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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPORTED OUT-OF-CLASS ENGLISH USE
AND PROFICIENCY GAINS IN ENGLISH

by

Denisa K. Cundick

A master's thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Linguistics and English Language
Brigham Young University

December 2007

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE COMMITTEE APPROVAL

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This thesis has been read by each member of the following graduate committee and by majority vote has been found to be satisfactory.

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As chair of the candidate's graduate committee, I have read the thesis of Denisa K. Cundick in its final form and have found that (1) its format, citations, and bibliographical style are consistent and acceptable and fulfill university and department style requirements; (2) its illustrative materials including figures, tables, and charts are in place; and (3) the final manuscript is satisfactory to the graduate committee and is ready for submission to the university library.

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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPORTED OUT-OF-CLASS ENGLISH USE AND PROFICIENCY GAINS IN ENGLISH

Denisa K. Cundick

Linguistics and English Language

Master of Arts

This study investigated the relationship of out-of-class English use and proficiency gains. It also explored the relationship of gender, proficiency level and native language and the possible effect of these demographics on out-of-class English use and language gains in English. Though some studies have shown that those who spend more out-of-class time using the target language have higher language gain (Seliger, 1977), other studies have not found this to be true (Day, 1985; Freed 1990; Spada, 1986). Some reasons for the discrepancy in findings may be differences in the length of the time data is collected, samples of study participants and types of tests used to measure proficiency.

Sixty-one students at an intensive English language program came from 12 different language backgrounds and 4 proficiency levels. They participated in a 31-week-long study. Participants took a proficiency pre- and posttest (Elicited Imitation

Test) and responded to a questionnaire designed to elicit information about out-of-class language use (Language Contact Profile). In addition to the questionnaire, six students participated in semi-structured interviews that offered additional support for the data gathered by the questionnaire. Data obtained from the questionnaire and interviews was compared to gains in proficiency between the pre- and posttest. The results suggest that using English out-of-class helps improve oral proficiency. In addition, the study shows that gender, proficiency level and native language are not significant predictors of out-of-class English use and proficiency gains. These findings are discussed in light of what teachers and school administrators can do to help their students use the target language in and out of class for best results.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to thank my husband Bryce for his support and help throughout the researching, analyzing and writing of my thesis. He has always made time for me to let me talk about my ideas and helped me think of things to consider as I was planning out my study. His encouragement and support have helped me through the difficult times. I also want to thank our son Tomas for allowing me to spend time on my thesis. He understood at age of three that it was an important thing for me to do.

My thesis chair, Dr. Wendy Baker, has been patient with me and always believed in me. She has skillfully lead me through the process and offered a lot of encouragement along the way. Dr. Baker, as my chair, and Dr. Norm Evans and Dr. Lynn Herichsen, as my committee members, have always tried to make sure my study was on the right track. Without their help, this study would not have turned out as well as it did.

Last, I want to thank people at the ELC (Troy Cox, Joyce Kohler, and many ELC teachers and staff) and BYU (Dr. Ray Graham, Dr. Diane Strong-Krause, Dr. Neil Anderson; Rosssana Camacho and many other students in the TESOL Certificate and MA Program) who have helped me at different stages of the thesis process. I could not have continued and finished the work without their help.

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CHAPTER ONE

Learning English outside of English speaking countries can be a challenge. Many students might feel like their non-native teachers don't know enough, or that there aren't enough opportunities to use English in their everyday lives. It is easy to believe that if one lived in an English speaking country, and could use English all the time, it would be easier to improve. I felt this way learning English in Slovakia for four years before I moved to an English speaking country. I was certain that living among English speakers would make my English better—fast. Nobody would speak my native language, and I would have to deal with everything in English on a daily basis.

For me, my own assumptions turned out to be true. I lived in London for a year after four years of high school English. I did not know anyone who spoke Slovak, and I had to do everything using English, my second language. I attended classes, and at the end of the year I spent in England, I successfully passed the TOEFL and was later accepted to an undergraduate program at a U.S. university. Was I an exception? How much of an effect did using English outside the classroom have on my language learning, and does it affect other ESL learners in the same way?

Rationale for the Study

The amount of research to date on the effect of out-of-class language contact on proficiency is somewhat limited. Some studies have found a tenuous connection between the two factors (Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Seliger, 1977; Yager, 1998). Others have found no connection—or even an adverse one in some cases, with increased out-of-class contact resulting in negative gains in proficiency (Day, 1985; Mendelson, 2004; O'Donnell, 2004; Spada, 1986). One explanation for this discrepancy and failure to

find a strong connection could be the limited scope of most of the previous research (such as small participant samples (on average, 35 participants) and short timeframes (6 to 15 weeks)). Sufficient time frames and large enough participant samples are necessary because they would ensure these two factors were not the cause of the inconsistencies found in earlier studies. To date, no researcher has been able to do a long-term, full-scale study on the issue. If a connection between out-of-class language use and proficiency gain could be found and specific tasks identified that are particularly useful, teachers could provide students with another tool to help them learn English more effectively.

In addition to some of the problems associated with the past studies, it is possible that using English outside the classroom is more common or even more beneficial for one group of learners than for others—an element which had not been explored in past studies. For example, women generally seem to engage in more social interactions than men and may therefore have more opportunities to use English out of class. For this reason, the present study will also look at how factors like gender, native language and proficiency level relate to differences in out-of-class English use. None of the past researchers have addressed these factors, despite the fact that these three personal characteristics might have influenced their studies (Day, 1985; Freed, 1990; Spada, 1986; Yager, 1998).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to fill this gap in the research, conducting a 31 week study focused on discovering if there is a relation between out-of-class English use and proficiency gain in 61 ESL learners from various countries. If such a relationship were found, the study aimed to discover which specific out-of-class language tasks were

most beneficial to students' language proficiency gains and whether certain demographics (gender, native language and language level) had an effect on the process as well. This study builds upon the work of the researchers mentioned above, combining elements of their study designs to create a more in-depth analysis of the phenomenon than has been conducted to date. If after such a lengthy, in-depth study, there continues to be little sign of a connection between out-of-class language contact and proficiency gain, then there will be a stronger argument against pursuing further research in this area. On the other hand, if a lengthy, in-depth study shows a strong connection, then further studies with similar scope can be designed to get a more accurate picture of this relationship, hopefully generating new interest among researchers in the field.

Definition of Constructs

The following five constructs need to be defined in the present study.

Elicited Imitation Test (EI). An oral proficiency test designed to measure fine gains. Sentence prompts are played to test participants and need to be repeated with accuracy.

Language Level. In the present study, language level means proficiency level as measured by class placement tests at the English Language Center (ELC), with level 1 representing beginners, level 2 representing low intermediate learners, level 3 representing intermediate learners, level 4 representing high intermediate learners and level 5 representing advanced learners.

Language Contact Profile (LCP). A self-report survey developed by researchers to measure out-of-class language use (Freed et al., 2004).

Out-of-class English use or outside of classroom English use. “Out-of-class” in this study means any time students spend outside of the ELC classes including ELC sponsored events such as ELC choir and activities. Out-of-class time includes homework, preparation for classes, free time, and time spent in jobs.

Proficiency gain(s). In this study, proficiency gain will be determined by the difference between subjects’ oral proficiency scores on a pretest and posttest (the Elicited Imitation test).

Research Questions

The research questions for the present study were based on questions and concepts found in earlier, similar studies (see Chapter 2). With this in mind, my thesis will attempt to answer the following questions:

1. Is there a relationship between reported use of out-of-class English use and proficiency gain as measured by pre/post scores on the Elicited Imitation test (EI)?
2. What specific language learning activities reported on the LCP promote language gain?
3. Does gender significantly influence reported out-of-class activities conducted in English or proficiency gain?
4. Does English proficiency level significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain?
5. Does native language significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain?

Delimitations

Self-reported Data. Measuring actual out-of-class language use is a difficult task. Observations of learner behavior may be one of the most accurate measures, but they may also be one of the most subjective and intrusive. For the purposes of the current study, reported out-of-class English (as measured by the LCP) will be the focus rather than actual out-of-class English use, since it is desired that results of the current study can be compared to results of previous studies, all of which have relied heavily on self-report data of this nature. Judging from the experience of previous studies (such as Mendelson, 2004), it is anticipated that some of the figures for out-of-class English contact may be over-inflated. It is often hard for learners to estimate how much time they spend on learning, because many view most of their time as learning time. Especially when asked to report on time spent on various language learning activities, the estimates may unintentionally be exaggerated. This should not be seen as a limiting factor, but it must be remembered that these over-inflated figures—should they appear—are merely representative of subjects' perception on frequency of their out-of-class English contact, not scientific presentations of actual time spent.

Sources of Proficiency Gain. It is realized that the amount of any one participant's proficiency gain over a specific time frame can be attributed to any number of factors, including aptitude, motivation, teacher influence, and personal characteristics of the participant (i.e. an extrovert/introvert personality). The present study has attempted to control as many factors as possible, but influences such as these also play a role and can never be wholly eliminated.

Measure of Proficiency Gain. A number of proficiency measures could have been used in the present study as in some of the previous studies (Segalowitz & Freed, 2004;

Spada, 1986), but for the purposes of this study only one measure of proficiency was chosen to measure gains in oral language. Perhaps other issues related to out-of-class English learning could have been also been measured (confidence, willingness to communicate, etc.), but these were not the focus of the present study.

Outline

To adequately address the issues at play in this research field, the study will first establish a context by reviewing literature in this area. Then, a description of the research design created to answer the research questions will be provided, followed by the results for each specific question. The study will conclude with a discussion of the results and the implications that may be drawn from them, in addition to specifying areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

The present study is concerned with the relationship of out-of-class language use and possible gains in English proficiency, as well as discovering what other factors might play a part in that relationship. If out-of-class language use helps to improve language skills significantly, more attention needs to be devoted to it in research and language teaching. This chapter will first present an overview of four major but older studies in the field of out-of-class language learning, which will be followed by a discussion of more recent studies. Further research issues such as the relationship of out-of-class language use and gender, native language and proficiency levels are discussed in the next part of the chapter. A short summary concludes this chapter.

Chronological Overview of Important Studies

One of the most surprising aspects of the studies conducted on the subject to date is that they continue to regularly appear, despite the fact that they almost universally have indicated a lack of a connection between out-of-class contact and proficiency (Day, 1985; Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Seliger, 1977, Spada, 1986 and Yager, 1998). Perhaps the reason why researchers return to this question is that common sense would suggest that those students who devote themselves to practice out-of-class would become more proficient than those who refuse or avoid the use of the second language (L2) in their daily lives. This contrast between results and logic has inspired one researcher after another to return to the field in an effort to design a study that can correct past design flaws in hopes of better understanding the matter. Thus, the best introduction to understanding the context of this study is through an analysis of the history of research in

the field. By examining the initial four major studies upon which the current study is based (Day, 1985; Freed, 1990; Seliger, 1977 and Spada, 1986) the main issues involved become apparent and can then be addressed as they arise in the context of how the research evolved.

Seliger (1977)

The first major study concerned with out-of-class language use and proficiency was conducted only 30 years ago. Herbert W. Seliger (1977) performed a small scale study with six upper intermediate students of various language backgrounds who were enrolled in an intensive English language program (the length of the program was not specified in the study). The participant selection was based on observed levels of verbal interaction in class, after which participants were classified as either high interactors or low interactors. Perhaps the most important contribution of this study was that it was the first to use what has become a standard in this research field: the Language Contact Profile (LCP), a self-report survey designed to measure students' out-of-class use of L2. The LCP was administered in connection with a cloze test as a measure of proficiency once at the end of the semester. (In a cloze test, certain words are blanked out in a passage, and learners are rated based on their ability to correctly complete those blanks.)

Due to the exploratory nature of this study (limited by both participant number and language level), Seliger's results were rather limited in their scope. Nevertheless, based on the results of his study, Seliger suggests there are two kinds of learners: the ones who consciously work on their English and the ones who do not, concluding that there is an interaction continuum, with active learners who seek out opportunities to practice on one end, and passive learners who avoid interaction in target language on the opposite

end. In general, the former have higher proficiencies than the latter. Thus, the first study in the field indicated a tentative positive relation between out-of-class contact and proficiency, although clearly further research was necessary.

Day (1985)

Building on Seliger's study, Richard Day (1985) conducted a study which investigated the relationship of the use of target language out-of-class and proficiency. His participant sample was much larger than Seliger's: 58 predominantly Asian adults enrolled in an intensive ESL program. Their proficiency ranged from intermediate to advanced.

Day used a modified version of Seliger's LCP to measure out-of-class English use, administering the test twice—once at the beginning and once toward the end of an eight-week semester. As did Seliger (1977), Day used oral interviews and a cloze test to measure English proficiency which was tested only once during the sixth week of English instruction.

After considering the data collected on the pre-and post-LCP and the two measures of proficiency, Day (1985) disagreed with Seliger, concluding that “evidence purporting to support the claim that the level attained by ESL students is related to their use of English outside the classroom is mixed and questionable” (p. 265). However, by only testing proficiency once, Day limited himself to trying to find a link between current proficiency and out-of-class English use. Since participant proficiency was not measured before the study started (i.e., providing a pretest-posttest measure), the cloze test administered at the end of the study does not show gain in proficiency, only proficiency at the time of the test administration. In other words, the most Day could have hoped to

prove with a study of this nature is whether out-of-class English use has an affect on current proficiency. However, a student's proficiency at any one point in time can be attributed to any number of factors, such as natural talent or previous exposure to the language. Improvement in proficiency, on the other hand, can be traced to the activities of the student within a certain timeframe. A single test is insufficient to measure improvement.

Additionally, the time period in which Day conducted his study is also problematic. Language proficiency may improve or decline over short periods of time, but these small changes are often not measurable. Any improvements by the participants over eight weeks might have been too slight to measure significantly and reliably.

However, Day also improved upon Seliger's study in various ways. He modified the LCP to include questions asking about time students spend on specific out-of-class English use activities such as listening to the radio or reading the newspaper. This is important, since later studies questioned not only whether out-of-class English use affected proficiency gain, but what type of out-of-class English use had the greatest effect. In addition, Day used a much larger sample of participants with a broader range of proficiency, giving his study a wider generalizability. Finally, his finding of no significant relationship between English use out-of-class and proficiency sparked interest in the field and led other researchers to further investigate the issue.

Spada (1986)

Just a year after Day's report, Nina Spada (1986) published a study investigating the effects of type of contact and instruction on proficiency. Forty-eight intermediate adult ESL learners of various language and cultural backgrounds were included in her

study, which lasted for six weeks. Data from seven proficiency measures were collected. Three of the proficiency measures were administered as pre-/posttests. To assess out-of-class English use, Spada used a survey she termed the “Language Contact Questionnaire” which she administered once in the middle of the six-week program.

Her study also found mixed results. Surprisingly, Spada (1986) found that “the more contact learners had with the second language, the poorer their scores were” on proficiency evaluations, yet “type (but not amount) of contact was positively correlated with speaking scores on both the pre- and post-tests” (p. 190). So rather than simply indicating there was no connection between out-of-class English use and proficiency, the study seemed to show that the more students used English out-of-class, the worse their proficiency became. However, other results from Spada’s (1986) data suggested that “neither amount, type nor combined contact scores accounted for differences in learners’ improvement” on proficiency (p. 191). In the end, she could find no link between out-of-class L2 use and proficiency gain.

Some elements of Spada’s study improved upon previous efforts. Testing proficiency twice instead of once made hers the first study where the results could be interpreted for the influence of out-of-class English on proficiency gains, not just proficiency level. Unfortunately, some of Spada’s other methodology decisions cast an element of doubt onto her results. Only by testing intermediate level speakers for such a brief period of time (six weeks), it is questionable if any measurable advances in proficiency could have been detected. This short time frame may explain some of the contradictory findings of her study, and Spada (1986) freely admits that “further studies

carried out over longer periods of time with larger samples are needed to investigate these issues” (p. 198).

Freed (1990)

In 1990, Barbara Freed investigated the out-of-class French use of a group of 38 students during a six week study abroad program in France. Although her research was conducted in a study abroad context with native or near-native English speakers, it is similar to the previous studies. The 32 participants of different proficiency in French ranged from beginner to advanced and were enrolled in French language classes accordingly. Freed administered proficiency tests (the College Entrance Examination Board Language Achievement Test (CEEB) and Oral Proficiency Interviews (OPI)) as pre- and posttests. To assess out-of-class French use, Freed administered four different measures: the LCP, bi-weekly diaries, post-survey interviews and informal in- and out-of-class observations. However, only the data from the LCP were used in the final analysis. After preliminary analysis Freed (1990) determined that the other three instruments were flawed and unreliable (p. 465).

Freed’s findings coincide with the results of Day’s 1985 study. As she has stated, “[t]he amount of out-of-class contact does not seem to influence measurable class progress,” although type of contact did have some affect on proficiency (Freed, 1990, pp. 472-473). According to Freed (1990), social interactions were beneficial to lower level students who have not yet mastered this type of language. On the other hand, higher level students profited more from interacting with language materials such as books, newspapers, and movies.

However, there remain some areas of concern in the research design of Freed's study. In addition to conducting her study in a very limited time frame (six weeks), Freed used a proficiency measure designed to measure significant rather than miniscule changes in proficiency—the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI). The OPI's strengths are numerous. It is a well established and reliable measure developed, tested and used for over 20 years by the American Council of Teaching of Foreign Languages and is a “standardized procedure for the global assessment of functional speaking ability” (*Testing for proficiency*, n.d.). It is also not tied to any specific curriculum, teaching method or content, so it likely seemed to be a very suitable measure of overall proficiency in French which Freed wanted to test. However, the OPI recognizes only 10 proficiency levels and therefore may not be sensitive enough to identify minimal gains in proficiency such as would be attainable over six weeks, something Freed acknowledges in her conclusions. Additionally, Freed found the OPI to be even more unsuitable for advanced students, since gains in proficiency for higher level learners are much slower than for novice learners. While the beginner learners could jump from one level of the OPI to another even in a short period of time, advanced learners usually need more time to move up a level on the OPI.

