language learning process.

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Appendix

A. Wave 2 Questionnaire

LSS: BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE
Wave 2 version 2.4

Interviewee's name: _____

Date of the interview: _____

Interviewer's name: _____

1. In what country were you born?

2. USA (1) (go to Q3)

OTHER (2) (specify) _____

1

3. [If not born in US]: How many years have you lived in the US?

(include months if known)

3a. How many people live in your household, including yourself?

3a

[Insert appropriate name in each question]

What is the [name] of each member in the household?	What is [name] relationship to you?	How old is [name]?	How well does [] speak English?			What language do you speak with [name]?	Does [name] work?		
			no ne	so me	a lot		P T	F T	N o
XXXXXX	SELF	XXX	X	X	X	XXXXXX	X	X	X
XXXX		X	X	X	X	XXX			

3b What language do you usually speak outside the home?

ENGLISH (1)

OTHER (2) (specify) _____

3b

4a How many years of education did you complete in your country?

4a

4b. If beyond high school, what was the focus of your studies? _____

Yes (1)

5a

No (0)

5b. If yes, what was it?

5c. How many years did you work in it?

5c

6. If you had the opportunity, what additional formal education would you get?

1. none
2. high school diploma or GED
3. Vocational, trade or Business school
4. two year college degree (AA)
5. four year college degree (Bachelor's)
6. graduate school
7. professional certification or license (post 4-yr college)

6

7. Are you currently enrolled at PCC?

YES (1)

NO (0)

[Go to Q.10]

7

[If enrolled at PCC]

8. In what classes are you enrolled at PCC(e.g., ESL, ABE, ADULT HIGH SCHOOL, PRE-GED, GED, Other)

9. How many hours do you go to each class each week?

[Go to Q.15]

total hours 9

[If NOT enrolled at PCC]

10. When did you last attend classes at PCC?

F	W	Sp	Su	
---	---	----	----	--

Year

11. What was the reason you stopped going to PCC?

(Interviewer: Indicate any detail provided)

1. School reason
2. Work reason
3. Family reason
4. Met your goal
5. Other reason: e.g., health, transportation

[Insert letter corresponding to answer]

11

12. Are you currently enrolled in some other adult education or training program?

YES (1)

NO

12

13. What

14. How many hours do you go to this class each week? ¹⁴

[ALL RESPONDENTS]

15. What is your most important goal right now?

- a. To improve basic skills
- b. To become a citizen.....
- c. To register to vote.....
- d. To help my community
- e. To enter the military
- f. To obtain GED.....
- g. To prepare for high school diploma ...
- h. To enter training/go to college
- i. To get a job
- j. To keep my job
- k. To get off public assistance
- l. To communicate better at work
- m. To talk to my child/children's teachers
- n. To help my children with their homework
- o. Other (specify)

[If learner has stopped attending PCC]

16. Did you meet your goals?

- Yes
- Some (2)
- No (0)

 ¹⁶

[Note any details provided]

17a. Do you plan to return to PCC or some other adult learning class?

Yes (1)
No (0) (GO TO Q.) 17a

17b. *What class?* 17b

[ALL RESPONDENTS]

Now I'm going to ask you a few questions about work and income.

18. What is your current job status?

- 1. Employed full-time [complete table]
- 2. Employed part-time [complete table]
- 3. Unemployed, looking for work [skip to Q 27]
- 4. Unemployed, not looking for work [skip to Q 27]
- 5. Other 18

[Insert number corresponding to answer]

Job Changes

19. Do you have the same job you had last year?

19 Yes (1) (Go to 21)
No (0)

20. If no, circle answer to each

- a. Is your job with the same employer, or company? 20a Yes/No
- b. Did you get promoted? 20b Yes/No
- c. Do you get paid more? 20c Yes/No
- d. Do you have more responsibility? 20d Yes/No
- e. Do you speak English more? 20e Yes/No
- f. Is your job unrelated to your previous job? 20f Yes/No
- g. Do you have more than one job? 20g Yes/No

21. Let's talk a little bit more about your work

What is your job title?
 When did you start at that job?
 How many hours a week do you work?
 How much do you get paid in one week?
 [Do you have another job?]

JOB TITLE	START DATE (month/year)	#HRS per week	PAY per week

22. Do any of your employers pay for all or any part of medical coverage for you ?

YES (1)

NO (0)

Don't know (2)

 22

23. What do you do in English at work?

	How often?	How long each time?	[interviewer compute] Total minutes each week
1. talk to your supervisor			
2. talk to customers			
3. talk to co-workers			
4. read safety manuals and signs			
5. write forms or reports			

6. read forms or reports			
7. Read labels			
8. Write timesheets			
9. Other (specify)			

If employed,(present job):

(Note to the interviewer: read questions 24,25,26) for each of the skills.

For example : Do you feel you have the English *reading skills* to do your current job well?)

24. Do you feel you have the English reading, writing, math and computer skills to do your current job well?

YES (1)

NO (0)

N/A (2)

Reading	Writing	Math	Computer

1.

25. Do you feel you have the English reading, writing, math and computer skills to advance at your workplace?

YES (1)

NO (0)

N/A (2)

Reading	Writing	Math	Computer

26. Are there any opportunities to improve your English reading, writing, math and computer skills at your workplace?

YES (1)

NO (0)

N/A (2)

Reading	Writing	Math	Computer

[All respondents]

27. What do you do in English in your daily life (outside of work)?

	How often?	How long each time?	[interviewer compute] Total minutes each week
1. Ask questions at the bank			
2. go shopping			
3. read material for your school			
4. read books or newspapers			
5. Watch T.V.			
6. listen to the radio			
7. speak with friends			
8. ask questions about the bus			
9. talk with children's teachers			
10. read materials from children's school.			
11. read purchase/sale/lease agreement			
12. at the doctor			
13. at restaurants			
14. apply for jobs			
15. read bills			
16. write notes or letters.			

Thank you !