Discussion

An overview of the first four studies in the field highlights some of the obstacles researchers typically face when approaching a study of this nature. First of all, finding reliable tests to measure proficiency and out-of-class language contact has proven problematic. The formulation and refinement of the LCP has helped with the latter difficulty, but clearly defined proficiency tests, such as the OPI, often have a limited

scale and measure gain only in long-term dimensions. This leads to the second obstacle: time. Often L2 learners are only involved in a particular program for a single semester, during which time they may improve, but not as drastically as they would if the time frame could be extended. Another factor is language level. With so little reliable, consistent research in the field, little is known about the effect level might have on out-of-class learning. In other words, perhaps by limiting the scope of participants to those of a particular level (intermediate or high, for example), the studies might be overlooking groups where proficiency gain due to out-of-class contact is more significant. Taken in isolation, any one of these factors might have a marked impact on results.

Of course, there have been more recent studies that have attempted to alter the research design sufficiently in hopes of avoiding these obstacles (Yager, 1998; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Mendelson, 2004 and O'Donnell, 2004). As has been said before, it seems that this area of research attracts scholars because the typical results are often contradictory and counterintuitive. The following researchers have learned from the pioneers in the field and have made some appropriate improvements in their study designs and administration. However, as is often the case, at times their solutions brought up further problems, which come to light in a further study-by-study analysis.

Yager (1998)

Building upon the four major studies, Kent Yager (1998) conducted his study to determine the effects of informal out-of-class contact on student attitudes and language gains. Of the 41 students who participated in a 10-week summer program in Mexico, 30 volunteered to take part in Yager's 7-week study. The participant group consisted of native or non-native English speakers with beginning to advanced level proficiency in

Spanish. They filled out background questionnaires and the LCP, and provided an oral sample (description of pictures evaluated by native speakers for grammar and pronunciation as well as a category Yager termed “overall Spanish,” which is only generally defined), as a pre- and posttest. Four control participants took part in the same pre- and posttest procedures, but did not participate in the study abroad program.

Yager’s findings are somewhat puzzling in relation to some of the previous studies. Yager differentiates between interactive and noninteractive contact—interactive meaning contact of L2 learners with speakers of the target language; noninteractive being contact with language materials such as books and TV. Like Freed, Yager (1998) found that, “greater interactive contact correlates with greater gain in beginners” and “greater noninteractive contact corresponds with less language gain in beginners” (p. 907).

However, contrary to Freed’s findings, Yager (1998) found that, “greater noninteractive contact corresponds with less language gain in advanced learners” (p. 907). Yager concludes that the differing results are possibly due to the difference in the proficiency measures used; different proficiency measures might produce different results. In other words, by trying to use a more sensitive test to measure proficiency gains over a short period of time, Yager used a somewhat unconventional proficiency measure with questionable reliability. In any case, care should be taken to select a proficiency test that is both appropriate for the study at hand and as reliable as circumstances will allow.

Segalowitz & Freed (2004)

Segalowitz and Freed (2004) finally tried to remedy the biggest problem of all previous studies: insufficient time between pre- and posttest. They lengthened the period between their pre- and posttest to 13 weeks—almost double the study length in previous

studies. Their participants consisted of 40 native English speakers learning Spanish in two different learning contexts—at home (AH) and in a study abroad (SA) program.

Once again, the LCP played a major part of the study. In fact, Freed et. al (2004) published a version of the LCP which is used in the present study. This LCP had a pretest and a posttest form, both of which focused on the use of target language in all four skill areas—speaking, listening, reading and writing. Each of the four parts (speaking, listening, reading and writing) contained specific questions that prompt participants to think about all of the opportunities they have for target language use. The division into the four skill areas may also be helpful during analysis, since it may become easier to identify what skill area a particular participant prefers in language use.

Somewhat counter intuitively, Segalowitz and Freed used the OPI as one of their pre- and posttest proficiency measures. Multiple times, even by Freed herself in 1990, the OPI has been proven insufficient to measure small gains in proficiency accurately. Perhaps Segalowitz and Freed reasoned that since there would be 13 weeks between the pre- and posttest OPI, the time would be sufficient and the OPI would prove to be a more reliable measure of gains.

In addition to an OPI score, each participant sample was submitted to seven other oral and fluency proficiency tests such the longest turn test, duration test and speech rate test. Segalowitz and Freed (2004) also conducted interviews with the participants to “learn more about [their] language experiences throughout the semester” (p. 179). By submitting the data obtained during the OPI to other more focused tests, Segalowitz and Freed assured that they would gain more reliable results through triangulation. Also, the addition of the interviews could make their study more valuable since the qualitative

interviews could offer additional support for their quantitative data and together the two may provide a more complete picture.

Although the study design seems to have improved significantly, the results of this study were again mixed. On one hand, when the participants from the AH context were compared to the participants in the SA context, the SA participants were found to have much higher oral performance gains as measured by the OPI and another oral proficiency measure. On the other hand, Segalowitz and Freed (2004) state that the “amount of in-class and out-of-class contact appeared to have only a weak and indirect impact on oral gains” for learners in both AH and SA contexts (p. 192). They listed possible reasons for this discrepancy, including the fact that much of the contact participants had could have been formulaic (greetings or short chitchat) or that significant gains from out-of-class contact only occur after a certain “threshold” of time is reached. They discussed the fact that a 13-week time frame might have been too short to show the gains in proficiency from out-of-class language use. This seems to be a reasonable assumption. Since there are only 10 possible levels on the OPI, a learner needs to make a reasonable improvement to show gain by moving up even one level. The OPI appears to be an unsuitable proficiency instrument even for a 13-week study.

In addition, Segalowitz and Freed found a negative correlation for the SA group between time spent speaking with host families and gains on the longest turn test. This is a very surprising finding, reflecting a result similar to Spada’s study. It seems reasonable that learners who take opportunities to use the target language including speaking with host families would improve, and for the research to fail to confirm this is perplexing. To partially explain this result, Segalowitz and Freed point out that communication with host

families is often limited to greetings and short exchanges. These do not help learners improve because they are often repetitive and very simple.

Overall, Segalowitz and Freed's 2004 study is very significant for this field. While it was built to correct the major flaws of the previous studies, it also reconfirmed good design choices and discovered some problems. Because Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz and Halter published their version of the LCP, future researchers can easily see what it contained and how it differed from previous efforts. Setting a standard in this manner helps to ensure that later studies become increasingly reliable, and it is unfortunate that not all studies to this point have provided exact copies of the tools used to measure out-of-class language use.

Second is the fact that even in a 13-week study the results are conflicting and come short of confirming the original hypothesis. The results of their study suggest three choices for future researchers:

1. to extend the study length beyond 13 weeks
2. to use a more sensitive instrument than the OPI to measure language gain
3. to do both—extend the study time and use a more sensitive instrument.

Finally, Segalowitz and Freed used a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures. Although the interviews were not explicitly discussed in the published version of their study, they were conducted in order to gain insights into the participant's out-of-class language use that the LCP as a self-reporting questionnaire cannot provide. The fact that Freed used interviews in her 1990 study and again in the present study with Segalowitz indicates she must have found them a valuable tool. In the future, researchers

should perhaps pay more attention to the data the interviews provide so that they may be viewed as a useful and necessary out-of-class language use measure.

Other Studies and Discussion

Two other significant studies on out-of-class language contact and proficiency have appeared recently: Mendelson (2004) and O'Donnell (2004). Mendelson conducted a three-part study focused on two American study abroad groups in Spain: one which lasted 15 weeks with 14 participants and one which lasted 4 weeks with 31 participants. Because some of her study participants ended up with her during a different semester, Mendelson took the opportunity to interview them further in a third, smaller study. O'Donnell's study (2004) consisted of 37 participants, some at a 15-week American study abroad program in Spain and the rest in a Spanish program at a Colorado university. Both Mendelson and O'Donnell used the OPI as the measurement for proficiency gain and the LCP as the measurement for out-of-class language use. Mendelson's participants ranged from beginner level to advanced. (O'Donnell didn't specify her participants' levels.) O'Donnell's study was closely related to Segalowitz & Freed (2004), using much of the same data, so it should come as no real surprise that like Segalowitz & Freed (2004), O'Donnell also failed to find a connection between out-of-class language use and proficiency gain. Mendelson's study also concluded with the same result. (A detailed chart comparing the various studies can be found in Appendix D.) Again, one might easily wonder why researchers continue to persist in the study of a topic that has such consistent lack of results. Perhaps another explanation can be found in the fact that the results of the various studies often contradict one another. If numerous researchers had been using the same approach and receiving similar findings, there would

be no need for further research. However, by looking at the comparison chart (Appendix D), it is clear that the studies to date have been consistent neither in their approach nor in their findings.

Thus, the present study hopes to combine the strengths and experience of previous efforts in an attempt to clarify the matter. Specifically, five areas will receive particular attention. First, the length of the study will be long enough to ensure more distinct gains in proficiency. Second, a participant sample will be used that is non-homogenous both in language level and background so that the results of this study can be applied to wider populations of English as a second language learners. In other words, since learners from many native language backgrounds with beginner to advanced proficiencies will be included in this study, the results of the study can be applied to other learning contexts where many native languages and levels of proficiency are present. Third, a proficiency test will be selected that is sensitive enough to be able to measure subtle distinctions in proficiency. Fourth, the LCP will continue to be used in order to ensure the results of the current study can be compared and contrasted to previous work. From the LCP developed by Seliger in 1977 to the LCP used by Freed in 2004, much has changed, but the overall concept has been kept and the survey has been continually improved. Using a different tool at this point would make it difficult to compare the present study to previous efforts, and there seems to be no need to reinvent a tool when a suitable one is already readily available. However, post-survey interviews will be used in addition to the LCP to avoid relying on just one out-of-class use measure, an option later researchers have consistently chosen.

Further Research Issues

Beyond the basic methodology differences between the current study and previous efforts there are several other issues that need to be explored in relation to out-of-class language use: gender, native language and language level. As has been seen above, the main thrust of researchers' efforts has been at finding a connection between proficiency and out-of-class contact. If and when this connection is found, however, the next logical step is to question how a language learner's individual background might affect his or her tendencies toward out-of-class contact and whether these demographics affect the relation to proficiency gain as well. If such a relation is found, ESL teachers could then use general demographic information to encourage their students to maximize out-of-class contact in a manner best suited to their background. A closer look at these three issues gives greater context for the research in the present study.

Gender

There have been numerous investigations into connections between gender and language acquisition. Earlier studies approached the question with the presupposition that there would be marked differences between male and female language learning abilities, with females generally shown to have the advantage (Burstall, 1975; Eckstrand, 1980 and Oxford, Nyikos & Ehrman, 1988). From there, focus shifted to the differing social practices of men and women and the resulting affect on language learning, with researchers shying away from the assumption of an inherent biological difference (Ochs, 1992; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 1992 and Freed, 1996). Susan Ehrlich (1997) gives an excellent overview of this evolution of the study of gender and language acquisition, detailing how focusing on the social practices that relate to gender (such as a women

being forced to stay in the home and have restricted access to L2 speaking opportunities) is more fruitful than simply trying to study gender alone. Additionally, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) have noted that as society evolves and the distinction between gender identities blurs, the differences in the way genders approach language learning will also blur, though this is affected by the various cultural attitudes toward gender.

Past research in the area of out-of-class language use has not been concerned with the role of gender. In fact only a few of the major researchers listed the break down of genders in their studies (Day, 1985; Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Even these few didn't address gender in their results and analysis. This factor should be investigated more thoroughly since if there is a distinction between how L2 men and women learners use out-of-class language and in particular how this usage effects improvements in proficiency, it would be an important finding to share with educators and learners.

Native Language

This leads directly into the second area for additional research: native language and its relation to L2 acquisition, an issue that incorporates a variety of subtopics. For each different native language, numerous studies have been conducted on its relation to ESL learning, with factors ranging from phonology to orthography to syntax to cultural effects. As a brief sampling of the variety of approaches, Weber and Cutler (2006) studied the affect of German phonotactics on listening to English, Akamatsu (1999) researched the affect of L1 orthographic characteristics (of Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Persian) on ESL students' ability to recognize words in English and Abu-Rabia (1996) looked at the way the native culture of Israeli ESL students affects their ability to properly interpret written English. It is impossible to anticipate the many different

language combinations ESL students and teachers will encounter, but clearly there is the potential for different native language speakers to have different approaches to out-of-class language use.

In addition to the vast research on the learning differences for learners with different language backgrounds, an interesting trend becomes noticeable in previous studies on out-of-class language learning. Researchers have used similar methods and measures to try to find the connection between learners' proficiency and out-of-class language use, but each researcher tried to show this connection with a different group of learners in different language settings. Some researchers used learners of various language backgrounds learning English (Seliger, 1985; Spada, 1986), while other studies used homogeneous language background groups of learners. Day (1985) used speakers of Asian languages learning English; Freed (1990), Mendelson (2004), O'Donnell (2004) and Segalowitz & Freed (2004) used native English speakers learning Spanish. Yager (1998) used a mix of native and non-native English speakers learning Spanish. For this reason, it seems necessary to find out whether learners of different native languages differ in out-of-class language use. If such a result were confirmed, future studies would need to be streamlined more and comparisons of study results across different languages could only be made in cases where similar native language groups learning the same language were included.

Proficiency Level

The third and final issue is proficiency level and its relation to L2 acquisition. Do speakers with higher proficiencies have greater tendencies to initiate out-of-class language contact? This is not a research question that has been dealt with specifically in

previous studies, but researchers have managed to explore the issue to an extent simply by the various types of participant groups they have studied. For example, Seliger (1977) studied only upper intermediate students, Day (1985) focused on intermediate to advanced participants and Spada (1986) studied intermediate students. While Seliger (1977) found a preliminary connection between out-of-class language contact and proficiency (which would then imply a relation between upper intermediate students and the same two factors), Day (1985) and Spada (1986) did not. The other main researchers have had much broader samplings of students (beginner to advanced), and their results have been mixed. While Freed (1990) and Yager (1998) found that out-of-class contact which requires speakers to be interactive (such as engaging in conversations or using concepts learned in class) helps beginner-level students, they disagreed on the role of non-interactive contact. Freed (1990) found it helped advanced students, while Yager (1998) found it hindered both advanced and beginner students. Mendelson (2004) and O'Donnell (2004) also studied beginner to advanced learners, but they found no relation between out-of-class use and proficiency gain for any level of student. Thus, the results for previous studies when viewed solely by their relation to language gain are still varied and contrasting, leaving the matter unresolved.

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, the relationship between out-of-class language use, proficiency gain, gender, native language and language level is a matter that is still debated. New studies continue to appear, but little actual progress (in the form of results) has been made since research first began. Different research designs have been attempted but as yet none have approached the issue with the present study's wide scope. It is hoped that the results

of the present study will illuminate aspects of the field that have yet to come to light. The present study's research design including the description of context, participants, instruments and data analysis will be addressed in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Design

Building on research of over 30 years (Day, 1985; Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Seliger, 1977; Spada 1986), this study examines the relationship that exists between out-of-class English use reported by ESL students on the Language Contact Profile (LCP) and their corresponding gains in English skills over a period of two semesters in an intensive English program. Although the relationship of out-of-class language use and proficiency has been examined in the past, the results are thus far inconclusive. One of the aims of the present study is to remedy some of the possible shortcomings in the previous studies, so the present study draws heavily on the former research. The two main differences between the present study and the studies done in the past are in length of study time and number of participants; this study examines 61 students' out-of-class English use over a 31 week period, increasing the likelihood of discovering both improvements in proficiency and any potential connections to out-of-class English use. To strengthen the comparison of results of the present study with the results of previous studies, the LCP is used to assess participants' out-of-class English use and compile data on the demographic features of gender, native language and language level. Proficiency is measured by an Elicited Imitation (EI) pretest and posttest. These quantitative data are followed by the qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Context

This study was conducted at the English Language Center (ELC) at Brigham Young University (BYU) in Provo, Utah. The ELC offers daytime intensive English classes focused on preparation for college in the United States. The classes are taught by

either experienced teachers who recently completed a TESOL MA program or by new teachers who are enrolled in courses for the BYU TESOL Graduate Certificate program or MA TESOL program. Additionally, some ELC teachers come from the community (these teachers have completed a TESOL Graduate Certificate Program or TESOL MA program or similar programs in the past). The bulk of the present study was carried out with the students enrolled in daytime intensive classes during Fall 2006 and Winter 2007, with post-study interviews conducted during Summer 2007.

ELC students are enrolled in a 13-week semester and receive approximately 17 hours of instruction per week. The ELC places students into five proficiency levels. Level 1 is the beginning level—students with limited English proficiency are placed in this level. Levels 2, 3 and 4 represent the low intermediate, intermediate, and high intermediate proficiency in English, respectively. In levels 1-4, students receive instruction in the following skill areas: listening/speaking, reading, writing and grammar. Recently, the curriculum for level 5, the advanced level, has changed from the regular skill classes (as in levels 1-4) to content classes in three tracks—general education, humanities and management. For example, in the humanities track, the students in the Sociology class study from high school sociology text books. The class focuses on all four language skills, but in the context of the readings from the textbook.

Upon their arrival at the ELC, the students are placed into the five levels according to their proficiency at the time of their enrollment in classes based on three measures: a placement test administered before the semester starts, a diagnostic test given the first week of instruction, and a teacher rating (based on the diagnostic test and teacher observations) determined at the end of the first week of classes.

Many of the students at the ELC are planning on attending a university either in the United States or in their native country in the future. A large number of them are planning on taking or have already taken the TOEFL (usually students in levels 3-5). A few students are preparing for the GRE, GMAT or the LSAT and graduate programs in the U.S.

Participants

In the last decade, the majority of the students at the ELC speak Korean, Spanish, Chinese, or Japanese as their L1. While students must be at least 17 years old to be enrolled in classes, most of them are usually between the age of 18 and 30, although occasionally there are a few older students.

All ELC students in levels 1-4 during Fall 2006 (N=243) and in levels 2-5 during Winter 2007 (N=248) were asked to participate in the present study. The study was designed to run for two semesters with the beginning marked by the proficiency pretest, which was administered the second and third week of Fall 2006. Because most of the ELC students move to a higher level each semester they study at the ELC, it was expected that students who study in level 1 during Fall 2006 would be in level 2 during Winter 2007, those in level 2 in level 3 and so on. Because of this shift, students enrolled in level 5 in Fall 2006 were excluded from the study since a large number of them would not return to the ELC for the following semester. Students enrolled in level 1 in winter 2007 also did not qualify as study participants, because they were not at the ELC at the start of the study in September 2006.

Of the 243 students who attended levels 1-4 in Fall 2006, 177 took the proficiency pretest (the remaining 66 students chose not to participate in the proficiency testing).

During Winter 2007, 248 students studied in levels 2-5; 209 of them took the posttest and 233 of them responded to the LCP. Because only about 50% of students stay at the ELC for a second semester and some students chose not to take the tests, only 78 students participated in both the April 2007 LCP and the EI pretest administered in September 2006. Three LCP and EI participants who were studying in level 2 at the time of its administration did not receive translation in their native language and their data were eliminated from the study. Seven participants did not have an EI pretest score, and their data were also eliminated from the study. Seven other participants were eliminated because they had 30% or more incomplete EI responses or their posttest data was missing. This resulted in the final 61 study participants who took the EI pretest/posttest and the LCP and had complete scores for each of these tests. The demographics of the final participant group can be seen in Table 3.1, broken down by gender, language level and native language.

Of these 61 study participants, only 18 stayed at the ELC for the third semester (Summer 2007) and could therefore be included in the pool of interview participants (discussed below). Two students in the pool of the interview participants repeated a level at the ELC, which disqualified them from participation in the interviews, since by repeating a level, a new variable would have been introduced into this set of participants. For example, a repeating student might be unhappy about studying at the same level again and therefore may not want to use English out-of-class as a protest, giving them a different view on the process than a student not in this situation. Every effort was made to make the group as homogenous as possible (with the exception of gender, native language and native language). Finally, six interview participants were chosen for the

interviews based on their answers on the LCP and proficiency gains on EI (explained in more detail below). The final group consisted of three males and three females (two level 2 students, two level 3 students and two level 4 students). Three spoke Spanish, and one each spoke Japanese, Portuguese and Korean, respectively.

Table 3.1 Demographic characteristics of participants (N = 61)

Native Language	Level 2		Level 3		Level 4		Level 5		Total
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
Spanish		2	2	6	3	8	1	3	25
Korean	1		4	1	1	4		4	15
Japanese			1	1	1	1			4
Mandarin Chinese				1	1		1		3
Taiwanese		1		1	1				3
Mongolian			1			1		1	3
Portuguese	1	2							3
Russian						1			1
Italian								1	1
Armenian					1				1
French		1							1
Haitian Creole			1						1
Total	2	6	9	10	8	15	2	9	61

Instruments Design Overview

As a part of the present study the participants were given an Elicited Imitation (EI) pretest (September 2006) and posttest (April 2007) measuring oral proficiency in English (explained below). At the end of the Winter 2007, the participants also responded to the questions on the LCP, a self-reporting survey that assesses the students' use of English out-of-class. In addition, 6 semi-structured interviews were conducted in June 2007 to better understand and triangulate the results of the LCP.

Pretest/Posttest: Elicited Imitation

The Elicited Imitation test (EI) was chosen to measure participants' proficiency for a variety of reasons. First of all, it is a test that has been studied fairly extensively (Erlam, 2006; Graham, 2006; Bley-Vroman & Chadron, 1994), with research indicating that the EI reliably measures oral proficiency. To ensure as high a measure of reliability as possible, the EI test used for the present study was constructed by one of the researchers in the field (Graham, 2006), using the results of an extensive testing of over 180 EI prompts in order to ensure the 60 prompts used were as effective as possible. Secondly, as has been noted in Chapter 2, some of the previous researchers, by developing their own proficiency tests to act as measures to link out-of-class English use with language proficiency, cast a measure of doubt on their results. Using an established proficiency test made it possible to focus on the subject at hand and not be forced to test the reliability of a new measure. Second, the EI is very sensitive to fine changes in measuring proficiency. Each participant had to repeat 60 sentence prompts and each response was scored individually after which an average score was computed for the responses. This resulted in a score from 0 to 4, broken down into tenths (i.e. 0, 0.1, 0.2, etc.), a much more delicate measurement than the OPI's ten level scale. Finally, the EI does not appear to have a ceiling effect even for native speakers of English. This is a great improvement over some of the proficiency tests used in the past, since some of them (such as the College Entrance Examination Board Language Achievement Test (CEEB), a test used by Freed (1990)) produced unreliable scores for higher level language learners.

Pretest Pilot Study. In the process of selecting a suitable measure to assess proficiency gains in the present study a few options were considered. In the past,

researchers have often relied on the OPI (Freed, 1990; Mendelson, 2004; O'Donnell, 2004; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004), but the OPI has proven problematic (see Chapter 2). Two proficiency tests were considered for inclusion as the pretest in the current study. The English Certification Test (ECT) was administered in September 2006 at the time of the EI administration. This is a test of achievement for L2 English learners, measuring overall achievement in English, including speaking, listening, reading and writing categories. The second test considered as a proficiency measure in the present study was the Level Achievement Test (LAT), which measures what students learn during each semester at the ELC, again divided into speaking, listening, reading and writing categories. Student's progress from one level to another at the ELC is partially dependent on their LAT scores. Both tests were developed by TALL (Technology Assisted Language Learning), a group sponsored by Brigham Young University, and it had been planned that the speaking scores on both tests could be used as the proficiency measurements for the present study. It was hoped that the ECT pretest would be positively correlated with the LAT as a posttest. However, this correlation proved to be unsuccessful. Using the LAT, which is administered at the ELC at the end of each semester, as a posttest and a pretest was also considered, but this option was abandoned because the LAT has not been tested in proficiency studies. In the end the most suitable option to measure proficiency gains was to use the EI as a pretest and posttest.

Actual Pretest. All ELC students were notified in a large all-school meeting at the beginning of the second week of Fall 2006 that due to an ongoing effort to improve the teaching and learning at the ELC, they needed to take part in proficiency tests. The purpose of one of these tests (EI) was to provide data both for the pretest portion of this

study and for another larger study which was going on at the ELC at the same time. Three other tests were administered at the same time as the EI.

The students were promised extra credit points for participating in these proficiency tests. Then they were provided with time-slot sign up sheets and could sign up for a time that fit their schedule. To accommodate all 243 students in levels 1-4 during Fall 2006, the pretest was conducted at two locations during a period of two weeks, one at the computer lab on the university campus, the other at the computer lab at the ELC. Trained proctors were present at each testing session to help students log in and to answer any questions. The EI was chosen as a proficiency measure in this study for two additional reasons. It is a fairly short test and it is non-threatening. The administration of the whole test takes only about 7 minutes. Students heard a sentence or a question (i.e. “Why have they liked peas so much?”) which they were instructed to repeat with accuracy. After the instructions, two training items followed. The test contained 60 items; one had to be eliminated because it was found that the student responses for this item were not recorded (computer program malfunction), so in the end 59 test items were used. The sentence/question items ranged between 5 and 25 syllables in length. They were also constructed to feature “a range of syntactic and morphological features” (Graham, 2006). For example, sentence item 3014 read “Joe writes poetry.” Another more complex sentence (number 2007) read “He should have walked away before the fight started.” Each item was followed by a 5 second period during which the students needed to repeat the sentence.

These sentences were rated based on the students’ ability to properly repeat all syllables in the sentence, making the EI easily and relatively quickly scored. First, each

sentence was divided into syllables. Using the 5-point rating rubric below (Graham, 2006), a score ranging from 0 to 4 was given for each sentence. Points were not taken off for mispronounced words unless (1) the participant used a completely different word than the word in the prompt or (2) the response (or a part of it) was unintelligible (Graham, 2006).

4 points = correct response with all syllables present and no extra syllables

3 points = correct response except for one syllable missing, unintelligible, or added

2 points = correct response except for two syllables missing, unintelligible, or added

1 point = correct response except for three syllables missing, unintelligible, or added

0 points = four or more syllables missing, unintelligible, or added

For example, a student could receive the following scores for the sentences from the example above:

Table 3.2 Examples of EI items

					0	0	0						
2007	1	He	should	have	walked	a	way	be	fore	the	fight	star	ted.
3014	4	Joe	writes	po	e	try							

To demonstrate, in the above examples, the 0's above the words "walked away" indicated that the -ed ending on "walked" was missing and the word "away" was omitted. Because of these omissions, the score for this rendition of the sentence would be a 1; one point was taken off from the total points of 4 for each missing, unintelligible or added

syllable. In the second example, all of the syllables were present and intelligible and nothing was added, so the score was a 4.

In cases when the participant began speaking before the response or a part of it could be recorded (whether it was at the beginning or at the end of the sentence), each rater decided whether the response was cut off by the recording or whether the participant did not know how to repeat the sentence correctly. If such response was judged as being cut off, no points were taken off for it. If, however, it was obvious that the participant did not repeat the sentence accurately, the response was excluded from the 59 item data set, thus reducing the total number of items for that participant. If 30% or more of responses in a single participant's data set were marked as incomplete because of equipment failure (participants' recordings consistently being cut off), the participant's entire data set was eliminated from the study, eliminating that participant from the study. This step was only required for a small percentage of participants (10%).

On average it took 30 minutes to score each 59-item test. The pretest data was double rated by two trained raters who rated all of the pretest items independently. After the ratings from both raters were finished, when there were inconsistencies, a third rater was called in. For example, if rater 1 gave item 2007 a score of 1 and rater 2 gave the same item a score of 2, the third trained rater listened to the recording multiple times and gave a new score. This score was then valid for the item. Because all of the data were double scored and then adjusted by the third rater when discrepancies were noted, no interrater reliability correlation was performed on the pretest data. Originally, 177 ELC students participated in the EI pretest. Their scores were included in the present study only in cases when they participated in the LCP and the EI posttest.

To obtain a single pretest score, an average score was calculated for the 59 items for each participant. In cases when some items had to be eliminated because the responses were incomplete, the average was calculated based on scores of the remaining items. This average score was then recorded as the pretest score.

Posttest. At the end of Winter 2007, 31 weeks after the pretest, the proficiency posttest was administered. All ELC students who took final exams in April 2007 (N = 209) took the 7 minute-long EI posttest immediately following their final exams. The posttest items were identical with the pretest items. Again, the test contained 60 sentence items, out of which one had to be eliminated because of recording malfunction. The posttest data was scored by two raters (one of which was the principal investigator and another was a current student in the MA TESOL program). Because of time shortage, the raters were not able to each independently rate all of the EI items. The raters divided the items so each would rate about half. To establish interrater reliability, 10% of the data sets (scores for 443 single sentence items) were double scored ($r = .94$, $p = .001$). Because the raters discussed rating problems that occurred while practice rating, they felt very confident in their ability to rate consistently and accurately. After the correlation was established, the item scores for each of the participant data sets were averaged to obtain a posttest score value. After the average posttest scores were obtained, the average pretest score for each participant was subtracted from the posttest score to produce the gain score.

The Language Contact Profile

Development. In the process of searching for the right tool to measure out-of-class English use, two different versions of the LCP were used in pilot studies. First, a version

of the LCP (see Appendix B), somewhat similar to Seliger's LCP from 1977, was utilized in a pilot study during Winter 2006 (233 ELC students). Because this survey was created to answer questions the ELC administrators had, in addition to some of the questions on Seliger's 1977 LCP, it contained questions focused on housing, roommates/own family/host family questions, job questions and friends questions. This pilot LCP was made available on the computers at the ELC computer lab in English only; no translations were available at this time. The survey was attached to the ELC class and teacher evaluations, so the students first filled out the class evaluations and then spent time answering the questions on the LCP. This was a long process: in some cases it was reported that students got very tired of filling out the answers to the questions on the LCP and did not take the survey seriously. It was reported that the pilot LCP took about 30 minutes to complete, which was viewed by the students and the teachers as too long. Later, at the end of summer semester 2006, a modified version of the LCP was used in a second pilot study (see Appendix C). It was again administered after the ELC class and teacher evaluations at the ELC computer lab. This time the LCP included a checklist of English use activities (such as watching videos in English, or writing email messages in English) where the students had to indicate how often they participated in each activity. In addition, for the second pilot study, the LCP was also translated into five major languages represented at the ELC (Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Mongolian) to help lower level students (levels 1 and 2) understand it easily. These translations were available on paper as a supplement to the English survey on computers. The survey took about 25 minutes to complete.

Finally, as a result of a more thorough literature review, a current and published version of the LCP by Freed et al. (2004) was discovered. There were two main reasons why this version was used in the present study. First, the authors, Freed, Segalowitz, Dewey and Halter are some of the leading researchers in the area of out-of-class target language use. They have used this version of the LCP repeatedly in their own research (Freed, Segalowitz & Dewey, 2004; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Second, by using this newer version, the results of the present study can be compared with the results of similar studies by these key researchers and many other researchers who have used the Freed et al. (2004) LCP. Finally, by using the Freed et al. (2004) LCP no further pilot testing would be required, because their LCP has been tested numerous times in the past.

Still, the two pilot LCP studies were very helpful because they uncovered some of the possible problems and challenges that might be encountered in the actual study. First, getting all ELC students to participate might be difficult. Because the retention rate at the ELC is about 50%, most of the students at the ELC needed to take the LCP and the proficiency pre- and posttest in order to ensure a sufficient number of participants at the end of the study. To achieve this, having the LCP added to class evaluations worked well, but it also posed another challenge. After filling out class evaluations for four classes (about 30-60 minutes in total) the students were tired and did not want to spend more time filling out a survey. Therefore, another solution had to be found in which the majority of the ELC students would still participate in the survey, but they would not be already worn out. For this reason, the survey was shortened (See Appendix A) and administered during the students' writing class with the teacher present.

Additionally, some specific questions on the LCP proved problematic. In the first pilot, where the modified version of Seliger's LCP was used, the students needed to write names of their close friends with whom they used English to answer one of the questions. This seemed too personal to some students so they didn't respond to that part of the survey. It was also reported by the teachers that some students invented the names of friends in order to avoid answering the question. In the second LCP pilot, where a list of English-use activities was added, the administration of the LCP took so long that some of the students didn't finish it. These problems were avoided in the LCP used in the present study, since the Freed et al. (2004) LCP was specific enough to include a variety of English use questions, and Seliger's question that elicited names of friends did not appear on it at all.

The last important change that was prompted by the pilots was the switch to an online LCP. In both pilot studies, the LCP was created in Revolution® by a computer programmer at the ELC. This arrangement made last minute changes almost impossible. The online version of the LCP was created with the use of survey creating tool called Qualtrics®. This allowed for changes and access to the data at any time which proved to be very helpful in the online version creation stage and the analysis.

In addition, the following changes were made to the Freed et al. (2004) LCP in order to fit the context of the ELC better. First, the LCP by Freed et al. (2004) was made for native English speakers learning Spanish, so questions had to be reworded to fit ESL learners as opposed to Spanish learners. The second major change was that the present LCP did not have a pretest and a posttest version. The Freed et al. (2004) LCP pretest contains mostly demographic questions and questions about participants' past language

learning experiences. The demographic questions on the present LCP all originally appeared in the Freed et al. (2004) LCP pretest. Third, the present LCP was shorter than the Freed et al. (2004) LCP, because some questions either did not apply to the ELC or were unimportant in the present study.¹ Questions about homework were added to each section that did not already contain one (speaking, reading and listening). In addition, small changes in instructions had to be made because the present LCP was an online survey, not a pencil and paper survey as the LCP by Freed et al. (2004).

In the early stages of this study, other possible instruments besides the LCP were examined such as journals and daily logs, but it was decided that the LCP was the best and most accurate measure available for the following reasons. First, journals were not used because, to make journals a reliable measure in the present study, they would need to be written in the students' native language as pointed out by O'Donnell (2004) and Dewey (2002). Due to time constraints and the large number of languages represented at the ELC (12 different native languages for the 61 participants), this tool was abandoned.

Second, even if journals had been a feasible measurement of daily language use, there would be no guarantee that translations of the journals would have been uniform and reliable enough to ensure scientific dependability. Daily logs were not used because they are unreliable, as explained by Mendelson (2004) and Dewey (2002), who both found that participants are not consistent enough in actually doing them. (i.e. Some would fill them out every day while others would go back and try and reconstruct their activities—essentially what the LCP itself is designed to do already.) Other researchers

¹ Specifically, question items 1a (requiring a list of host family members), 3f (concerning speaking English with service personnel), 6a-6e (inquiring about different language speaking combinations), 7e (reading schedules, announcements or menus), 7p (filling out forms in English) and 8-9d (additional general language activity questions about native language use) were eliminated.

(Freed, 1990) who used diaries at first to corroborate data from the LCP ended up abandoning using them for data analysis for the same reasons. The fact that the LCP is still used 30 years from its creation and data gathered by it have been repeatedly reported in published studies make it the most valid of the available measures.

In the present study, the LCP was administered twice, once in December 2006 and once in April 2007. Originally, the principal investigator planned on comparing the LCP answers from both administrations to learn whether participants were consistent in responding to LCP questions. However, the LCP from December 2006 was not used in the present study for a number of reasons. Although the first LCP had been translated into various languages for those speakers who had difficulty understanding the directions in English, no back translations were performed at the time due to time restraints. Once back translations were completed (during Winter 2007), it was discovered that parts of the original translations were unclear or even misleading, throwing an unknown factor into over a quarter of the results from the first LCP. In addition, some of the questions on the first LCP were phrased poorly, resulting in incomplete responses. Thus, the second administration of the LCP was slightly altered to improve its design. Finally, previous studies used a pretest LCP mainly to gather demographic information about the participants, not obtain out-of-class language contact data (see below). Since most of these demographic questions were already included on the LCP used in this study, the pretest LCP was deemed redundant.

The LCP was administered during the 12th and 13th week of Winter 2007 during class, with the teacher for each class present. During the administration of the LCP used in this study, the survey was not connected with the class evaluations. Having it not be

part of the class evaluations allowed students to focus exclusively on answering questions on the LCP and also allowed them to have sufficient time to complete the task. In addition, for level 2 students who were not proficient enough to understand all of the questions on the LCP in English, the whole survey was translated to a majority of the native languages spoken by these students (Korean, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese and French). The translations were provided by native or near-native speakers of each language. Additionally, each translation was back translated into English and then compared with the English original. Any inconsistencies were corrected before the translations were made available to the students. Four students in level 2 spoke languages for which translations of the survey were not available (Arabic, Mongolian and Thai). The survey data from these students were eliminated from the study.

On average it took the students 11 minutes to respond to the online version of the LCP. All writing teachers in levels 2-5 were asked to help their students log into the survey. This was done on the classes' regular computer day. Once the students logged in, they were guided through the survey by following simple instructions written at the beginning. The students in level 2 were provided with a paper copy of the survey in their native language. The participation in the Winter LCP was very high—90% of all students in levels 2-5 (223 out of 248) responded.

Description of the Final Version of the LCP. The LCP used in the present study consisted of two parts—the demographic part and the LCP itself (See Appendix A). The demographic part contained a brief statement of confidentiality and 13 questions. The confidentiality statement informed the students that their responses would be kept

confidential and that the information they will provide will be used to help ELC administrators and teachers better understand students' learning experiences.

The first section on the LCP contained 9 demographic questions slightly modified from Freed et al (2004) LCP (age, gender, native language, level), three extra demographic questions (ID number, email address and length of stay in U.S.) and a two-part question asking about participation in extra curricular activities at the ELC (e.g. ELC choir and after-school activities). The first two extra demographic questions were added as identifiers, because student names were not used. The third extra demographic question (length of stay in the US) was added because this fact could have an effect on the results of the study since the ELC has a variety of students, many of whom have previously visited or lived in the United States. The two ELC extracurricular questions were added because the ELC is unique in the fact that the school itself provides multiple opportunities, such as the ELC Choir and ELC sponsored activities, for students to use English out-of-class. Because the LCP in the present study was designed to fit the learning conditions at the ELC, these two questions were added.

The second part of the survey consisted of four main sections which appeared in the following order: speaking, reading, listening and writing. At the beginning of this part of the survey, brief instructions were provided. The instructions asked the participants to do two things for each question: first, specify how many days per week they typically used English in a specific situation, and then indicate on average how many hours per day they used English in that situation. This was done by clicking on number values for each question. (See Figure 3.1):

4. How often did you use **English** outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?

4a. to clarify classroom related work (homework)

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Typically, how many days per week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On those days, typically how many hours per day?	0-1 <input type="radio"/>	1-2 <input type="radio"/>	2-3 <input type="radio"/>	3-4 <input type="radio"/>	4-5 <input type="radio"/>	5+ <input type="radio"/>		

4b. to obtain directions/information (e.g., "where is the post office"; "what time is it"; "how much are stamps")

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Typically, how many days per week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On those days, typically how many hours per day?	0-1 <input type="radio"/>	1-2 <input type="radio"/>	2-3 <input type="radio"/>	3-4 <input type="radio"/>	4-5 <input type="radio"/>	5+ <input type="radio"/>		

4c. for superficial or brief exchanges (e.g., greetings, "please pass the salt"; "I'm leaving", ordering in a restaurant, etc.) with my host family, English-speaking roommate, or friends in my apartment complex

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Typically, how many days per week?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
On those days, typically how many hours per day?	0-1 <input type="radio"/>	1-2 <input type="radio"/>	2-3 <input type="radio"/>	3-4 <input type="radio"/>	4-5 <input type="radio"/>	5+ <input type="radio"/>		

Figure 3.1 Sample Screenshot of Online LCP

The speaking section of the LCP was the longest, containing 16 questions subdivided into four parts: (a) overall average amount of time spent speaking English and amount of time spent on speaking homework, (b) specific activities speaking in English, (c) specific purposes for speaking English and (d) classroom learning and English use.. The “speaking in English” section contained six questions inquiring to whom the participants tried speaking in English, such as their teacher, classmates, host family, etc. The next section, “purposeful use of English” had 4 questions and inquired about different purposes for which participants used English (to clarify classroom related work, to obtain directions, for brief exchanges, for extended conversations). The last section in the speaking part of the LCP had two questions requiring the participants to state how often they used what they learned in class with native speakers outside of class, and how often they brought back to class questions about what they learned outside of class. For

the most part in the online version, each of these smaller sections appeared on a new screen. Because the LCP was tailored to fit the context of intensive English programs where students have many opportunities to engage in conversations with peers, teachers, and friends, the speaking section had the highest number of questions of all four skill sections.

The remaining three sections were much shorter than the speaking section. The reading section had six questions asking about overall out-of-class reading; reading of newspapers; novels; magazines; email and internet web pages, and reading for homework. The listening section contained five questions requiring students to specify how much time they spent on listening overall; listening to TV, radio or movies; listening to songs, and doing listening homework assignments. In addition, there was a question that asked how much time students spent trying to catch other people's conversations in English. The last section on the LCP, writing, was the shortest and included only three questions: one overall question, one homework question, and a question about writing of letters, email, or internet chat in English out-of-class.

Interviews

Design. As in previous studies (Day, 1985; Dewey, 2002; Freed, 1990; Seliger, 1977), post-survey interviews were conducted in the present study to triangulate the data from the LCP. Six participants were selected from the 61 study participants based on the following four conditions:

1. Interview participant has studied at the ELC during Fall 2006 and Winter 2007 and has taken part in the proficiency and out-of-class English use measures.

2. Interview participant has not repeated any level at the ELC.
3. Interview participant is studying at the ELC during Summer 2007.
4. Interview participant reported either high or low values on the LCP.

Satisfying conditions 1-3, 16 possible interview participants were identified. Six were chosen based on their overall out-of-class English use values. From each level, the participants with the highest and the lowest out-of-class English use values (explained in detail in Data Analysis section in this chapter) were chosen. Two participants from levels 3, 4 and 5 were selected for the interviews. They were contacted by the principal investigator and invited to participate. Each participant read and signed a consent form (Appendix E) before their interview began. The interviews were conducted during the 8th and 9th week of Summer 2007. Participants were scheduled to meet the interviewer for 40-minute time slots either during the lunch break or after classes finished at the ELC. The interviews ranged in length between 20 and 37 minutes.

Interviews were conducted at the ELC by the principal investigator using an iPod with an external microphone. The data were then transferred on CDs and kept by the principal investigator for analysis. After all of the interviews were completed, the recordings were again reviewed and relevant passages were transcribed. This helped the principal investigator look for trends and compare the information from the interviews with the participants' responses on the LCP.

The interviews were semi-structured. The principal investigator prepared a list of the following five general question prompts:

1. Tell me a about the reasons you came to the ELC to study English. What do you want to accomplish while you are here?

2. Tell me what a typical day is like for you after you leave the ELC.
3. What do you usually do in the evenings?
4. What do you normally do on Saturday and Sunday?
5. Besides doing your ELC homework, what are some things you do to improve your English?

These questions were asked during the interviews and often follow-up questions were added as needed to obtain more details. The main purpose of the interviews was to obtain rich qualitative data to corroborate the quantitative LCP.

After each interview, the principal investigator spent time writing down impressions and main ideas that came up during the interview. In the final interview analysis this write-up was used in addition to the transcription. When discussing interviews in this study, pseudonyms will be used to refer to participants.

Interview Pilot. A pilot interview was conducted a few days prior to the actual interviews. This pilot interview was carried out over the phone with a former ELC student who was attending another intensive ESL program in Provo, Utah. Aside from the fact that the pilot interview was a phone interview, the rest of the conditions were similar to the real interviews. All of the conversation (the phone was set on speaker mode) was recorded and all of the question prompts were used. Although the interviewee had high proficiency in English, only 30 minutes were taken up by the interview. The time planned for the actual interviews was then slightly adjusted.

The pilot interview offered the principal investigator a good chance to practice her interviewing skills. The principal investigator needed to lead the discussion to help the interviewee reply to the question prompts but also respond to the information the

interviewee shared. It was surprising how many follow-up questions needed to be asked to help the interviewee share additional information about her out-of-class English use. During the course of this practice interview all five of the prepared question prompts were used, although sometimes the wording was modified to fit into the conversation better. In addition, the prompts were not asked in the order they were written on the prompts sheet, again to follow the interviewee's responses better.

Probably the most important thing the principal investigator learned from this experience was that the interview prompts were useful as a guide of the interview but at the same time the interviewer needed to pay close attention to the interviewee's responses and ask appropriate follow-up questions to obtain needed information. Also, since the pilot interview lasted only 30 minutes, the 30 minute mark became a target time for the actual interviews.

Data Analysis

Three major statistical procedures were used to analyze the data from the quantitative portion of this survey. Data for the research questions were analyzed in the following ways:

First, to answer research question number one (Is there a relationship between reported use of out-of-class English use and proficiency gain as measured by pre/post scores on the Elicited Imitation test (EI)?), average hours per day figures were established by multiplying the numbers for days per week by the numbers for hours per day for each question set, then dividing by 7 to receive an hour per day average for each set. For hours per day answers, where participants were required to select from a range (0-1, 1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5 or more than 5 hours), the higher number was used. (More than 5 hours was

considered 6, for the purpose of analysis). For example, for Part 2 Question 3a, which asks how many hours per week and how many hours per day a student tried to speak English to his or her teacher(s) (see Appendix A), if a student responded 4 days a week and 2-3 hours a day, this would result in an hour per day average of 1.714 $((4*3)/7)$. Only the numbers for the actual LCP questions (out-of-class speaking, reading, listening and writing) were included in this calculation. The numbers obtained for each set were then added to obtain a “total hours per day” figure for each participant. This process is in line with data analysis procedures of earlier research (Mendelson, 2004).

The next step was to divide the students into two groups: those who used English out of class frequently (“high users”) and those who used it less (“low users”). The average total hours per day was 43.81. Obviously this figure is over-inflated; it is impossible to do anything for almost 44 hours a day. This figure shows that the study participants had difficulties in accurately assessing their own English use, particularly when they had to report the time spent on a large number of out-of-class activities. (See Chapter 5 for a more thorough discussion of this figure). Those participants who had an average equal to or higher than this number were placed in the high users group. Those whose average was lower were placed in the low users group. This seemed a natural break between the LCP values, with the majority of participants forming a nice continuum on the low end and on the high end. Of the 61 study participants, 25 students (7 males, 18 females) were in the high users group, 36 (14 males, 22 females) in the low users group.

The dependent variable to answer the first question was the gains in proficiency as measured by the EI. As mentioned in the pretest section in this chapter, the gains for

each participant were obtained by subtracting the average pretest score from the average posttest score. The average gain for the low users group was .46, the average gain for the high users group was .67. A *t* test performed on the gain scores of both user groups provided the answer to research question 1.

To answer the second question (What specific language learning activities reported on the LCP promote language gain?), a linear step-wise multiple regression analysis was applied. In the linear step-wise multiple regression analysis, the gain scores for each participant were used as the dependent variable and the average LCP scores for each of the 26 questions on the LCP as predictor variables in order to find out which of the language learning activities on the LCP predict larger gains on the proficiency measures.

To answer questions 3-5 (i.e. Does gender significantly influence reported out-of-class activities conducted in English or proficiency gain? Does English proficiency level significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain? Does native language significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain?), a similar analysis was performed where the gain scores from the EI pre- and posttests were used as the dependent variable and the answers to the demographic characteristics were used as predictor variables in a linear step-wise multiple regression analysis. In order to run this analysis, each of the predictor variables needed to be assigned numerical values. For question 3 about gender, the two possible answers were quantified (1 = male, 2 = female). Question 4 asked about the participants' current level at the ELC. At the time of the LCP administration, the 61 participants were studying in levels 2, 3, 4 or 5. Since these answers were already numbers, no other numerical values were assigned to them.

Question 5 inquired about participants' native language. There were 12 different native languages present in the group of 61 study participants. These were assigned the following values: Armenian = 2; French = 5; Haitian Creole = 6; Italian = 8; Japanese = 9; Korean = 10; Mandarin Chinese = 11; Mongolian = 12; Portuguese = 13; Russian = 14; Spanish = 16; Taiwanese = 18. The regression analysis for all three questions was performed at the same time by using quantified answers.

To analyze the interview data, relevant parts of each interview recording were transcribed. The transcription and investigator's post-interview notes were compared to the answers each interview participant reported on the LCP. At the final stage, the principal investigator looked for trends of typical out-of-class English use. These trends are reported in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5.

Conclusion

The research design described in this chapter provided a means to answer each of the five research questions. Data was gathered through quantitative proficiency pretest and posttest and responses on the LCP as a measure of out-of-class English use. In addition, qualitative interviews were conducted with the purpose of confirming the LCP results. The results of these procedures are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine whether there is a relationship between out-of-class use of English and gains in oral proficiency and which out-of-class English use activities have a significant effect on gains in proficiency. Quantitative data were collected from 61 participants over a period of 31 weeks. To add a qualitative measure, 6 interviews were conducted 10 weeks after the posttest. The qualitative and quantitative measures were used to answer the following research questions:

1. Is there a relationship between reported use of out-of-class English use and proficiency gain as measured by pre/post scores on the Elicited Imitation test (EI)?
2. What specific language learning activities reported on the LCP promote language gain?
3. Does gender significantly influence reported out-of-class activities conducted in English or proficiency gain?
4. Does English proficiency level significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain?
5. Does native language significantly influence reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain?

To present the analysis and the results of the five research questions, three kinds of data were obtained—student answers from the online LCP, voice recordings of the repeated sentences on the EI and participant responses obtained during the post-survey interviews. The descriptive and inferential statistics obtained from analyzing this data are

presented below and are organized in terms of how they answer the five research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question examined the relationship between reported out-of-class English use and proficiency. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 61 participants were divided according to how much English use they reported on the LCP—a “high users” group and “low users” group based on the total hours per day figure derived for each participant (see Data Analysis in Chapter 3). The gain scores were obtained by subtracting the average posttest EI score from the average pretest EI score for each participant. The average hours per day of reported English use was 43.81, with the high user group averaging 70.01 and the low user group average at 25.62. The average proficiency gain for the high users group was .67, and .46 for the low users. These data are represented in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below:

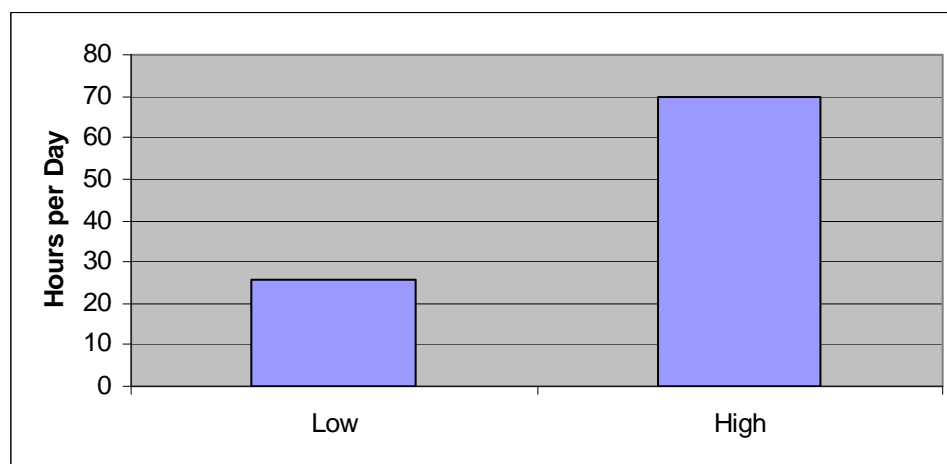


Figure 4.1 Average LCP score for low and high users

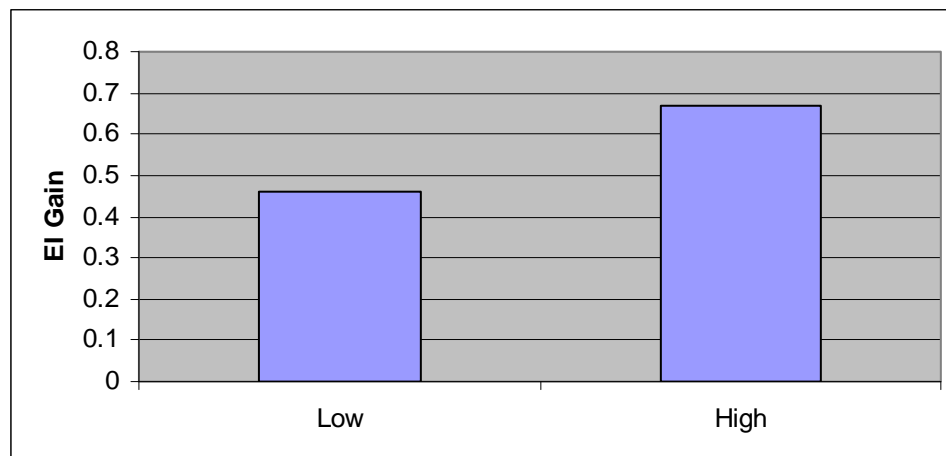


Figure 4.2 Average EI Gain for low and high users

To answer the question of whether the high-users had a greater English gain than the low-users, a *t* test analysis was performed on the data. The *t* test between the high and low English users showed that the high users made significantly greater gains than the low users ($t = 6.351$, $df = 60$, $p = 0.0001$). The difference in the proficiency gains between the two groups is significant, showing that participants who reported using 2.73 times more English out-of-class had 1.46 times higher proficiency gains than the students who on average used English less (See Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 High users vs. low users, * $p = 0.0001$, $df = 60$

Study Participants	N	Average LCP Value	Average Gain Score	<i>t</i> test
High users group (> 43.81 average LCP value)	25	70.01	.67	
Low users group (< 43.81 average LCP value)	39	25.62	.46	
Total Participants	61	43.81	.55	$t = 6.351^*$

This general LCP value can then be broken down into more specific numbers, analyzing reported hours per day averages for the individual English contact types (speaking, reading, listening, writing and overall). The greatest variation appeared in

speaking, where high users reported over 2.6 times as much use as low users. Writing and reading had the least difference: high users reported only 1.7 and 1.9 times as much writing and reading contact (respectively) compared to low users. (See Figure 4.3) This analysis leads directly into the next research question.

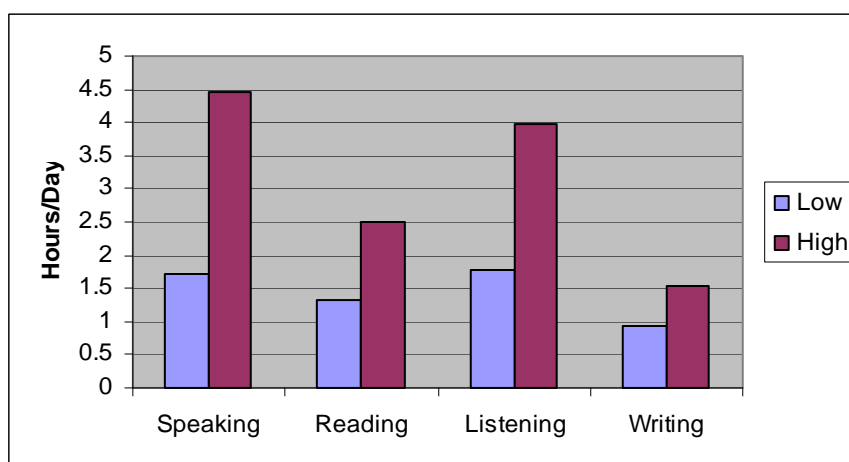


Figure 4.3 Out-of-class English use by skill

Research Question 2

The second research question sought to determine what out-of-class English use activities are the most effective predictors of language gain. This question is especially important because its results suggest specific language learning activities that are the most helpful in improving in English proficiency. To examine this question, a linear stepwise multiple regression analysis was performed on the data. A stepwise multiple regression analysis uses a model of high-predicting variables. Single predictors from a pool of potential predictors are added to this model at which point the model is evaluated through an F test to find out whether the added predictor is significant. If a predictor is found not significant, it is removed from the model and put back into the pool of predictors. These steps of adding and removing predictors alternate until the significant predictors are found.

All of the 26 language learning activities included on the LCP were included in the analysis (See the LCP in Appendix A). The overall multiple regression analysis revealed that the following out-of-class activities were significant predictors of gain in proficiency as measured by the EI:

1. Deliberately trying to use what was taught in the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) with native or fluent English speakers outside the classroom accounted for 43% of the variance in the scores.
2. Speaking to someone else (i.e., someone who is not a family member, close friend, or host family member) accounted for another 7% of the variance in the scores.²

This significant finding suggests that in this study, the two above mentioned language learning activities account for 50% of the variance in the gain scores, as measured by the EI (See Table 4.2). This in turn suggests that the two activities—especially activity number 1 (deliberately using what was taught in the classroom)—are very beneficial for learners who seek to improve their proficiency.

Table 4.2 Multiple regression analysis—activities that predict language gain

Gain predictors	R value	F value	Significance	Percentages
Deliberately using what was learned in class	.427	13.155	.001	43%
Speaking to someone else	.498	9.577	.0001	7%

Once these gain predictors were identified, they could be analyzed according to more descriptive statistics, comparing high and low user averages. (See Figure 4.4) On

² This item on the LCP required participants to specify who else, other than people already accounted for on the LCP, the participants spoke English with. The exact item can be found in Appendix A, item numbers 3e and 3f. It is further discussed later in the present chapter.

average, high users reported 2.73 times as much out-of-class contact on each of the language learning activities, but for deliberately using things taught in the classroom, they reported 3.85 times as much contact as low users. For speaking with someone not listed on the LCP the high users reported 3.83 times as much as the low users.

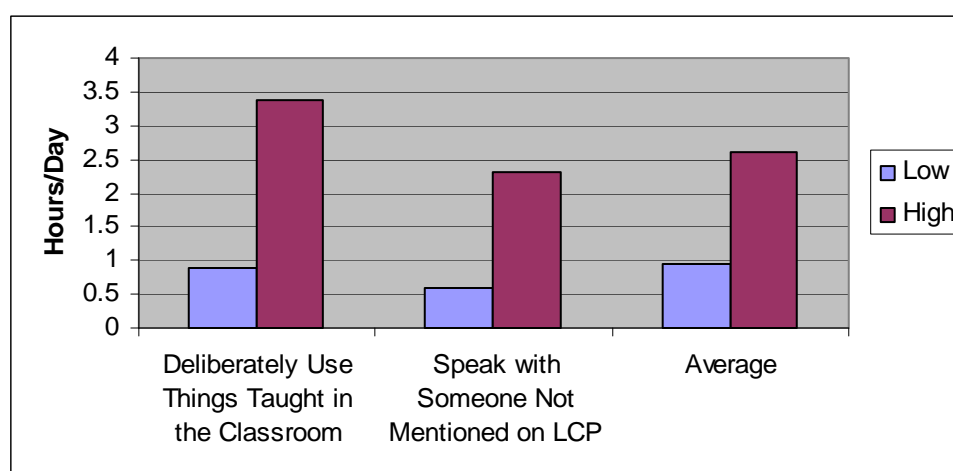


Figure 4.4 Out-of-class English use activities as gain predictors

These results suggest that deliberately using things taught in the classroom is an extremely helpful language learning activity. This is in line with what most teachers would probably hope for: students taking the concepts taught in class and trying to apply them to their everyday lives. With a result such as this, teachers can show students further evidence that practicing outside of class can help them improve. The other learning activity—speaking with someone not otherwise specifically mentioned on the LCP—is more ambiguous. Participants used this category to refer to people that actually were listed on the LCP (friends, classmates, teachers and roommates) as well as tutors, members of their church and coworkers. In addition, some simply listed things like “anyone” or “myself.” It was originally hoped that this extra catch-all category could be analyzed in further detail, but the variety of responses proved to be too ambiguous to

reliably categorize them. Because of this, analyzing why that learning activity might be statistically significant is difficult. It could be that participants used it to refer to the person they do most of their English practice with. On the other hand, it could also have been used by participants who tended to be extroverts and thus talked in English to a wider variety of people. It is also possible that the participants didn't know who else they should list, so they repeated a person whom they already accounted for in one of the previous LCP questions. In future studies, this is an area of the LCP that might deserve to be adjusted in order to return more specific results.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 inquired about the relationship of learner's gender on the amount of reported out-of-class English contact and proficiency gain. A basic review of the descriptive statistics for this demographic seems to bring some interesting facts to light. The average total reported hours per day for males was 40.5; females reported 45.5. This slight difference seems even less significant when one breaks down the averages for the high and low user groups by gender: 25.5 hours per day for low males and 25.7 hours per day for low females, 70.5 hours per day for high males and 69.8 hours per day for high females (see Figure 4.5). Thus, it appears that gender had little impact on participants' inclination to initiate out-of-class language contact—the figures for each group are virtually identical.

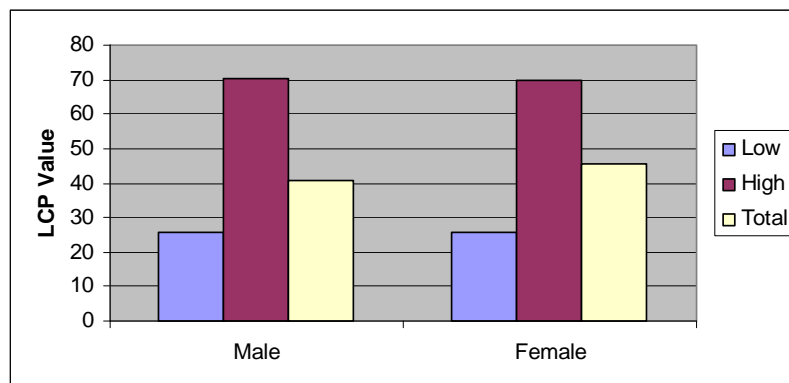


Figure 4.5 Average out-of-class English use by gender

EI gain divided by gender is a different story. The average gain for males was 0.46; females gained 0.59, a discrepancy which only grows when one breaks down the average gain for the high and low user groups by gender: 0.42 for low males and 0.49 for low females, 0.52 for high males and 0.73 for high females (see Figure 4.6). Across the board, females had higher gains than males, with the most significant increase being the difference in high user gain by gender. Females that used English out of class frequently had 40% higher gains than males who did the same, compared to only 17% more gain for females in the low user group.

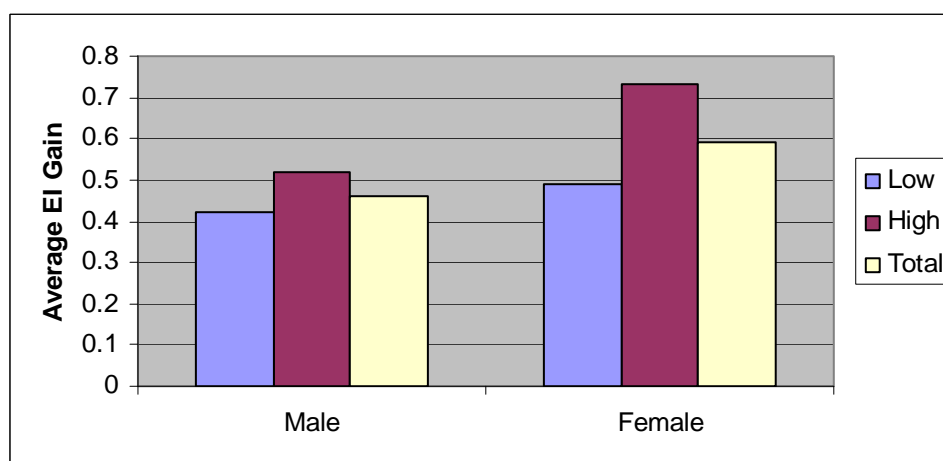


Figure 4.6 Proficiency gain by gender

Then again, although this appears like a very significant finding, an MRA performed on the data showed that this result is not statistically significant ($t = 0.487$, $p = 0.628$). Gender does not significantly affect either EI gain or reported out-of-class English use. Still, this is an interesting finding that might warrant further study in the future.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 sought to find out whether participants' level at the ELC was related to out-of-class language contact and proficiency gain. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the 61 participants were studying in levels 2, 3, 4 and 5 at the completion of the study. Viewed as a whole, the higher a participant's level, the lower his or her reported average hours per day of out-of-class language use would be: level 2's averaged 56.4 hours per day, level 3's 50.0, level 4's 39.9 and level 5's 32.1. Thus, despite the fact that one would believe level 5 students were more capable of initiating out-of-class English contact, they appear less inclined to do so. Divided into high and low user groups for each level, the story remains the same: lower levels report higher out-of-class contact than the higher levels, although for low users the difference is not as marked (see Figure 4.7).

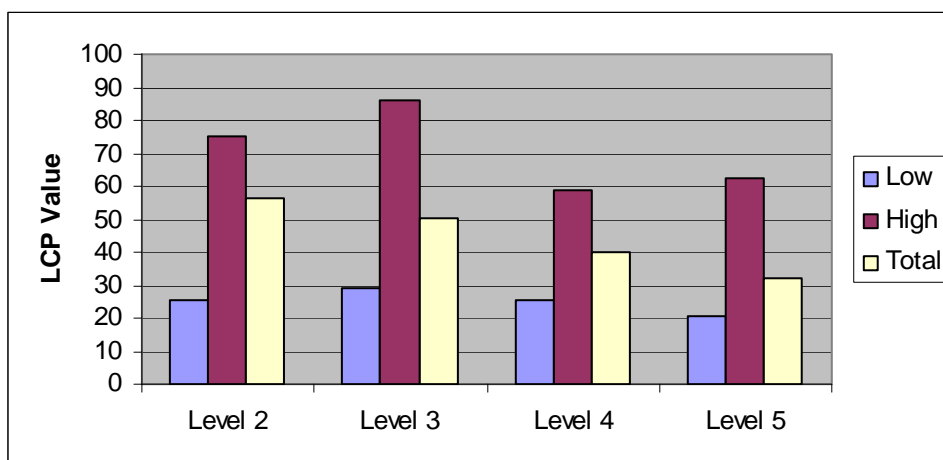


Figure 4.7 Average out-of-class English use by level

When one studies EI gains by level and high and low user groups, other interesting tendencies come to the front. Overall gain was highest for level 3 students (an average of 0.72), but the discrepancy in gain between low and high users, while slight for the lower levels, is very distinct for levels 4 and 5. High user level 4 students gained 82.4% more than their low user counterparts, and high user level 5 students gained 112.8% more than level 5 low users (see Figure 4.8). In other words, even though the level 4 and 5 students were reporting less overall out-of-class English contact than the level 2 and 3 students, the amount they were able to increase their proficiency (as measured by the EI) was much greater.

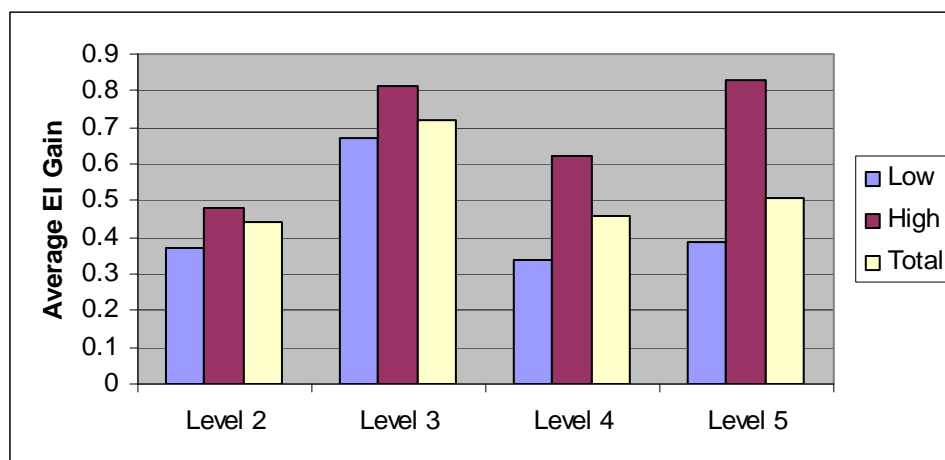


Figure 4.8 Proficiency gain by level

This is a very interesting finding. It is intriguing to see that the lower level students, although reporting that they do much to improve their English out of class, do not seem to benefit from their effort as much as the higher level learners who do not report using English out of class as much. However, once again an MRA performed on the data showed that this difference is not statistically significant ($t =$

-0.111, $p = 0.912$). Language level does not significantly affect either EI gain or reported out-of-class English use. Nevertheless, this is a very interesting finding and should be investigated by future researchers.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 examined the relationship of participant's native language and its impact on reported out-of-class English use and proficiency gain. 12 native languages were represented in the 61 participants who were involved in the study. When looking at the total reported out-of-class English use for each individual language, it appears that those languages that had fewer participants reported greater total hours per day (see Figure 4.9). (From left to right, languages go from the highest representation (25 Spanish speakers) to the lowest (1 Haitian Creole speaker).)

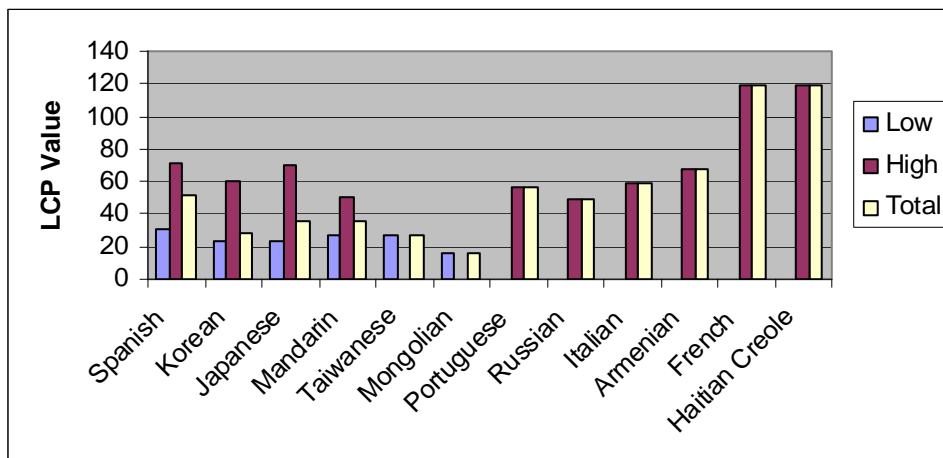


Figure 4.9 Average out-of-class English use by native language

This could be due to the fact that those learners who have fewer speakers of their native language present at the ELC are forced to utilize English more than those learners whose native language is richly represented. Of course, it is also possible that a participant with just one very good native language friend could spend as much time using the native language with that friend as another participant who uses the native

language with a variety of people. However, it is difficult to draw other conclusions based upon the data, since not all languages were represented equally.

The same general trend can be seen when viewing the EI gains for high and low user groups broken down according to native language. For the most part, those languages that had fewer total speakers had greater total gains, with Spanish and Korean being the two notable anomalies (see Figure 4.10). Spanish, with 25 total speakers represented in the study, had the fourth highest average gain (0.74). Even the low user Spanish group had gains well above the average of 0.55. The Korean group, on the other hand had the lowest gains of all, despite being represented by 15 speakers. In fact, their high user group actually had negative gains, although it is important to note that this group was comprised of only 2 participants. One possible explanation for this is that while the EI should not report lower scores if a participant's accent is particularly hard to understand, perhaps a Korean accent proved more difficult for raters to decipher and thus unintentionally lowered their EI scores. Another explanation might be the fact that since Korean has a different orthography than English and there is a greater linguistic distance between English and Korean, a Korean native speaker might have a more difficult time learning English than, for example, a Spanish speaker, since Spanish and English are both Indo-European languages. In any case, although it is premature to make any firm judgments based on such a limited sampling of individual languages, it does appear that native language plays a part in proficiency gain in English, as measured by the EI.

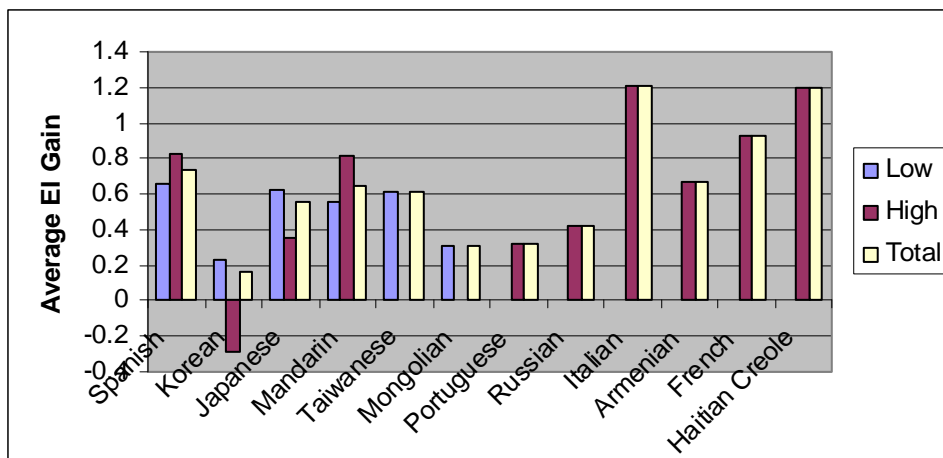


Figure 4.10 Proficiency gain by native language

As before, however, an MRA performed on the data showed that this result is not statistically significant ($t = 0.849$, $p = 0.399$). Native language does not significantly affect either EI gain or reported out-of-class English use. Perhaps with greater and more balanced representation of the various language groups, a significant relationship could be discovered.

Research Questions 3, 4 and 5: Inferential Statistics Summary

Since these three questions were almost identical, the same analysis applied to them. Although only gender, level and native language were of interest in the present study, all demographic variables were included in the analysis (gender, age, ELC level, native country, native language, other languages spoken, length of time spent in the US, length of time spent living in another English-speaking country, amount of participation in the ELC Choir, amount of participation in ELC activities, living situation, previous experience studying English (in Elementary school, junior high, high school and at college)).

Another linear step-wise multiple regression analysis was run on the data with the demographic variables included as predictor variables and the dependent variable as the

language gain in the first analysis and the amount of out-of-class language contact in the second analysis. Both analyses showed that neither gender, nor level, nor native language accounted for any of the variation in reported out-of-class English use ($p > .05$)

From the current findings, the results for research questions 3, 4 and 5 suggest that when addressing out-of-class language use issues, learners cannot and should not be categorized by their gender, level or native language but rather as individuals, because these three particular characteristics are not significant predictors of the amounts of reported out-of-class English use or proficiency gain, despite apparent trends in the descriptive statistics.

However, from the results of the step-wise multiple regression analysis, another factor was found to have a significant influence on out-of-class English use. Question number 13 on the LCP required students to report at what educational level and for how long they studied English previously. The multiple regression analysis revealed that studying English at a college level was significantly tied to participants' out-of-class English use ($R = 3.33$, $F = 7.383$, $p = .009$). Looking at the descriptive statistics, this connection is also apparent. High users had proportionately far less college schooling compared to low users (see Figure 4.11). The majority of high users had no experience learning English at college whatsoever. In fact on average, low users had two and a half times as much college learning experience as high users (1 year compared to 0.4 years). In other words, participants with more college learning experience were less inclined to engage in out-of-class language use. This issue will be explored further in Chapter 5.

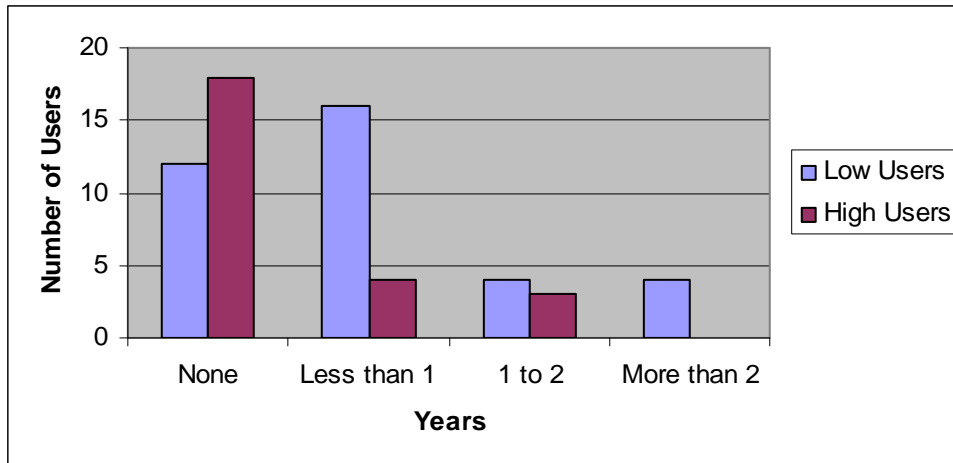


Figure 4.11 College English as a predictor of out-of-class English use

Conclusion

To summarize the main results of this study and answers, using English out-of-class, especially deliberately using what was taught in class, helps learners improve their proficiency. Learners who use English out of class more have higher proficiency gains than learners who use English less. Learner's gender, level and native language do not seem to predict how much out-of class English they use, although there are apparent trends in the descriptive statistics that might warrant further investigation by future researchers. Further discussion of the results and analysis described in this chapter are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between out-of-class English use and proficiency, attempting to discover what specific out-of-class activities are most beneficial to English learners in intensive English programs. Another aim of the study was to discover whether gender, level and native language play an important role in the amount of out-of-class English use.

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study, explores its limitations, examines implications, and discusses directions for future research.

Findings

Research Question 1

The first research question explored the relationship of out-of-class English use and gains in proficiency for 61 learners over two semesters. The results showed that high users who reported using an average of 2.7 times more English out-of-class had 1.5 times higher proficiency gains than the low users (See Table 4.1).

Although these findings were expected by the researcher, they do not confirm findings of previous studies that found no connection between out-of-class language contact and proficiency (Day, 1985; Mendelson, 2004; O'Donnell, 2004; Spada, 1986).³ Still, as was outlined in Chapter 2, this result is also not unexpected. Compared to earlier research, the present study was significantly longer, had more participants and used a proficiency test that returns finer results. Although the present study had some areas of weakness (which will be discussed in detail below), it was successful in remedying

³ The researchers who did find connections (Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Yager, 1998) found them in specific types of language activity, and thus a comparison to their findings will be discussed in the section on research question 2.

problems found in previous studies in this field. The combination of the increased length of the study and use of the LCP followed by interviews seemed to be the right design to prove the positive relationship of out-of-class English use and proficiency. Despite the limitations, the present study advances the research field because significant findings were obtained. The combination of the LCP and interviews helped the self-report out-of-class data become more reliable. The significance values obtained on the statistical procedures (multiple regression analysis and *t* test) were very high ($p = .0001$), which again shows the results can be trusted.

Comparing the low and high users by the main four skill areas (speaking, listening, reading, writing) (see Figure 4.3), it seems the biggest difference in their amount of out-of-class English use appears in how much they speak English outside of the classroom. Seen in light of the results to question 2, which showed that the most significant predictor of gain was taking time out of class to deliberately use what was taught in class with native speakers out of class, this dominance of speaking makes sense (especially since the measure of proficiency (EI) measures oral proficiency, as well).

The interviews also showed this trend. Five of the six interviewees touched on the fact that being able (or unable) to initiate conversation was directly related to their improvement. For example, in the interview with Richard⁴ (a level 2 high user whose native language is Portuguese), he said, “In my job in the MTC, all the time I speak English. All the time . . . Only English, because I’m not crazy. I have to practice, so when a person from Brazil tries to speak Portuguese, I tell them stop.” Time after time, participants stressed this fact during their interviews: they all believed speaking more English would help them improve their language skills, and most of them expressed the

⁴All interview names listed are pseudonyms.

desire to speak even more English than they currently were managing. Those that spoke English often felt more confident and comfortable with their English skills. Lucy, a high user level 3 Spanish speaker and the participant with the highest gain of any of the interviewees (and also the highest reported out-of-class English use), repeatedly talked about how good she felt about her English, since she was able to speak it often. In fact, in each interview, high users consistently seemed more confident about their English and optimistic about their prospects for improving.

If future studies were interested in exploring this matter further, perhaps following the design of the present study, where quantitative data were further supplemented by rich qualitative data obtained from the interviews, might make sense. The current study had a sufficiently large sampling, but it lacked the time and resources to interview a large percentage of participants. Ideally, a study could develop a method to codify interview responses and then do a quantitative evaluation of them in addition to a separate qualitative one. The qualitative analysis of the interviews could be used to supplement the LCP in much the same manner as the current study, although additional interviews would provide a better sampling of participant information, adding weight to the results. At the same time, a quantitative analysis conducted separately could also strengthen the study. For example, one set of researchers could evaluate each interview and classify the participant as a high or low user, depending on the answers given in the interview. This classification could then be compared to the LCP values reported by each participant. If participants were required to keep daily logs or journals focused on language use, those results could also be codified and evaluated, providing essential aspects of triangulation in a research area that at present is heavily based on self-report data. Finally, researchers

could observe participant behavior of out-of-class language use and compare those observations with the self-report data generated by the language user for those specific time frames. This would add an element other than self-report data, and would help validate or evaluate the language users' reports. However, such a study would require time and the efforts of multiple researchers, something which was beyond the scope of the present study.

Research Question 2

The purpose of the second research question was to find out what specific out-of-class activities were effective predictors of proficiency gains in English. The results of multiple regression analysis showed that two activities included on the LCP had a significant effect on proficiency gains: deliberately trying to use what was taught in the classroom and speaking with a specific person or specific people. The first one of these activities accounted for 43% of the variance in proficiency scores. It has already been extensively shown that increasing students' participation in class leads to significant gains in proficiency (Lim, 1992; Zhou, 1991, with other researchers indicating that the more a student becomes personally engaged in a class, the better the odds of their proficiency increasing (Krupa-Kwiatkowski, 1998), research most recently reconfirmed by Tsou (2005). Thus, the current finding appears to be very much in line with previous research, since deliberately using what was taught in class implies a certain level of personal engagement with the material. This also coincides with the findings of Seliger (1977). He concluded there are active learners—those who seek out opportunities to practice—and passive learners, who avoid interaction in the target language. In general, language learners who actively use their language by finding opportunities out of class to

practice what was learned in class have higher proficiency gains. In other words, Seliger's conclusion is supported by the current research, although the current study gives a more complete view of the relation.

One of the original goals of the current research was to ensure it could be compared to earlier efforts. This was one of the reasons the LCP was selected as the main tool for measuring out-of-class language contact. Other researchers (Freed, 1990; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004; Yager, 1998) found connections between specific types of language activity and proficiency gain. According to Freed (1990), social interactions were beneficial to lower level students who have not yet mastered this type of language, a finding echoed by Yager (1998). On the other hand, Freed (1990) stated that higher level students profited more from interacting with language materials such as books, newspapers, and movies, while Yager (1998) stated advanced students' proficiency was harmed by such interaction.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the current study and the studies of earlier researchers, primarily due to the fact that no significant relation was found between language level and proficiency gain. However, there are some descriptive statistics that appear to relate to the connections found by earlier researchers. For example, seen as a whole, all levels of students reported similar amounts of speaking contact (a close parallel to what Freed (1990) and Yager (1998) termed "social interaction"): no language level was more than 23% above or below the average (see Figure 5.1). With reading and listening activities (a close parallel to Freed (1990) and Yager (1998)'s "interaction with language materials"), the differences were much greater: the highest users (level 2) reported 136.5% more activity than the lowest users

(level 5). Level 5 students had almost equal amounts of both types of activities (social interaction and interaction with language materials), the only group to do so.

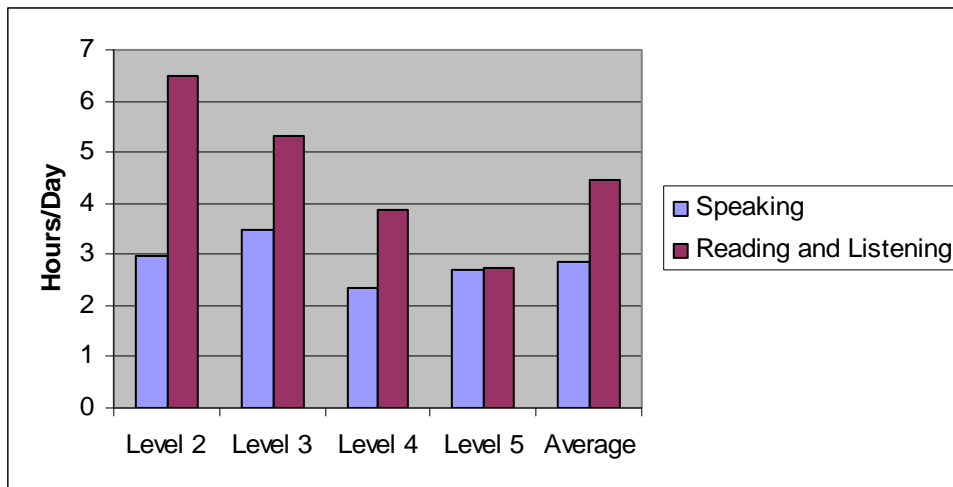


Figure 5.1 Type of language contact by level

Breaking down the level 2 and level 5 participants according to high and low out-of-class language use, the differences become even clearer. Level 5 high out-of-class English users (the group to have the most significant increases in proficiency compared to their low user counterparts) initiated the most speaking activities by far (see Figure 5.2). Both high and low level 2 users groups reported much more reading and listening activities than speaking. Assuming the findings of Freed (1990) and Yager (1998) are true, this might explain why level 2 students showed so much less gain in proficiency in this study: they didn't initiate enough speaking activities. As to the debate on whether reading and listening activities help or hinder upper level students, no identifiable trends in the current study seem to relate.

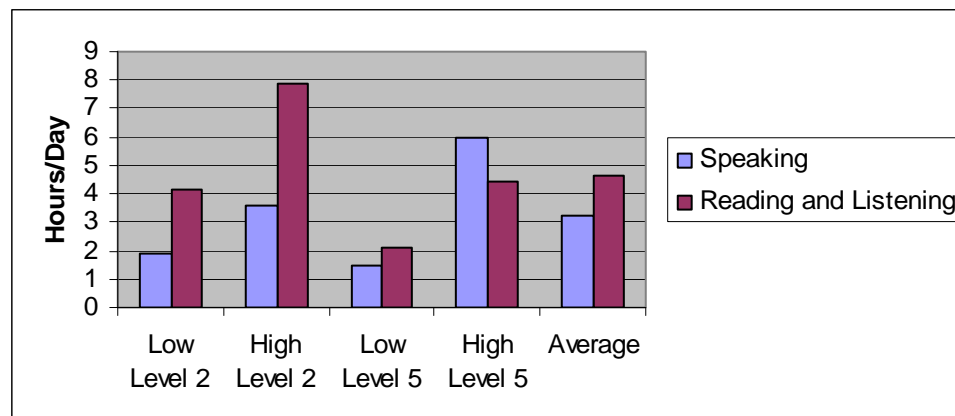


Figure 5.2 Type of language contact by level and user group

Once again, interviews with the participants helped bring this matter into focus. One discussion stood out in particular. Aaron, a level 3 Japanese speaker who was classified as a low user, talked about his perceptions of learning English before he came to America. “[I thought] just staying here I can improve, like I learn Japanese just [by] staying in Japan, I could learn English by staying here. I was wrong. I need to do something to improve.” Contrast this with the experience of Lucy, a high user level 3 Spanish speaker who talked about how much she used English out of class and how confident it made her, and the difference is clear. As the gain predictor indicates, it is not enough to simply reside in a foreign speaking country. To make significant gains in proficiency, learners need to become engaged in learning by applying what they learn in class and by using their target language in and out of class.

As to the second gain predictor (using English with a person other than the people already listed on the LCP, such as teachers, tutors or specific friends), more research is needed to properly understand the significance of the participant responses and the findings. This item (see Appendix A, numbers 3e and 3f) was also included in the LCP published by Freed et al. (2004). Although it seemed intriguing and was therefore used in

the present version of the LCP, it is too general to return consistent answers. With a larger sampling and a more scientific coding of the answers to this question, it might be possible to discover what aspect of this predictor is truly affecting language gain. As mentioned in Chapter 4, this question might indicate that those participants who reported high values for this question may be the types of people who are very friendly and social and practice their English in all possible situations and places. One interview might directly apply to this issue: Lucy's response to this question was that she spent 7 days a week, four to five hours a day speaking with her native English speaking boyfriend. During the interview, she indicated she spent every weekend at her boyfriend's sister's house, where none of the other people speak Spanish (her native language). Her proficiency gain was almost double the average (1.06 vs. 0.55). Perhaps this "catch all" question is an opportunity for participants to highlight the people they speak English the most with. Adding a question on the LCP along these lines (Who do you speak English the most with? How often? How much?) might illuminate the reason why this question predicted language gain.

Overall, the results of the second research question are significant because learners, teachers and administrators at the ELC could benefit from knowing what language learning activities students should focus on. Previous research showed tentative connections between certain levels and types of beneficial activities for those levels (Freed, 1990; Yager, 1998), but nothing as overarching as these results has been found to date in out-of-class language use and proficiency gain studies. When the results of the present study are confirmed by future replication studies, helping learners of English concentrate on using what they learned in class in out-of-class situations and encouraging

them to make good friends with whom they could spend time speaking English would be beneficial to learners.

Research Question 3

Research question 3 inquired about the relationship of learner's gender on the amount of reported out-of-class English use and proficiency gain. Although no statistically significant relationships were found, the descriptive statistics had some intriguing trends. Specifically, although there was relatively no difference in the amount of out-of-class use compared by gender, the amount of gain was 40% higher for high user females compared to high user males. This could be due to a variety of reasons, from females being generally more social and more willing to initiate conversations and use English at other occasions to males generally doing more non-social activities (such as watching the television or playing video games). Unfortunately, only one of the three females interviewed fell into the high user category. As already mentioned, Lucy was a very outgoing, very social individual who spent much of her time with her native English speaking boyfriend. Compared to the two high user males interviewed (Richard and Sam), more of Lucy's out-of-class English use was devoted to purely social pastimes. Both men used much of their English at work, where there is likely less of an opportunity for extended genuine conversations as opposed to the English use opportunities Lucy had when visiting her boyfriend's family.

One of Richard's comments indicates what might be a different mind set toward language learning for men compared to women. Numerous times he mentioned how important acquiring English was to him so that he could get a better job and provide for his family of four. "[Understanding and speaking English] is for me a power. I can

understand now. Five months ago, I couldn't understand. I feel bad and [wondered] what I do here?" He concluded he needed to increase his efforts learning English. It is possible that this different mindset puts more pressure on students who have a family, and especially on men who in most countries are seen as the providers. With this added pressure, focusing on English learning and out-of-class English use could be difficult.

To explore this issue more fully, researchers should perhaps conduct in depth interviews with more participants than was possible in this study. The interviews could also be conducted in a series of short conversations, where each would focus on a single interesting aspect of the participant's out-of-class English use—such as interviewing Richard more in depth about what actually happens while he is at work. LCP data is useful, but it cannot replace details about a participant's English use that are discovered through personal interviews.

Research Question 4

Research question 4 sought to discover whether participants' level at the ELC was related to out-of-class language use and proficiency gain. Overall, the descriptive statistics indicated that higher level students made greater gains in proficiency than did lower proficiency students despite the fact that they reported less out-of-class language use. As seen in the discussion of Research Question 2 above, high user level 5 participants were much more likely to engage in out-of-class speaking activities, which—viewed in light of the results of Question 4—adds further evidence to how effective speaking out of class can be for students. Still, it should be remembered that the EI is an oral proficiency test specifically aimed at oral activities. Thus, it stands to reason that students who have had more practice speaking would perform better on it. At the very

least, however, this shows that speaking out of class has a positive effect on oral proficiency gain. Hopefully, further research will illuminate other areas of proficiency to establish more precisely the limits of out-of-class language use on improvements in language ability.

Although none of the interviews revealed any more insights into the connections between proficiency gain, out-of-class English use and language level, the participants interviewed served as a good reminder that general demographics aren't always the best indicators of success in language acquisition processes. Lucy, a level four student, had much higher gains than any of the other participants interviewed, and with the exception of one level 2 student) the level 4 participants had the worst gains in proficiency, regardless of how much out-of-class English use they reported.

In any case, to study the possible trends suggested by the descriptive statistics for this research question, future scholars should have larger and more balanced samples of participants (where the numbers of participants in each level would be equal), so it is possible to compare the high and low users by level with much a higher accuracy, allowing more inferential statistics to be run on the data.

Research Question 5

Research question 5 examined the relationship of participant's native language and its impact on reported out-of-class English use and proficiency gain. The inferential statistics performed found no connection between these factors, but once again, descriptive statistics highlighted some interesting possibilities that future researchers can explore in further detail. In general, it appeared that participants who spoke a native language not well represented at the ELC (Russian, Armenian and Haitian Creole) both

had 38.2% greater average gains in proficiency and reported 79.5% greater average out-of-class English use.

Many of the students at the ELC have peers and friends who speak their language and who are unwilling to speak English for the sake of practice. Fifty-three of the 61 participants in the present study are native speakers of languages very common at the ELC (Spanish, Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Mongolian and Portuguese). These students have their own native language peer groups and often do not have or do not seek out opportunities to practice speaking in English, because it is much easier for them to use their native language. As Jenny, a native speaker of Spanish, mentioned in her interview, her roommate always speaks Spanish to her and she pressures Jenny to speak Spanish back. “It’s a problem for Latin people. [We] are always speaking Spanish and [have] no progress in English.” Likewise, Susan, a Korean speaker, spoke of how difficult it was for her to consistently practice her English out of class when she had a Korean boyfriend. “It’s not good for [my English] . . . I meet him a lot and speak Korean. He is attending BYU now and his English is very good, but we usually talk in Korean.” Comments such as these add further evidence to the idea that having less native language contact while learning a second language can help students increase their out-of-class language use and thus increase their proficiency more quickly.

In addition to these issues lies the simple fact that students whose native language is closely related to English are more likely to have an easier time learning English compared to students whose native languages are vastly different from English. For example, when the various native languages are grouped into three categories (Speakers of Romance Languages, Speakers of Various Asian Languages and Speakers of Other

Languages), it is clear that speakers whose native language is of Romance origin have an easier time learning English than speakers of various Asian languages (see Figure 5.3).

The “other” category includes only three speakers (Russian, Armenian and Haitian Creole), and so its results might be heavily influenced by the fact that (as mentioned above) these participants were forced to use more English simply because there were fewer fellow native language speakers to converse with. Thus, it seems apparent that a learner’s native language is a factor in language acquisition that should not be overlooked.

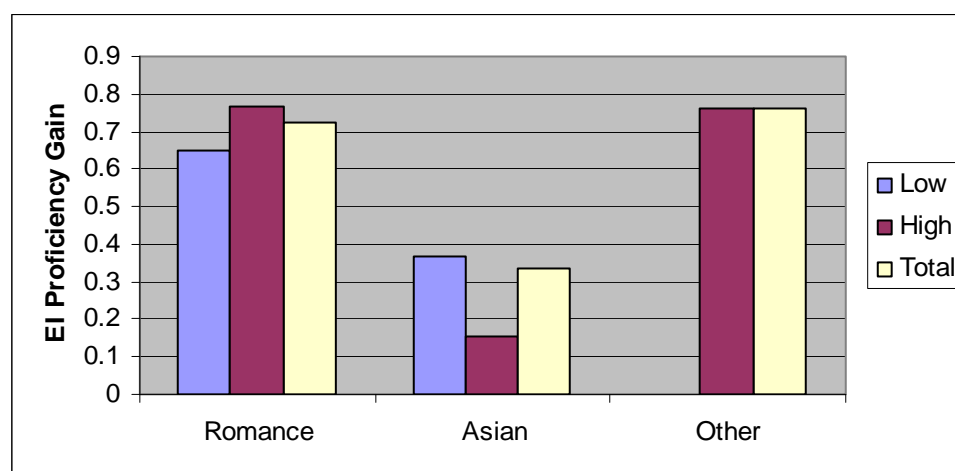


Figure 5.3 Proficiency gain by general language group

Future researchers who wish to study this issue in more detail should conduct their studies in an environment where speakers of many different native languages are present. This was the case in the present study, but it wasn’t possible to make the native language groups large enough and of equal size. Perhaps conducting an out-of-class language study with a very large sample of participants (such as conducting the study at multiple language learning centers at the same time) would ensure a better environment for the study of native language, out-of-class language use and proficiency.

Other Findings

One of the more perplexing findings unearthed by this research is the tendency of more college ESL education to result in less language contact. However, one reason immediately comes to mind: the older students were, the more college English classes they had taken. In fact, students who had taken more than 2 years of college English classes were on average 8.2 years older than students who had no experience (see Figure 5.4). Older students could have more responsibilities—more jobs, a family to spend time with, or other duties that could cut into the amount of time they would have available to use English out of class. This conjecture is supported by the interviews; as stated above, Richard (36 years old) talked about how hard he had to work in order to provide for his family. He is trying to improve his English, but he has other matters he must devote time to, as well. At the beginning of the interview, he stressed how tired he was, and how it was difficult for him to find time to study, work and still spend time with his children.

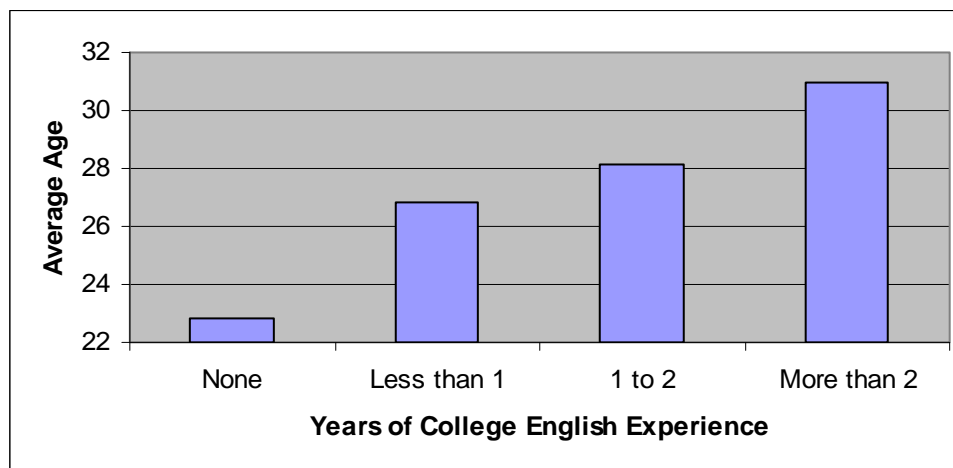


Figure 5.4 College English experience by average participant age

Limitations

The current study is not without its flaws. Looking at the research as a whole, four particular trouble spots arise: self-report data, the proficiency test used, the proficiency levels used for analysis and the language backgrounds involved in the study. Each of these limitations will be discussed in turn.

Self-report data/LCP

Perhaps the biggest limitation with the current study rests in the manner out-of-class English contact was measured. Mendelson (2004) noted that the LCP data returned was grossly exaggerated from what typical students might accomplish. The current study confirms this to an extent. On average, participants reported having some sort of out-of-class language contact for 8.5 hours of every day.⁵ When participants were asked to break their English out of class time down by activity (in the more specific LCP questions), the average hours of out-of-class contact per day jumped to 35.3⁶—high users reported 57.5 hours per day, low users reported 19.9 hours per day. Taken at face value, it is obviously impossible that participants could be fitting in so many hours of contact in each 24 hour period. Although this figure is disturbing, if one keeps in mind that the LCP is a measure of how much out-of-class contact students believe they are having, then this discrepancy is less troublesome. Those students who are making greater gains in proficiency are reporting higher values on the LCP, indicating that at the very least they believe they are working harder at initiating out-of-class language contact. The interviews

⁵ This figure was reached by separating the general task questions (speaking, reading, listening and writing) on the LCP (Part 2: 2a, 6a, 6g, & 6l), multiplying the hours per day by the hours per week, adding the totals and dividing by 7 to get the average hours per day.

⁶ A figure obtained by following the same process, only with LCP answers for Part 2:3a-d, 6a-f, 6g-k and 6l-n—the more focused questions for each general task.

supported this: through the conversations, it appeared students who had high LCP scores consistently were using more English than those who had low scores.

This is not to say that the LCP is fool-proof. Professor Dan Dewey of the University of Pittsburgh is currently doing a validation study of the LCP, and his results should be watched closely. In addition, to reduce the unreliable nature of the LCP, it is suggested that future studies take care to collect additional data, such as daily logs or journals. For the current study, such an approach was unwieldy due to the number of languages and levels being studied at the ELC, but with careful research design and enough funding, this is a surmountable problem.

Another approach to remedy the over-inflation of out-of-class target language use could be to adjust the time increments on the LCP. Currently, time spent on out-of-class activities can only be reported in full hours. Including smaller time units such as 15 minutes, 30 minutes and 45 minutes instead of full hours could help decrease the exaggeration of time reported by learners. As it stands now, each individual category is rounded up to the next hour. With so many various questions present, this can have a large effect on the end figures.

Proficiency Tests

The use of the EI as a proficiency test in the present study was somewhat untraditional, since the OPI had been used in the majority of the previous out-of-class language contact studies (Freed, 1990; Mendelson, 2004, O'Donnell, 2004; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). While the OPI is a long-tested and well-established proficiency test in L2 acquisition, it didn't seem to be the right choice for the studies it was used in, particularly due to their short length and the tendency of the OPI to test rather large changes in

proficiency. Because of this challenge, the OPI didn't produce reliable results in past studies. Although the EI was developed thirty years ago, it has not been tested as extensively and has not been used as much in SLA studies. Additionally, since the EI only tests oral proficiency, other, broader tests will need to be applied to out-of-class language learning to make the results of such studies stronger. In other words, this study has finally found a connection between LCP data and proficiency gain, but this connection needs further evaluation—in the form of testing various proficiency types with a variety of tests which address all four skill areas—before it becomes widely-accepted.

Proficiency Level

Another limitation lies in the fact that the proficiency level as used in the present study pertains to ELC proficiency level only, which (while useful at the ELC for student placement) are not universally applicable. Still, connections between the five ELC proficiency levels and general proficiency levels can certainly be drawn. Perhaps using proficiency tests that are more generally established and widely used would offer researchers a chance to more thoroughly evaluate any connections (or lack thereof) between out-of-class language use and proficiency gains.

Language Background

The participants in the present study came from 12 different native language backgrounds. This wide scope makes the study more generalizable, since the results may be applied to learners with many different language backgrounds. On the other hand, because so many native languages were involved, caution needs to be taken when applying the results of the present study to other L1/L2 combinations. If a language and

culture other than American English is the L2 in question, it is possible that the results could be significantly different. More research needs to be done to learn how other L1/L2 patterns would perform on similar proficiency test and in a similar learning environment.

Implications

Because a connection between out-of-class English use and proficiency gain has been established, several implications arise for students, teachers, and administrators in ESL programs, especially since specific activities were identified that are of particular use. Knowing these activities may give ELC students, teachers and administrators a better idea of how to optimize English language learning. The results may also contribute to more effective English language use in the larger ESL community. For example, a teacher who is aware of the fact that students who spend increased time using material learned in class have greater gains in proficiency might encourage their students to use grammar and vocabulary learned in class with native speakers of English often. A brief presentation of the pertinent results of the study in a form easily understandable to language learners (i.e., showing graphs and presenting percentages of obtainable language gain related to increased language use) could help students understand how their actions outside of class can affect their language learning.

On the other hand, teachers could assign specific homework assignments that would require learners to use the target language out of class. For example, students could use specific vocabulary learned in class in conversation with friends. After the completion of these assignments the students could report their experiences in class, which could lead to an encouragement discussion led by the teacher. This could increase the learners' out-of-class English use which in turn would help them not only perform

better on in-class tests, but more importantly, it may help the learners increase their proficiency. Likewise, if students know about the specific benefits of using material learned in class in out-of-class situations, they might be more willing to work hard on using what they learned in class in real situations. In addition, administrators might encourage the teachers they supervise to stress in classes the importance of using English with friends or people students spend a lot of time with (boyfriend, roommates). These tasks would help students engage in what appears to be significant out-of-class language use. As more research is done, these suggestions can be refined and reinforced. Simply knowing that out-of-class English use increases proficiency isn't enough—applying this knowledge to real life situations is key.

Directions for Future Research

Clearly much research remains to be conducted in this area. Since the research to this point has been so inconclusive, it is important for further studies to be made, hopefully utilizing the same modifications in methodology as the present study. With corroboration from different researchers, the current results can be strengthened and provide the basis for more specific studies. For example, the present study has shown that a close investigation of the relation of demographics to out-of-class language contact and proficiency gain is warranted. Descriptive statistics found in this research returned some interesting trends, but these were not reinforced by inferential statistics. Perhaps when more participants are involved in a replication study, statistically significant relationships might be uncovered.

When considering the descriptive statistics for the three demographic research questions, analysis of the effect of personality types on out-of-class English use may also

interest future researchers. In other words, are the high scoring language learners more extroverted than the low users? Do personality traits such as sociability or shyness have an effect on the learners' willingness to use the target language? These and other issues such as natural talent for languages could be explored in the future.

Future studies could also test different types of proficiency or use different tests of oral proficiency. Having a more complete picture of the ways out-of-class language use affect written proficiency or reading proficiency compared to oral proficiency would further help teachers and students understand the learning process. Perhaps one reason why earlier studies failed to find a connection between language use and proficiency gain is this connection is limited to certain types of proficiencies. In other words, it is possible that the EI focused on different measures of oral proficiency, and thus returned a different result. Ideally, a six to twelve month, large-scale study using the OPI as a proficiency measure could be conducted, since the OPI is such a well-established proficiency test. In any case, only by using different approaches can the full extent of this relationship be discovered.

Another interesting idea that surfaced through the course of this research is whether the reverse of the research question is true: if students use their native language more out-of-class, do their proficiency gains decrease? Several of the interviews highlighted the fact that students who still were able to use their native language felt like their English proficiency improved more slowly, and the results to research question 5 suggested that students who have few chances to use their native language improve more quickly than others. The LCP published by Freed et al. (2004) contained a few questions about native language use (which the present study omitted due to the large number of

native languages involved and the length of the LCP), but something more detailed—a “native language LCP”—might uncover additional insights into the relation between language contact in general and proficiency gain (or loss).

A final area that needs further research is in the measuring of out-of-class contact itself. As mentioned previously, Professor Dan Dewey of the University of Pittsburgh is currently working on a validation study of the LCP which should be watched closely. However, it seems other tools could be developed which would at the very least supplement the LCP as an out-of-class language use measurement. More detailed weekly or daily logs could be kept, although in that case researchers would need to be diligent in reminding participants to use them. As part of his study, Professor Dewey is calling participants at random times during the day to ask what they are doing, effectively getting a series of snapshots of students use of language out of class. Because the LCP returns data that seems so over-inflated (such as averages of over 70 hours per day of language use), it might be difficult for scholars not familiar with the field to properly appreciate the results of studies that utilize the LCP. Informal observations or less intrusive recordings of learners’ daily interactions with others could also be conducted with a sample of participants to provide a more objective element in future studies. Developing other measurement instruments would help alleviate this difficulty.

Cautions for Future Researchers

After experiencing first hand a study of this nature, several aspects of previous studies in the field become clear. First of all, gaining an accurate picture of the out-of-class language contact for such a large group over such a large time period is problematic. Perhaps the reason why studies are repeatedly done over short periods of

time and with few participants is that it takes a lot of effort to have study run longer than a semester and it is difficult to find enough participants when a study is carried over 2 semesters. For the present study, it was hoped that the sample would contain at least 150 participants, but as time progressed, this number kept dwindling, as students left the ELC program or didn't take one of the many different tests involved in the study, since even one missing score disqualified a participant.

A second aspect is how time-intensive a project of this magnitude can be. To score all of the individual tests and analyze any additional journals or logs that might be kept in future studies takes a team effort. More large scale, in-depth studies in this field need to be conducted, but doing so will likely take proper funding. In other words, in-depth study in this field is not an easy undertaking.

Conclusion

It is hoped that the results presented in the current study will spark further interest in the field. Much research remains to be done, and much of it will need to be large-scale—both in number of participants and length of study—to ensure accurate results. The ultimate goal is helping L2 students have a smoother learning experience. Since the time they spend out of class is much greater than the time they spend in it, being able to teach them how to maximize their out-of-class language use to help them become better language speakers would be very beneficial. With more research and understanding of this phenomenon, this goal will be much easier to accomplish.

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Appendix A

Language Contact Profile

The responses that you give in this questionnaire will be kept confidential. The information that you provide will help us to better understand learning experiences of ELC students. Your honest and detailed responses will be greatly appreciated. Thank you.

Part 1: Background information

1. What is your 9 digit BYU ID?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your gender?
4. How old are you?
5. What level at the ELC are you this semester?
6. What country are you from?
7. What is your native language?
8. How many other languages do you speak (for the purposes of this study it doesn't matter how well you speak them)? Do not include your native language and English.

I don't speak any other languages besides my native language and English.

I speak one other language besides my native language and English.

I speak two other languages besides my native language and English.

I speak three other languages besides my native language and English.

9. How long have you been in United States?
less than 4 months 5-8 months 9-12 months 1-2 years more than 2 years
10. If you have ever lived in another English-speaking country, how long have you lived there?
less than 4 months 5-8 months 9-12 months 1-2 years more than 2 years
- 11a. This semester, how often have you participated in the ELC Choir?
always often sometime rarely never
- 11b. This semester, how often have you participated in ELC activities (dances, cultural and sport events, etc.)?
always often sometime rarely never
12. Which situation best describes your living situation while studying at the ELC?
I live with only native English-speaking roommates.
I live with some native English-speaking roommates.
I live with no native English-speaking roommates.
I live with my own family and we mostly speak in my native language.

I live with a native English-speaking family (host family).
I live alone.

13. Have you studied English in school in the past at each of the levels listed below?
Click NO if you have not studied English at the specific level or if you have studied at that level, specify for how long?

	No	Yes, less than 1 year	Yes, 1–2 years	Yes, more than 2 years
Elementary school				
Junior high (middle) school				
Senior high school				
University/college				

Part 2: Language Contact Profile

1. For the following items, please specify
 - (i) how many **days per week** you typically used English in the situation indicated, and
 - (ii) on average how many **hours per day** you did so.
 Click on the appropriate numbers.

- 2a. On average, how much time did you spend speaking, **in English**, outside of class with native or fluent English speakers during this semester?
Typically, how many **days per week**? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
On those days, typically how many **hours per day**? 0-1 1-2 2-3 3-4 4-5 more than 5

- 2b. doing speaking homework assignments in English **outside of class**
3. This semester, outside of class, I tried to speak **English to:**
 - 3a. my teacher(s)
 - 3b. friends (acquaintances, study buddy, etc.) who are native or fluent English speakers
 - 3c. classmate(s)
 - 3d. a host family, English-speaking roommate or other English speakers in my apartment complex
 - 3e. Who else do you speak English with? Specify:
 - 3f. The person you specified in 3e.

4. How often did you use **English** outside the classroom for each of the following purposes?
 - 4a. to clarify classroom related work (homework)
 - 4b. to obtain directions/information (e.g., "where is the post office"; "what time is it"; "how much are stamps")

- 4c. for superficial or brief exchanges (e.g., greetings, "please pass the salt"; "I'm leaving", ordering in a restaurant, etc.) with my host family, English-speaking roommate, or friends in my apartment complex
- 4d. for extended conversations with my host family, English-speaking roommate, friends, or acquaintances in my apartment complex, native speakers of my native language with whom I speak English
- 5a. How often did you try deliberately to use things you were taught in the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) with native or fluent English speakers outside the classroom?
- 5b. How often did you take things you learned outside of the classroom (grammar, vocabulary, expressions) back to class for question or discussion?
- 6. How much time did you spend doing each of the following activities **outside of class**?
 - 6a. Overall, in reading in English **outside of class**
 - 6b. reading English newspapers **outside of class**
 - 6c. reading novels in English **outside of class**
 - 6d. reading magazines in English **outside of class**
 - 6e. reading e-mail and/or internet web pages in English **outside of class**
 - 6f. reading homework assignments in English **outside of class**
 - 6g. Overall, in listening to English **outside of class**
 - 6h. listening TV/radio, movies (at theatre and at home) in English **outside of class**
 - 6i. listening to songs in English **outside of class**
 - 6j. trying to catch other people's conversations in English **outside of class**
 - 6k. doing listening homework assignments in English **outside of class**
 - 6l. Overall, in writing in English **outside of class**
 - 6m. writing personal notes, letters, email or chat in English **outside of class**
 - 6n. writing homework assignments in English **outside of class**

Appendix B

Language Contact Survey
(1st LCP Pilot Study, Conducted Winter 2006)

Dear student,

The following questions relate to your everyday life here in Provo-Orem area. It should take you about 10 minutes to answer the questions. When a question asks you about the time you spend using English, think about a full calendar week, Monday through Sunday.

Good luck and thank you for helping us with our research.

1. What other language(s) besides your native language do you speak?

2. How long and where have you studied English before you came to ELC?

Institution's name and country _____ years
_____ months _____

Institution's name and country _____ years
_____ months _____

Institution's name and country _____ years
_____ months _____

3. How long have you been in US? (include all visits) _____ years _____ months

4. This semester how often have you participated in the ELC Choir?

always often sometime rarely never

5. This semester how often have you participated in ELC activities (dances, trips, service projects, etc.)?

always often sometime rarely never

A. Housing Questions

1. Please choose the sentence that best describes your housing situation:

I live with

- a. only native English-speaking roommates.
- b. some native English-speaking roommates.
- c. no native English-speaking roommates.
- d. my own family.
- e. a native English-speaking family (host family).

2. How many waking hours (not including the time you sleep) do you spend where you live a week?

0-20 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs 41-50 hrs 51-60 hrs more than 60 hrs

3. Of the hours you spend at home, what % of time do you spend using English?
0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Of the hours you spend at home, what % of time do you spend using your native language a week?
0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

B. Roommate Questions

1. How many hours do you spend with your roommates a week?
0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs
2. Of the hours you spend with your roommates, what % of time do you spend using English?
0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
3. Of the hours you spend with your roommates, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Living with my roommates helps me learn/practice English.
always often sometime rarely never
5. What specific activities, which you do with your roommates help you learn/practice English the most?

Activities that help me learn/practice English the most are (click all that apply):

Speaking with them

Listening to them

Playing games

Shopping

Watching movies or TV

Listening to music

Doing homework with them

Eating with them

Going to church

Other: _____

C. Own Family Questions

1. How many hours do you spend with your family a week?
0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs

2. Of the hours you spend with your own family, what % of time do you spend using English?

0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

3. Of the hours you spend with your own family, what % of time do you spend using your native language?

0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

4. Living with my family helps me learn/practice English.

always often sometime rarely never

1. What specific activities, which you do with your own family help you learn/practice English the most?

Activities that help me learn/practice English the most are:

Speaking with them

Listening to them

Playing games

Shopping

Watching movies or TV

Listening to music

Doing homework with them

Eating with them

Going to church

Other _____

D. Native English-speaking family (Host family) Questions

1. How many hours do you spend with your host family a week?

0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs

2. Of the hours you spend with your host family, what % of time do you spend using English?

0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

3. Of the hours you spend with your host family, what % of time do you spend using your native language?

0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

4. Living with my host family helps me learn/practice English.

always often sometime rarely never

5. What specific activities, which you do with your host family help you learn/practice English the most?

Activities that help me learn/practice English the most are:

Speaking with them
 Listening to them
 Playing games
 Shopping
 Watching movies or TV
 Listening to music
 Doing homework with them
 Eating with them
 Going to church
 Other _____

E. Job Questions

1. What do you do for your job? (drop down menu on Troy's survey)
2. What is your schedule? (from Troy's survey)
3. How many hours do you work a week (Mon-Sun)?
 0-5 hrs 6-10 11-15 16-20 hrs more than 20 hrs
4. Of the time you spend at work, what % of time do you spend using English (speaking with coworkers or customers, listening to music, reading, writing, etc.)?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
5. Of the time you spend at work, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
6. My job helps me learn/practice English.
 always often sometime rarely never

F. Friends Questions

1. List your three closest friends in Provo-Orem area. What is their nationality and relationship to you (teacher, friend, roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, host family member, etc.) On average, how much time do you spend with them a week?

Name _____
 Nationality _____
 Relationship _____
 Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

Name _____
 Nationality _____
 Relationship _____

Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

Name _____
 Nationality _____
 Relationship _____
 Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

2. List three English speaking Americans that you speak English with the most.
 (You may repeat names from the previous question.)

Name _____
 Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

Name _____
 Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

Name _____
 Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

G. Other Activities

1. List all other activities that you regularly do to improve your English.

Appendix C

Language Contact Survey
(2nd LCP Pilot Study, Conducted Summer 2006)

Dear ELC student,

The following questions relate to your everyday life while you are attending the ELC this semester. It should take you about 15 minutes to answer the questions. When a question asks you about the time you spend using English, think about a full week, Monday through Sunday. Good luck and thank you for helping us with our research.

Part 1. General Questions

1. What other language(s) do you speak (for the purposes of this study it doesn't matter how well you speak it)? Do not include your native language and English.

I don't speak any other languages besides my native language and English.

I speak one other language besides my native language and English. I speak _____.

I speak two other languages besides my native language and English. I speak _____ and _____.

I speak three other languages besides my native language and English. I speak _____ and _____ and _____.

2. How long and where have you studied English before you came to ELC?

Elementary/Middle school in (country) _____ years _____ months _____

High school in (country) _____ years _____ months _____

University/College in (country) _____ years _____ months _____

English Language Course/School in (country) _____ years _____ months _____

Study Abroad in (country) _____ years _____ months _____

Other _____ years _____ months _____

I studied English by myself at home not in a school or class. years ___ months ___

I have never studied English before I came to the ELC.

3. How long have you been in United States? (include all visits) _____ years
_____ months

4. If you have ever lived in another English-speaking country, how long have you lived there? (include all visits) _____ years _____ months

5. This semester, how often have you participated in the ELC Choir?
always often sometime rarely never

6. This semester, how often have you participated in ELC activities (dances, trips, service projects, sport events, etc.)?
 always often sometime rarely never

Part 2. Housing Questions

1. Please choose the sentence that best describes your housing situation:
- I live with only native English-speaking roommates.
 - I live with some native English-speaking roommates.
 - I live with no native English-speaking roommates.
 - I live with my own family.
 - I live with a native English-speaking family (host family).
 - I live alone.
3. How many hours (not including the time you sleep) do you spend where you live a week?
 0-20 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs 41-50 hrs more than 50 hrs
3. Of the hours you spend at home, what % of time do you spend using English?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Of the hours you spend at home, what % of time do you spend using your native language a week?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Part 2abc. Roommate Questions

1. How many hours (not including the time you sleep) do you spend where you live a week?
 0-20 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs 41-50 hrs more than 50 hrs
2. How many hours do you spend with your roommates a week?
 0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs
3. Of the hours you spend with your roommates, what % of time do you spend using English?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Of the hours you spend with your roommates, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

5. Living with my roommates helps me learn/practice English.
 always often sometime rarely never

Part 2d. Own Family Questions

1. How many hours (not including the time you sleep) do you spend where you live a week?
 0-20 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs 41-50 hrs more than 50 hrs
2. How many hours do you spend with your family a week?
 0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs
3. Of the hours you spend with your own family, what % of time do you spend using English?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Of the hours you spend with your own family, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
5. Living with my family helps me learn/practice English.
 always often sometime rarely never

Part 2e. Native English-speaking family (Host family) Questions

1. How many hours (not including the time you sleep) do you spend where you live a week?
 0-20 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs 41-50 hrs more than 50 hrs
2. How many hours do you spend with your host family a week?
 0-10 hrs 11-21 hrs 21-30 hrs 31-40 hrs more than 40 hrs
3. Of the hours you spend with your host family, what % of time do you spend using English?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
4. Of the hours you spend with your host family, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
5. Living with my host family helps me learn/practice English.
 always often sometime rarely never

Part 3. Job Questions

1. What do you do for your job?
 Custodial
 Laundry
 Food Service
 Other (Please specify)
2. What is your schedule?
3. How many hours do you work a week?
 0-5 hrs 6-10 11-15 16-20 hrs more than 20 hrs
4. Of the time you spend at work, what % of time do you spend using English (speaking with coworkers or customers, listening to music, reading, writing, etc.)?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
5. Of the time you spend at work, what % of time do you spend using your native language?
 0 % 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
6. My job helps me learn/practice English.
 always often sometime rarely never

Part 4a. Activity Questions

Select how often you did these language learning activities this semester.

always (4 times a week or more)

often (2-3 times a week)

sometime (twice a month)

rarely (once a month)

never

Activities that can be used to learn, practice and/or improve English	How often did I do this activity this semester?
1. Do English class homework	
2. Study English for my own personal goals	
3. Speak with natives in English (roommates, co-workers, friends, boss, etc.)	
4. Play games in English	
5. Watch movies or TV in English.	
6. Make vocabulary flashcards	
7. Watch movies in English with subtitles in English	
8. Copy English text	
9. Listen to music in English	

10. Meet with my study buddy	
11. Surf the internet in English	
12. Read and write letters and/or email in English	
13. Watch movies in your native language with subtitles in English	
14. Look up new words in a dictionary (electronic or paper)	
15. Go to the library	
16. Memorize text/sentences in English	
17. Chat on the internet in English	
18. Read magazines or newspapers in English	
19. Translate texts in my native language into English	
20. Read books I chose in English	
21. Stay at the ELC/SACS after classes to practice English	
22. Go to a movie theatre to watch movies in English	
23. Listen to radio in English	
24. Talk to my classmates in English	
25. Watch movies in English several times to understand better	
26. Read college textbooks in English	
27. Visit bookstores to browse English books	
28. Talk to English-speaking friends on the phone	
29. Write documents for my job in English	
30. Read documents for my job in English	
31. Attend social activities/functions in English (parties, dates, church)	
32. Read aloud in English	
33. Listen to English commentary while watching sports on TV	
34. Write down new English words	
35. Watch movies in English with subtitles in your native language	
36. Translate English texts into my native language	
37. Write a journal in English	
38. Interpret for someone who doesn't speak English	
39. Sing English songs	
40. Read children's books in English	

Part 4b. Other Activities

2. List all other activities that you did this semester to improve your English.

Part 5. Friends Questions

3. List your three closest friends in Provo-Orem area. What is their nationality and relationship to you (friend, roommate, boyfriend, girlfriend, teacher, host family member, church member, etc.) On average, how much time do you spend with them a week?

Friend #1

Nationality _____
 Relationship _____
 Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

Friend #2

Nationality _____
 Relationship _____
 Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

Friend #3

Nationality _____
 Relationship _____
 Language Used _____
 Hours/week _____

4. List three English speaking Americans that you speak English with the most.
 (You may repeat the people you listed in the previous question.)

American Friend #1

Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

American Friend #2

Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

American Friend #3

Relationship _____
 Hours/week _____

Part 6. Comments

Do you have any comments, ideas, and suggestions for the researcher after you've taken this survey? If yes, write them here.

Appendix D

Research Design Comparison

Researcher	Study Length	Subjects	Language Level(s)	Proficiency Test	LCP Used	Non-Self Report Data	Language	Homogenous Group	LCP/Gain Relation Found	Date
Seliger	Not Specified	6	Upper Intermediate	Cloze	Yes	No	English	No	Yes	1977
Day	8 weeks	58	Intermediate to Advanced	Oral Interviews and Cloze	Yes	No	English	Yes—Asian	No	1985
Spada	6 weeks	48	Intermediate	7 different measures	No	No	English	No	No	1986
Freed	6 weeks	38	Beginner to Advanced	OPI and CEEB	Yes	Yes	French	Yes—American	Mixed	1990
Yager	7 weeks	41	Beginner to Advanced	Oral Interviews	Yes	No	Spanish	Yes—American	Mixed	1998
Segalowitz & Freed	13 weeks	40	Not Specified	OPI and 7 other	Yes	Yes	Spanish	Yes—American	Weak Connection	2004
Mendelson A	4 weeks	31	Beginner to Advanced	OPI	Yes	Yes	Spanish	Yes—American	No	2004
Mendelson B	15 weeks	14	Beginner to Advanced	OPI	Yes	Yes	Spanish	Yes—American	No	2004
O'Donnell	15 weeks	37	Not Specified	OPI and other	Yes	Yes	Spanish	Yes—American	No	2004
Cundick	31 weeks	61	Beginner to Advanced	EI	Yes	Yes	English	No	To Be Determined	2007

Appendix E

Consent to be a Research Subject

Introduction

This research study is conducted by Denisa Cundick an MA student at Brigham Young University to determine how English Language Center (ELC) students spend their time after class. You were selected to participate because you have studied at the ELC for two or more semesters.

Procedures

You will be asked to participate in a 25-45 minute interview conducted in English at the ELC. Questions will include details about what you normally do after classes and how you spend your free time. The interview will be tape-recorded and then transcribed.

Risks/Discomforts

There are minimal risks for participation in this study. If you feel that a question is too personal, you do not have to answer it.

Benefits

There are no direct benefits to subjects. However, the ELC administrators and teachers may benefit from your honest answers to the questions. In addition, the subjects will have an opportunity to practice speaking in English.

Confidentiality

All information you provide will be kept confidential. The audio files and transcripts will be kept on the researcher's personal computer and will not be shared with anyone. The audio files and the transcripts will be destroyed after the research is completed. The researcher may want to use transcribed portions of the audio files in her thesis and/or other publications and/or presentations. Your name will not appear in any form and with the transcribed quotes or in any part of the researcher's thesis, publications or presentations. Voice recordings will be used for analysis only, and will never be used in thesis, publications or presentations.

Participation

Participation in this research study is voluntary. If you decide to not participate in this research, your decision will not effect you grades at the ELC.

Questions about the Research

If you have questions regarding this study, you may contact Denisa Cundick at 796-5506 or denisacundick@gmail.com.

Questions about your Rights as Research Participants

If you have questions you do not feel comfortable asking the researcher, you may contact Dr. Renea Beckstrand, IRB Chair, 422-3873, 422 SWKT, renea_beckstrand@byu.edu.

I have read, understood, and received a copy of the above consent and I agree with participation in this study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____